

Riskline / Destination Report

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PANAMA

Overall risk level

<p>Low Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Moderate Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Medium Exercise caution</p>	<p>High Reconsider travel</p>	<p>Extreme Defer non-essential travel</p>
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The Overall Risk Level will be determined by the higher of the Security Risk Level and Covid-19 Risk Level.

Security risk level

<p>Low Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Moderate Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Medium Exercise caution</p>	<p>High Reconsider travel</p>	<p>Extreme Defer non-essential travel</p>
Safe, with few security risks	Generally safe, with some predictable security risks	Not completely safe, but typically presents predictable security risks	Can be dangerous and may present unexpected security risks	Extremely dangerous and presents unpredictable security risks
Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Chaotic; travel impossible

Covid-19 risk level

<p>Low Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Moderate Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Medium Exercise caution</p>	<p>High Reconsider travel</p>	<p>Extreme Defer non-essential travel</p>
<p>Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to Low Risk locations, which have limited or no restrictions on international travel and domestic activities.</p>	<p>Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to Moderate Risk locations, which have few restrictions on international travel and limited or no restrictions on domestic activities.</p>	<p>Unvaccinated travellers should exercise caution when travelling to Medium Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should take normal precautions. These locations may have some restrictions on international travel, but few restrictions on domestic activities.</p>	<p>Unvaccinated travellers should reconsider their need to travel to High Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should exercise caution. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and partially restricted domestic activities.</p>	<p>Unvaccinated travellers should defer non-essential travel to Extreme Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should reconsider their travel. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and domestic activities.</p>

Overview

Upcoming Events

05 May 2024 - 06 May 2024

- **Moderate risk:** General elections to be held on 5 May 2024

A general election will take place nationwide on 5 May 2024 with former president Ricardo Martinelli of the Realizing Goals (RM) party currently the frontrunner for the presidency.

Travel Advisories

● Moderate risk: Outbreak of mosquito-borne viruses in the Americas

Mosquito-borne virus cases have seen a steep upward trend in the Americas in 2023, and are expected to rise further amid increasing temperatures. Take measures to prevent mosquito bites and ensure vaccine coverage and medication before departure.

Several mosquito-borne viruses (Chikungunya, dengue, malaria, yellow fever, Zika) are endemic to tropical and subtropical regions of **Central** and **South America**, the **Caribbean**, **Mexico** and the **United States**, and appear in both rural and urban areas, most often during the rainy season, which varies from country to country.

Climate change, deforestation and urbanisation are some of the factors behind the increasing number of outbreaks of mosquito-borne viruses. Mosquitoes thrive under increased precipitation and higher temperatures; outbreaks have increased even in areas of dry weather. Following a two to seven year cycle, El Niño weather phenomenon is developing since June, further increasing the risk of higher temperatures across the region and above-normal rainfall with an increased risk of flooding on the **West Coast** of the **United States**, **Peru** and **Ecuador**.

Dengue accounts for the largest number of cases in the Americas region, with epidemics occurring every three to five years. In **South America**, dengue is moving further south to countries such as **Bolivia**, **Peru** and **Paraguay**, with over 2.8 million cases reported in 2022 compared to 1.2 million a year earlier. Since January 2023, over 4.1 million cases have been reported of which over 1.8 million have been confirmed in the Americas, with higher-than-usual numbers of dengue cases reported including in **Argentina**, **Bolivia**, **Brazil**, **Colombia**, **Costa Rica**, **Cuba**, the **Dominican Republic**, **Guadeloupe**, **Guatemala**, **Martinique**, **Nicaragua**, **Panama**, **Paraguay** and **Peru**. Authorities in **Costa Rica**, **Bolivia** and **Jamaica** have issued emergency alerts due to the situation as of September.

Confirmed cases of chikungunya in the region have also increased from 50,000 in 2022 to over 230,000 in 2023, with an expansion observed beyond historical areas of transmission. **Paraguay** and **Brazil** reported the highest infection rates.

Reported cases of Zika virus have remained in a lower level than in 2022, with **Brazil, Bolivia** and **Belize** reporting the highest share of the over 3,200 confirmed cases. While malaria has been nearly or completely eradicated in many countries in the Americas, the region remains vulnerable to outbreaks. **Costa Rica** has reported an ongoing outbreaks of malaria in **Limón, Alajuela** and **Puntarenas provinces**, with over 515 cases reported since April. The impact of the increased transmission will depend on several factors, including country capacities for a coordinated public health response, high mosquito densities due to interrupted vector control activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the susceptibility to infections, particularly in areas where these viruses are newly circulating.

In 2022, cases of both dengue and chikungunya peaked in May in the southern hemisphere. Transmission rates are expected continue high in the coming months, due to weather conditions favourable for the proliferation of mosquitoes. Such an increase may be followed by a high transmission season in the northern hemisphere, given the susceptible populations and increasing temperatures.

Symptoms and Treatment

Each of these viruses when contracted present their own list of symptoms and require varied treatment plans, whether preventative or reactive.

Viral infections transmitted by the bite of the **Aedes** mosquito include chikungunya, dengue fever, yellow fever and Zika virus. The most common virus transmitted by the bite of the *Anopheles* mosquito is malaria. Both insects are most active during early morning and late afternoon hours, though some species are nocturnal making preventative measures like repellents and mosquitos nets an important strategy.

Cases of Zika virus are usually mild and include symptoms of fever, headaches, conjunctivitis, rash and joint and muscle pain; most cases are asymptomatic. Zika virus may also be transmitted through sexual contact with an infected person and has been linked to microcephaly in unborn children. There is no treatment for Zika virus, beyond rehydration and bed rest.

Initial symptoms of yellow fever include a high fever, chills, vomiting, nausea and backaches/muscle pain, with a risk of potentially fatal complications, including jaundice, severe haemorrhaging and kidney failure. There is no post-infection treatment for yellow fever, making vaccination against the disease imperative prior to travel.

Symptoms of dengue fever include a high fever, joint pain and headaches, although severe cases may cause significant falls in blood pressure and/or haemorrhaging, which can be fatal. There are no treatments for dengue fever though vaccine research is ongoing.

Symptoms of chikungunya fever include a high fever, joint pain and headaches; the disease is typically non-fatal. In most cases those infected recover after seven to ten days. There are no vaccines or treatments for chikungunya.

Symptoms of malaria include a high fever, joint pain, anaemia, chills and headaches; if left untreated, symptoms can become life-threatening. While pre-departure courses of anti-malarial prophylactics are available, these do not guarantee immunity to malaria. If contracted and caught early, malaria can be treated easily with a range of anti-malarial medications.

Travellers are advised to take measures to prevent mosquito bites such as wearing long sleeves and pants, applying insect repellent to exposed skin and clothing, using a bed net when sleeping in a room that is not screened or air-conditioned. Travellers should ensure they are up-to-date on vaccines before departure, consult medical professionals about use of prophylactics, take precaution with selection of sexual partners and ensure use of protection.

● High risk: Eastern border with Colombia (Darién Gap)

Reconsider travel to **Darién province** and along the Colombian border in the **Guna Yala** and **Emberá-Wounaan comarcas** until further notice due to smuggling activities.

Darién province is considered to be highly dangerous, particularly south of **Metetí**; the remoteness and impenetrable topography of the area leads to general lawlessness. However, security has improved with the demobilisation of Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and since 2018 Panamanian authorities have operated a comprehensive security station on the **Pan-American Highway** in **Agua Fría**. The station was established in order to monitor overland transport and to strengthen the fight against narcotrafficking as well as illegal immigration. Despite being considered the most dangerous migratory route in the world, 243,000 undocumented migrants crossed and over 76 migrants died on the trails in the **Darién jungle** in 2022, prompting authorities to launch an extensive operation to enhance border security in the area. In June

2023, authorities deployed some 1,200 immigration agents, border police, marine and air force soldiers in the area to combat criminal gangs, after at least three suspected smugglers were killed and a Venezuelan migrant injured in a shootout with border police near **Bajo Chiquito** on 28 May. Authorities have committed to increase deportations of those migrants who enter the country illegitimately.

In 2023, Venezuelans have been the largest migrant group on the route, mainly due to new visa requirements introduced by Mexico and other countries, followed by Ecuadorians and Haitians fleeing from increased violence. Extensive drug smuggling and sporadic armed clashes between security forces and narco-traffickers remain a risk. Cartel and gang members also extort migrants for passage rights, guide services and use them to traffic drugs. Both locals and foreign nationals have been the victims of violent crimes, sexual assaults, kidnappings and murder in the past, and security remains a major concern in **Darién province** and along the Colombian border in the **Guna Yala** and **Emberá-Wounaan comarcas**.

Authorities operate migrant camps including in **Lajas Blancas** and **San Vicente**. In 2015-2016, when 60,000 people crossed the area, authorities closed the country's borders during the migrant crisis. With over 460,000 migrants having crossed the area since January 2023, tensions and xenophobia in the country may increase once again, while outbreaks of measles, rubella and water-borne diseases are possible. However, local residents in **Bajo Chiquito** have also benefitted from increasing migration, with the business that has grown around migration making up at least half of the local income. Widespread flooding, as well as dangerous animal species, are also a threat across the vast jungle area.

Business-essential travel to the affected area should only be undertaken as part of an organised group and restricted to areas protected by local police. Do not stray from the immediate vicinity of the protected resort area. Ensure to have all documentation and permission to travel from authorities. Contact your local embassy for details prior to any trip to **Darién Gap**.

Summary

Overall ● Medium Risk

Panama is a **Medium Risk** destination: exercise caution.

Security ● Medium Risk

Medium Risk locations are not completely safe, but typically present predictable security risks. Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions.

Covid ● Low Risk

International travel has resumed and economic and social activities have reopened. Daily case numbers peaked in January 2022, with smaller spike reported in May and December 2022.

Political Instability ● Moderate Risk

A presidential democracy led by centre-left President Laurentino Cortizo, Panama has enjoyed relative political stability since transitioning from a repressive military dictatorship in 1989 and the subsequent heavy United States involvement in domestic affairs until 1999. Tackling high rates of poverty and inequality and managing the large influx of Venezuelan and Cuban migrants are among the most important issues the country must address in the coming years.

Conflict ● Moderate Risk

Low-level tensions exist with Colombia over the general lawlessness and diplomatic, trade and economic issues of the countries' shared border area, known as the **Darién Gap**. Guerrilla and various smuggling groups from Colombia are highly active in the area in large part due to the difficult terrain and neglect from both national governments. The large influx of migrants into Panama has resulted in unilateral border closures in the past, though further state action is unlikely to escalate into military conflict.

Terrorism ● Moderate Risk

There are no terrorist groups active in the territory, and there have been no reported incidents of terrorism or threats made against foreign nationals or foreign interests in Panama. Cross-border non-state actor footholds have been established from Colombian narco-terrorists through the **Darién Gap**, where little state presence is felt, is the greatest source of insecurity. However, the role in global trade of the **Panama Canal** likely makes it a soft target for any future attacks in the country, which are mitigated by joint Panama-US intelligence efforts.

Unrest ● Moderate Risk

Peaceful protests and strikes are a regular occurrence with workers' unions typically organising demonstrations over a range of economic and social issues; much of the resulting civil unrest occurs in **Panama City** or along highways across the country. In 2019, 2022 and 2023, an anti-government movement forced lawmakers to reconsider various decrees and proposed constitutional amendments.

Crime ● Medium Risk

Panama has experienced consistent levels of crime over the last years that are likely to affect foreigners. Petty and opportunistic crime such as pickpocketing and purse snatching is common across the country. Homicide rates, armed robberies and violent assaults have registered increases in recent years as a result of gang and drug trafficking activities.

Natural and Environmental ● Medium Risk

Hurricanes and tropical storms have the potential to cause damage to the country, typically between June and November, while the rainy season that lasts from May to December often triggers prolonged episodes of flooding. The areas most prone to flash floods are **Chiriquí, Veraguas, Bocas del Toro, Colón, Darién, Panamá Oeste** and **Panamá provinces**. Emergency services will struggle to respond to large-scale natural disasters outside of **Panama City**. The territory is situated near an active seismic zone that may occasionally experience earthquakes.

Local Travel ● Medium Risk

The **Pan-American Highway** and its secondary roads are typically well-maintained, however, the majority of the nation's road system is unpaved and becomes impassable during the rainy season (April-December). Radio-dispatched taxis and ride-sharing services are reliable in cities like **Panama City**, with the exception of **Colón**, where incidents of assault have been reported. Buses should be avoided as the driving standard is poor and pickpockets operate both on buses and at bus stations nationwide. Local airlines are recommended for travel to the **western provinces**.

Health and Medical ● Medium Risk

Medical care is adequate in **Panama City** where routine care offered by English-speaking professionals is available at a number of private clinics and hospitals, however, services are lacking outside of the capital. Serious medical emergencies will likely require evacuation. There are outbreaks of mosquito-borne viruses year round, particularly in rural areas, with the greatest risk coinciding with the rainy season (May to December).

Political Overview : ● Moderate Risk

Panama returned to democratic rule in 1989 after two decades of military dictatorship. The United States (US) military intervened to remove General Manuel Antonio Noriega from power and exercised a high degree of influence in Panamanian affairs until 1999, when the US handed Panama de facto control of the Panama Canal. The US's historical involvement in Panamanian domestic affairs, combined with factionalised interests stemming from military rule, left Panama's democratic processes in an undeveloped state. However, in recent years the situation has improved, thanks to widespread support for the democratic regime as well as renewed business interest in Panamanian banking and shipping industries, and real estate markets.

In the May 2019 general elections, centre-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) candidate Laurentino 'Nito' Cortizo took 33 percent of the vote and secured the open seat of the presidency. Democratic Change Party (CD) candidate Rómulo Roux came in a close second with 31 percent; former president Juan Carlos Varela's centre-right Panameñista Party failed to garner support heading into the election, taking only 10 percent of the vote. Campaigning on a reformist platform, Cortizo promised to tackle corruption, introduce significant changes to the Panamanian constitution, overhaul the health and education systems and address widespread poverty and inequality. An anti-establishment feeling has become more widespread in recent years, following the region-wide Odebrecht Scandal and the leaked Panama Papers in 2015 which incurred a huge reputational cost for Panama and put the country on various financial blacklists. This backdrop ultimately encumbered the Varela administration, hamstringing the minority government's agenda in the National Assembly and fostering the nationwide desire for more effective and responsive governance.

Panama is likely to remain economically stable for the foreseeable future, with President Cortizo indicating that he will adhere to a pro-business agenda whilst attempting to fulfil his campaign promises. In tackling poverty and inequality and in cleaning up business practices, the new government will likely go to great lengths to avoid deterring foreign investment and trade. However, recent national protests in the country that resulted in the reversal of a mining contract renewal with First Quantum and subsequent arbitration cases may harm Panama's foreign investment in the near future. While the PRD's representation in the National Assembly is strong with 35 seats, Cortizo's success in implementing his agenda will depend on his ability to maintain party unity and any cross-party deals which may be struck. Like his

predecessor, Cortizo's administration will no doubt suffer if it is hit with allegations of corruption. Cortizo's planned constitutional reforms triggered protests in October-November 2019. Though the National Assembly approved many of Cortizo's proposed constitutional reforms related to education, health and the environment, others - including related to combatting corruption in the Supreme Court and the National Assembly - were replaced or modified. Corruption and impunity remain serious challenges, affecting the justice system and the highest levels of government. Similarly, if economic growth does not pick up, or an external shock induces economic downturn, anti-establishment sentiment could lead to unrest. As tension increases between China and the US, Panama - as the host to a key international commerce route - could see itself caught walking a political tightrope amidst a US-China trade war. Furthermore, should the crisis in Venezuela or other regional countries worsen, a region-wide migrant crisis would likely be induced. Panama is already home to nearly 150,000 Venezuelan migrants; a greater influx could prompt a socio-political backlash. As of December 2023, at least 500,000 migrants, two thirds of which hail from Venezuela, have crossed the **Darien Gap** seeking to transit central America to reach the United States.

As with all countries across the region, Panama experiences crime, particularly in urban areas, as well as protests and industrial action. Provided that Panama is not rocked by any external shocks, and provided Cortizo maintains support and delivers on his campaign pledges in the years to come, these phenomena are likely to remain at a predictable, stable level.

There are no recent incidents

Conflict : ● Moderate Risk

Border Conflicts: Relations with Colombia remain strained due to various diplomatic, trade, economic and security issues along the **Panama-Colombia border**. There have been increased efforts on the part of Panamanian and Colombian security services to improve security in the shared border areas, however, these efforts have remained limited due to a lack of funding and political attention from both countries. Insurgents and other criminal groups remain very active in the border region. Further, migration flows of mainly Cuban, Haitian and Venezuelan refugees transiting from Colombia through the remote and dangerous terrain of the **Darién Gap** continue to trigger tensions.

Low level disputes over land exist along the **Panama-Costa Rica border**, however, these are highly unlikely to escalate into serious conflict.

Strength of Military Forces: After two decades of military dictatorship and feared repression by security forces, Panama's military was abolished in 1990 and reformed into the Panamanian Public Forces (FPP). An amendment prohibiting the creation of a standing military was approved by the Legislative Assembly in 1994.

Terrorism

International Terrorism: There is no evidence to suggest that Panama is a target for terror attacks or that the country has been used as a haven by international terror organisations. Panama and the US maintain an ongoing dialogue on protecting the **Panama Canal** and no evidence has emerged that there is any plot to attack it. Panama's immediate terrorism concern is incursions by Colombian narco-terrorists into Panama's remote **Darién province**.

There are no recent incidents

Unrest : ● Moderate Risk

Strikes: The most credible threat to political and social stability in Panama is mounting civil unrest brought about by strikes in response to reform attempts by the government.

Protests and Demonstrations: Small to mid-scale protests occur, particularly in **Panama City**, including at **Panama University, National Assembly** and on **La Avenida Simón Bolívar (Transístmica)**.

An increasing number of demonstrations have taken place across Panama against rising food and fuel costs in the country. In October-November 2019, a wave of anti-government protests erupted in **Panama City** against President Cortizo's planned constitutional reforms. Related protests turned violent in mid-2022 in which looting and clashes with police took place in communities nationwide, including downtown **Panama City**. Government officials in both cases promised reforms in order to quell unrest before renegeing on their promises.

Protests launched by 'Alianza Pueblo Unidos por la Vida' activists across the country in September intensified in October-November, with the participation of environmental groups, teachers, indigenous people and construction workers, after the government approved Law 406 granting a 20-year concession extension for an important copper mine run by the Minera Panamá, a subsidiary of the Canada-based First Quantum Mineral company. Protest blockades on major highways in **Panama City** and nationwide caused disruptions to commerce and travel, while several casualties and hundreds of arrests were reported from clashes between demonstrators and police. A Supreme Court ruling voided the mining contract law on 28 November.

Recent incidents

20 December 2023 - 23 December 2023

● **Moderate risk: Activists to demonstrate in Panama City on 20-22 December**

Members of the Alianza Pueblo Unido por la Vida will march from the Clayton roundabout to the United States (US) Embassy in Panama City on 20 December, to mark the 1989 US invasion of Panama. Protesters will also rally at the Labour Ministry on 21 December, to demand an increase in the minimum wage and at the Ombudsman's Office on 22 December, to demand that ombudsman Eduardo Leblanc resign.

19 December 2023 - 20 December 2023

● **Moderate risk: Activists to march in Panama City**

Members of the Alianza Pueblo Unido por la Vida will march from Parque Porras to the Presidential Palace in Panama City from 16:00 local time (21:00 GMT), to demand the shutdown of the Cobre Panamá mine.

30 November 2023 - 01 December 2023

● **Moderate risk: Demonstrators lift roadblocks in Chiriquí and Veraguas provinces - Update**

Updated reports indicated that demonstrators lifted all remaining roadblocks along the Pan-American Highway in Chiriquí and Veraguas provinces as of afternoon hours local time, following pressure from residents and commuters after a court ruling voided a mining contract law that precipitated the demonstrations.

29 November 2023 - 30 November 2023

● **Medium risk:** Demonstrators continue roadblocks in Chiriquí and Veraguas provinces despite court ruling - Update

Local sources indicated that demonstrators blocked the Pan-American Highway in Las Vueltas, Horconcos, El Salado, Silimin, San Félix and Tolé, Chiriquí province, and 19 Julio Bridge in Santiago, Veraguas province, as of afternoon hours local time, over additional social demands despite a court ruling that voided a mining contract law; there were no immediate reports of clashes or arrests. A related march was ongoing near Iglesia del Carmen in Panama City.

Crime : ● Medium Risk

Petty Crime: Pickpocketing, purse snatching and theft are common in Panama but are more intense in **Panama City** and **Colón**. Thefts are common at bus stations, ATMs, airports and other crowded areas.

Beware of your surroundings, do not leave your belongings unattended and exercise general personal safety for travel. Only carry what is needed, do not flash expensive valuables or large sums of money, and keep cash, identification and mobile phones in front pockets, or in a zipped or concealed pocket or pouch rather than in a bag. Secure belongings when using public transport or when frequenting markets and other crowded public areas; secure bags diagonally across the body against the chest, keep bags within sight and away from the street. Refrain from using mobile phones or laptops in congested public places; avoid putting bags containing valuables on the ground. Avoid walking in poorly lit and isolated areas. Stay in groups. Reject rides or drinks from strangers and never leave drinks unattended. Exercise extreme caution when purchasing and consuming alcohol in public venues. Do not accept pamphlets in the street or shopping centres; these could be impregnated with potent and disorienting drugs, which permeate the skin. If you start to feel unwell, tell staff or close friends and do not leave the venue alone or with strangers. Shout to attract attention, if needed.

Violent Crime: Violent crime is a concern in Panama. Homicides and armed robberies related to gang violence have increased due to drug trafficking and are particularly high in **Colón**, **Mosquito Gulf** between **Colón** and **Chiriquí** as well as **Darién** province beyond **Yaviza** town. There is a heightened risk of armed mugging at the **Madden Dam** locality. Serious assaults occasionally occur in **Panama City** even during daylight hours, and foreigners are as likely to be affected as locals.

Commonsense measures are best kept to ensure against becoming the victim of a violent crime. Travellers are advised to remain vigilant at all times and exercise general personal safety for travel: avoid walking alone at night, do not venture down roads with poor lighting and few access points. Be careful when using taxis and public transport and plot route bypasses around rowdy crowds. Seek local advice for areas to avoid. If you are held-up by an armed robber do not become confrontational as any resistive behaviour may cause more violence by the attackers.

Property Crime: Theft from hotel rooms and home accommodations occurs in urban

and central areas but are usually non-violent. Gangs often impersonate delivery services, salespeople and janitors to gain access to property and perform burglaries.

Travellers are advised against leaving valuables in hotel rooms. Deposit important items in the safe. Be sure to lock hotel/house doors, even when you are present. Home invaders often conduct thorough investigations of their victims' routines and whereabouts prior to an attack. Avoid visible displays of wealth and check for signs of being followed when returning to one's place of residence. If you do happen to be burgled, remain cooperative as perpetrators are likely to be armed and any resistive behaviour may cause more violence by the attackers.

Organised Crime and Gangs: Recent spikes in gang activities are pointed as a reason for higher crime rates in Panama, with **Colón** and **Panama Oeste** province being hotspots for violent crimes. The gangs perform activities ranging from drugs, arms and human trafficking to contract killing. Prominent groups include **Bagdad** and **Calor Calor**. Although foreign nationals seldom encounter such gangs, armed bandits have targeted tourists in remote areas in the past.

Violence is often contained within inter-gang rivalries, though bystanders may be caught up in drive-by shootings, street shootings and armed or arson attacks. Avoid the epicentres of criminal activities, which are often located on the outskirts of urban areas. Seek local advice on specific areas to avoid. Restrict travel in unfamiliar areas to daylight hours. Visitors should avoid association with members of any groups or individuals they suspect of being involved in such activities.

Piracy and Banditry: Shipping and tourist vessels off the coast are prone to pirate attacks. Pirates usually target docked boats in ports and anchorages. There are isolated reports of tourists being fatally attacked by criminals onboard vessels at **Morodub Island** and **Nombre de Dios Bay**.

Piracy: In areas without an effective naval force or coast guard, shipping vessels may be vulnerable to an increased risk of pirate attacks. While attacks typically occur on vessels that are berthed or anchored, attacks on moving ships cannot be ruled out. Consult a local port agent or the Maritime Police for the current security situation, designated safe anchorage areas and which vessels to use when crossing higher risk ports. Keep all doors locked if sleeping on board a vessel. Follow best practice safety procedures while travelling in the high seas: extinguish navigation lights, roll up ship ladders, sail as fast as possible and only at recommended times, use barbed wire and avoid engagement with any fishing boats or vessels requesting assistance. Ensure access to updated HF emergency frequencies to broadcast mayday calls in the event of

pirate sightings. Report all suspicious activity to the nearest coastal state and flag state.

Vehicle Crime: Break-ins and theft from unattended vehicles could occur, particularly in major cities. Armed carjackings occur on roads surrounding the Pacific entrance of the **Panama Canal**, near the **Bridge of Americas** and the city of **Colón**. There is a high risk of armed assaults when driving on the **Pan-American Highway** beyond **Yaviza** and other rural roads along the **Panama-Colombia border**.

Break-ins: Expensive-looking vehicles, especially 4x4s, or vehicles with visible valuables are commonly targeted. Visitors should park cars in well-lit areas, preferably in private parking lots with security and ensure that all valuables, including vehicle's papers/insurance, are removed from the vehicle. Lock car doors at all times and make sure windows are rolled up. If renting a vehicle, ensure that it is fitted with a secure car alarm.

Carjacking: Avoid leaving or returning to your place of work or residence at the same time every day. Vehicles equipped with a coded key or a key fob tend to be increasingly targeted as they make it easier to hijack with jamming devices. Hijackers also tend to stage breakdowns, flagging victims for assistance. Two cars are often used to box the victim in and force them to stop. Leave a safe distance between yourself and the car in front of you at traffic stops, limiting speed as much as possible to avoid stopping in order to keep the vehicle moving and gain time before the light turns green. Hijackers are often armed and extremely willing to use deadly force so resistance is discouraged. Stay calm and move slowly and exit your vehicle avoiding eye contact with the assailants. Keep your hands in clear sight at all times.

Kidnapping: Short-term “express kidnappings” occur to extract the victim’s money, particularly near ATMs, bank branches and bars, with taxi drivers sometimes accomplices, but generally do not target foreigners. Isolated reports of politically motivated kidnap-for-ransom events in border areas with Colombia have occurred in the past.

Travellers should remain aware of their surroundings and follow the latest advisories for their destination. Maintain communications and your itinerary with local contacts, authorities or embassy staff, especially in locations with a higher risk of kidnapping. Consider a local guide or security escort for the highest risk locations.

Recent incidents

05 December 2023 - 06 December 2023

● **Medium risk:** Injuries reported from shooting incident in Colón

Initial reports indicated that at least four people were injured when a group of vehicle-borne unidentified assailants engaged in a shooting in the vicinity of Calle 9 and Calle 10 along Central Avenue in Colón, Colón province, during night hours local time. Police responded to the incident and cordoned off the area. Further details were not immediately available.

03 September 2023 - 04 September 2023

● **Medium risk:** Deadly shooting incident reported in Colón

Local media reported that a member of Panama's national football team was killed and seven other people were injured after unidentified gunmen opened fire on Calle 5 and Avenida Herrera in the Barrio Norte neighbourhood of Colón during afternoon hours local time on 3 September. At least one suspect was arrested.

05 June 2023 - 06 June 2023

● **Medium risk:** Security heightened along Colombian border in Darién province

Authorities deployed some 1,200 immigration agents, border police, marine and air force soldiers to the border with Colombia in Darién province, as part of a security operation to combat criminal gangs. On 28 May, at least three suspected smugglers were killed and a Venezuelan migrant injured in a shootout with border police near Bajo Chiquito.

19 April 2023 - 20 April 2023

● **Medium risk:** Fatal shooting targets taxi in San Miguelito, Panamá province

Local sources indicated that at least one person was killed and a taxi driver was injured on Transístmica highway, near the Gran Estación in San Miguelito, Panamá province, during afternoon hours local time on 19 April, when at least one suspected vehicle-borne hitman opened fire at the taxi; a police investigation was underway.

Law

Law: The judicial process is extremely slow. Persons caught violating Panamanian laws, even unknowingly, may be arrested, expelled or imprisoned. From the time of arrest, appearing before a judge can take upwards of 12-24 months. Prisons in Panama are renowned for their harsh conditions.

Corruption

Corruption: Travellers may encounter corruption in Panama's public service sector, particularly by policemen who will try to extort a bribe through real and bogus traffic offences. Travellers may also be confronted with security officials or other authorities who expect to be paid a bribe for their services. Bribes should not be directly offered to an official, as it is illegal and could result in more trouble. Foreign businesses looking to invest in Panamanian ventures are advised to first consult with experienced law professionals before committing any funds.

Security Services

Security Services: Since the abolishment of standing military in 1990, as a result of a 1989 US invasion that overthrew the military dictatorship, security services under the Panamanian Public Forces (FPP) enjoy a much better reputation than their predecessors. The FPP includes the National Police (PNP), National Maritime Service, National Air Service, and an armed Institutional Protection Service (SPI), PNP being a paramilitary force of around 20,000 officers. Law enforcement units such as the Technical Judicial Police (PTJ) are directly subordinate to civilian authorities. PNP response is adequate, but units of the FPP tend to lack the equipment and training facilities which may result in slow or inconclusive investigations.

Natural Risks : ● Medium Risk

Hurricanes and tropical storms have the potential to cause damage to the country, typically between June and November, while the rainy season that lasts from May to December often triggers prolonged episodes of flooding. The areas most prone to flash floods are **Chiriquí, Veraguas, Bocas del Toro, Colón, Darién, Panamá Oeste** and **Panamá provinces**. Emergency services will struggle to respond to large-scale natural disasters outside of **Panama City**. The territory is situated near an active seismic zone that may occasionally experience earthquakes.

Hurricanes/Typhoons/Tropical Cyclones

A cyclone/typhoon/hurricane is essentially a large mass of air that spirals around a low-pressure centre. It is an organised collection of thunderstorms embedded in a swirling mass of air. This mass of air is called a cyclone if it forms in the Indian or South Pacific oceans, a typhoon if formed in the West Pacific Ocean and a hurricane if formed in the East Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Cyclones/typhoons/hurricanes normally bring gale-force winds, heavy rainfall and high tides, with the potential of causing significant or destructive damage and widespread travel disruptions.

Tropical storms in the Caribbean have the potential to trigger prolonged disruptions to flight operations at **Panama City's Albrook (PAC/MPMG)** and **Tocumen (PTY/MPTO) airports**. While the country has an efficient storm warning system, infrastructure like power grids, roads and buildings in the country are not strong enough to withstand strong storms as was the case in **Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro** and **Veraguas provinces** in November 2020.

Follow local radio or television broadcasts for information and evacuation instructions. If not under an area with mandatory evacuation orders, remain indoors. Locate and secure important documentation, including passports, photo identification, travel permits and any indispensable personal effects. Be advised that the calm 'eye' is deceptive and should by no means be interpreted as a sign that the storm has passed. The second winds are likely to be worse and may destroy trees and buildings damaged in the first pass. If caught in a region hit by a cyclone/typhoon/hurricane, remain indoors until the storm passes. If there is a need to move to an evacuation centre, evacuate in a calm manner and ensure you carry important personal identification.

Avoid all low-lying coastal areas due to storm surges. Confirm the viability of overland travel routes due to the risk of flooding. Air and sea travel are also likely to be impacted. Anticipate disruptions to power, communications and other essential services.

Flooding

A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry. It is normally triggered by an extended period of heavy rainfall and can be exacerbated by poor drainage systems in the affected area.

Flash floods usually disrupt overland travel and trigger mass evacuations for prolonged periods in the country during storms and the rainy season which occurs from May to December. Areas most prone to flash-floods due to poor drainage systems include **Chiriquí, Veraguas, Bocas del Toro, Colón, Darién, Panamá Oeste** and **Panamá provinces**. Sometimes flash-floods can occur without warning during periods of heavy rainfall. Mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and Zika also usually occur in the wake of severe flooding.

If instructed of the possibility that flash-flooding may affect the area you are in, monitor local updates and move immediately to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks and storm drains. Though flash-flooding is commonly attributable to excess upstream precipitation, be aware that flooding can occur without typical warning signs of rain clouds or heavy rain. This is especially true near streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. If you happen across a flooded road in your car, turn around and drive in the opposite direction. When trapped on a flooded road, vacate your vehicle immediately and climb to higher ground.

Landslides/Mudslides

Sometimes referred to as debris flows, mudflows, lahars or debris avalanches, landslides/mudslides are a form of mass soil movement that tends to flow in channels in a surge of water-saturated rock, earth and debris, typically following heavy rainfall.

Landslides and mudflows are a concern during the rainy season and hurricane-related

weather, especially in vegetation slopes where the soil is loose and infrastructure is weak. Areas most prone to landslides and mudflows include **Panama** and **Colón provinces**, and the **Ngobe-Bugle region**. These incidents often prove to be fatal and also result in prolonged roadblocks and displacements of thousands of people.

Follow local news updates in landslide prone areas for warnings about intense storms and rainfall. If landslide or debris flow danger is imminent, quickly move away from the path of the slide. Seek shelter on the nearest high ground in a direction away from the path. If rocks and debris are approaching, run for the nearest shelter and take cover (if possible, under a desk, table or other piece of sturdy furniture that can provide you with air space if the building collapses). Anticipate disruptions to overland travel in areas affected by landslides. Confirm the viability of intended overland travel routes before departure and remain alert for landslide warning signs including cracks in the soil or the faint rumbling sound of an approaching landslide or debris flow.

Earthquakes

An earthquake is the sudden, rapid shaking of the earth, caused by the breaking and shifting of subterranean rock as it releases strain that has accumulated over a long period. Initial mild shaking may worsen and become extremely violent within a matter of seconds. Additional earthquakes, called aftershocks, may follow the initial earthquake.

Shallow earthquakes in the **Caribbean Sea** and the **Pacific Ocean** can cause widespread damage and disruptions in northern and southern coastal areas of Panama due to the poor quality of infrastructure. However, there have not been any major earthquakes which affected the territory in recent years.

When shaking begins, drop to the ground and take cover under, and hold on to, a sturdy piece of furniture, such as a heavy desk or table that can provide you with air space if the building collapses. If you're not near a strong piece of furniture, crouch down and protect your head and face in an inner corner of a building; only stand in a doorway if you know it is strongly supported. Stay away from windows or glass panels. Most deaths and injuries in an earthquake are caused by collapsing building materials and heavy falling objects. Stay indoors until the tremors stop and you are sure it is safe to exit. Avoid all areas in the vicinity of outer walls and doorways, as these are

most prone to falling debris. In a high-rise building, the electricity may go out and the sprinkler systems may come on. Do not use the elevators. If the lights go out, avoid using candles, matches or lighters during or after the earthquake; if there is a gas leak, an explosion could result. If outdoors, move to an open space away from buildings, electric poles and street lights which are prone to collapse. Do not travel on roads and bridges which may have been damaged by the earthquake. Be prepared for secondary earth movements that follow the initial earthquake; some of these may be large enough to cause additional damage or bring down weakened structures.

Tsunami

Tsunamis are commonly generated by an earthquake-induced movement of the ocean floor. A strong earthquake lasting 20 seconds or more near the coast is likely to generate a tsunami and imminent coastal impact, possibly before warnings can be issued. However, all offshore or coastal earthquakes carry the potential of generating tsunamis. Warning signs of a tsunami include a sudden rise and fall in coastal sea levels.

Strong and shallow offshore earthquakes can generate potentially hazardous tsunami waves in Panama in areas along the **Pacific** and **Caribbean coasts**. Tsunami warnings are occasionally issued by the US Tsunami Warning Centre and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre. There have not been any tsunami-related disasters in the country in recent years.

In areas at risk of tsunamis, know the height of your street above sea level and the distance of your street from the coast or other at-risk waters. Areas which are less than 7.5 metres (25 feet) above sea level and/or within 1.5 kilometres (one mile) of the coastline are perceived to be the most at risk. Evacuation orders may be based on these numbers. Immediately move inland or to higher ground in the event of a tsunami alert/warning; stay away from the beach. In the absence of an official warning, if you are on the coast and feel an earthquake, or if there is a noticeable recession in water away from the shoreline this is a natural warning of a possible tsunami and should be heeded; move away immediately. Remain out of the tsunami hazard zone until local officials advise otherwise.

Recent incidents

03 November 2023 - 30 June 2024

- **Moderate risk:** Panama Canal to limit container ship traffic further from 3 November - Update

The Panama Canal authority will cut daily booking slots for ships from 31 to 25 per day effective 3-7 November, and gradually reduce the daily slots to 18 by 1 February 2024. The depth of container ships is limited to 13.26m (43.5 feet) until June 2024, due to low water levels caused by a drought; ships must either carry less cargo or shed weight to float higher.

Health and Medical: ● Medium Risk

Overview

Medical care is adequate in **Panama City** where routine care offered by English-speaking professionals is available at a number of private clinics and hospitals, however, services are lacking outside of the capital. Serious medical emergencies will likely require evacuation. There are outbreaks of mosquito-borne viruses year round, particularly in rural areas, with the greatest risk coinciding with the rainy season (May to December).

Before you travel

Consult your doctor or a healthcare provider who specialises in travel medicine at least six weeks before your departure. If you have a medical condition, you should also share your travel plans with your doctor.

Outbreaks and Other Diseases

Malaria

Areas with Malaria:

- The provinces of Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí, Colón, Darién, Panamá, and Veraguas
- The indigenous provinces (comarcas indígenas) of Emberá, Kuna Yala (also spelled Guna Yala) and Ngäbe-Buglé
- No malaria transmission in the province of Panamá Oeste, in the Canal Zone, or in Panama City (the capital)

Recommended chemoprophylaxis:

- Darién, Emberá, Kuna Yala, and eastern Panamá Provinces : Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, primaquine, tafenoquine
- Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí, Colón, Veraguas, and Ngäbe-Buglé Provinces : Atovaquone-proguanil, chloroquine, doxycycline, mefloquine, primaquine, tafenoquine

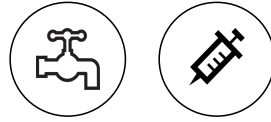
Yellow Fever

There is a risk of Yellow Fever in some areas.

Vaccinations, Medicines and Documentation

Note: Requirements and recommendations for vaccines and other medicines as well as Yellow Fever vaccine are based on guidelines from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Yellow Book 2024. All other entry requirements are based on Riskline research.

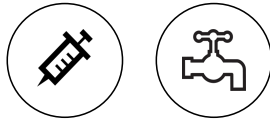
Routine vaccines



Make sure you are up-to-date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Some of these vaccines include

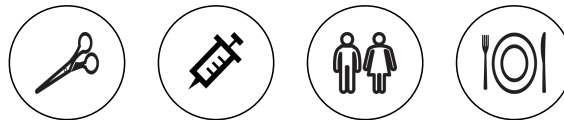
- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis
- Flu (influenza)
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- Shingles

COVID-19



All eligible travellers should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

Hepatitis A



Recommended for unvaccinated travellers one year old or older going to Panama.

Infants 6 to 11 months old should also be vaccinated against Hepatitis A. The dose does not count toward the routine 2-dose series.

Travellers allergic to a vaccine component or who are younger than 6 months should receive a single dose of immune globulin, which provides effective protection for up to 2 months depending on dosage given.

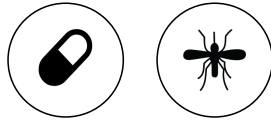
Unvaccinated travellers who are over 40 years old, immunocompromised, or have chronic medical conditions planning to depart to a risk area in less than 2 weeks should get the initial dose of vaccine and at the same appointment receive immune globulin.

Hepatitis B



Recommended for unvaccinated travellers younger than 60 years old traveling to Panama. Unvaccinated travellers 60 years and older may get vaccinated before traveling to Panama.

Malaria



CDC recommends that travellers going to certain areas of Panama take prescription medicine to prevent malaria. Depending on the medicine you take, you will need to start taking this medicine multiple days before your trip, as well as during and after your trip. Talk to your doctor about which malaria medication you should take.

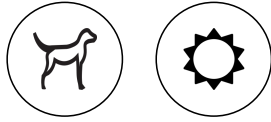
Find country-specific information about malaria.

Measles



Infants 6 to 11 months old traveling internationally should get 1 dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine before travel. This dose does not count as part of the routine childhood vaccination series.

Rabies



Rabid dogs are commonly found in Panama. However, if you are bitten or scratched by a dog or other mammal while in Panama, rabies treatment is often available.

Consider rabies vaccination before your trip if your activities mean you will be around dogs or wildlife.

Travellers more likely to encounter rabid animals include

- Campers, adventure travellers, or cave explorers (spelunkers)
- Veterinarians, animal handlers, field biologists, or laboratory workers handling animal specimens
- Visitors to rural areas

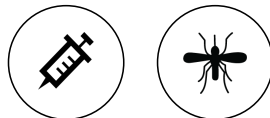
Since children are more likely to be bitten or scratched by a dog or other animals, consider rabies vaccination for children traveling to Panama.

Typhoid



Recommended for most travellers, especially those staying with friends or relatives or visiting smaller cities or rural areas.

Yellow Fever



Recommended for travellers ≥ 9 months old going to all mainland areas east of the Canal Zone including Darién Province, the indigenous provinces (comarcas indígena) of Emberá and Kuna Yala (also spelled Guna Yala), and areas of the provinces of Colón and Panamá, east of the Canal Zone. **Not recommended** for travel limited to the Canal Zone; areas west of the Canal Zone; Panama City (the capital); Balboa district (Pearl Islands) of Panamá Province; or the San Blas Islands of Kuna Yala Province.

Required documentation

Yellow Fever entry requirement (Source: USA CDC):

Required for travellers one year and older arriving from countries with risk for YF virus transmission. Also, vaccination documentation is required from all travellers arriving from **Brazil**, documentation issues from ANVISA ten days or less will be requested.

Other entry requirements:

None

Note: Documentation requirements are subject to change. Consult your destination embassy or consulate prior to departure for confirmation.

While you are there

Emergency Numbers

Medical	911	
Emergency	911	All emergencies

Emergency services

Ambulance services are unavailable outside urban centres.

Evacuation

In the event of a severe life-threatening injury or illness, medical evacuation will be required at the patient's expense.

Routine care

Although **Panama City** has some good quality private hospitals and clinics, medical facilities outside of the capital are limited. The country is working towards establishing itself as a destination for medical tourism, offering top quality services and affordable prices at private hospitals and clinics in **Panama City**. **Hospital Santa Fe** is one of the most modern facilities in the capital, where English-speaking healthcare professionals

are available.

Medicine

Access to high-quality prescription medication is limited, and overall the quality control of pharmaceuticals is inadequate; visitors are advised to bring a sufficient supply of their own medications from home. While travellers are unlikely to experience any difficulties in entering the country with their own prescription medicine it is advisable that all prescription drugs are kept in their original container noting the patient's name.

Payment

Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate payment for health services, and foreign medical insurance is not always valid. While private hospitals will generally accept major credit cards, payment for doctor services are usually expected in cash.

Ailments

Chagas Disease



Chagas is widespread in low level rural areas, including the former **Canal Zone**.

Chagas disease is a parasitic infection transmitted by insects, usually the triatomine bug, and is most prevalent in rural areas. Symptoms include fever and swelling at the site of the insect bite. If left untreated, the disease can cause serious chronic conditions, including damage to the heart and gastrointestinal system. Chagas disease can be treated with a course of antiparasitics.

Chikungunya Fever



Cases of Chikungunya fever are rare in Panama with only two reported nationwide

in 2022. Visitors however should remain aware of the possibility of outbreaks.

Chikungunya fever is a viral infection, transmitted via mosquito bite. Generally non-fatal, the symptoms of Chikungunya fever include a high fever, joint pain and headaches. In most cases those infected recover after seven to ten days. There are no vaccines or treatments for chikungunya.

Dengue Fever



Dengue fever is endemic year-round and countrywide, with elevated risk during the rainy season (usually May through December). Over 1,661 cases were registered nationwide since 1 January.

Dengue fever is a viral infection, transmitted by the bite of the Aedes mosquito, which is most active during early morning and late afternoon hours and is commonly found in urban areas. Symptoms include a high fever, joint pain and headaches, although severe cases may cause significant falls in blood pressure and/or haemorrhaging, which can be fatal. There are no vaccines or treatments for dengue fever.

Hantavirus



At least 50 hantavirus cases were detected in **Los Santos, Herrera** and **Coclé provinces** in 2022; over 17 cases were registered since 1 January 2023.

Hantavirus is a viral infection carried by rodents, which can cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) in persons exposed to the urine or faeces of infected rodents, usually through the inhalation of droplets of the virus in the air. Early symptoms include fever, muscle aches and fatigue and may include diarrhoea, vomiting and nausea; later symptoms include fluid in the lungs and shortness of breath. HPS has a 38 percent fatality rate, and there is no known treatment beyond

supportive hospital care.

Leishmaniasis



Scattered cases of cutaneous leishmaniasis occur countrywide in rural areas, with lower incidence only in the northern regions. At least 628 confirmed cases were registered since 1 January.

Leishmaniasis is a parasitic infection transmitted by the bite of sand flies, which are most active during early morning and late evening hours. Symptoms of cutaneous leishmaniasis include swollen glands and sores; symptoms of visceral leishmaniasis include fever, swelling of the liver or spleen and weight loss. Leishmaniasis can be treated with a course of Amphotericin B, an antifungal.

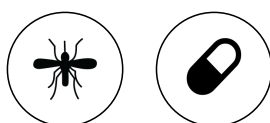
Leptospirosis



Present country-wide, the greatest contraction risk occurs during periods of heavy rainfall (usually May through December).

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection transmitted through contact with (or consumption of) soil, water or food contaminated by infected animal urine. Symptoms can occur in two phases: first stage symptoms include fever, diarrhoea, vomiting, jaundice, headaches and muscle and stomach aches; second stage – also known as Weil's disease – symptoms are more severe and may include meningitis and kidney or liver failure. Leptospirosis can be treated with a course of antibiotics.

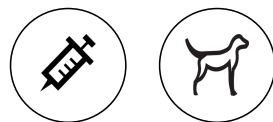
Malaria



Malaria is prevalent year-round in Panama. Transmission areas include **Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí, Colón, Darién, Panamá** and **Veraguas provinces**, as well as the indigenous provinces of **Emberá, Kuna Yala** (also spelled **Guna Yala**) and **Ngäbe-Buglé**. In the other provinces there is a negligible risk of malaria and no to nearly no risk in **Panama City, Panama Oeste** or the former **Canal Zone**, excluding some outlying areas of **Panama City**.

Malaria is a serious parasitic infection, transmitted by the bite of the Anopheles mosquito. Symptoms can be flu-like and include a high fever, joint pain, anaemia, chills and headaches; if left untreated, symptoms can quickly complicate and become life-threatening. While pre-departure courses of anti-malarial prophylactics are available, these do not guarantee immunity to malaria. Caught early, malaria can be treated easily with a range of anti-malarial medications.

Rabies



Rabies in animals (usually dogs and bats) is widespread. Occasional human cases are also reported.

Rabies is a serious viral infection, transmitted through close contact with saliva from infected animals (i.e. bites, scratches or licks on broken skin and mucous membranes). Travellers who suspect they may have come into contact with a rabies-infected animal should seek immediate emergency attention: post-exposure treatment has a high success rate if administered early. Late-stage rabies (when symptoms begin to occur) is untreatable and fatal.

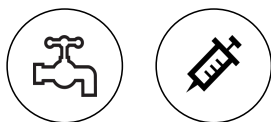
Traveller's diarrhoea (TD)



Traveller's diarrhoea (TD) is a catch-all term for a number of minor or moderate bacterial, viral and parasitic infections, generally transmitted through infected food or water. In the majority of cases antibiotics or anti-diarrhoeal medication is

unnecessary; travellers experiencing TD should ensure that they remain hydrated and well rested until their symptoms dissipate. Most cases of TD last less than three days; if diarrhoea continues for longer periods, travellers should consider consulting a medical professional.

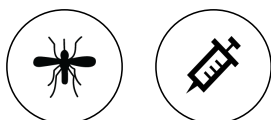
Tuberculosis (TB)



Tuberculosis is highly endemic in Panama with an annual occurrence was greater than or equal to 32 cases per 100,000 population.

Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection transmitted via the coughing and sneezing of infected persons. Symptoms – which may take years to develop if a person has latent TB – include fever, night sweats, chest pain, coughing up blood, weight loss and fatigue. TB can be treated with a course of antibiotics; the length of treatment is significantly longer once the disease becomes active and is no longer latent.

Yellow Fever



A yellow fever vaccination is recommended for all travellers who are visiting the **Darién** (including **Emberá**) and **Kuna Yala provinces** and areas east of the canal in the provinces of **Colón** and **Panamá**. This does not include **Panama City**, the **Panama Canal area** (old **Canal Zone**), the **Balboa Islands (Pearl Islands)** and **San Blas Islands**.

Yellow fever is a serious viral infection, transmitted by the bite of the Aedes mosquito, which is most active during early morning and late afternoon hours and commonly found in urban areas. Initial symptoms include a high fever, chills, vomiting nausea and backaches/muscle pain; in some cases those infected may develop potentially fatal complications, including jaundice, severe haemorrhaging and kidney failure. There is no post-infection treatment for yellow fever.

Zika Virus



Zika virus is a viral infection transmitted by the bite of the Aedes mosquito, which is most active during early morning and late afternoon hours and commonly found in urban areas, as well as through sexual contact with an infected person. Most cases of Zika virus are asymptomatic; where symptoms occur they are usually mild and include fever, headaches, conjunctivitis, rash and joint and muscle pain. Zika has been linked to microcephaly in unborn children. There is no treatment for Zika virus, beyond rehydration and bed rest.

Recent incidents

19 December 2023 - 20 December 2023

● **Moderate risk: Dengue fever cases, fatalities increase amid outbreak - Update**

Officials registered at least one new fatality from dengue in Guararé, Los Santos province, on 19 December, bringing confirmed cases to 12,924 and fatalities to 15 amid a nationwide outbreak since January. Colón, Bocas del Toro, Panamá metro, San Miguelito, Panamá Oeste and Chiriqui were the worst-affected.

25 October 2023 - 29 October 2023

● **Moderate risk: AMOACSS healthcare workers launch 72-hour strike until 28 October**

The Association of Physicians, Dentistry and Related Professionals of the Social Security Fund (AMOACSS) adhered to nationwide anti-mining protests and launched a 72-hour strike at 07:00 local time (12:00 GMT). The University of Panama also decided to suspend classes for the remainder of the week.

20 May 2023 - 21 May 2023

- **Moderate risk: Authorities confirm dengue fever, malaria infections nationwide**

Officials registered 1,661 cases of dengue fever nationwide as of 20 May amid an ongoing outbreak since 1 January. Colón, Panamá including Panama City and San Miguelito, Panamá Oeste, Bocas del Toro, Herrera and Los Santos were the worst-affected. Over 4,192 malaria cases were also confirmed.

20 May 2023 - 21 May 2023

- **Moderate risk: Leishmaniasis outbreak erupts in parts of the country**

Local health officials reported on 20 May that at least 628 confirmed cases of leishmaniasis, a disease transmitted through sand fly bites, were recorded including in Panamá Oeste, Bocas del Toro, Ngäbe Buglé, Coclé, Panamá, including Panama City and San Miguelito, Veraguas and Colón, since 1 January amid an outbreak.

Covid-19: ● Low Risk

Summary

International travel has resumed and economic and social activities have reopened. Daily case numbers peaked in January 2022, with smaller spike reported in May and December 2022.

What is the current nationwide Policy?: Open

Policy starts: 16 September 2022

Policy ends: indef

Policy explanation:

Policy source: https://www.atp.gob.pa/?page_id=372#2-qubely---a-full-fledged-gutenberg-builder

Last update: 24 October 2023

Infection

Infection Level: Low

Infection rate: 0.0 cases per 100k in the last 14 days

As of date: 09 November 2023

Hotspots: -

International Travel

International Flights

Is there a ban on international commercial flights? No
Through what date? indef

Flight Ban Explanation:

Regular international commercial flights through Tocumen International Airport (PTY/MPTO) have resumed. Copa Airlines has resumed commercial flight operations including to and from the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela, among others.

From 16 July 2022, masks are optional on international flights to and from Panama.

Last Update: 28 November 2023

Entry and Borders

Is there a ban on entry for any travellers? No
Through what date? indef

Travellers from where are banned?

Land border: Open

Maritime border: Open

Entry Rules Explanation:

International travellers are allowed entry regardless of their vaccination status.

The country's borders have reopened.

Entry Rules: <https://www.tourismpanama.com/plan-your-vacation/advisorie>
[s/](#)

Last

Update:

Testing

Do travellers need to take a COVID-19 test No

When?

Is it mandatory or optional?

Test Type:

Minimum age requirement:

Pre-travel test validity, in hours:

After arrival test days:

Testing Explanation:

There are no testing requirements in place for entry.

Testing Rules: -

Last Update: 28 November 2023

Health and Travel Documentations

Do arriving travellers need any health and/or travel documentation? No

Documentation Explanation:

Last Update: 24 October 2023

Tracing App

Do travellers need to use a contact tracing app after arriving? No

Tracing App Explanation:

There is no mandatory national contact tracing app at this time.

Last Update: 24 October 2023

Quarantine on Arrival

Who needs to quarantine on arrival Some travellers

Travellers from where need to quarantine?

How many days is quarantine? 7

Is it self-quarantine or operated by the government? Gov

Quarantine Explanation:

There are no quarantine requirements in place.

Quarantine Rules: <https://www.tourismpanama.com/plan-your-vacation/advisories/>

Last Update: 2023-11-28

Exit

Is there a ban on exit for any travellers? No

Are there special requirements to exit? No

Exit Requirements Explanation:

There are no special requirements to exit the country.

Exit Requirements (URL): <https://www.tourismpanama.com/plan-your-vacation/advisories/>
Last Update: 28 November 2023

Vaccination

Percent vaccinated with at least one dose: 81.895 as of 02 Jun 2023

Percent fully vaccinated: 72.0 as of 12 May 2023

Is vaccination mandatory for entry? No

Fully vaccinated are exempt from: -

Minimum age for vaccine requirements for travel:

Exemptions for vaccine requirements for travel:

"Fully vaccinated" is defined by the destination as:

Accepted vaccines, validity and special age restrictions:

Is mixing of vaccine doses authorised? N/A

Are specific combinations of mixed doses required?

"Boosted" is defined by the destination as:

Accepted boosters:

"Recently recovered" is defined by the destination as:

Recovery status is valid from days until after .

Vaccination certificates accepted:

Vaccination certificates accepted in the following languages:

Recent recovery document required:

Recent recovery document accepted in the following languages:

Explanation:

There are no vaccination requirements in place for entry.

Sources: <https://www.tourismpanama.com/plan-your-vacation/advisories/>

Last change to vaccination policy: 16 September 2022

Last Update: 28 November 2023

Other International Travel Restrictions

Exit Requirements Explanation:

Last Update:



Domestic Situation

Areas on Lockdown

Last Update:

Areas under Curfew

Last Update:

Domestic Travel

Domestic Travel Explanation:

Domestic flights and public transport have resumed.

The Panama Canal Authority has limited the depth of container ships to 13.26m (43.5 feet) for at least 10 months until June 2024, due to low water levels caused by a drought; ships must either carry less cargo or shed weight to float higher. Daily transits are capped at 31, and will be capped at 25 effective 3-7 November, and gradually reduce to 18 by 1 February 2024.

Last Update: 28 November 2023

Other Domestic Restrictions

Last Update: 24 October 2023

Resources

Health Dept COVID Site: <https://minsa.gob.pa/coronavirus-covid19>

There are no recent incidents

Local Travel : ● Medium Risk

Travel Safety

Air Travel: Tocumen International Airport (PTY/MPTO), located 25km (15 miles) east of **Panama City**, is modern, clean and efficient and has ample security. Terminal operations are disorganised and inbound travellers should expect long wait times. Bags should be watched closely while passing through the conveyor belt.

Due to airport security measures, taxis are parked away from the main terminal building. Dispatchers wearing green and red uniforms with identification badges hail the pickups. For added security, airport taxis are white and have no identifying marks other than a rear yellow licence plate bearing the letters 'SET'. Drivers, who carry a special badge, must register their destination at a police checkpoint upon leaving the airport. A police patrol is sent to check for all fares that do not reach their destination within a prescribed period of time. Ridesharing services such as Uber are available from the airport parking area and are typically cheaper or comparably priced to official taxi services.

The **Corredor Sur (South Corridor) Expressway** offers a direct, fast and safe route from the airport to **Downtown Panama City**. The trip to most hotels takes about 30 minutes, with ride-shares typically charging a bit less than taxis. Metrobus lines connect the airport with several areas of the city, including **Via España, Plaza Concordia, Tumba Muerto, Transístmica** and **Cervecería Nacional**, while free shuttle service runs to the **MetroMall Shopping Centre**.

Domestic flights and charters operated by Air Panama are available at **Marcos A. Gelabert Albrook International Airport (PAC/MPMG)**, located 1.5km (one mile) west of **Panama City**.

Airspace: Regular international commercial flights through Tocumen International Airport (PTY/MPTO) have resumed. Copa Airlines has resumed commercial flight operations including to and from the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela, among others.

From 16 July 2022, masks are optional on international flights to and from Panama.

Borders and Entry: International travellers are allowed entry regardless of their vaccination status.

The country's borders have reopened.

Exit: There are no special requirements to exit the country.

Road Travel: Traffic moves on the right in Panama. Roads in Panama are in fair condition. The **Pan-American Highway**, stretching from **Panama City** to the **Panama-Costa Rica border**, is in good condition but heavily-laden with truck and bus traffic. The **Panama-Colón Expressway** and secondary roads that branch off of the **Pan-American Highway** are also in decent condition. Most paved roads are well maintained, yet poor lightning and non-functioning traffic lights are common. The majority of Panama's road system remains unpaved and subject to impassable conditions during the rainy season (April-December).

The old **Trans-Isthmian Highway** between **Panama City** and **Colón** is generally well-maintained but night driving can be particularly hazardous. There are highway patrols 24 hours a day and generally few reported cases of malicious acts, however. There are many restaurants and filling stations along the highway west of **Panama City** but to the east, towards **Darién**, they are much less common.

Seat belts are compulsory for drivers and front seat passengers and children under five must travel in booster seats in the back. All vehicles licensed in Panama must have liability insurance. Collision coverage is optional and limited to newer vehicles only. As such, many locals drive without it. If involved in a car accident, visitors should wait with the vehicle until the traffic police (Transito) arrive; this is required by Panamanian law. The speed limit is between 60kph (31 mph) and 100kph (62 mph) on highways and 30kph (18 mph) in urban areas.

Rail Travel: A luxury train service connects **Panama City (Corozal)** with **Colón**.

Public Transport

Ferries and Boats: Boaters should avoid the coast of **Kuna Yala Comarca (San Blas Islands)**, south of **Punta Carreto**, on the Atlantic Coast, due to narcotics transport in the area. Shipping and tourist vessels off the coast of Panama are also susceptible to pirate attacks.

Buses: Inter-city buses in Panama are often small and cramped. Consider flying for inter-city travel between **Panama City** and **David**, or for travel to **Bocas del Toro**. Opt for modern Metrobus city buses instead of Diablos Rojos (Red Devils) buses in **Panama City** due to lack of regulatory enforcement of the latter.

Taxis: Registered taxis in **Panama City** and all other urban centres, with the exception

of **Colón**, are generally safe. Consider using radio taxis, private drivers or ridesharing services as hailing taxis from the street can take some time, especially at night or during the rainy season. **Panama City** taxis are a riot of different colours, makes and models. Look for rooftop signs and yellow licence plates bearing the word taxi. Licence numbers are painted on the doors. There are no metres; taxis operate on a zoning system and fares are inexpensive but should be arranged in advance. Rides anywhere within the capital rarely exceed USD5. Whenever possible, hotel or radio-dispatched taxis, dialled through telephone number 264-6788, are advised.

Unregistered cabs are unsafe and should be avoided. Past incidents of serious assault have involved taxi drivers. It is advisable not to travel unaccompanied and not to sit in the front seat of a taxi. Avoid getting in a taxi with strangers and instruct the driver not to stop and pick up any additional passengers.

Vehicle Hire: Rental cars from international and national firms are available. Foreign licences are valid for up to 90 days. Avoid driving east of **Panama City** or in **Colón**, as random acts of crime in both places is higher than in the rest of the country.

Car theft is decreasing in **Panama City** due to more effective policing and dismantling of 'chop shops.' European and Japanese luxury sedans are most commonly sought. To deter theft, don't park in isolated places. Alarms, demobilisation devices and brake and clutch locking mechanisms also reduce risks. Valuables should never be left visible in parked vehicles, even for short periods, since the looting of unoccupied cars is commonplace.

Theft from moving vehicles is most likely to occur at busy intersections in **Panama Viejo, Río Abajo, San Miguelito** and **Santa Ana**. Perpetrators typically work in teams of two or more. One distracts the victim – window cleaning is a typical ruse – while an accomplice reaches into an open window or opens an unlocked door. Sometimes windows are shattered to gain access.

The best defence against vehicle assault is to remain alert, keep vehicle windows rolled up and doors locked (use of tinted window film is also permitted). Try to avoid eye contact with individuals approaching your vehicle and never keep valuables in open view. Leaving extra space between vehicles can also facilitate manoeuvring at traffic lights.

Metro: Panama City Metro Rail consists of two lines running between **Albrook Airport** and **San Isidro** (Line 1) and between **San Miguelito** and **Nuevo Tocumén** (Line 2).

Movement Control Orders

Special permission is needed from the National Environment Authority to visit the National Park on **Coiba Island**.

Recent incidents

17 October 2023 - 18 October 2023

- **Moderate risk: Saudi authorities extend e-visa scheme for nationals of Türkiye, other countries - Update**

Saudi authorities extended the e-visa (electronic visa) scheme for nationals of Türkiye, Thailand, Mauritius, Seychelles, Panama and Saint Kitts and Nevis to enter Saudi Arabia for up to 90 days, effective until further notice. The e-visa is valid for multiple entries and is intended for tourism and business, among other government-approved visits.

Destination Hotspots

Darién province can be extremely dangerous due to general lawlessness and remoteness near the **Panama-Colombia border**. Guerilla and paramilitary incursions into the **Panama-Colombia border area** are common. Drug, arms and human trafficking by organised armed groups also take place. Both locals and foreign nationals have been the victims of violent crimes, kidnappings and murder in this area. Dozens of migrants continue to die or disappear annually attempting to cross the **Darién Gap**.

If venturing into **Darién province**, air travel is recommended. Should overland travel be scheduled, go only with an organised group to recognised tourist destinations protected by Panamanian Police. Do not stray from the immediate vicinity of the protected resort area. It may also be necessary to have a police escort for ground travel. Please contact your local embassy for details prior to any trip to **Darién province**.

Safety

Emergency Numbers

Fire	103	
Police	104	
Medical	911	
Emergency	911	All emergencies

Beaches and Public Areas: Do not swim in the **Bay of Panama** around **Panama City**. It is polluted with industrial waste and untreated sewage. Some Pacific and Caribbean beaches have strong currents and undertows; be cautious and follow local instructions. Remain apprised of socio-political developments in the country prior to travel and during travel in case of renewed protests or roadblocks. **Panama** recently experienced a two-month long protest against a mining contract renewal.

Corruption: Travellers may encounter corruption in Panama's public service sector, particularly by policemen who will try to extort a bribe through real and bogus traffic offences. Travellers may also be confronted with security officials or other authorities who expect to be paid a bribe for their services. Bribes should not be directly offered to an official, as it is illegal and could result in more trouble. Foreign businesses looking to invest in Panamanian ventures are advised to first consult with experienced law professionals before committing any funds.

Documents and Identification: Panamanian law requires all persons (citizens and foreign nationals) to carry official documentation at all times. Due to an increase in illegal immigration, the police have been checking these documents more frequently of late. Failure to show identification upon request may result in jail detention and a fine being imposed.

Drugs and Alcohol: Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Panama are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Heavy terms of imprisonment upwards to 15 years are applicable even for possession of very small quantities of drugs. Simply being in the company of someone using drugs is sufficient reason for arrest. Drug-related prison sentences are served in local jails, which do not meet basic standards.

Drinking and driving is not tolerated and blood alcohol level higher than 0.0 percent may result in fines or a jail sentence.

Food and Drink: Avoid unpasteurised milk and any by-product, such as ice cream. Avoid food and beverages obtained from street vendors, as well as raw or undercooked meat or fish. Bottled water is strongly recommended. Do not drink tap water or beverages with ice cubes unless the water has been boiled, filtered, or chemically disinfected.

Import and Export: Panamanian customs authorities are likely to enforce strict regulations regarding the import or export of items including firearms, ammunition, cultural artefacts, endangered wildlife species, narcotics and food products.

Law: The judicial process is extremely slow. Persons caught violating Panamanian laws, even unknowingly, may be arrested, expelled or imprisoned. From the time of arrest, appearing before a judge can take upwards of 12-24 months. Prisons in Panama are renowned for their harsh conditions.

Photography: It is illegal to photograph official buildings in Panama. If in doubt, make sure to check with local authorities. Permission should also be sought before taking photographs, especially of children or women. When taking photos of indigenous people, it is not uncommon to be asked to pay a small fee.

Security Services: Since the abolishment of standing military in 1990, as a result of a 1989 US invasion that overthrew the military dictatorship, security services under the Panamanian Public Forces (FPP) enjoy a much better reputation than their predecessors. The FPP includes the National Police (PNP), National Maritime Service, National Air Service, and an armed Institutional Protection Service (SPI), PNP being a paramilitary force of around 20,000 officers. Law enforcement units such as the Technical Judicial Police (PTJ) are directly subordinate to civilian authorities. PNP response is adequate, but units of the FPP tend to lack the equipment and training facilities which may result in slow or inconclusive investigations.

Culture

Cultural and Religious Sensitivities: Panama has five indigenous regions (comarcas): **Guna Yala, Emberá, Ngäbe Buglé** and **Naso Tjër Di** and two indigenous subdivisions (corregimientos): **Madungandí** and **Wargandí**. Despite the influence of modern society, indigenous groups continue to hold strongly onto their traditional culture and language. **Guna Yala province** has its own internal government and each island is administered by a chief. Tourism is restricted to only a few of the islands and visitors must get permission from the chief prior to visiting any of the islands.

Panamanians are Catholic and thus tend to be more conservative outside urban centres.

Specific Traveller Advice

Female Travellers

Local Customs and Laws: There are no local customs that a female traveller should take into consideration in Panama. Familiarise yourself with your destination prior to travel, and be respectful and mindful of any possible cultural sensitivities, which may include dress, behaviour and topics of discussions.

Safety: There are some safety concerns that a female traveller should take into consideration in Panama. Harassment, sexual assaults and violence targeting women does occur in Panama, especially in **Panama City, Colón, David, Mosquito Coast** and **Darién region** along the border with Colombia, but isolated incidents have also been reported in beach areas. Female travellers may receive unwanted attention from men, ranging from open displays of catcalling and staring to physical groping, including at day time. It is best to ignore these advances or confrontations and walk away. In the event that harassment escalates, draw attention to what is happening and locals will likely come to your aid. Exercise personal safety awareness if walking alone at night. Stick to main, well-lit streets and avoid walking through desolate areas, beaches or unfamiliar neighbourhoods, especially at night, due to the persisting risk of violent crimes, including sexual assault targeting foreign female nationals. Taxis and public transport are among the most common places for harassment in Panama. Only use official and registered taxis, reputed radio cabs or ride-hailing services and avoid public transport, especially at night, to limit exposure to possible cases of harassment. Avoid sitting in the front seat of the taxi, especially at night, and always take the seat behind the driver. Female travellers should exercise caution when reporting crimes to local police as there have been reports of law enforcement undermining incidents of harassment and assault. Consider consulting your home consulate/embassy for legal advice and ensure you receive a copy of the police report. When available consider reporting crimes to Tourist Police Units who maintain a high degree of professionalism.

Health and Wellness: Women have access to some specialised gynaecological and reproductive health services, medicines and products in Panama, especially in urban areas. Abortion is legal in Panama only in cases where the life of the woman is in danger, in cases of rape or foetal malformation. Specialised clinics, prescription emergency contraceptives and prescription contraceptives and feminine hygiene products may not be readily available outside **Panama City, David** and other cities.

Consider bringing an adequate supply of female-specific OTC drugs, feminine hygiene products and oral contraceptive pills, which may not be available locally. Consult a health professional prior to travel, especially if pregnant or planning to become pregnant, due to a potential risk of Zika virus.

LGBT+

Homosexuality is legal in Panama. There are some legal protections for LGBT+ persons in the country, including anti-discrimination laws and laws concerning gender identity or expression (in a limited capacity). Same-sex marriage is illegal. LGBT+ activity and persons are somewhat socially accepted. Despite the legal status of LGBT+ rights, social conservatism is prevalent in some parts of the country. Travellers may prefer to be discreet about sexual orientation and avoid excessive public displays of affection in areas where attitudes towards the LGBT+ community are unknown or generally not accepted. Use caution in conversations about sexuality or LGBT+ issues with strangers or recent acquaintances. Consider booking hotel rooms with two separate beds. Transgender travellers may wish to consider having their passport and identification changed to reflect new gender before travelling.

Technology & Communication Risk

Travellers are unlikely to face risks related to information and communication technology (ICT) in Panama.

Internet access and social media have no restrictions. While some government officials have employed libel laws to suppress criticism by taking publishers to court, this is uncommon and unlikely to affect travellers. There are no concerns related to device searches or sensitive technology. Device searches and inspections at the border are unlikely. There are no restrictions in relation to bringing or operating sensitive equipment, which may include photo cameras, satellite phones, drones, and other GPS systems, in the country.

State or criminal penetration of private data is unlikely. Authorities implement minimal state surveillance of ICT networks in the country.

Travellers should exercise basic ICT safety precautions. However, travellers should note that ICT laws and practices are subject to change on short notice, and travellers are recommended to confirm the legality/appropriateness of their specific ICT needs prior to departure.

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