

Panama

Geography

Location: Middle America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Colombia and Costa Rica

Area:

total area: 78,200 sq km

land area: 75,990 sq km

Land boundaries: total 555 km, Colombia 225 km, Costa Rica 330 km

Coastline: 2,490 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 200 nm

Climate: tropical; hot, humid, cloudy; prolonged rainy season (May to January), short dry season (January to May)

Terrain: interior mostly steep, rugged mountains and dissected, upland plains; coastal areas largely plains and rolling hills

Natural resources: copper, mahogany forests, shrimp

Land use:

arable land: 6%

permanent crops: 2%

meadows and pastures: 15%

forest and woodland: 54%

other: 23%

Irrigated land: 320 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: water pollution from agricultural runoff threatens fishery resources; deforestation of tropical rain forest; land degradation

Note: strategic location on eastern end of isthmus forming land bridge connecting North and South America; controls Panama

Canal that links North Atlantic Ocean via Caribbean Sea with North Pacific Ocean

People

Population: 2,680,903 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 34% (female 439,491; male 458,817)

15-64 years: 61% (female 812,876; male 823,124)

65 years and over: 5% (female 74,672; male 71,923) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.9% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 24.12 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 4.79 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -0.36 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 15.8 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 75.2 years
male: 72.57 years
female: 77.97 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.8 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Panamanian(s)
adjective: Panamanian

Ethnic divisions: mestizo (mixed Indian and European ancestry)
70%, West Indian 14%, white 10%, Indian 6%

Religions: Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant 15%

Languages: Spanish (official), English 14%
note: many Panamanians bilingual

Literacy:
total population: 89%
male: 89%
female: 88%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Panama

conventional short form: Panama

local long form: Republica de Panama

local short form: Panama

Type: constitutional republic

Capital: Panama

Independence: 3 November 1903 (from Colombia; became independent from Spain 28 November 1821)

National holiday: Independence Day, 3 November (1903)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Flag: divided into four, equal rectangles; the top quadrants are white (hoist side) with a blue five-pointed star in the center and plain

red, the bottom quadrants are plain blue (hoist side) and white with a red five-pointed star in the center

Economy

Overview: Because of its key geographic location, Panama's economy is service-based, heavily weighted toward banking, commerce, and tourism.

Industries: manufacturing and construction, petroleum refining, brewing, cement and other construction materials, sugar milling

Agriculture: accounts for 10% of GDP (1992 est.); crops - bananas, rice, corn, coffee, sugarcane; livestock; fishing; importer of food grain, vegetables

Illicit drugs: major cocaine transshipment point and drug money laundering center

Transportation

Railroads:
total: 238 km

Highways:
total: 8,530 km

Inland waterways: 800 km navigable by shallow draft vessels; 82 km Panama Canal

Pipelines: crude oil 130 km

Ports: Bahia de las Minas, Balboa, Colon, Cristobal, Panama

Airports:
total: 115

Defence Forces

Branches: Panamanian Public Forces (PPF; includes the National Police or PNP, Maritime Service, National Air Service, and Institutional Protective Service); Judicial Branch Technical Police