

PANAMA'S

PROVINCES

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



www.allthingspanama.net

Hola, Expats! Welcome to Panama: Your 10-Province Playground

Panama's more than just the Canal, amigos! Dive into this guide and discover the diverse landscape, friendly faces, and vibrant cultures that each of its ten provinces offers. So, grab your panama hat, sunscreen, and an adventurous spirit, let's explore! Be sure to subscribe for more from www.allthingspanama.net



1. Bocas del Toro: Archipelago Paradise

Imagine turquoise waters dotted with emerald islands, coral reefs teeming with colorful fish, and lush rainforests whispering secrets. Bocas del Toro is an island haven for surfers, divers, and nature lovers. Hike Volcan Baru, paddle through mangroves teeming with monkeys, or simply chill on Starfish Beach. Don't miss the famous "Ballet of the Dolphins" off Dolphin Bay—it's pure magic!

Microclimate: Tropical paradise! Hot and humid with refreshing sea breezes. **Fauna:** Monkeys, sloths, dolphins, sea turtles, countless vibrant birds. **Local Food:** Ceviche with fresh-caught seafood, coconut rice, "patacones" (fried green plantains), and the local brew, "Chicha fuerte."

Useful Links: Bocas del Toro Tourism Board: <https://go.bocasdeltoro.travel/>



2. Coclé: Coast, Mountains, and Colonial Charm Coclé boasts everything from sun-kissed beaches like Playa Blanca to the misty highlands of El Valle de Antón, a hidden volcanic caldera cradling waterfalls and hot springs. History buffs will love Panama Viejo, the ruins of the first Spanish city on the Pacific coast. And foodies? Get ready for fresh seafood, "sancocho" (hearty stew), and the famous "cocadas" (coconut candy).

Microclimate: Diverse! Coastal areas are hot and humid, while the mountains are cooler and wetter. **Fauna:** Howler monkeys, toucans, quetzals, butterflies, and even humpback whales during migration season. **Local Food:** "Pescado frito" (fried fish), "ceviche," sancocho, and don't forget to try "empanadas de jaiba" (crab turnovers).

Useful Links: Coclé Tourism Board: https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Attractions-g2651530-Activities-Cocle_Province.html **Image:** Imagine soaking in a hot spring nestled in the lush El Valle de Antón:



 www.tripadvisor.com



3. Colón: Culture, Canal, and Caribbean Vibes

Colón is a vibrant mix of Caribbean rhythms, Afro-Panamanian heritage, and the awe-inspiring Panama Canal. Immerse yourself in the bustling streets of Colón City, learn about the canal's fascinating history at the Gatun Locks, or relax on the white sands of Isla Grande. Be sure to catch a "congo" dance performance and savor the spicy flavors of Caribbean cuisine.

Microclimate: Hot and humid, with Caribbean coastal breezes. **Fauna:** Sloths, monkeys, dolphins, manatees, and an abundance of tropical birds. **Local Food:** "Yuca frita" (fried cassava), "patacones," "carimañolas" (deep-fried meat turnovers), and don't miss the sweet and spicy "raspao" (shaved ice).

Useful Links: Colón Tourism Board: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/> **Image:** Picture yourself dancing to the infectious beat of a "congo" performance:



cascospanish.com



4. Chiriquí: Coffee Mountains and Cool Breezes

Chiriquí is a hiker's paradise, with towering mountains, cascading waterfalls, and lush coffee plantations. Trek to the summit of Volcan Baru, Central America's highest peak, or explore the misty cloud forests of Boquete. Coffee lovers, rejoice! This is Panama's coffee heartland, so sip your way through some of the best brews in the world.

Microclimate: Cooler and drier than most provinces, with refreshing mountain air. **Fauna:** Quetzals, toucans, hummingbirds, butterflies, and tapirs. **Local Food:** "Queso blanco" (white cheese), "chorizo," "arepas" (corn cakes), and the famous "cafe chiriqui" (local coffee).

Useful Links: Chiriquí Tourism Board: <https://www.tourismpanama.com/> **Image:** Picture yourself sipping coffee on a balcony overlooking stunning Boquete landscapes:





5. Darién: Untamed Beauty and Indigenous Charm.

Darién is for the adventurous souls. This remote province boasts untouched rainforests teeming with wildlife, indigenous communities preserving ancient traditions, and secluded beaches perfect for Robinson Crusoe fantasies. Hike the Darién Gap, a challenging trek through the Darién jungle, or visit the Emberá-Wounaan villages and learn about their vibrant culture. Remember, Darién is off the beaten path, so be prepared for adventure!

Microclimate: Hot and humid rainforest climate with significant rainfall. **Fauna:** Jaguars, tapirs, monkeys, sloths, and a mind-blowing diversity of birdlife. **Local Food:** Fresh river fish, "yuca frita," "patacones," and traditional Emberá dishes like "casado" (plantain stew).

Useful Links: Darién Tourism Board: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/> **Image:** Picture yourself paddling a canoe through the Darién jungle, surrounded by lush greenery and exotic birdsong:



www.elpasotimes.com



6. Herrera: Sun, Sand, and Sugarcane Fields

Herrera is all about laid-back beach vibes and sweet temptations. Stretch out on the golden sands of Playa Coronado or Playa Azuero, catch some waves at Playa El Palmar, or go kitesurfing in Punta Chame. Take a break from the beach and explore the sugarcane fields, learn about the traditional "punta" dance, and indulge in some delicious "cocadas" (coconut candy) from the local "cofradías" (women's cooperatives).

Microclimate: Hot and humid with sunshine most of the year. **Fauna:** Monkeys, iguanas, sea turtles, dolphins, and a variety of coastal birds. **Local Food:** Fresh seafood, "ceviche," "arroz con pollo" (chicken and rice), and don't miss the sweet and sticky "bienmesabe" (coconut dessert).

Useful Links: Herrera Tourism Board: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/> **Image:** Picture yourself soaking up the sun on the golden sands of Playa Coronado:



www.panamaequity.com



7. Los Santos: Colonial Charm and Artisan Dreams

Los Santos is a window into Panama's colonial past. Wander the cobbled streets of the charming town of Las Tablas, admire the colorful "balcones" (wooden balconies), and visit the historic churches. This province is also a haven for artisans, with skilled craftsmen creating beautiful pottery, traditional "tapetes" (rugs), and intricate "sombros pintados" (painted hats). Don't miss the annual "Festival Nacional de la Mejorana" in February—a vibrant celebration of Panamanian folklore and music.

Microclimate: Hot and dry with a coastal breeze. **Fauna:** Monkeys, iguanas, whales during migration season, and a variety of coastal birds. **Local Food:** "Arroz con puerco" (pork and rice), "chicharrón" (fried pork belly), "empanadas" (turnovers), and the local delicacy "tortillitas" (small corn pancakes).

Useful Links: Los Santos Tourism Board: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>

Image: Picture yourself strolling through the charming streets of Las Tablas, admiring the colorful balconies and colonial architecture:



www.whereandwhen.net



8. Panamá: City Lights and Canal Wonders

Panamá City is a dazzling metropolis where skyscrapers kiss the clouds and history whispers from ancient ruins. Explore the colonial gem of Casco Viejo, stroll along the scenic Cinta Costera waterfront, or marvel at the awe-inspiring Panama Canal. Shop for local handicrafts at the vibrant markets, catch a salsa performance in a smoky club, or indulge in world-class cuisine from around the globe. Panamá City is a city that never sleeps, ready to offer you every imaginable experience.

Microclimate: Hot and humid with regular rainfall, but cooled by sea breezes. **Fauna:** Monkeys, iguanas, sloths, and abundant birdlife in parks and green spaces. **Local Food:** "Pescado frito," "ceviche," "sancocho," "empanadas," and international cuisine from all corners of the globe.

Useful Links: Panama City Tourism Board: <https://www.visitpanama.com/>:

<https://www.visitpanama.com/> **Image:** Picture yourself gazing at the glittering skyline of Panama City from the rooftop bar of a chic hotel:



 www.pinterest.com



9. Veraguas: Mountains, Jungles, and Hidden Gems

Veraguas is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered. Trek through the verdant cloud forests of Cerro Troncoso National Park, explore the pre-Columbian ruins of Barriles, or dive into the refreshing waters of the Santa Clara River. This province is also home to the charming town of Santa Fe, with its colonial architecture and laid-back atmosphere. Don't miss the renowned "Festival de Manito" in August, a vibrant celebration of Panamanian folklore and traditional dance.

Microclimate: Diverse, with cooler temperatures in the mountains and hot and humid conditions in the coastal areas. **Fauna:** Monkeys, sloths, tapirs, quetzals, and a variety of other birdlife. **Local Food:** "Tamales," "sancocho," "chicharrón," and the local delicacy "chichemecca" (corn soup with seafood).

Useful Links: Veraguas Tourism Board: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/> **Image:** Picture yourself hiking through the misty cloud forests of Cerro Troncoso National Park in Veraguas:



10. West Panamá: Archipelago Adventures and Untamed Beauty

West Panamá is a remote archipelago paradise dotted with pristine islands, untouched beaches, and coral reefs teeming with marine life. Coiba National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a must-visit for eco-adventurers, offering snorkeling, diving, and wildlife encounters with monkeys, whales, and dolphins. Isla Contadora, with its luxurious resorts and laid-back vibes, is perfect for a relaxing escape. Remember, West Panamá is off the beaten path, so be prepared for limited amenities and pristine wilderness.

Microclimate: Hot and humid tropical climate with plenty of sunshine. **Fauna:** Whales, dolphins, monkeys, sea turtles, and an incredible diversity of coral reef fish. **Local Food:** Fresh seafood, "ceviche," "pescado frito," and simple island fare.

Useful Links: West Panamá Tourism Board: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/>: <https://www.atp.gob.pa/> **Image:** Picture yourself snorkeling among vibrant coral reefs off the coast of Isla Coiba in West Panamá:



www.discovercoibapanama.com

snorkeling in Isla Coiba, Panama

This concludes our guide to Panama's ten provinces. Remember, this is just a taste of what each province has to offer, and there's so much more to discover! So, grab your adventurous spirit, pack your bags, and say "adios" to the ordinary—your Panamanian adventure awaits!

Feel free to customize this guide further by adding your own personal experiences, recommendations for specific activities, or interesting facts about each province. I hope this helps you create a valuable resource for fellow expats in Panama!

¡Buen viaje!

Craving more Panamanian paradise?

This guide is just the tip of the iceberg! Dive deeper into each province's secrets, uncover hidden gems, and connect with fellow Panama enthusiasts at **AllThingsPanama.net**.

Here's what awaits you:

- Detailed province guides:** Go beyond the basics and explore each province's unique culture, attractions, activities, and local tips.
- Exclusive member content:** Dive into in-depth articles, expert interviews, and interactive maps unavailable elsewhere.
- A vibrant community:** Connect with fellow travelers, expats, and locals, share experiences, and get insider advice.

•**Regular updates:** Stay ahead of the curve with news, events, and special offers tailored to your Panamanian interests.

Ready to take your Panamanian adventure to the next level? Head over to AllThingsPanama.net and unlock the full Panama experience!

Don't wait, dive in now!

