

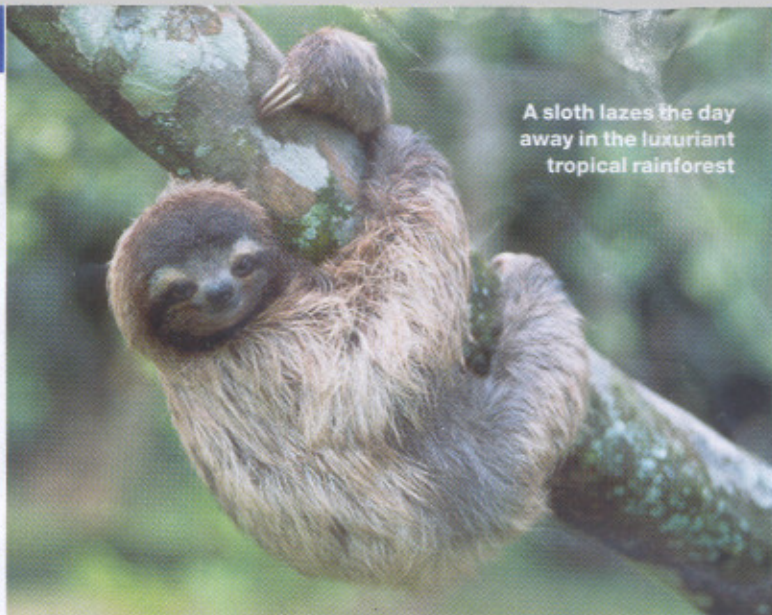
Panama

Why go there?

Poised on a narrow isthmus connecting North and South America and lying between the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean, this all-purpose paradise has a lot more to offer than sunhats and a famous canal. Perfect for adventure lovers, it features white, sandy beaches, fauna-rich rainforests and an exotic culture. The surprisingly sleek Panama City boasts a nonstop nightlife fuelled by rum and rumba and merengue music.

Dancing delights

Panama City's carnival celebrations are nothing if not flamboyant, with a host of parades, masks, costumes, confetti and indigenous music. For the festival of the Black Christ on 21 October, a



A sloth lazes the day away in the luxuriant tropical rainforest

17th-century icon is paraded all around the Caribbean town of Portobelo by candlelight to great singing and dancing.

Places to party

The best way to prepare for a big night out is with a long

afternoon siesta before refuelling with a shot of Seco Herrerano, the local rum. Then head off to the all-night Casco Viejo district. This Latin-centred club scene only starts hopping after 11pm, when elegantly dressed Panamanians dance up a storm.

Must see must do

- Book a full-day trip through the famous Panama Canal.
- Shop until you drop in Panama City – designer gear is even cheaper than in New York.
- Come face-to-face with three-toed sloths and howler monkeys in the Parque Nacional Soberania.
- Visit Archipelago de las Perlas, Panama's most idyllic islands, with turquoise seas and swaying palms.
- Visit the Interoceanic Canal Museum of Panama, the Plaza de Bolívar and the History Museum of Panama.

How to get there

Journey Latin America (020-8747 8315; www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk) offers a 13-day tailor-made guided tour to Panama from £2,095 per person.