

# Discovery Theater

and the  
Smithsonian Latino  
Center  
*present*

## The Tremendous Encounter

*An adaptation from the play "Tremendo Encontron"*

A REPRODUCIBLE LEARNING GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

This guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss **Tremendous Encounter**. It contains background information, questions and activities. Appropriate for ages 8-12.

This program is part of the "Panama at the Smithsonian" program series.

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Smithsonian Latino Center

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See our website for tickets, location, directions, resources for teachers, and much more!

## Where is Panama?

An isthmus is a narrow strip of land connecting two larger land areas. The beautiful Isthmus of Panama is located in Central America. The Caribbean Ocean is to the north and Pacific Ocean is to the south. To the east is the country of Colombia and to the west is Costa Rica. There are currently 3,242,173 million people living on the Isthmus of Panama. Try to find Panama City, Colón and the Panama Canal on the map. Circle them.



## Discovery of Panama!



In 1501, the Spanish scribe, Triana Rodrigo de Bastidas, led an expedition to the Isthmus of Panama. This was the first time Spanish conquerors had set foot on the island! Bastidas navigated the Caribbean coast of what is now known as Colón and the archipelago of the Comarca San Blas.

Then, Admiral Christopher Columbus visited the Panamanian coast in 1502 during his fourth and final visit to the Americas.

When the Spanish arrived, they found several indigenous groups living in the area. Today the descendants of these groups live in various regions of Panama and includes the Kunas, Embera Wounan, Ngobe Bugle, and the Bri Bri.



## The Birth of a City

Panama City was one of the first cities to be founded on August 15, 1519 by Spanish conqueror, Pedro Arias de Avila. The city's official name at that time was "The Noble and Loyal City of Panama, Castile of Gold on Earth". Panama City was also known as the first city to be founded by the Spanish on the Pacific coast of the Americas. How exciting is that!

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## What's in a Name?

There are many theories about the origin of the word Panama. Some say that the indigenous people of the 16<sup>th</sup> century named these lands "Bannaba". The problem was that when the Spanish arrived they were unable to translate this correctly, so they called it Panamá. Today, the word Panamá has several meanings, including an abundance of fish and/or the abundance of butterflies.



## Gold and the Pacific Ocean

During the colonization era, the indigenous peoples of Panama used gold to create their daily utensils, as well as the armor used for warriors going to battle. They did not realize the economic value of the precious metal. However, the Spanish did know how valuable it was. The Spanish would often exchange the gold for combs and mirrors. Once, **Panquiaco**, an indigenous man, told the Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa that walking from the Caribbean coast one could discover lands where all the utensils were gold and one could also find an ocean where ships as large as the Spanish sailed through. Panquiaco became Balboa's guide in 1513, which allowed Balboa to discover the Pacific Ocean in 1513, which he named the Ocean of the South.



## Piracy

During the colonial era, piracy became a big problem. Many European countries wanted to do business with the Spanish colonies, but the Spanish Colonies did not make it easy for countries wishing to trade. They had to get permission to travel through the Indies, which was a long, difficult, and expensive process. As a result, piracy was born! One of the most famous pirates to travel to Panama was Sir Henry Morgan. Morgan was an English pirate and the son of a rich farmer, who lived on the island of Jamaica. In fact, because of these trade disputes, Morgan was rewarded by the Jamaican government for his attacks on the Spanish settlements in Panama.



## The King's Highway



Since Colonial times, Panama has been known for being one of the most important transit routes for goods. Before the Panama Canal was built, the Spanish were unable to find a body of water that allowed them to cross from one side to the other. However, they created two very important land

routes. The first route, the **Camino Real**, also known as the King's Highway, was an overland route that allowed for the transportation of silver. The other route was the **Camino de las Cruces**, which was an overland route until the town of Cruces and then it became a water route on the Chagres River that flowed into the Caribbean ocean.

## The Chagres River

The Spanish were the first to explore the **Chagres River** in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was the preferred route through Panama, because it reduced travel cost. In 1850, when the construction of the railroad began, the Chagres River was still important and the rail line ran parallel to the river. Even when the U.S. arrived in 1904 to build Panama Canal, a portion the Chagres River was dammed and turned into a freshwater reservoir in order to be preserved.

## Lake Gatún

On October 10, 1913, the reservoir that was once the central portion of Chagres River was released and created the artificial lake known as **Lake Gatún**. The lake was created between 1907 and 1913, and stretches approximately 423 km<sup>2</sup> (Did you know that 1 kilometer equals .62 miles?). Lake Gatún plays a large part in the functioning of the Panama Canal. Until 1937, it was the largest artificial lake in the world, but is now third behind Lake Gorges in China and Lake Mead in Nevada.

### Did you know?

- The cargo ship Ancon was the first vessel to transit the Canal on August 15, 1914.
- Boats traveling from New York to San Francisco save 7,872 miles using the Panama Canal instead of going around Cape Horn.
- The highest toll paid was in 2009 and it was US\$362,448,000.00
- The lowest toll paid in 1928 was US\$ 0.36, by Richard Halliburton who swam across.
- The Hydrofoil Pegasus of the US Navy did the fastest transit of the Canal in 2 hours and 41 minutes.

## Flora and Fauna in Panama

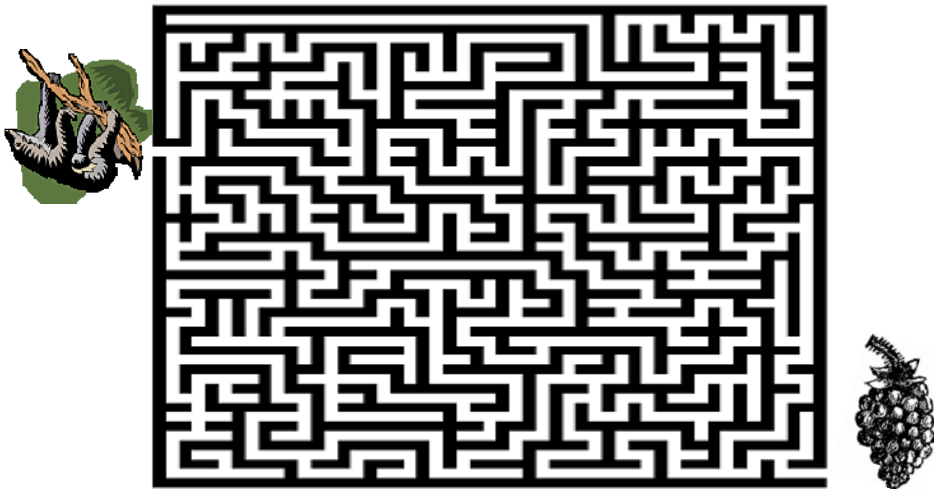
There are many wonderful mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects that are native to the Isthmus of Panama and the government has done much to protect them. There are approximately 971 species of birds, more than the United States and Canada combined. The national bird of Panama is the **Harpy Eagle**. Its image can be found in the national coat of arms (see page 2). Unfortunately, the Harpy Eagle is currently endangered and their homes are being protected by law. This large predatory bird primarily eats sloths.



### All About Sloths

- Sloths are mammals; they eat fruits, nuts and leaves.
- Hair covers their body, except for their faces.
- They have green spots, because of seaweed.
- They have two types of hair: long and thick, and short and fine.
- Male sloths have an orange spot in between their shoulder blades.
- Sloths are range 41-74 cm in height.
- They have small, round, and flat heads, big eyes, stout noses, and do not have ears.

## Help the Sloth Get the Berries



## The Kuna People

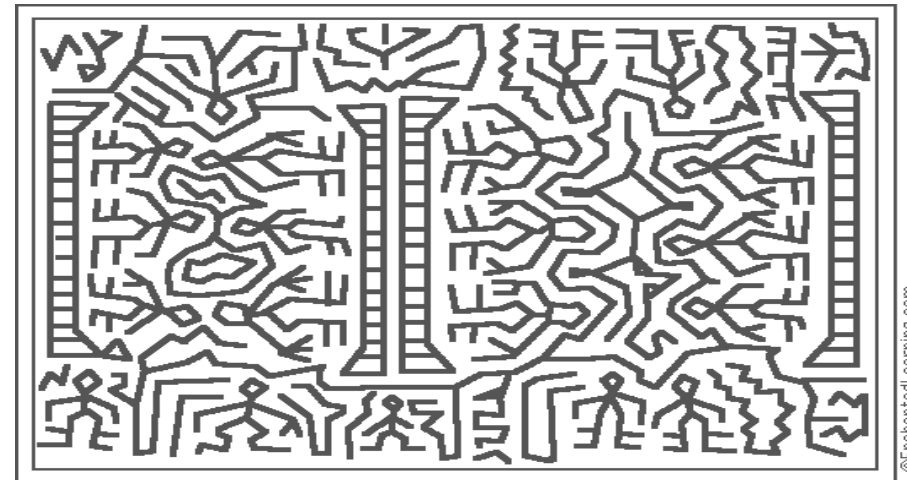
The Kuna People live in the Northwest region of Panama known as the Comarca Kuna Yala, or Land of the Kunas. It's comprised of an archipelago with more than 365 islands. The land is filled with beautiful birds and crystal clear waters. Kuna society honors and protects many of their traditions and ancestral customs. Children learn both Spanish and the indigenous language Kuna. Kuna men wear clothes similar to many in the U.S., except when they perform their traditions and dances. During these occasions, the men dress in shirts with colorful, extravagant hats decorated with feathers of bird that live in the Land of the Kunas. Kuna woman wear very colorful dresses, known as the **mola**, that they design and are admired and recognized worldwide.

### All About the Mola

- The **Mola** is made by creating geometrical shapes and figures and sewing pieces of cloth over others.
- The women wear a cloth head piece of red and yellow colors known as the **Muzue**.
- The skirt uses another piece of cloth known as a **Zaburete**.
- The woman's hands and legs are decorated with long necklaces made of colored beads known as **Guini**.

### Color A Kuna Mola

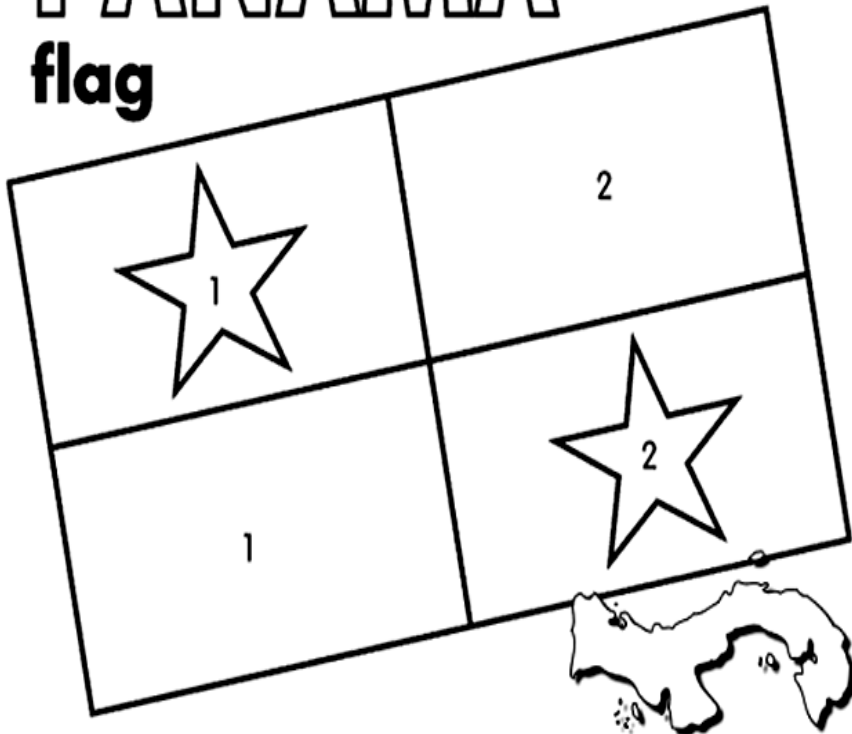
The Kuna people of Panama make intricate, colorful, reverse applique textiles called molas. The design on the mola above is based on chicha, a sugar cane drink.



Color the

# PANAMA

flag



To color the flag of Panama use your favorite Crayola® crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Color the shapes numbered 1 in blue and the shapes numbered 2 in red.

For more coloring pages, follow this link:  
[www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages](http://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages)

## About The Smithsonian Latino Center

The Smithsonian Latino Center ([latino.si.edu](http://latino.si.edu)) – The Smithsonian Latino Center is dedicated to ensuring that Latino contributions to art, science, and the humanities are highlighted, understood, and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States. "Panama at the Smithsonian" is program series that includes exhibitions, educational activities, and public programs that bring national and international attention to the history, land, and cultural expressions of the people of Panama. For more information, please visit [www.latino.si.edu](http://www.latino.si.edu).

## About Discovery Theater

Discovery Theater ([DiscoveryTheater.org](http://DiscoveryTheater.org)), the Smithsonian Institution's theater for children, has been dedicated to offering the best in live performing arts for young people since 1979. Each year, more than 50,000 Washington-area children and their adults visit DT (now located in the Smithsonian's S. Dillon Ripley Center on the National Mall in Washington, DC) to explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, musicians and mimes. For details, call (202) 633-8700 or see [www.DiscoveryTheater.org](http://www.DiscoveryTheater.org).



## About Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panama and the Play

Adapted and translated from the Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panama's "Tremendo Encontrón", tells the story of the meeting between the native people of Panama and the Spanish conquerors along the beautiful Chagres River. Design and production of puppets by The Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panamá. This exciting puppet play portrays the early history of 16th century Panama for a young audience. The museum is a Smithsonian Affiliate, has the mission to preserve, research, interpret, disseminate, and highlight the history of Panama and its Canal by providing experiences that contribute to human development. [www.museodelcanal.com](http://www.museodelcanal.com)