

Medical issues may effect entry to Panama

Written by T. Rob Brown (aka Roberto Chocolate)

Tuesday, 10 August 2010 13:06 - Last Updated Wednesday, 11 August 2010 13:40

Questions regarding being close to International airport and how medical issues effect Pensionado Visa. Roberto

Dear Roberto,

My husband and I, along with our young son, are contemplating a move to Panama.

It all seems so overwhelming! We plan to visit in October, and evaluate things hands on. Choosing an area is obviously the most difficult part. People we know are also planning to move to Panama.

Although they are focusing on the David/Boquete area, that would be difficult for me, as I do fly frequently, and need much better access to an international airport.

For example, I will be travelling for work internationally this fall - along with many cities in the USA.

In addition I am contemplating opening some kind of education center in somewhere in Panama. I wouldn't even know where to begin at this point! So yes, any suggestions would be wonderful. We don't want to be in the city, but would need to be close enough to people for our businesses. We also have to be near an appropriate school. Based on all the recommendations we've read, we would prefer to rent for the first while.

My husband may be able to apply for the Pensionado. He receives a pension and an insurance payment due to health issues. Would this qualify him in your opinion?

Many thanks,

D. MY RESPONSES:

Dear D:

First, congrats: you are planning properly;

A) rent first, and B) going in the rainiest month of the entire year (Oct) is a good idea - if you like it then, you will love it in the sun.

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The weather is not so bad, even in October. You wake up and it is nice and sunny, it clouds over and pours (torrential) rain at 2 - 3 o'clock then clears up and it is sunny again (humid) and it rains every night. On a very few days it rains all day.

Secondly, as you fly a lot, you might consider the areas from Chame to Penonomé, on the Pacific side. This area is under 2 hours to Panama City. It is also where most English-speaking expats have settled. Also, the government just announced they are expanding the Penonomé airport into an International Airport. Bids are only being accepted in 2011 - so it is a few years away.

Staying at one of the all-inclusive resorts in the area and renting a car (rent a car at the resorts, not at the airport to save money) allows to explore the whole area. **This just in - a cheap car rental agency - I have NOT checked them out - but give them a try**

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<http://www.sixt.com/car-rental/panama/>

Breezes www.breezes.com/resorts/breezes-panama/ , Playa Blanca www.panamaplayablanca.com/ or Royal

Decameron

www.d

ecameron.com/

are the only all-inclusive resorts in the country, which is why the government decided to expand the near-by Penonomé airport.

To book a resort, see the www.sunwing.ca and www.airtransat.ca/ and www.nolitours.com websites for good air/hotel package deals. All three resorts shuttle you to the resort and back to the airport. My personal favorite is Breezes - new, better food choices. Good for kids.

You mentioned you need to be "near people". Which people? Spanish-speaking? Families? Young people? Older? Expats? What are your markets/potential customers? Coronado area has the most expats. Penonomé is about 20,000 people, mostly Spanish-speaking. The most new condo construction (other than Panama City) is in the Santa Clara/Farallon area.

There are International Schools in Penonomé and Gorgona that I know of, and I am sure there

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are more. Certainly there are a dozen or more in Panama City including French immersion, PACE, International Baccalaureate and even university-affiliated schools.

My brother is a thirty-year career school-teacher. he has just moved to Panama and is looking into schools, so I will have more info posted soon. Keep checking the site.

Medical issues may effect your husband's ability to obtain a Pensionado Visa. They do require a health certificate from a Panamanian doctor before they issue permanent residency. He is probably fine - but check with your lawyer. Contagious diseases are obviously a concern for the authorities.

Anyone, regardless of age, can apply for Pensionado Visa if they can prove a \$1,000 per month pension and \$250 for a spouse and each dependent, so if he can show \$1,500 per month, you are all eligible. Again, consult your lawyer. The benefits are terrific and well worth getting.