

General Notes about visiting Panama

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Passport with signature, minimum validity for six additional months.
- Effective January 8, 2007, all nationals, including U.S. citizens, are required to hold a valid passport to enter the United States by air and by sea. This also applies when coming from Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda. The new passport requirement means that all travelers, including U.S. citizens, who are departing the U.S. and intend to re-enter the United States are required to hold a valid passport upon departure from the U.S.
- Round trip airline ticket
- Sufficient funds for length of stay
- Visa/Tourist card, depending of nationality, as follows:

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1. **Do Not require a visa:** Citizens of the following countries, can travel to Panama for a stay of 30 days or less without a visa.

Argentina	Andorra	Austria	Belgium
Bolivia	Brazil	Czech Rep.	Chile
Colombia	Costa Rica	Cyprus	Denmark
Egypt	Eslovania	Eslovaquia	Estonia
Finland	France	Germany	Great Britain
Greece	Guatemala	Holland	Honduras
Hungary	Iceland	Ireland	Israel
Italy	Korea (South)	Latvia	Lethonia
Lithuania	Liechtenstein	Luxembourg	Malta
Monaco	Netherland Antilles	Nicaragua	Norway
Paraguay	Poland	Portugal	Salvador
Singapore	Spain	Switzerland	Sweden
San Marino	The Netherlands	Uruguay	Vatican.
United Kingdom			

2. **Tourist card:** Citizens of the following countries must have a tourist card, valid for a stay of 30 days.

Aruba	Barbados	Bahamas	Belize
Bermuda	Canada	Colombia	Granada
Bolivia	Curacao	Cyprus	Egypt

Greece	Guatemala	Iceland	Korea (South)
Guyana	Jamaica	Japan	Mexico
New Zealand	Netherland Antilles	Sao Tome and Principe	St. Lucia
St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Vincent and Grenadines	Sweden	Taiwan
Trinidad and Tobago	U. S. A	Malta	New Zealand
	Suriname		

3. **Tourist stamped visa:** Citizens of the following countries must have a tourist visa stamped on passport.

Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Peru	Russia
Thailand	Chad	Philippines	Venezuela
Samoa (West)			

4. **Pre-authorized visa:** Citizens of the following countries must have a pre authorized visa stamped on passport.

Cuba	China	Haiti	India
Korea (North)	Kenya	Nigeria	

And **other nations** of Africa, Asia, Middle East and Oceania **not listed in #1,2 or 3 above.**

- Tourist card/visas are valid for a stay of up to 30 days and the cost is USD\$5.00. Application for extension of stay may be made at the Panama Immigration Office.
- Visa application can be made at your nearest Panamanian consulate or you can contact us at STRI at least two months in advance of intended arrival in order to assist you with your application. Authorized visas have a cost between USD\$5.00 and USD\$65.00.
- Immigration information is subject to changes, therefore we recommend that you check your nearest Panamanian Consulate, travel agent, airline or call Panama Immigration Directorate at (507) 227.1077 for updated information, or visit the web site: www.migracion.gob.pa
- Or at STRI you may contact Ms.Celideth DeLeon, Office of External Affairs, Tel. (507) 212.8050, Fax (507) 212.8150, E Mail DELEONC@SI.EDU

The American Embassy in Panama is located in Clayton, at Building 520. The Embassy telephone number is 507-207-7000 during duty hours. After duty hours, the telephone number is 507-207-7200.

CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS:

Clothing should be light weight, but with long sleeves and pant-legs (to avoid insect bites and being scratched by forest branches). For days in the forest or on a boat, bring sunscreen, insect repellent, a hat, sunglasses, a small umbrella or rain poncho, tennis or hiking shoes (not sandals), and binoculars if you are interested in birds. You may bring snorkeling gear; otherwise STRI will provide it. If you plan to scuba dive, do not bring your own equipment. You will be given Smithsonian-certified equipment.

If you may be taking a special, behind-the-scenes tour of the Panama Canal locks, do not wear sandals. Moving machinery parts make it dangerous for those wearing open shoes, and canal personnel will not allow you to enter some areas.

During the May to December rainy season, Panama City experiences heavy rain most days, often with brief flooding of streets or walkways. During the rest of the year rains are less frequent. In the dry season, weather will be hot (78-85degrees F) without much chance of rain, except in Bocas del Toro. Restaurants, meeting rooms, and STRI offices and laboratories will be air conditioned, and can be quite chilly.

CURRENCY INFORMATION:

The Panamanian currency is the Balboa and has the same value as the US dollar, so you will not have to convert money.. Panama uses US paper currency and has its own coinage which has the same denominations, shapes and sizes as US coinage. It is probably easier to find an ATM machine than to cash travelers' checks in Panama, so travelers' checks are not recommended.

All major credit cards are accepted in Panama at most shops, supermarkets and hotels. However, you do require currency for making small payments.

HEALTH TIPS:

The government of Panama does not require any vaccinations in order to enter the country. There have been (a few) cases of malaria reported throughout Panama, so if you are concerned you may wish to take an anti-malarial drug. Other health related problems are: dengue fever (slight more frequent than malaria) – throughout Panama; Yellow fever (rare) – distribution unknown.

Most medicines are widely available in Panama City and at a similar rate to that in most western countries. Most medicines are sold by the same trademark names used in the U.S.

For emergencies, there are many good private clinics and hospitals throughout the country, but the biggest and best equipped are located in Panama City.

WATER:

Panama has some of the cleanest drinking water in Latin America (if not in the world). Hotel water is safe to drink from the faucet, as is true for water in most restaurants. Purified bottled water is sold in most hotels and supermarkets.

All food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, are safe to eat.

OTHERS:

Voltage of most electrical outlets is 110 volts, so a power adapter is not necessary.

ADDRESSES FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

From USA:
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Unit 0948
APO Miami 34002-0948

Or

From everywhere else:
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Apartado 0843-03092
Balboa, Ancon
República de Panamá

STRI'S EVENT COORDINATOR:

Audrey M. Smith
e-mail: smitham@si.edu
tel: +507-212-8000 (507 is Panama's country code)
fax: +507-212-8280

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Guidebook: Scott Doggett, Panama, Lonely Planet Guide, 1999.
- History: David McCullough, The Path Between the Seas
- Robert Ridgley and John Gwynne, Jr., A Guide to the Birds of Panama

STRI WEB SITE: www.stri.org