

# Panama, a Short Introduction.

The first European to discover Panama was Christopher Columbus in 1494.

Panama is at the center of the Americas and is a country comprised of various cultures and traditions that have created a unique and exotic environment. Indigenous, American, Asian and European cultures combine to create an interesting and wonderful country.

Panama City is the only cosmopolitan city in the world where you can find skyscrapers as well as protected tropical rainforest within the city limits. The city offers historical sites, museums, quaint streets, shopping, and beautiful parks. Within an hour you can visit Taboga Island, breathtaking beaches, the Pacific Coastline, and the Panama Canal.

Panama is a natural land bridge that links North and Central America with South America and its nature is spectacular. Thousands of varieties of flora and fauna flourish in Panama's rainforests and it is host to the largest number of animal species in the world. The Smithsonian Institute of Tropical Research has several bases in Panama. With 954 bird species, more than in all of North America alone, it is a bird watcher's dream. Near Panama City you can tour trails to watch monkeys, watch for elusive jaguars or the Harpy Eagle, national bird of Panama.

On Taboga Island you can watch a large number of interesting bird species, large iguanas, the tiny green dart frog, diverse marine life and much more.

## Panama Facts

-The \$US is the primary currency used in Panama; over 100 banks choose Panama to host their local and offshore branches.

-Over 30 percent of Panama's land is protected by 15 national parks, 5 forest preserves and 10 wildlife refuges.

-More than 1,518 islands are located within Panama's territorial waters which include Pacific and Caribbean coastline.

-There are over 500 rivers running through Panama.

-In the Canal Zone, Panama is only 52 miles wide.

More species of birds live in Panama than in all of North America combined.

-Taste a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as enjoy over 10,000 species of plants, including 1,200 types of orchids, 678 species of ferns and 1,500 varieties of trees.

-Five areas in Panama have been declared World Heritage sites by UNESCO.





-Panama has seven of the 12 zones necessary to sustain the land's principal ecosystems.

-Panama includes world record-holding fishing grounds.

-The famous red frog is found in the Bastimentos Island National Marine Park in the Bocas del Toro Province.

-Panama's coasts and islands offer coral reefs, which are home to a diversity of marine species.

-The world's first transoceanic railway was built between 1850 and 1855, and the trip is less than two hours.

-Gatún Lake was the largest man-made lake in the world until 40 years ago, covering nearly 262 square kilometers.

-The Panama Canal is one of the wonders of the world. It was completed by the United States in 1914.

-It took 10 yrs. to build the Panama Canal with 75,000 people at a cost of approx. \$400 million, it opened Aug. 15, 1914.

-On numerous occasions Panama was pillaged by pirates such as Henry Morgan and Francis Drake.

-Spain founded the first city of the New World in Panama - Santa María la Antigua de Darién.

-Excavations carried out by the Smithsonian Institute found the remains of pottery dating back to 300 years B.C.

-Panama is the home of Central America's largest convention center, ATLAPA.

-Treasures from the Americas were sent to Nombre de Dios on the Caribbean by the Camino Real trail and on to Europe.

-Panama has a democratic government.

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