



# Panama City

POP 699,500 / ELEV SEA LEVEL / AREA 2561 SQ KM

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## Best Places to Eat

- Maito (p63)
- Mercado de Mariscos (p59)
- Country Store (p63)
- La Rosa Mexicano (p62)
- Granclément (p59)

## Best Places to Stay

- Las Clementinas (p54)
- Saba Hotel (p55)
- Magnolia Inn (p54)
- Luna's Castle (p53)
- Dos Palmitos (p58)

## Why Go?

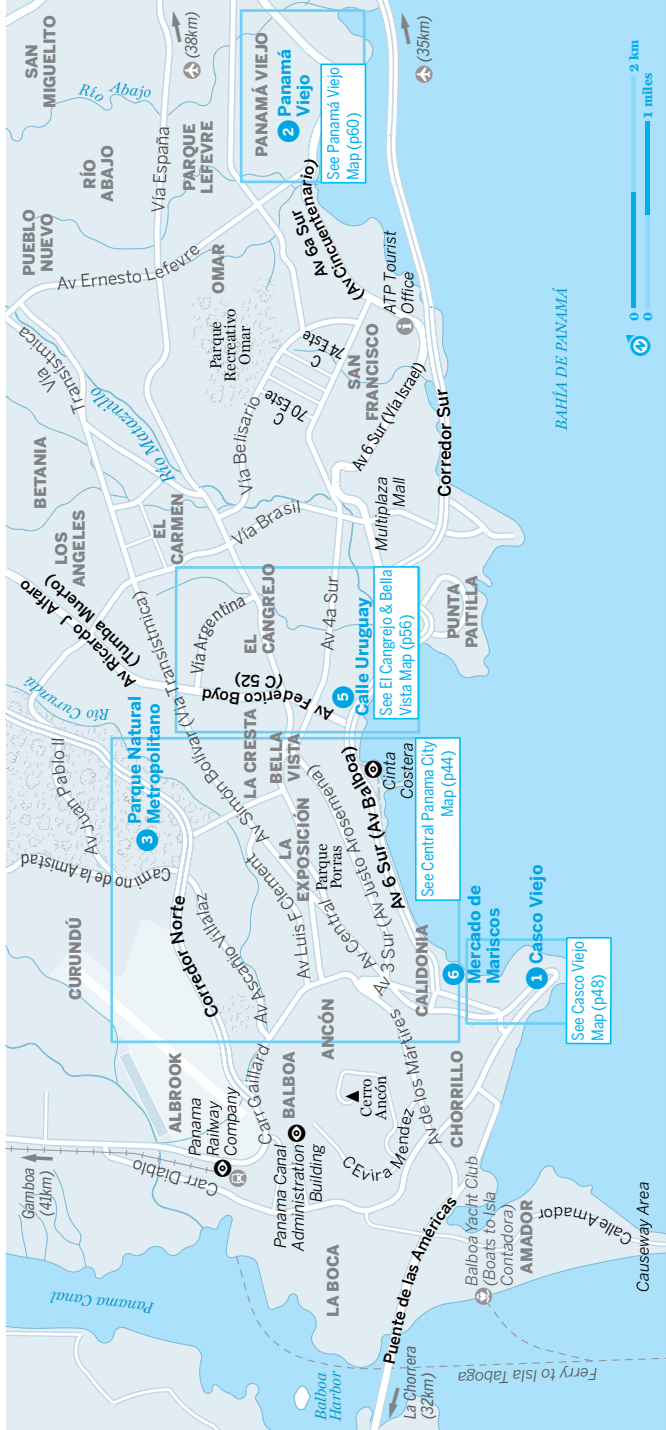
The most cosmopolitan capital in Central America, Panama City is both vibrant metropolis and gateway to tropical escapes. Many worlds coexist here. Welcoming both east and west, Panama is a regional hub of trade and immigration. The resulting cultural cocktail forges a refreshing 'anything goes' attitude, more dynamic and fluid than its neighbors.

Unflinchingly urban, the capital rides the rails of chaos, with traffic jams, wayward taxis and casinos stacked between chic clubs and construction sites. A center of international banking and trade, the sultry skyline of shimmering glass and steel towers is reminiscent of Miami. In contrast, the peninsula of Casco Viejo has become a thriving colonial neighborhood where cobblestones link boutique hotels with underground bars and crumbled ruins with pirate lore.

Escape is never far. Day trip to sandy beaches (Pacific or Caribbean), admire the canal, or explore lush rainforests of howler monkeys, toucans and sloths.

## When to Go

- **Jan** In the peak of high season, the weeklong Panama Jazz Festival features open-air concerts and events held mostly in the historic neighborhood of Casco Viejo.
- **Dec-mid-Mar** High season is dry season, with sunnier weather for outdoor cafe dining and day trips to the beach; hotel rates are up and travelers should book ahead.
- **Apr-Nov** Low season prices and occasional rain showers, though a rain reprieve usually comes in October. A slew of public holidays in November mean ubiquitous parades, party events and closures.



## Panama City Highlights

- 1 Explore history-filled **Casco Viejo** (p45), a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of crumbling colonials, soaring churches and grand plazas
- 2 Reconnect with the past at the **Panamá Viejo ruins** (p50), the original Panama City circa 1519
- 3 Hike through **Parque Natural Metropolitano** (p48),
- 4 Feast on new tropical fusion cuisine at any of the capital's fine assortment of **restaurants** (p59)
- 5 Party like a rock star on **Calle Uruguay** (p63), home to the city's most sophisticated nightlife
- 6 Treat your hangover pedaling along the Cinta Costera to **Mercado de Mariscos** (p59) for cheap ceviche (marinated seafood) and the freshest fish around