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## General

Panama is located in Middle America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean.

It is bounded to the E by Colombia and to the W by Costa Rica. Heavily wooded hills and mountain ranges generally span the length of the country with the exception of the low gap at its narrowest part through which the Panama Canal crosses.

Elevations E of the canal rise to a height of about 1,615m near the Colombian border and to a height of 3,475m in the mountains to the W of the canal.

Most of the numerous rivers of the country flow into the Pacific Ocean and are of little or no importance to navigation.

Panama has about 477 miles of coastline on the Caribbean Sea side and 767 miles on the Pacific Ocean side.

Puerto Armuelles, a banana exporting center, is the only port of any commercial significance. The other maritime trade passes through the Panama Canal ports of Balboa and Cristobal.

The climate is tropical. It is hot, humid, and cloudy with the rainy season from May to January and the dry season from January to May.

The terrain in the interior is mostly steep with rugged mountains and dissected, upland plains. The coastal areas are largely plains and rolling hills.

## Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region B) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

## Currency

The official unit of currency is the balboa, consisting of 100 centesimos.

## Government

Panama is a constitutional republic. The government consists of a single chamber legislature elected every four years, and now consists of 42 members. The President is elected by vote for a term of four years.

There are normally two Vice Presidents, elected every four years by vote, and a cabinet of seven ministers nominated by the President, who may attend and address the legislature but may not vote.

The capital is Panama.

## Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

January 1, New Year's Day; January 9, Day of Mourning; February 15, Carnival Tuesday; Good Friday; May 1, Labor Day; October 11, Revolution Day; November 3, Independence Day; November 10, Declaration of Independence; November 28, Independence Day; December 8, Mother's Day; and December 25, Christmas Day.

**Industries**

The main industries are based on manufacturing, and construction, petroleum refining, brewing coffee, cement and other construction materials, and sugar milling.

Local industries include cigarettes, clothing, food processing, shoes, soap, and cement products. Foreign firms are being encouraged to establish industries, and an oil refinery is in operation in Colon.

**Languages**

The official language of Panama is Spanish, but English is spoken extensively by the West Indian population in the cities.

**Time Zone**

The Time Zone description is ROMEO (+5).

**U.S. Embassy**

The U.S. Embassy is located in Avenida Balboa and Calle 38, Apartado 6959, Panama City.

The mailing address is American Embassy Panama, Unit 0945; APO AA 34002.