



Gatun Locks Panama Canal



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a world to experience



Willemstad, Curacao

# CARIBBEAN CRUISE WITH PANAMA CANAL

January 22, 2023 – 16 Days

*On Holland America's Eurodam*

It's time to get back on a ship after nearly 2 years with no cruises. This 11-day cruise calls at Half Moon Cay, Holland America's private island; Oranjestad, Aruba; Willemstad, Curaçao; Cartagena, Colombia; Colón, Panama; and Puerto Limón, Costa Rica. A unique experience is cruising halfway through the Panama Canal to Gatun Lake, and returning the same way. The ship is the *Eurodam* which carries only 2,100 passengers and was launched in 2008. She has lots of veranda staterooms which are the most popular nowadays, but insides, outsides, and suites are also available. Experiencing the Panama Canal should be on everyone's bucket list. The cruise starts and finishes in Fort Lauderdale. We stay 2 nights at the Embassy Suites Hotel and take a tour of the Everglades with an airboat ride.

Activity Level: 1



37 Meals Included:

15 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 11 dinners

Fares per person double/twin:

\$6,025 Interior Stateroom category J

\$6,275 Oceanview Stateroom category E

\$6,725 Veranda Stateroom category VD

Single & triple fares and ship suites also available.

Tour is exempt from GST.

Early Bookers:

\$250 discount on first 15 seats; \$125 on next 10

Experience Points:

Earn 100 points on this tour.

Redeem 100 points if you book by October 18, 2022.

Departure from: Victoria



Eurodam theatre

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Sunday, January 22, 2023

We cross the border and follow I-5 south to Seattle. We stay overnight at the Embassy Suites Hotel near the Seattle airport. Meet your fellow travellers during a reception after arrival.

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

### Day 2: Monday, January 23

We fly from Seattle to **Fort Lauderdale**. The next two nights are at the Embassy Suites which has a convenient location downtown between the airport and cruise terminal. All units have a living room and separate bedroom. Amenities include a pool, whirlpool, restaurant, and lounge.

**Note:** We have scheduled 1½ days in Fort Lauderdale to avoid the risk of a flight delay which could cause you to miss the ship departure.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Hotel

### Day 3: Tuesday, January 24

Start the day with the Embassy Suites' extensive breakfast buffet. This is a free day to relax around the hotel or visit the many shops and restaurants nearby. Tonight, join your fellow travellers for a complimentary two-hour reception with wine, beer, and cocktails.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Hotel

### Day 4: Wednesday, January 25

The morning is leisure time. A transfer is provided to the Port Everglades cruise terminal. We board the **Eurodam** in early afternoon and enjoy an embarkation buffet lunch. The afternoon is free time to explore the ship and get settled into your stateroom. We sail out of Port Everglades at 4 pm with a festive "Farewell to Florida" deck party. After a sumptuous dinner, enjoy a lively stage show or music in many smaller lounges.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### Day 5: Thursday, January 26

The **Eurodam** anchors at **Half Moon Cay**, Holland America's private island in the Bahamas. We ride tenders ashore. There are plenty of recreational activities here, or you can laze on the long sandy beach. We stay here from 8 am to 3 pm.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### Day 6: Friday, January 27

During this day at sea, we sail south through the strait between Cuba and Haiti, and cross the Tropic of Cancer. Explore your beautiful ship while deciding how to spend the day. The ship's daily newsletter keeps you informed about scheduled activities like stage shows, movies, bingo games, group fitness, and game times in lounges. Reserve a treatment at the spa. Enjoy the entertainment at the Lincoln Stage or BB King's Blues Club. Get some advice on a workout plan at the fitness centre. Sidle up to the wine tasting bar and sample wines from around the world. There may be a talk offered at Explorations Central. The choices are many.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### Day 7: Saturday, January 28

During the morning, we cruise across the Southern Caribbean and arrive at 1 pm at **Oranjestad on Aruba**, a small island just off the coast of Venezuela. One of the Lesser Antilles, Aruba was granted home rule by the Netherlands in 1986 and became fully independent in 1996. The primary industries are tourism and the refining of oil imported from Venezuela. The island has a population of about 70,000, but is only 30 km long and 8 km wide. Together with Bonaire and Curaçao, Aruba forms a group referred to as the ABC islands. Collectively, Aruba and the other Dutch islands in the Caribbean are often called the Dutch Caribbean. Driving and walking tours of Oranjestad can be purchased on the ship or on shore. The city is noted for its Dutch Colonial architecture and the Royal Plaza outdoor shopping mall. The **Eurodam** departs at 11 pm.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### Day 8: Sunday, January 29

We arrive at the **island of Curaçao** and the capital of Willemstad. This is also a Dutch island and, after settlement in 1634, they built several forts at strategic locations. Today, the island has a population of 150,000 and has a diverse economy dominated by tourism and international trade. Sightseeing tours can be purchased that take you

to historic places and other attractions around Curaçao. The *Eurodam* is docked here from 8 am to 11 pm.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### **Day 9: Monday, January 30**

This is a day at sea while we cruise west across the Caribbean to Panama.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### **Day 10: Tuesday, January 31**

The *Eurodam* docks at **Cartagena in Colombia** for a short visit from 7 am to 1 pm. Founded in 1533 by the Spanish, it rivalled Mexico City for commercial importance in the New World by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Fortress of San Felipe on the mainland guarded the wealth of the Spanish Main whereas the modern city is on an island accessed by a causeway. Driving and walking tours of historic Cartagena and harbour cruises can be purchased during our visit to this fascinating South American city.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### **Day 11: Wednesday, February 1**

Geographically, **Panama** is a curious country which connects two continents and has a length of 600 km, but a width of just 50 km between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea at its narrowest. Panama has a population of 3.3 million people, mostly concentrated near the Panama Canal. Panama City, the capital and largest in the country, was founded in 1519 by the Spanish and has grown into a modern and bustling city. One of the highlights of our cruise is today's halfway transit of the remarkable **Panama Canal**. Opened in 1914, after nine years of construction, it still ranks as one of the world's greatest engineering achievements with 134 million cubic metres of earth moved and a cost of \$336 million. Currently about 14,000 ships per year (38 per day) pass through the canal and pay tolls of about \$450 million. Cruise ships pay a toll based on berths, so Holland America will pay about \$290,000 for the *Eurodam's* passage. We go halfway into the Canal, so the *Eurodam* is lifted by three locks and enters Gatun Lake, then returns the same way

into the Caribbean. A Panama Canal expert is on board to explain its history and technical operations. At 3 pm, we dock at Colón, the city near the north entrance to the Canal, and stay until 8 pm.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### **Day 12: Thursday, February 2**

We arrive in Costa Rica, docking in its only Caribbean port, **Puerto Limón**, from 7 am to 4 pm. The country is known for its natural beauty, many parks, and exotic wildlife. San Jose, the capital, is about 150 km away on a high interior plateau. Limón is the second largest city with a population of 55,000 people. Christopher Columbus visited this area in 1502. The city was founded in 1854 and grew after a railroad was built to the interior to carry exports, especially coffee, to the port.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### **Day 13: Friday, February 3**

### **Day 14: Saturday, February 4**

During our last two days at sea, we sail west and north of Cuba. If you haven't dined in all the specialty restaurants, we suggest you reserve the Pinnacle Grill, Canaletto, or Tamarind for a superb dinner (extra cost).

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** *Eurodam*

### **Day 15: Sunday, February 5**

We dock in **Fort Lauderdale** and say goodbye to *Eurodam*. A coach and local guide meet us at the cruise terminal and we drive to the **Everglades**, a vast swamp where unusual animal and plant life can be observed. An exciting air-boat ride across these shallow waters is included and alligators are likely to be seen. Our guide talks about the



Everglades air-boat

challenges of protecting the Everglades in past centuries, and the current status of this delicate ecosystem. The tour ends at Fort Lauderdale Airport, and we fly to Seattle this evening.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

## Day 16: Monday, February 6

There are shopping stops at Bellis Fair Mall and the Duty-Free Store, then we cross the border and travel home.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

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## CRUISE NOTES

**Please book early:** Holland America has confirmed a block of staterooms for this tour and they are normally held until three months before sailing (mid-October 2022). However, any unsold staterooms can be taken away from us at any time when the ship fills. This is a unique cruise itinerary with a taste of half of the Panama Canal, so it could sell out early and result in our block being reduced. When this has happened before, we had to waitlist disappointed customers, even though we still had seats available on the coaches and plane.

**Dinner reservations:** The *Eurodam* offers both open dining and fixed dining. Open dining is standard, so you can go to a restaurant when you are ready with your friends or make a reservation earlier in the day. If you prefer to dine at the same time with the same people each day, we can request this. The three specialty restaurants take reservations on board and you should do this early in the voyage.

**Included lunches:** The above itinerary shows an included lunch on every cruise day. These lunches are on the ship, so if you book a shore excursion, you may miss an included lunch if you are not back on board at lunchtime. There is no compensation for missed lunches.

**Food Allergies:** You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy.

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## MS EURODAM

The *Eurodam* made her inaugural cruise in 2008 after being christened by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. She is Holland America's second largest design with a capacity of 2,100 passengers. *Eurodam's* gross tonnage is 86,000 and she is 285 metres long. Her 11 decks feature a 1,000-seat live entertainment theatre, nine lounges, casino, shopping arcade, movie theatre, beauty shop, library, games room, Internet centre, spa, gymnasium, and two swimming pools (one with sliding dome cover). *Eurodam* has 14 elevators and four of them are glass with panoramic views. An exquisite \$2 million collection of art and artifacts is showcased throughout the ship with a theme of "The Dutch Golden Age".

Dining is one of the highlights of a cruise. The elegant two-floor Dining Room serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner with full choice of menu. The Lido Market offers buffet-style serving stations for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and the 11 pm snack. The intimate Pinnacle Grill, the Canaletto Restaurant, and the Tamarind Restaurant offer extraordinary service, reserved seating and gourmet menus for an extra charge. You can also dine in the privacy of your stateroom by ordering from the complimentary room service menu. All meals are culinary delights and you will not go hungry on board!

Staterooms have twin lower beds (some convert to queen-size double), television, music, telephone, and bathroom with toilet, sink, and shower or bathtub. A crew of nearly 900 ensures top-quality service and entertainment. Every day has a full schedule of optional activities: dance class, bridge, bingo, shuffleboard, table-tennis, karaoke, board games, and fitness activities. The movie theatre presents films several times daily and, every evening, there is live entertainment in the Mainstage Theatre plus musicians playing in most lounges.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transportation to/from Seattle Airport
- 4 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Flight from Seattle to Fort Lauderdale & return
- Current air transport taxes & security fees
- Airline luggage fee for 1 suitcase per person
- Transfer from Fort Lauderdale Airport to hotel and from hotel to cruise terminal
- 11 days and nights on *Eurodam*
- Cruise gratuities
- Port charges, Panama Canal fees, cruise taxes
- Coach transportation in Fort Lauderdale Feb 5
- Locally-guided tour of the Everglades
- Everglades air-boat ride
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Gratuities for Florida guide and drivers
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **37 meals:** 15 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 11 dinners



**Activity Level 1:** Although cruising is normally Activity Level 1, some of the ports may have cobblestone streets and stairs. Choose shore excursions at the cruise ports based on your abilities. There can be longer walks in the airports, so please request a cart or wheelchair in advance or at check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coaches cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. If Activity Level 1 could be challenging, you are urged to bring a companion to assist you. The tour director and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour.

## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due October 18, 2022. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

**Discounts:** Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 15 seats and \$125 on next 10 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after October 18, 2022.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to September 16, 2022, the cancellation charge is \$100 per person. From September 17 to October 18, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From October 19 to November 18, the cancellation charge is 50% of tour fare. From November 19 to December 16, the cancellation charge is 80% of tour fare. After December 16, there is no refund.

**Fare Changes:** Changes to taxes and surcharges from tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore, Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes until departure.

**Travel Insurance:** A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**Home pickups** may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

**Photo Credits:** Wikimedia (Panama Canal, Willemstad, Everglades), Holland America (theatre)

**Experience Points:** This tour earns 100 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until October 18, 2022.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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