

# Nature

Panama has natural world-class attractions, such as beaches, lakes, two coasts, jungles and tropical rain forests in which you can find all kinds of marine and land wildlife species. More than 29 % of the country land shares 15 National Parks and are considered protected areas; also there is a dozen of forest reserves and 10 wildlife refuges.



Panama has 225 species of mammals, 214 species of reptiles and 143 species of amphibians, such as the well-known Golden Frog, which can be found in Valle de Anton.



Panama is a huge garden of multicolored flowers, and a suitable place where you can enjoy an extensive variety of fruits and fresh vegetables, as well as more than 10,000 species of plants, including 1,200 varieties of orchids, among them the National Flower "Holy Spirit" (Penstemon elata), 678 species of ferns and 1,500 variety of trees.



**Darien National Park**, World Heritage, UNESCO, 1981.

It was acknowledged as World Biosphere Reserve in 1983. It protects an area of more than 1.2 million acres of exuberant virgin tropical forests along the border with Colombia. There are over 300 species of birds, including the Harpy Eagle, four species of macaws and also the famous Pico Iris Toucan. It is a world-level birdwatchers' favorite place.

**Coiba National Park**, World Heritage, UNESCO, 2005.

It is one of the parks of greater marine surface protected in the world (total area: 270,125 Has., of which 53,528 are insular territories and 216,543 are marine areas). The broad variety of whales and Pacific Ocean's most extensive coral reef are another features of the park.

Panama has 990 species of birds. In the highlands of Chiriqui province, you can find Quetzals, while in the forests of Darien you can observe the National Bird "Harpy Eagle".

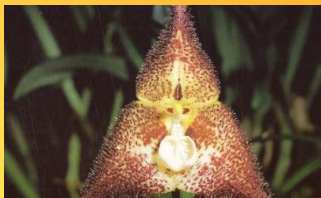


Close to the coast, there are hundreds of islands and thousands of protected coral reefs. At the beautiful beaches you can practice sports such as snorkel, scuba diving and swimming. Panama also offers excellent fishing experiences in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, as well as in Gatun Lake.



**La Amistad International Park**, World Heritage, UNESCO, 1983 and extended in 1990.

Managed jointly by both Panamanian and Costa Rican parks authorities, it keeps intact one of the oldest tropical highlands forests of Central America. Animals such as wild cats of great size, the powerful jaguar, endemic birds, mammals and amphibious can be found there. Also, the Dracula Tubeana orchid grows here.



# Commerce



## Shopping

Panama City is a paradise for the buyer. You can find clothes, jewels, embroidered tablecloths, oriental art, watches, perfumes, electronic and photographic appliances, glassware and fine porcelain at very convenient prices. Large shopping malls with extensive variety of specialized stores and boutiques. Handicraft shops offer a variety of items such as straw and wood-made articles, embroidering and paintings, besides the well-known "Mola", which is handmade by the Kuna Indians.

## Colon Free Zone

Crossroad for international trade. It is the most important free trade zone of the western hemisphere, and is ranked as the 2nd. largest of the world. Products of any type, including commodity and machinery, can be imported, stored, modified, processed, assembled, re-packed and later re-exported without being subject to customs taxes. The import and export amounts to \$ 29,000 million a year.



## Commerce in Panama

Panama possesses an International Banking Center with more than 90 prestigious world-level banks. Since the US dollar is used everywhere, commercial activities performed in Panama and abroad are stable. There is a freedom of movement of foreign currencies, favorable tax treatment, labor and economic stability, technological modernization, an extensive and very flexible law for the creation of Corporations which allows Panama to be a great place for doing business. Annual international fairs such as EXPOCOMER, which was founded in 1983 by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, generates business for US\$ 110 million. Around 1000 companies from 30 countries participate, as well as over 40,000 visitors.



# The Way



*Come to Panama and allow us to offer you everything that Panama has, a country plenty of charm and excitement. There is something you will never forget: the Panamanian people's smile and their warm welcoming.*



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Panama Tourism Authority (ATP)

<http://www.atp.gob.pa> (Spanish) [www.visitpanama.com](http://www.visitpanama.com) (English & Spanish)



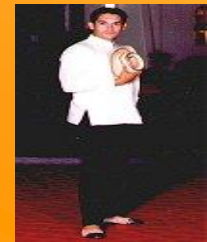
# General information

**Population:** 3.56 million. (Estimation 2013)  
**Area of Land:** 75,517 Km2, **Territorial Sea:** 77,617 Km2  
**Capital:** Panama City – estimated population: 1.346 million. (2009)  
**Government:** Sovereign and Independent State. Its government is unitary, republican, democratic and representative. It is composed of three governing branches: the Executive, Legislative and Judicial.  
**Political division:** Nine provinces (divided into 67 districts) and five autonomous Indian territories (comarcas).  
**Religion:** 85% Roman Catholics, 15% Protestants. However, absolute religious freedom exists in Panama.  
**Language:** Spanish (official language). However, English is broadly spoken and understood in main cities.  
**Climate:** Pleasant and tropical; annual average temperature: 27 degrees Celsius; Average Humidity: 79%. Two seasons: rainy season (April – November) and dry season (December – March). Also, Panama is away from the route of hurricanes and rarely there are small tremors.  
**Time:** Same as the US east area's Official Time (GMT-5).  
**Electricity and public Utilities:** 110v.- 60hz and 220v.  
 Telecommunications, cable TV and Internet systems are well developed.  
 The country code for international phone calls is 507.  
**Currency:** Balboa. (However, US\$ is widely used in Panama as well.) 1US\$=1 Balboa  
 Travelers checks and credit cards are broadly accepted.  
**Tips:** Not included in the prices at restaurants. Usually, 10% to 15% of the total consumption is given.  
**Driver License:** Foreign License is allowed for only 90 days. If it is required, passport must be shown to traffic authorities.  
**Entry Permission:** Japanese tourists doesn't require visa to enter Panama.  
**Number of tourist received:** 2,004,015. (2011), 2,086,007.(2012)  
**Famous Japanese visitors:** In 2001, Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Hitachi, visited Panama for bird watching.



# Culture

Panama has a great variety of ethnic groups. Warm and cheerful people, Panamanians love music and their cultural traditions. The folklore could be seen at festivals and traditional dance performances, where the woman shows the colorful national costume "Pollera", with gorgeous accessories, while men wear the "Montuno", or traditional male costume.



Out of them, the most representative group is the Kuna Indians which is one of the most politically organized groups in the world. They enjoy political independence and self-regulation.



There are three Indian tribes: Kuna, Emberá-Wounaan and Ngöbe Buglé, each one with its own tradition. It is said that the most widespread Panamanian handicraft "mola" was created by the first Kuna woman on earth, called "Kikadiyaa", who then was in charge of teaching manufacture techniques and mola usage to the other Kuna women. Nowadays, revenues coming from molas sales are an important source of income for the Kuna people's economic development.



Carnivals take place 40 days before the Eastern. You can find festivals all year in honor of the Saints, who are the guardians of each town in the country. Carnivals in Panama are featured by cheerful music, colorful and spectacular performances as well as friendly people everywhere.



The ethnic diversity of Panama is shown in the variety of handicrafts, including wood carving and the always popular "Mola", Ngöbe Buglé's robes and "chaquiras" – multicolor necklaces –, braided straw hats called "montuno, pintao" in reference to their style; cocobolo and vegetable ivory "tagua" wood carvings done by Emberá and Wounán tribes, and bowls and clay sculptures distinctive of the countryside region.

# Wonders

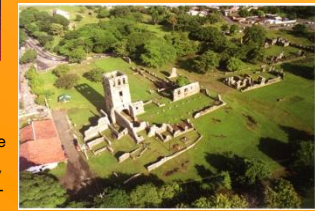
**Historical Monument of "Casco Antiguo"** of Panama. World Heritage - UNESCO 1997 and extended in 2003.

It is located in the neighborhood of San Felipe, Panama City. It was founded on January 21, 1673 by Antonio Fernández de Córdoba y Mendoza. It combines European, neoclassical, and colonial art. Elegant coffee shops and remodeled facades help to keep the colonial atmosphere of paved streets, which lead to museums, colonial churches, balconies with baroque grilles and monuments plenty of history.



**Historical Monument Compound of Panama La Vieja.** World Heritage - UNESCO, 1997 and extended in 2003.

It was founded in August 15, 1519 by the then governor Pedro Arias de Ávila, becoming the first Spanish city founded on the Pacific coast. Because of its geographical location, it became a crucial trade point for Spanish colonies. Since galleons coming from Peru, loaded with gold and silver passed through it, Panama became the target of pirates and corsairs.



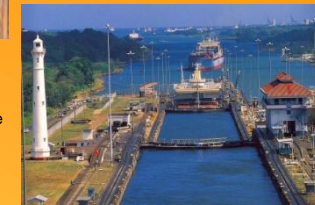
**Fortifications on the Caribbean Side of Panama: Portobelo.** World Heritage – UNESCO, 1980.

The historic sites of Portobelo and San Lorenzo, are outstanding examples of Spanish colonial military architecture of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The forts, castles, barracks and batteries of Portobelo created a defensive line around the bay and protected the harbour; the works at San Lorenzo guarded the mouth of the Chagres River. In 1980, UNESCO declared Fort San Lorenzo, together with the fortified town of Portobelo about 30 miles (48 km) to the northeast, to be a World Heritage Site under the name, "Fortifications on the Caribbean Side of Panama."



**Panama Canal.** Total Extension: 80 Km.; Transit Time (with waiting time): 24 hours.

It is one of the most impressive engineering works in the world. Its construction was finished in 1914 by United States. It has three lakes and three sets of locks, which raise and lower vessels up to 26 meters in order to transit the Canal. Yearly, the average transit is 15,000 vessels. Touristic facilities are available at Miraflores Locks on the Pacific side and at Gatun Locks on the Atlantic side.



# Attractiveness

**NIGHT LIFE**  
 Since it is a crossroads point for vessels and airlines, Panama has a night life plenty of singular attractions and excitement, such as restaurants, night show, bars, night clubs, casinos, and so forth, for all type of taste and budgets.



**GOLF**  
 More than 5 excellent golf courses with 18 holes and a length of 7,000 yards. Moreover, due to the dry weather, golf can be enjoyed throughout the year.



**SECURITY ISSUES**  
 Panama is a safe country for tourists. It has no army, but a complete and well-trained police service that is in charge of maintaining public order and protecting tourists with responsibility and care similar to our nationals. Sightseeing spots are protected by a police tourist force especially created to offer security to our visitors, so they can feel at home.



**CRUISERS**  
 Panama is a cruisers' destination, due to its rich variety of landscape and sightseeing spots. We have around 250,000 visitors a year. There is a ferry that operates daily between Panama City and Taboga Island, and also a sailing boat named "catamaran" for Contadora Island. In addition, shopping malls, hotels and ecotouristic and historical expeditions in the Atlantic Coast are available.