



The Republic of Panama

(GMT - 5 hours)

Country Overview: Panama, located at the southern end of the Central American isthmus, has the largest rainforest in the Western Hemisphere outside the Amazon Basin and its jungle is home to an abundance of tropical plants, animals and birds, some of them to be found nowhere else in the world. However, it is for a feat of engineering, a canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans that Panama is most famous.

Area: 77,381 sq km; 29,762 sq miles.

Capital City: Panama

Languages: The official language is Spanish, though English is increasingly understood.

People: Mostly of mixed descent, with sizeable communities of indigenous Indians, Afro-Caribbeans, Italians, Spanish, Arabs, Jews and Asians.

Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, with Protestant groups, Judaism and Islam represented in the country.

Currency: Balboa (PAB); US Dollar (USD)

Major Political Parties: Arnulfista Party (PA), Partido Popular (PP), Democratic Change, Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), Nationalist Republican Liberal Movement (MOLIRENA), Solidarity Party (PS)

Government: Panama has three branches to its representative democracy: the executive (comprising the President and two Vice-Presidents), the legislative - a 78 member single chamber assembly, and the judiciary. This comprises a nine-member Supreme Court of Justice (each appointed for a ten year period), five superior courts and a court of appeal. The President serves one term of 5 years. Elections for President and the single chamber legislative assembly are held at the same time.

International Direct Dialling Codes

Panama 00 507

Fixed Date National Holidays

1 January, 9 January, 1 May, 15 August (Panama City), 1 November, 3-5 November (Colón), 8 December, 25 December

Variable Date National Holidays

Easter Week, Carnival Week (Feb)

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Panama Newspapers

<http://www.elpanamaamerica.terra.com.pa> - El Panama America

<http://www.elsiglo.com> - El Siglo

<http://www.prensa.com/> - La Prensa

<http://www.critica.com.pa/> - La Critica Libre

<http://www.estrelladepanama.com/> - La Estrella de Panama

http://www.thepanamanews.com/pn/v_13/issue_11/frontpage.html - Panama News

Panama - other useful sites

<http://www.businesspanama.com> - Council for Investment and Development

<http://www.banconal.com.pa/> - Banco Nacional de Panama

<http://www.mire.gob.pa/> - Ministry of Exterior Relations