

CRISTOBAL PIER

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SIGHTSEEING

GATÚN LOCKS

Gatún Locks raise ships entering the Panama Canal from the Caribbean Sea to the water level of Lago Gatún. Gatún Locks contain two sets of three large chambers, each a thousand feet long, where ships are raised 85 feet above sea level to cross the Isthmus of Panama. For the ship to be raised, the ship enters a lock while gates close behind it. Water is let into the lock until its level equals that of the water ahead. The forward gate is then opened and the ship proceeds through. Approximately 14,000 ships a year pass through, guided by the special locomotives of the Panama Canal.

GATÚN LAKE

Once the largest man-made lake in the world, it was created as a passageway for ships transiting the Panama Canal and to supply fresh water for the operation of the Canal. Wildlife surrounding the lake has been protected for almost a century. The Smithsonian Institute has an important tropical investigation site here, on the 3,300 acre island "Barro Colorado", where 366 species of birds, 93 species of mammals and 90 species of amphibians and reptiles live.

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