



# Panama City

POP 880,700 / AREA 275 SQ KM / ELEV SEA LEVEL

## Includes ➔

History .....	44
Sights .....	44
Activities .....	55
Courses .....	56
Tours .....	56
Festivals & Events .....	56
Sleeping .....	57
Eating .....	62
Drinking & Nightlife .....	66
Entertainment .....	67
Shopping .....	67

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Donde José (p63)
- ➔ Mercado de Mariscos (p62)
- ➔ Madrigal (p64)
- ➔ Avatar (p64)
- ➔ Super Gourmet (p63)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Las Clementinas (p58)
- ➔ Magnolia Inn (p58)
- ➔ Luna's Castle (p57)
- ➔ American Trade Hotel (p58)
- ➔ Panama Hat Hostel (p60)

## Why Go?

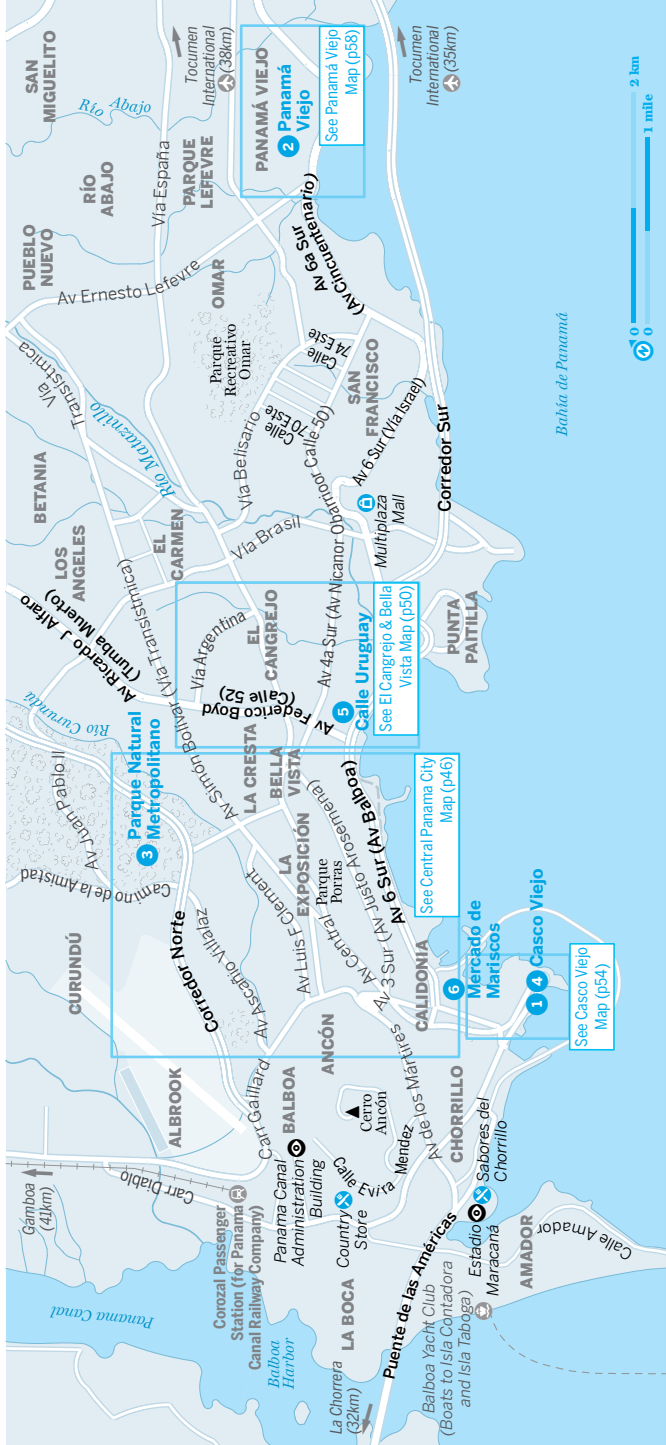
The most cosmopolitan capital in Central America, Panama City is both vibrant metropolis and gateway to tropical escapes. Many worlds coexist here. Welcoming both east and west, Panama is a regional hub of trade and immigration. The resulting cultural cocktail forges a refreshing 'anything goes' attitude, 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 showers, though a rain reprieve usually comes in October. A slew of public holidays in November means ubiquitous parades, party events and closures.



## Panama City Highlights

- 1 Casco Viejo** (p45) Exploring a history-filled, gentrifying neighborhood of crumbling colonials, soaring churches and grand plazas.
- 2 Panamá Viejo** (p52) Reconnecting with the past at the ruins of Panamá Viejo, the original Panama City.
- 3 Parque Natural Metropolitano** (p49) Hiking through rainforest, just 10 minutes from downtown.
- 4 Casco Viejo** (p62) Feasting on tropical fusion cuisine in Casco Viejo's fine assortment of restaurants.
- 5 Calle Uruguay** (p66) Partying like a rock star on Calle Uruguay, home to the city's most sophisticated nightlife.
- 6 Mercado de Mariscos** (p62) Pedaling along the Cinta Costera for cheap ceviche (citrus-cured seafood) and the freshest fish around.