

Panama

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Panama is a developing nation classified as high income. Located in Central America along the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean (south of Costa Rica and north of Colombia), the climate classifications range from humid equatorial (long dry season) to humid equatorial (short dry season).

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

An official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary. Vaccination is usually recommended if you'll be traveling in areas where there is risk of yellow fever transmission.

- **Requirement:** A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 1 year coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. This does not apply to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) in risk countries.
- **Official Status:** listed by WHO as a country where YF transmission risk is present.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—*International Travel and Health* (current online update, Country List)

(2020) Malaria risk due predominantly to *P. vivax* (97%) exists throughout the year in the following provinces and comarcas along the Atlantic coast and the borders with Costa Rica and Colombia: Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí, Colón, Darién, Kuna Yala, Ngäbe Buglé, Panama, and Veraguas. In Panama City, the Canal Zone, and other provinces, the risk of malaria transmission is negligible or non-existent.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **B** – Risk of *P. vivax* malaria only. Mosquito bite prevention plus chloroquine chemoprophylaxis^a
- Recommended prevention in eastern endemic areas bordering Colombia: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications)^a

^aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand-by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—*Health Information for International Travel* (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: Present in the provinces of Darien, Kuna Yala (also spelled Guna Yala), Ngäbe-Buglé, and eastern Panama province. None in Panama Oeste, the Canal Zone, and Panama City (see Map 2-22).

- Drug resistance³ : Chloroquine (east of the Panama Canal).
- Malaria species: *P. vivax* 99%, *P. falciparum* 1%.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Provinces of Darien, Guna Yala, and eastern Panama province: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, primaquine,⁴ or tafenoquine.⁴ Ngäbe-Buglé: Atovaquone-proguanil, chloroquine, doxycycline, mefloquine, primaquine,⁴ or tafenoquine.⁴

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

High risk exists throughout the country, with minimal risk in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures are generally inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chagas' disease (American trypanosomiasis), chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis, mayaro virus, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, West Nile virus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, hantavirus, helminths, leptospirosis, marine hazards, melioidosis, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites, tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Consular Travel Advice

Due to ongoing security concerns, US (DOS) advises avoiding travel to Darién Province and remote areas of the Caribbean coast between the towns of Boca del Río Chiriquí and Coclé del Norte. Canada (GAC) and Australia (DFAT) have more limited warnings. UK (FCO) has no current warning.

Terrorism Risk

No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

Crime

Moderate risk of violent crime (armed robbery, home invasion, sexual assault, and murder) and moderate risk of petty crime exist throughout the country, especially in Panama City (particularly in San Miguelito, El Chorrillo, Juan Díaz, Veracruz Beach, Soberanía National Park, Río Abajo, Ancón, Curundú, Tocumen, Via España, Avenida Central, Calidonia, Casco Viejo, and

Panamá Viejo); near the Madden Dam; on roads between Panama City and Colón; in areas bordering Colombia; in the provinces of Colón and Chiriquí.

Kidnappings by criminal groups occur in Darién Province.

Express kidnappings to force cash withdrawals at ATMs may occur throughout the country.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations may infrequently occur, especially in Panama City, and have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

A dangerous security environment may exist in areas bordering Colombia.

Water Safety

Hazardous water conditions (including currents, tides, and undertows) may occur, especially in Bocas del Toro Province. Heed posted warnings, and avoid beaches that are not patrolled. Do not swim alone or after dark, and do not walk on any beach after dark.

Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI, and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Transportation Safety

High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is less than 10 in most high-income countries.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

Drunk driving laws are poorly enforced.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Airline Safety

The US Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters

The hurricane season is from June through November. The rainy season is from April through December. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic and volcanic activity occur, especially in western areas.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Panama

- United States: [+507] 317-5000; pa.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+507] 294-2500; www.panama.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+507] 297-6550; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-panama-city
- Australia: [+507] 6677-3833

Panama's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: www.embassyofpanama.org
- In Canada: www.embassyofpanama.ca
- In the U.K.: www.panamaembassy.co.uk
- In Australia: [+61] 2-9150-8409

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV testing may be required to obtain a work or residence visa.