

# Tourist Attractions in Panama City

By

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Over one million visitors arrive at Panama in Central America every year. Newcomers are enticed by the famous Canal and old-timers return year after year because of additional tourist attractions described in travel guides. Situated between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea along the tropical 9° N parallel, Panama has a summer-like climate without hurricanes or snow all year around. This beautiful climate was the primary allure for my wife and I to visit Panama six times in four consecutive years since 2005. Most of our visits have taken place during the months of February or July, when we seek to escape the icy roads or the heat waves of Washington DC. Usually we flew from Miami and landed on Panama City, the Nation's capital, after three hours. There was no jet lag in winter when the East Coast followed the Eastern Standard Time.



Panama on a map

In their textbooks, Panama is known as the land of fish, trees, and butterflies. We are nature lovers and amateur birdwatchers and enjoy particularly the abundant wildlife in the vicinity of the Panama City. A favorite place for us to stay overnight is an orange colored B&B in a hilly suburb called Ancon Hill. (Ancon stands for the Association for the Conservation of Nature.) The B&B occupies a three-story building and backs up to woods on a steep hill that is reachable only by birds and animals. We love to eat our breakfast on a second-floor balcony overlooking the back yard where colorful tropical birds can be seen from time to time just twenty to thirty feet away.

On one morning, we watched a day worker filling up bird feeders from the balcony and attaching yellow bananas to a tree swing with a ten-foot pole. Suddenly, blue jays, red-wing blackbirds, and parakeets gathered around the bananas and consumed their breakfast in front of us just below our eye level. What a pretty and harmonious sight. A few minutes later, we saw toucans, woodpeckers, and hummingbirds flying or resting near treetops. Once we spotted a sloth sleeping on the treetop, sitting on a tree branch, and leaning back to the tree trunk with his arms cross his chest.



Keel-billed toucan



Sloth on a tree

On another foggy morning in June 2009, we started our daily walk at 5 AM and reached a hilltop at 650 feet. As the warm sun rose from the horizon, the morning fog disappeared in gentle sea breezes. At the hilltop, the panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean, Panama City, and the Panama Canal took my breath away. How peaceful and quiet the scenery was in the morning! We were also pleasantly surprised to sight toucans NINE times in one hour. We sighted them at a scenic spot near the second guardhouse next to a tall transmission tower overlooking the Pacific Ocean. While descending from the hilltop, we saw little monkeys with white faces and long tails jumping across the paved road near treetops. There was a group of four parakeets flying from tree to tree under a blue sky in fresh air. This morning walk took us around 30 minutes each way and was the highlight during our visit to Panama City in 2009.



White-faced monkey

In our visits, we have found life to be good and affordable. Our favorite things are fresh seafood, tropical fruits, and international dining (Chinese, Italian, and Greek). As with foreign travels in Central America, there is the challenge of communicating with the locals in their native Spanish. However, this inconvenience is partially offset by the convenience not having to visit currency exchange as Panama uses the US dollar as the legal currency. My wife and I look forward to enjoying the sunny days, fantastic wildlife, and fine dining when we return to Panama City in 2010 and beyond.

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