Panama Canal

Cruise transit | Read your exact itinerary

A PRACTICAL PLAN FOR YOUR TRANSIT DAY

1 Full or partial transit

A full transit crosses between the Caribbean/Atlantic and Pacific. A partial transit enters part of the canal and returns, with arrangements set by the itinerary. Some partial sailings offer excursions and reboarding plans. Confirm these with the cruise line; duration is not guaranteed.

2 Two lock systems

The original route uses Gatun Locks on the Atlantic side and Pedro Miguel plus Miraflores on the Pacific side. The expanded route uses Agua Clara on the Atlantic side and Cocoli on the Pacific side. Both routes share Gatun Lake and Culebra Cut. Your ship's size, itinerary and operations determine its assignment.

3 What to watch

Locks raise and lower ships between the ocean and the elevated lake. Locomotives help position ships in the original locks; tugboats assist in the expanded locks. The expanded locks reuse part of their water through water-saving basins. The original canal opened in 1914; the expanded locks opened in 2016.

4 Enjoy the day on board

Move between forward, side and higher-deck viewing areas as access allows. Listen to onboard commentary and bring sun protection, water and rain gear. Waiting and lock times vary with traffic and canal operations. Wildlife may be seen around the lake, but sightings are not assured.

BEFORE YOU GO / BEFORE YOU RETURN

Use ship time. Follow your own all-aboard or last-tender deadline and allow a generous buffer for queues, traffic and weather. Confirm hours, tickets, access and transport for your sailing date.

OFFICIAL SOURCES | REVIEWED 25 OCTOBER 2026

pancanal.com / first panama canal water saving basin filled testing
pancanal.com / N01 2024 Vessel Requirements AC.pdf
pancanal.com / preguntas frecuentes
pancanal.com / discover the expanded canal