

General Notes about visiting Panama

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Passport with signature, minimum validity for six additional months.
- Round trip airline ticket
- Sufficient funds for length of stay
- Visa/Tourist card, depending of nationality, as follows:

PANAMANIAN IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS

THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA IS THE HOST COUNTRY FOR THE SMITHSONIAN TROPICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (STRI). THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT HAS GENEROUSLY CEDED CERTAIN SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS TO STRI THAT ALLOWS US TO FACILITATE YOUR VISIT TO OUR HOST COUNTRY.

THE PANAMA IMMIGRATION NATIONAL SERVICE HAS RECENTLY PUT IN EFFECT NEW REGULATIONS STIPULATED IN LAW #3, DATED AUGUST 2008. FOLLOWING THESE REGULATIONS, NEW VISA CATEGORIES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED FOR TOURISTS/VISITORS COMING TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.

ALL VISITORS TO STRI MUST COMPLY WITH EXISTING REGULATIONS. THEREFORE, ALL VISITORS WHO NEED A VISA AND ARE COMING TO STRI FOR A PERIOD FROM ONE MONTH AND UP TO ONE YEAR, SHOULD APPLY FOR THE CORRESPONDING TYPE OF VISA (BELOW) **BEFORE** TRAVELING TO PANAMA AT YOUR NEAREST PANAMANIAN CONSULATE.

CITIZENS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA, ECUADOR, PERU AND MEXICO MUST PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION WITH TIME NEEDED TO COMPLY WITH SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.

THE VISA CATEGORY APPROPRIATE TO STRI'S MISSION IS THE **SHORT TERM VISA AS RESEARCHER/SCIENTIST/STUDENT**. SEE THE GENERAL VISA LIST BELOW AND INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE TRAVELING TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.

- [Visa Corta Estancia 2009](#) [Download PDF]
See visa application form attached. Reference Points page 2 - # 19(d); page 5 - # 10

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- **Yellow Fever vaccine** - Mandatory for countries marked in red
- A Valid passport (for at least 6 months)
- A round trip ticket
- Sufficient funds for length of stay (minimum of \$500.00 cash)
- **Visas**, as follows:

1. **Do Not require a visa:** Citizens of the following countries can travel to Panama for a stay of **90** days or less without a visa nor a tourist card. See notes.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Argentina | Austria | Belgium | Bolivia |
| Brazil | Czech Rep. | Chile | Costa Rica |
| Cyprus | Denmark | Finland | France |
| Germany | Great Britain | Greece | Guatemala |
| Holland | Honduras | Hungary | Israel |
| Italy | Korea (South) | Lithuania | Luxembourg |
| Nicaragua | Paraguay | Poland | Portugal |
| El Salvador | Singapore | Spain | Switzerland |
| Sweden | The Netherlands | Uruguay | Vatican |

2. **Tourist card- 30 days:** Citizens of the following countries must have a tourist card, valid for a stay of **30** days only. This card can be obtained at the airline or at Panama airport. See notes.

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Colombia | Bahamas | Belize | Bermuda |
| Granada | Jamaica | Japan | New Zealand |
| Venezuela | | | |

3. **Tourist card- 90 days:** Citizens of the following countries must have a tourist card, valid for a stay of **90** days. This card can be obtained at the airline or at Panama airport. See notes.

| | | | |
|----------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Canada | USA | Australia | Japan |
| Thailand | Taiwan | Mexico | |

4. **Short Term Visa as Researcher/Scientist:** Citizens of the following countries must obtain a short Term visa as Researcher/Scientist stamped on the passport, valid for one month and/or up to 9 months, before arriving to Panama. See notes.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Cameroon | Dominican Republic | Ecuador | Peru |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|

Ghana Papua New Guinea Russia Ucrania

5. **Short Term Visa as Researcher/Scientist - pre authorized:**
Citizens of the following countries must obtain a short term visa stamped on passport for the period of time invited by STRI, before arriving to Panama. See notes.

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| Cuba | China | India | Korea (North) |
| Congo Dem. Rep. | Nigeria | Philippines | Egypt |
| Sri Lanka | Turkey | | |

6. And other nations of **Africa, Asia, Middle East and Oceania not listed in # 4 or 5 above.**

Important Notes

- If your stay is for less than 90 days, no action is necessary for those citizens of countries that can stay up to 90 days. A penalty will have to be paid if you exceed your time before exiting Panama.
- If you plan to stay up to 90 days, and you have a tourist card valid for 30 days only, a regular extension for extra 60 days can be requested at Immigration through STRI in Panama. No further extension can be requested and a penalty will have to be paid if you exceed your time before exiting Panama.
- If you plan to stay more than 90 days and up 9 months, you must obtain a short Term visa as Researcher/Scientist stamped on the passport before arriving to Panama. This visa must be requested at your nearest Panamanian Embassy/Consulate.
- If you plan to stay in Panama beyond 9 months or more, and you are a citizen of any country mentioned in points #1 and #3 above, you may enter the Rep. of Panama as there in mentioned. STRI will assist you with the corresponding visa process, at STRI Panama headquarters, before your initial 90 days period expires.
- Any further extension of your stay in Panama is subject to approval from the Immigration National Service or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whenever applicable.
- Dependents, per Immigration regulations, are only legal wife, legal husband, children.
- Any **Visa** application should be made at your nearest Panamanian Embassy/Consulate, two months in advance of your intended arrival.

- If it is necessary, STRI can assist citizens of countries, where there is no Panamanian consulate representation, with the visa application from our headquarters in Panama, previous notification of at least two months in advance of your intended travel plans.
- Immigration information is subject to change, therefore we recommend that you check your nearest Panamanian Consulate, travel agent, airline or call Panama Immigration National Service at (507) 507.1800 for updated information. Web site: <http://www.migracion.gob.pa/>
- AT STRI, for any additional information, you may contact Ms.Celideth De Leon, Office of External Affairs, Tel. (507) 212.8050,Fax (507) 212.8150, E Mail DELEONC@SI.EDU.

CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS:

Clothing should be light weight, but with long sleeves and pant-legs (to avoid insect bites and being scratched by forest branches). For days in the forest or on a boat, bring sunscreen, insect repellent, a hat, sunglasses, a small umbrella or rain poncho, tennis or hiking shoes (not sandals), and binoculars if you are interested in birds. For visit to Bocas del Toro bring bathing suits and flip flops. You may bring snorkeling gear; otherwise STRI will provide it. If you plan to scuba dive, do not bring your own equipment. You will be given Smithsonian-certified equipment.

During the May to December rainy season, Panama City experiences heavy rain most days, often with brief flooding of streets or walkways. During the rest of the year rains are less frequent. In the dry season, weather will be hot (78-85degrees F) without much chance of rain, except in Bocas del Toro. Restaurants, meeting rooms, and STRI offices and laboratories will be air conditioned, and can be quite chilly.

CURRENCY INFORMATION:

The Panamanian currency is the Balboa and has the same value as the US dollar, so you will not have to convert money.. Panama uses US paper currency and has its own coinage which has the same denominations, shapes and sizes as US coinage. It is probably easier to find an ATM machine than to cash travelers' checks in Panama, so travelers' checks are not recommended.

All major credit cards are accepted in Panama at most shops, supermarkets and hotels. However, you do require currency for making small payments.

HEALTH TIPS:

The government of Panama does not require any vaccinations in order to enter the country. There have been (a few) cases of malaria reported throughout Panama, so if you are concerned you may wish to take an anti-malarial drug. Other health related problems are: dengue fever (slight more frequent than malaria) – throughout Panama; Yellow fever (rare) – distribution unknown.

Most medicines are widely available in Panama City and at a similar rate to that in most western countries. Most medicines are sold by the same trademark names used in the U.S.

For emergencies, there are many good private clinics and hospitals throughout the country, but the biggest and best equipped are located in Panama City.

WATER:

Panama has some of the cleanest drinking water in Latin America (if not in the world). Hotel water is safe to drink from the faucet, as is true for water in most restaurants. Purified bottled water is sold in most hotels and supermarkets.

All food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, are safe to eat.

CELLULAR PHONES:

Not all cell phone and blackberry services will work in Panama, so travelers should check with their service providers.

ELECTRICITY:

Voltage of most electrical outlets is 110 volts, so a power adapter is not necessary.

ADDRESSES FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

From USA:
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute

Unit 0948
APO Miami 34002-0948

Or

From everywhere else:
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Apartado 0843-03092
Balboa, Ancon
República de Panamá

STRI'S OFFICE OF SPECIAL EVENTS:

e-mail: striosep@si.edu

tel: +507-212-8256 or 212-8294 (507 is Panama's country code)

fax: +507-212-8280

STRI WEB SITE: www.stri.org (Section About Panama)