

How long can I stay in Panama?

Written by T. Rob Brown (aka Roberto Chocolate)

Monday, 24 May 2010 15:45 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 June 2010 16:17

Dear Roberto,

I am looking for my place in the sun to retire. I am 50 yr old canadian female. I want peace&harmony the sea ,sand and sun. Is puerto viejo where I want to be? How long can I visit this country and what are the requirements? I plan to visit 6 -10 months, maybe forever. Thank you in advance for your help. Shelly

Dear Shelly,

You may stay for 30 days as a tourist, then extend your visa by two months for a total of 90 days. If you do not apply for resident status then you must leave for three days before you can return for another 90 days. Many people do this, taking a bus or driving the short distance to Costa Rica for a weekend getaway.

There is nothing you need to do to visit, but bring your valid Canadian passport and have a return ticket.

Once you decide you want to stay, you will use an Immigration lawyer to apply for your Pensionado (permanent resident) which gives you all kinds of discounts on just about everything - hotel rooms, airfares, prescriptions, doctor visits, restaurants, grocery stores - see my other articles on Pensionado Visas.

There are 12 different visas - or ways to immigrate to Panama. Your lawyer can advise you which one is right for you.

I am not familiar with any place called Puerto Viejo - there is a Casco Viejo (Old Town) which is anything but quiet - it is more like New Orleans's French Quarter. There is Panama Viejo which is the original Colonial city, burned during the 1671 raid by the pirate Captain Henry Morgan. It has some very interesting old foundations and a restored convent and a church tower - but it is

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not residential.

Panama City is a very cosmopolitan city - about 1.4 million people. It looks more like Miami than a Central American city. If what you want is peace, harmony and the sun/sand/sea you will like either the Pacific beaches (from Chame to Farallon) perhaps one of the Pearl Islands or Chiriqui Province - Boca Chica, Las Lejas are gorgeous. The other place to look is the Azuero Peninsula (Central Panama).

If you are looking for an expat community, Coronado is the biggest town (they have three large shopping malls, many restaurants, hardware stores, hotels, golf course, equestrian center, even a McDonalds). There are nice, smaller towns nearby like Gorgona and San Carlos. My friends and one of my brothers have bought homes in those towns.

In fact my friends arrived yesterday to sign a deal on a beautiful unit in a Canadian-run development in Gorgona - only 18 units, a beautiful shared infinity pool, overlooking the ocean, fully maintained, very secure - a 2 bedroom unit, fully furnished for \$135,000.

Let me know when you are coming down and I will try to get together with you.

To explore the country and decide where you want to be, I suggest staying at The Royal Decameron Beach Resort - an all-inclusive in the Pacific beaches area. The food is not their best feature (what all-inclusive has great food?), but it is clean, beautiful with a great beach and pool. They pick you up at the airport, and it is a good central base to explore the whole country. They have great deals on air/hotel.

I live two and a half kilometers from The Decameron in a town called Santa Clara.

If you are staying 6 - 10 months I suggest you rent a house or condo by the month. Expect to pay \$500 - \$900 in the low season, more in the higher season. There are property management companies that can arrange this for you.

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Hope this helps. Roberto Chocolaté