



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

Cities of Panama

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** Panama City: Gateway to the Americas
- **Chapter 2** Casco Viejo and Panamá Viejo: The Heart of History
- **Chapter 3** Colón: Caribbean Portal and Free Trade Giant
- **Chapter 4** Portobelo and San Lorenzo: Fortresses of the Spanish Main
- **Chapter 5** David: The Economic Engine of Chiriquí
- **Chapter 6** Boquete and Volcán: Highlands of Coffee and Adventure
- **Chapter 7** Santiago de Veraguas: "The Green City" at Panama's Center
- **Chapter 8** Santa Fé and the Highlands of Veraguas
- **Chapter 9** La Chorrera: Panama's Agricultural Heartland
- **Chapter 10** Arraiján and the Pacific Corridor
- **Chapter 11** Penonomé: Handicrafts and Festivals in Coclé
- **Chapter 12** Antón and El Valle de Antón: A Crater Community
- **Chapter 13** Chitré: The Pulse of the Azuero Peninsula
- **Chapter 14** Las Tablas: Folklore and Panamanian Traditions
- **Chapter 15** Pedasí and the Eastern Azuero
- **Chapter 16** Bocas del Toro: Caribbean Paradise and Island Culture
- **Chapter 17** Bocas Town and Isla Colón
- **Chapter 18** Almirante and Changuinola: Bananas and Beyond
- **Chapter 19** Aguadulce and the Sugar Coast
- **Chapter 20** La Palma and Darién: Gateway to the Jungle
- **Chapter 21** San Miguelito: Urban Life Next Door to the Capital
- **Chapter 22** Chepo and the Gateway to the East
- **Chapter 23** Gamboa and the Canal Zone Towns
- **Chapter 24** Balboa and Ancón: Administrative and Canal Heritage
- **Chapter 25** Sabanitas, Nombre de Dios, and the Forgotten Coast

Introduction

Panama is a country defined by its crossroads nature—a vibrant tapestry that weaves together cultures, histories, and landscapes from across the Americas and around the world. Strategically poised between two continents and two vast oceans, Panama is more than the sum of its famous canal or its celebrated biodiversity; it is above all a nation of cities. Each of its urban centers, from pulsating metropolises to tranquil towns, offers a doorway into the country's soul, inviting exploration, discovery, and appreciation.

This book, "Cities of Panama," was conceived to illuminate the rich history and dynamic modernity of Panama's great urban centers. Cities like Panama City and Colón reflect dramatic tales of conquest, commerce, and continuity, while Chiriquí's David, the highland towns of Boquete, and the bustling heart of Santiago de Veraguas tell stories of resilience, migration, and change. Through colonial streets, glass towers, Caribbean markets, and indigenous villages, Panama's cities embody the complex interplay of tradition and innovation that defines the nation as both ancient and forward-looking.

Visitors arriving in Panama, whether landing first in the cosmopolitan sprawl of Panama City or journeying directly to the balmy Bocas del Toro islands, soon sense the distinct energy each city brings. The capital's skyline tells of a new global hub, while in Chitré and Las Tablas, the tempo of life moves with the rhythms of folkloric drums and the annual carnaval. Penonomé and La Chorrera echo with the harmonies of community, agriculture, and festival, while outposts like Santiago stand as proud testes to regional identity, commerce, and culture. Each city's heritage is inscribed in its museums, markets, music, and the shared memory of its people.

Yet these cities are more than historical showcases or economic engines—they are living, changing organisms. Over the centuries, Panama's urban centers have expanded and adapted to commerce along the world's highways and trade routes, the migrations of people seeking opportunity, and the creative forces that have shaped architecture, cuisine, and daily life. The result is an urban landscape simultaneously local and global, where ancient ruins stand alongside modern infrastructure, and ancestral traditions coexist with the innovations of a new century.

As a guide for visitors and a resource for the curious reader, this book aims to serve as both a gateway and a companion. Each chapter provides a window into the story, culture, and attractions of a particular city or region, offering practical advice for travelers, insights into daily life, and glimpses of the challenges and triumphs that have marked Panama's urban journey. Whether your interest is historical exploration,

culinary adventure, nature, nightlife, or simply authentic local encounters, you will find in the cities of Panama an invitation to connect deeply with the country's past, present, and future.

With this book as your companion, set out to explore the great cities of Panama. Let their streets, plazas, and panoramas reveal a nation thriving at the center of the world—welcoming all who come to discover its spirit, its people, and its eternal sense of possibility.

SAMPLE COPY

CHAPTER ONE: Panama City: Gateway to the Americas

Panama City, the pulsating heart of the Republic of Panama, stands as a testament to strategic geography and relentless ambition. It's a city where glistening skyscrapers reflect the tropical sun, just a stone's throw from the ancient ruins of its original incarnation, Panamá Viejo. This vibrant metropolis, perched at the Pacific entrance of the iconic Panama Canal, serves as the nation's political, administrative, banking, and commercial epicenter, boasting a metropolitan population exceeding 2.1 million. For visitors, it's often the first glimpse into the rich tapestry that is Panama, a country that truly embodies its role as a bridge between continents.

The city's narrative began on August 15, 1519, when Spanish conquistador Pedro Arias Dávila founded what would become the first European settlement on the Pacific coast of the Americas. This initial settlement, Panamá Viejo, quickly became a critical hub for Spanish colonial power. It wasn't just a place to hang your hat; it was the launching pad for ambitious expeditions, most notably those that led to the conquest of the Inca Empire in Peru. Imagine the bustling scene, with hopeful conquistadors, weary travelers, and fortunes in gold and silver passing through its gates.

Panamá Viejo's significance extended beyond military staging. It was an essential stop on one of the most vital trade routes in the Americas, facilitating the transport of vast quantities of gold and silver plundered by Spain from its South American mines. These precious metals were shipped northward to Panama City, then carried across the narrow Isthmus by pack animals to Caribbean ports like Nombre de Dios or Portobelo, destined for Spain. This flow of wealth made the city a tempting target, and indeed, its prosperity was eventually curtailed by the constant threat of pirates and privateers.

The inevitable occurred in 1671 when the Welsh privateer Henry Morgan, with a formidable force of 1,400 men, attacked and looted the city. Panamá Viejo was subsequently sacked and burned, a dramatic end to its initial chapter. Today, the architectural vestiges of this original city, known as Panamá Viejo, remain a poignant and popular tourist attraction, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003. Visitors can wander through the ruins of its cathedral, convents, churches, and other structures, transporting themselves back to an era of daring exploration and immense wealth.

Just two years after its destruction, in 1673, Panama City was formally reestablished approximately eight kilometers (five miles) southwest of the original site. This new location, chosen for better defense against future pirate attacks, is what we now know as Casco Viejo, or the Old Quarter. This historic district, also a UNESCO World Heritage

Site, is a picturesque labyrinth of colonial churches, plazas, and palaces, showcasing a charming blend of architectural styles, including Caribbean, Republican, Art Deco, and French.

Geographically, modern Panama City is beautifully situated between the Pacific Ocean and a sprawling tropical rainforest. This unique setting means that within minutes of the urban bustle, one can find themselves amidst lush biodiversity. The Metropolitan Natural Park, for instance, borders the Panama Canal and is a haven for unique bird species and animals such as tapirs, pumas, and caimans. It's a refreshing reminder that even in a burgeoning metropolis, nature is never far away. Another natural gem is Cerro Ancón, the city's highest natural point, offering incredible panoramic views of both the historic Casco Viejo and the modern skyline. A relatively easy hike to the summit can reward visitors with sightings of sloths, deer, and toucans.

The city's economy is a dynamic force, largely propelled by its status as a major international financial center and the ongoing activities associated with the Panama Canal. Panama City is home to around eighty banks, with at least fifteen being local institutions. The country's dollarized economy, coupled with a robust financial infrastructure and favorable business climate, has solidified its position as a key player in Latin American finance, attracting multinational corporations and foreign investors. This economic prowess translates into a significant contribution to the national GDP, with Panama City responsible for approximately 55% of the country's total.

Tourism, too, has become an increasingly vital pillar of Panama City's economy, experiencing substantial growth since the transfer of the Panama Canal Zone to Panamanian control at the end of the 20th century. Visitors are drawn to the city's unique blend of history, culture, and modernity. The hospitality industry has flourished in response, with an array of luxury hotels, diverse restaurants, and vibrant entertainment venues catering to both tourists and business travelers.

Culturally, Panama City is a captivating melting pot, a reflection of the diverse people who have traversed and settled here over centuries. This rich tapestry of influences is evident in the variety of languages commonly spoken, which, in addition to Spanish, include German, Portuguese, French, Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, and English. The city's cultural vibrancy is showcased in its numerous shopping centers, restaurants offering global cuisines, and a lively nightlife, particularly in areas like Calle Uruguay and Casco Viejo.

Beyond the glittering lights and bustling markets, Panama City also nurtures its intellectual and artistic life. It is home to the national university, the University of Santa María la Antigua, along with various academies, libraries, museums, and research institutes. Notable landmarks that speak to the city's institutional and historical significance include the stately Palace of Justice and La Presidencia, the official residence and offices of the President of Panama. The National Palace is

another architectural highlight, as is the strikingly colorful Biomuseo on the Amador Causeway, designed by Frank Gehry, which offers a captivating look at Panama's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

For those seeking to delve into the country's past and engineering marvels, Panama City offers a wealth of museums. The Panama Canal Museum, housed in a beautifully restored building in Casco Viejo, traces the history of this monumental feat of engineering. The Museo de la Mola, on the other hand, provides insight into the intricate artistry of the indigenous Guna people. These cultural institutions, alongside numerous plazas, theaters, and cathedrals, make Panama City a hub of artistic and historical exploration.

The city's culinary scene is a delight, earning it the title of Creative City in Gastronomy in 2017 by UNESCO, a recognition of its rich food history based on diverse cultures and natural resources. With over 2,477 restaurants and food kiosks, there's an endless array of flavors to explore. From traditional Panamanian fare to international gourmet experiences, Panama City caters to every palate. This gastronomic diversity is a direct reflection of the cultural exchange that has long defined the city.

Panama City truly is a city of contrasts and connections. From its ancient ruins to its modern skyline, from its bustling financial district to its serene rainforests, it offers a multifaceted experience for every visitor. Whether you're interested in tracing the footsteps of conquistadors, marveling at a modern engineering wonder, indulging in world-class cuisine, or simply enjoying the vibrant atmosphere, Panama City serves as an unforgettable gateway to the Americas.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY