

WHY PANAMA

Panama is paradise for retirees and anyone seeking safe refuge in difficult and uncertain times. Panama is a country of only 3 million mostly Catholic, hard working and educated people.

Affordable real estate, a low cost of living, fabulous scenery and relaxed pace should put this gem at the top of the list for Americans on a fixed income. It's the gateway for global commerce with the Panama Canal. The Canal is currently undergoing a \$5.2 billion expansion, which when complete will triple its current capacity. This means even more possibilities exist for commerce and business in the next few years, and beyond.

Panama is one of the best places in the world for retirees today, combining a low cost of living, near-perfect weather and one of the world's best discount programs for retirees, with up to 50% off everything from public transport to movies, mortgage rates, doctor's visits, electricity, restaurants and airfares.

Panama gives immediate residency to foreigners from 22 countries that maintain friendly, professional, economic and investment relationships with Panama. The United States is listed among these countries. Immediate foreign residents have the right to work in Panama, establish a business and engage in professional and economic activities. After five years of living in Panama, they may apply for full citizenship.

With over 80 international banks, it has been placed among the world's largest banking sectors. Three of Panama's banks were featured in the top 1000 world banks for 2012. The leading banks in Panama and their positions are:

- Banco General
- Banco Latinoamericano de Exportaciones
- 789 Banco Nacional de Panama
- Scotiabank is in Panama, as well as HSBC

When you compare Panama with its neighbors, you'll see that it has more amenities than traditional retirement spots such as Mexico and Costa Rica, with lower costs and FAR lower crime rates. In Panama, you'll encounter less red tape and less interference from local authorities.

To encourage long-term foreign investment, Panama requires no special authorizations, permits or prior registration for foreign investors. The Investment Stability Law, passed in 1998, protects foreign investors from any change in tax, customs, municipal and labor rules for a period of 10 years after an investment is registered.

Major companies doing business in Panama include Federal Express, DHL, Sears, Price Costco, BellSouth, Kansas City Southern Railways, Continental and American Airlines, Warranty Company of the Americas and Hutchison Whampoa. Plus, you'll find just about every American franchise you can imagine on the streets of Panama City.

And there are other incentives for foreigners to spend time here, invest here ... or

retire here. For example:

Newcomers who buy or build a new house won't owe any property taxes for 20

years.

Residents pay no taxes on foreign-earned income.

Tourism investments have 20-year exemptions from import duties, fees for construction materials and equipment, and income, real estate and other taxes.

The U.S. dollar is legal tender in Panama, which insulates its economy from global shocks. During the Asian monetary crisis of 1998, Panama became one of the healthiest economies in Latin America.

Panama's pensionado program;

Once you become a resident "pensioner" of Panama under the Tourist Pensionado Visa, you are eligible for the most appealing program of benefits for retirees available anywhere in the world right now.

The rules for becoming a "pensioner" and qualifying for this visa program in Panama are probably not what you'd expect.

In fact, anyone over the age of 18 may apply and can qualify as a pensionado in Panama. All you need is a guaranteed pension income of \$1200 per month. As a qualified pensioner in Panama, you would be entitled to:

50% off entertainment anywhere in the country (movies, theaters, concerts,

sporting events, etc.)

30% off bus, boat, and train fares

25% off airline tickets

50% off hotel stays Monday through Thursday, 30% off Friday through Sunday

25% off restaurant meals

15% off at fast-food restaurants

15% off hospital bills (if no insurance applies)

10% off prescription medicines

20% off doctors' consultations

15% off dental and eye exams

20% off professional and technical services

50% off closing costs for home loans and more

Crossroads of the Americas; Panama is also perhaps the most accessible retirement haven for Americans Europeans and Canadians.

There is a frequent nonstop service to Panama City's Tocumen International Airport and 200 miles by air or highway to the city of David, where most of the Americans and Canadians live.

It's a 2½-hour flight from Miami on American Airlines and COPA, Panama's national airline or American , Delta and United from Toronto get there in 5.4 to 8.5 hours.

Panama has one of the lowest costs of living in all Central and South America: A U.S.-style home can be built for about \$40 per square foot; unskilled labor costs \$6.40 per day; a full-time live-in maid costs \$120 to \$160 a month; a beer at a bar costs 35 cents; a cup of coffee, 30 cents; a haircut and shave can cost as little as \$2; an afternoon at a beauty salon is \$8; electricity is about 10 cents per kilowatt-hour; water bills are \$18 per year; telephone service costs roughly \$30 a month; Internet access is \$14 a month; wireless is available for a bit more;

cellular-telephone service costs about \$30 a month plus a per-minute charge of around 22 cents; and cable TV will cost you about \$30 a month.

As a foreign resident, if you buy or build a new house, you won't pay property taxes for 20 years, nor will you pay taxes on foreign-earned income. Personal income tax is based on a sliding scale from a minimum of 4% to a maximum of 30%.

A Value Added Tax of 5% to 10% is charged on most products and services. Transfer taxes on real estate are paid by the seller, and there is no inheritance tax or gift tax.

The three best places to buy real estate in Panama are: the city of David, the mountains of Boquete, the beaches of the Pearl Islands, and, if you enjoy big city life, the First World metropolis of Panama City.

Boquete: Boquete sits in Panama's mountainous Chiriqui region at an elevation of about 3,500 feet. It's cool, quiet, unspoiled, uncrowded. Mountains, rivers, waterfalls. lush green hills and great masses of red and purple flowers. Cost of a home: Our two-bedroom homes start at \$158,000 US with three bedroom 2 bath units priced at \$178,000 .

Today Panama is like a closely guarded secret playground for wealthy and famous political leaders, writers, entertainers and businessmen --

not just from Panama but from all over the world. The richest woman in the world just moved to Panama.

The world was changed as the new richest woman in the world was crowned. Analiede Gallardo de English, the granddaughter and sole heiress to one of the richest families in the world, turns 25 and is now living in Panama which she and her advisors consider the safest place in the world.

Panama City: Here you'll find world-class restaurants, every imaginable luxury, hundreds of multinational businesses . . . all at about half the price you'd pay in Miami, Toronto, or any other city for that matter.

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