



# PANAMA

**Capital:** Panama City

**Language:** Spanish

**Population:** 3.4 Million

**Time Zone:** EST minus 1 hour

**Currency:** Balboa (PAB), US Dollar

**Electricity:** 120V/60HZ

## Fun Facts

- At one point in time, the shares of Panama Railroad were the highest priced stock on the New York Stock exchange.
- Panama is the only place in the world where you can see the sun rise in the Pacific and set in the Atlantic
- Panama elected its first female president in 1999 (Mireya Moscoso).
- Baseball is the most common sport in the country.

Panama is one of the most fun and unique destinations in Central and South America. A visit to Panama guarantees experiences with wildlife, ocean, beaches, rainforest, and cultural and ethnic variety. You have the chance to get up and go off trekking through forest or set out to the waters, or to sit back and relax and let the fabulous atmosphere take hold of you. Swim in crystal azure waters, bask on a pristine white sand beach, dance and play music with local indigenous people, and traipse through lush rainforest

## Panama City & the Canal

Cruise down the Panama Canal as you drift into Panama City, a surprisingly modern trade hub of Latin America. The Panama Canal is an international engineering marvel that is still invaluable today. It was a 33-year long project that began in 1881, which allowed the passage of ships through the Isthmus of Panama between the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean. This massive project, once completed meant that sailors no longer had to travel the lengthy route around the southern-most tip of South America and it ensured that Panama would be a major conduit for international trade. This industrial and vital part of the world blends gracefully with some of the most precious waters, beaches, and ecosystems in the world, but it is a step off the beaten path when it comes to typical travel.

## Gamboa Rainforest

Along the canal, the Gamboa Rainforest gives visitors a chance to see the wildlife of Panama and visit an Indian village to discover how people have inhabited these forests for centuries. This tiny but vital bridge between North and South American continents preserves a precious culture all its own, eager to share and teach new visitors. Although Central & South America are known for its many species of birds, Panama is a unique bird lover's paradise. Apart from birds, you can spot howler monkeys, iguanas, dozens of frog species, Peccaries, butterflies, and fascinating insects. You can explore the area from nature trails around your hotel or you can venture out in a gondola that carries you over the canopy of the unspoiled and vibrant forest. For real adventurers, you can kayak down the Chagras River or take a guided night walk to see the more unusual nocturnal creatures lurking in the dense forest. However you choose to see it, the Gamboa Rainforest is a laid-back and fun experience that allows you to enjoy nature and adventure as well as rest and repose.

## San Blas Islands

Now a change of pace! Head out to the San Blas Islands if you want an authentic and tropical beach paradise. One of the best parts about visiting the San Blas Islands is the personal touch you'll receive – and you can

take the pretention out of it. The local Kuna people are warm and welcoming – proud of their gorgeous islands and special traditions. If you like to escape typical tourism, this archipelago in the Caribbean is the best place to visit when vacationing in Panama. Consisting of 378 islands, 49 of which are inhabited, the San Blas Islands are run autonomously from the Panamanian government by the Kuna Indians who live here. Visit these islands for a chance to experience local customs, culture, and ancient traditions of these Indians. Additionally snorkeling here, swimming the day away, eating the local fare, and submerging in the culture of the Kuna Yara people will more than fill your travel journal with memories. When you remove a lot of the “extras” of travelling, what you’re often left with is just fun – beautiful landscapes, unique experiences and a sense of play that you can’t find elsewhere. Soak up the warmth and softness of these beaches under gently drooping palm trees with only the sounds of lapping waters around you – a perfect paradise getaway.

### **Granito de Oro & Coiba Islands**

Granito de Oro, meaning “Little grain of gold”, is one of the top 10 diving and snorkeling sites in the world. The beaches, backed by jungle, are so idyllic on a clear day you could spend hours just soaking in the sun and taking pictures of the vivid fish and coral life while you float just beneath the clear-water surface. It’s a gorgeous and unique spot along the coast of Panama – and a refreshing stop among the more touristy spots.

### **Boquete**

If you want to see more of Panama, which of course is a no-brainer, head out west to spend some time in Boquete. Boquete is located in the highlands of Panama and it is known for its haven-like qualities, where you can enjoy greener greens, cooler and more comfortable temperatures, rivers, hot springs and volcanoes and a central village bursting with charm. The food here is legendary and a huge part of the local culture – you’d swear it’s more colorful and flavorful than you’re used to. Although it has been a major attraction for foreigners looking to settle down in a comfortable and fairly prosperous place, Boquete has managed to preserve its small-town feel and welcomes visitors with open arms and with variety! This enchanted forest area is chock full of vibrant bird species, quiet cloud forests, boasting coffee plantations, volcanic mountains, and forest canopy views that allow you to gracefully appreciate the well-preserved ecosystem. Boquete will leave you with a sort of relaxed quietness, as it is a welcome reprieve from Caribbean heat and a beautiful spot that encourages life to slow down a little.

### **Bocas Del Toro**

Off the Northeastern shore of Panama and sitting at the edge of the Caribbean Sea, Bocas del Toro entices those looking for an exotic mix of nature, forest, beach, and fun. This coastal paradise provides you with a unique experience in Panama, as you are sandwiched conveniently between rainforest and crystal clear ocean waters. Wildlife is seen in abundance here from snorkeling through stunning coral reefs, exploring Panama’s first National Park, which is teeming with rainforest, lagoons, exotic birds, monkeys, sloths, reptiles and an endless assortment of plant life. Bird Island, while it may appear as just a large rock in the middle of the water, it is a vital spot for hundreds of bird species as they migrate to and from South America. The chance to witness this extraordinary natural preservation of the ecosystem is a unique privilege. Be sure to catch a sunrise and a sunset from the beach here – as the day rises and the night falls in this enrapturing paradise, you will feel you’ve found absolute bliss.

### **Pacific Coast**

If you’re looking for a retreat not far from Panama City, the Pacific Coast is a trove of white sand beaches, gorgeous resorts, and pristine waters ideal for anything you could want. This vacation spot can satisfy the shoppers, the water lovers, adventurers, relaxers, and foodies. Kayaking is a favorite past time and the waters are calm and clear enough to scope out the sea life while you’re out there. You can venture out into the tropical forests here for some unique wildlife scoping or just stroll around the local shops until the sun sets and then perhaps sample the night life!

Panama is a critical little strip of land that showcases some of the prettiest beaches, privacy, variety, and adventure. But if you like to escape the high-traffic tourist traps, Panama is perhaps one of the best places to visit in Central and South America, where you can experience bustling city life, practically deserted and private beaches, and the Caribbean experience that is totally unique. Fun, relaxation, and exploration await you, packaged up in this central isthmus connecting the Great North and South Americas!



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## VISAS AND PASSPORTS

A visa for your visit to Panama is not necessary for U.S. Citizens. If you hold a passport from another country, check with your local consulate about requirements for travel to Panama.

All passengers traveling internationally are required to have a passport. Please carry proper identification (your passport) on you and do not leave in your suitcase or hotel room. Most countries have laws that require you to carry your passport with you at all times.



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## COUNTRY CODES

The country code for Panama is 507. When calling to Panama from overseas, dial your international access code (011 from the U.S./Canada) followed by the country code, area code, and phone number. Phone numbers in Panama are 7 digits in length. Dialing from the U.S./Canada: 011 507+### ####.



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## CURRENCY

The official currency of Panama is the US Dollar but it is called a balboa in Panama and is exactly the same bill as a dollar. Panama doesn't have its own paper money, but it has its own coins that are the same size and weight as US coins. Both Panamanian and US coins can be used.

- The banknotes and coinage for Balboa is the same as the US dollar and you can use the US dollar at the same rates.

Credit cards are accepted in Panama, and you should have no problems using them in larger shops and restaurants. Visa and MasterCard are most accepted. Smaller shops may ask you to pay in cash or have a minimum amount required to use a credit card. For cash transactions, many shops may not accept bills over \$20 USD.

Traveler's Checks are extremely difficult to exchange in Panama. Their use is not recommended.

For the most current exchange rates, please go to our Web site at [www.globusfamily.com/currency](http://www.globusfamily.com/currency).



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## BUDGETING AND SHOPPING

The following budget guidelines are just approximate values or starting values for meals and are per person. Actual prices will vary widely by restaurant and city within a country but below are some averages as provided by our experienced personnel.

The approximate cost of a soft drink/mineral water/coffee is US\$1.00.

An average lunch consisting of a salad or sandwich and a soda or water starts at approximately US\$7.00.

A steak dinner at a mid-range restaurant with dessert and a non-alcoholic beverage starts at approximately US\$35.00.

### Shopping

In open street markets, try not to touch items unless you are interested in purchasing them. If you would like to take photos, please ask permission. Most vendors are happy to have their picture taken with the item you have just purchased. If you are being confronted by vendors, smile, say nothing and then shake your hand low to say no. This is polite and they understand. To many people, saying "No" means I want it at a lower price and they will follow you in attempt to bargain.

In many areas of Central America, bargaining for purchases is normal. First, ask for a price. Offer an amount slightly below what you wish to pay. It is important to be polite and smile while bargaining. In most cases, bargaining will not save you a lot of money. Keep different value bills folded and separated in different pockets, that way you can pull out the exact money you need, and sometimes this can close the deal.

Opening a wallet or purse to pull a roll of bills out can lead to negotiation problems. Always finish the transaction with Thank You and a smile.



## TIPPING

Tipping in Panama is similar to tipping in North America. For restaurant services a tip of 10-20% is reasonable.

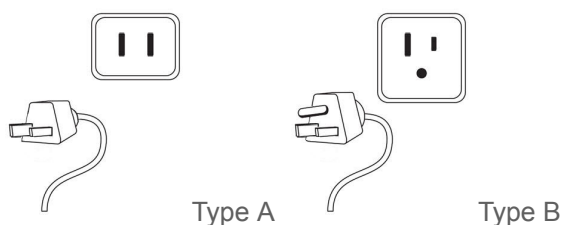
For a taxi, a tip is not customary.

Tip hotel staff a few dollars for room and bar service.



## ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Voltage for outlets is the same as those in North America. Outlets in Panama will be the same as those in the United States and Canada



Type A

Type B



## TEMPERATURES

Panama enjoys consistent temperatures almost year-round, being so close to the equator. Winter months (May – November) tend to be more hot and humid than traveling in the summer months (December – April)

To help you plan, below are average low and high temperatures for Panama (in °F):

Month	Panama City	Boquete	Bocas del Toro	Pacific Coast	San Blas
January	71/88°F	55/82°F	68/87°F	71/88°F	68/87°F
February	72/89°F	55/82°F	68/87°F	72/89°F	68/87°F
March	72/91°F	56/88°F	68/88°F	72/91°F	68/88°F
April	74/92°F	57/82°F	70/88°F	74/92°F	70/88°F
May	73/87°F	56/80°F	72/89°F	73/87°F	72/89°F
June	73/83°F	57/79°F	72/89°F	73/83°F	72/89°F
July	72/87°F	56/79°F	71/89°F	72/87°F	71/89°F
August	72/87°F	57/81°F	71/89°F	72/87°F	71/89°F
September	71/86°F	55/79°F	71/89°F	71/86°F	71/89°F
October	71/85°F	56/80°F	71/89°F	71/85°F	71/89°F
November	70/85°F	54/81°F	71/89°F	70/85°F	71/89°F
December	70/87°F	54/79°F	70/88°F	70/87°F	70/88°F

To convert to Celsius, subtract 32, then multiply by 5 and then divide by 9.



## FOOD SPECIALTIES

Panama offers a wide variety of food from French, Caribbean, and Spanish influences. Typical choices include beef, fried or baked chicken, rice, beans, salad, cabbage, and lots of fruit.

In restaurants, always ask if they have menus in English, as many establishments will.

### Drinking Water

Bottled water is how many people drink water even at home. Never ask for tap water for many reasons. Ice is rarely used as well.



## CUSTOMS AND CULTURE

### Greeting and Interaction

- The best way to address people when you do not know their name is to simply use “Señor” (male) or “Señora” (female).
- It’s normal to introduce yourself with a polite greeting of “buenos días/tardes” (good morning/afternoon or evening).
- Greeting customs in Central and South America also incorporate a lot of personal contact. Women will generally greet other women by kissing once on each cheek, right to left. Men will also kiss women on the cheeks when greeting them, but handshaking is reserved for between two men.
- People here have a tendency to stand relatively close to each other when they are talking. Although you might find that this is perhaps a little too close for your liking, you should just accept that this is normal behavior, and trying to create more space between you and your counterpart could be seen as rude.

### Public Restrooms

- Ladies should always travel with tissue. If public restrooms have toilet paper, it is sometimes rationed. Hand sanitizers are recommended to bring with you as some bathrooms may not have hot water and soap. In some public restrooms you are required to pay a small fee.



## A FEW WORDS OF THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

### Spanish: CONVERSATION

¡Hola! Hi!, ¡Buenos Días! Good morning!, ¡Buenas Noches! Good evening!, **Me llamo \_\_\_\_\_**. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, **¿Cómo se llama usted?** What is your name?, **Mucho gusto.** Pleased to meet you., **¿Cómo está usted?** How are you?, **Bien, gracias. ¿Y usted?** Fine, thanks. And you?, **Mas o menos** So-so, **¡Hasta luego!** See you later!, **Adiós.** Good-bye., **Por favor.** Please., **Vivo en \_\_\_\_\_** I live in \_\_\_\_\_, **(Muchas) gracias. (Muy amable.)** (Many) thanks. (Very kind.), **De nada.** You’re welcome., **Lo siento.** I’m sorry., **¿Me permite?** May I?, **Disculpe.** Excuse me. (To get someone’s attention.), **Con permiso.** Excuse me. (For leaving or passing through.), **Perdón.** Excuse me. (For sneezing, arriving late, etc.), **¡Salud!** Gesundheit! (When someone sneezes.) Cheers! (For toasting with drinks.), **¿Me pasa \_\_\_\_\_ por favor?** Could you please pass me \_\_\_\_\_?, **Sí.** Yes., **No.** No., **Gracias** Thank you, **No entiendo!** don’t understand, **No hablo español** I don’t speak Spanish, **¿Habla inglés?** Do you speak English?, **¿Dónde está el baño?** Where is the bathroom?, **Está cerca?** Is it near?, **Está lejos?** Is it far?, **Siga recto.** Go straight ahead., **Gire a la derecha.** Turn right., **Gire a la izquierda.** Turn left., **Nescito esto.** I would like this., **Una mesa para dos, por favor.** A table for two, please., **La carta, por favor.** The menu, please., **La lista de vinos, por favor.** The wine list, please., **primer plato** appetizers, **plato principal** main course, **postre** dessert, **Quisiera algo para beber.** I would like something to drink., **Un vaso de agua, por favor.** A glass of water, please., **Una Cerveza.** Beer, **Una Copa de vino tinto/blanco** Glass of red/white wine, **La cuenta, por favor.** The check, please., **Incluye la propina?** Is the tip included?, **Desayuno** Breakfast., **Comida** lunch, **Cena** dinner, **¡Buen provecho!** Enjoy the meal!, **¡Salud!** To your health!, **Está riquísima!** It’s delicious!, **Plato.** plate, **Tenedor.** fork, **Cuchillo.** knife, **Cuchara.** spoon, **Servilleta.** napkin, **Hielo.** ice, **Sal.** salt, **Pimiento.** pepper, **Azúcar.** sugar, **Sopa.** soup, **Ensalada.** salad, **Pan.** bread, **Mantequilla.** butter,

**Pollo.** Chicken, **Carne.** Beef, **Cerdo.** Pork, **Quisiera la carne poco cocida.** I like my steak rare., **Quisiera la carne a medio cocer.** I like my steak medium., **Quisiera la carne bien cocida.** I like my steak well done.

#### **NUMBERS**

**Cero.** Zero, **Uno. 1, Dos. 2, Tres. 3, Cuatro. 4, Cinco. 5, Seis. 6, Siete. 7, Ocho. 8, Nueve. 9, Diez. 10, Once. 11, Doce. 12, Trece 13, Catorce 14, Quince 15, Dieciseis 16, Diecisiete. 17, Dieciocho. 18, Diecinueve. 19, Veinte. 20, Cien. 100, Mil. 1000.**

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