

Ocean Wonders

Heritage Routes of Panama

In Panama, the two oceans almost touch.

Ocean Wonders

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Panama, the oceanfront jewel



Pearl Islands

With 2,490 kilometers of beaches bathed by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, Panama stands as a world-class tourist paradise. Its strategic geographic position not only captivates with the exuberance of its landscapes, but also invites the delight of unique experiences and the flourishing of international trade. In this vibrant scenario, the National Ocean Policy stands as the compass, embracing the vastness of our waters and safeguarding the natural treasures they hold. Here, every wave is an invitation to explore, to immerse oneself in marine beauty, and to navigate toward a future of prosperity and harmony with nature.

Panama's geographic location gives it a significant competitive advantage by allowing a diversity of marine and coastal activities, including fishing, aquaculture and ecotourism, in addition to transportation and maritime navigation through the Panama Canal. The latter constitutes a national patrimony that regulates the transit of ships of all nations. Recognizing the importance of the oceans, Panama has established policies and commissions for their preservation and sustainable development, such as the Commission for the Formulation, Development and Monitoring of the National Ocean Policy.

With the vision of "Being a Blue Panama", we seek to protect, conserve and value marine and coastal resources in a sustainable manner, positively impacting the quality of life of its citizens. The objective is an inclusive, participatory and science and technology-based maritime and coastal management, supported by legal tools that guarantee the protection and proper management of the oceans and seas.

The heritage routes of Panama.

Panama's Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development uses the Tourism-Conservation-Research approach as the strategic framework for Panamanian tourism, and implements the Heritage Routes: a network of circuits that reflect the essence of Panama's natural and cultural heritage and become a key differentiating element for the destination.

Ocean Wonders Heritage Route.

The ecosystemic characteristics of Panama's oceans allow the development of 4 heritage circuits in the different regions of the country. These circuits include communities that understand the importance of the conservation of marine ecosystems, their species and the integration of their good practices with sustainable tourism.

This country surrounded by two oceans and connected by one of the most important waterways in the world deserves to recognize and enjoy its heritage being aware of its importance for the life of the world.

Live the Heritage Routes of Panama.

Ocean Wonders is just one of the five Heritage Routes. To continue discovering Panama, choose another route and go on an adventure.

Bridge of the World

Multicultural Panama

Forests of Life

Birds in Paradise



The seas of Panama offer unique experiences.

Coiba National Park

Panama receives humpback whales from both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres

Between July and September, Panama's waters receive hundreds of whales that come to reproduce and give birth to their calves. Here the populations of the South Pacific Antarctic Ocean and those of the Arctic and North Pacific meet, which allows the exchange of genes and helps the conservation of the species.

Ballena Jorobada
Megaptera novaeangliae

Research projects:

Scientists at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute use satellites to track the movements of whales visiting the Gulf of Panama. With this information, they collaborated with the Panama Maritime Authority and the Panama Canal Authority to establish a marine corridor for ships entering and leaving the canal to avoid collisions that are often fatal to whales.

More than half of Panama’s oceans are protected

In addition to two National Marine Parks and several recreational and multiple use areas, Panama has two huge marine protected areas, Cordillera de Coiba in the Pacific and Banco Volcan in the Caribbean, which cover more than 54% of Panama’s marine Exclusive Economic Zone.



Pacific Ocean



Coiba has the most expansive coral reefs in the Eastern Pacific

For the extraordinary biodiversity of its reefs, home to more than 13 species of corals and more than 800 species of fish, Coiba was declared a Natural World Heritage Site. These waters are also visited by whale sharks and manta rays.

Five of the species of sea turtle nest in the beaches of Panama

Places like Bluff Beach in Bocas del Toro or Cañas Island in Los Santos are important nesting sites for sea turtles. Between July and November, five species of sea turtles visit these beaches to build their nests, sometimes in large groups, in an amazing natural spectacle.

Conservation projects:

Multiple organizations and community groups are working for the conservation of Panama's sea turtles, which are vulnerable or endangered. In addition to providing environmental education, they guard nests and operate hatcheries to care for the eggs. Once hatched, their volunteers accompany the hatchlings so that they can safely reach the sea.

Green sea turtle
Chelonia mydas



Red-billed tropicbird
Phaethon aethereus



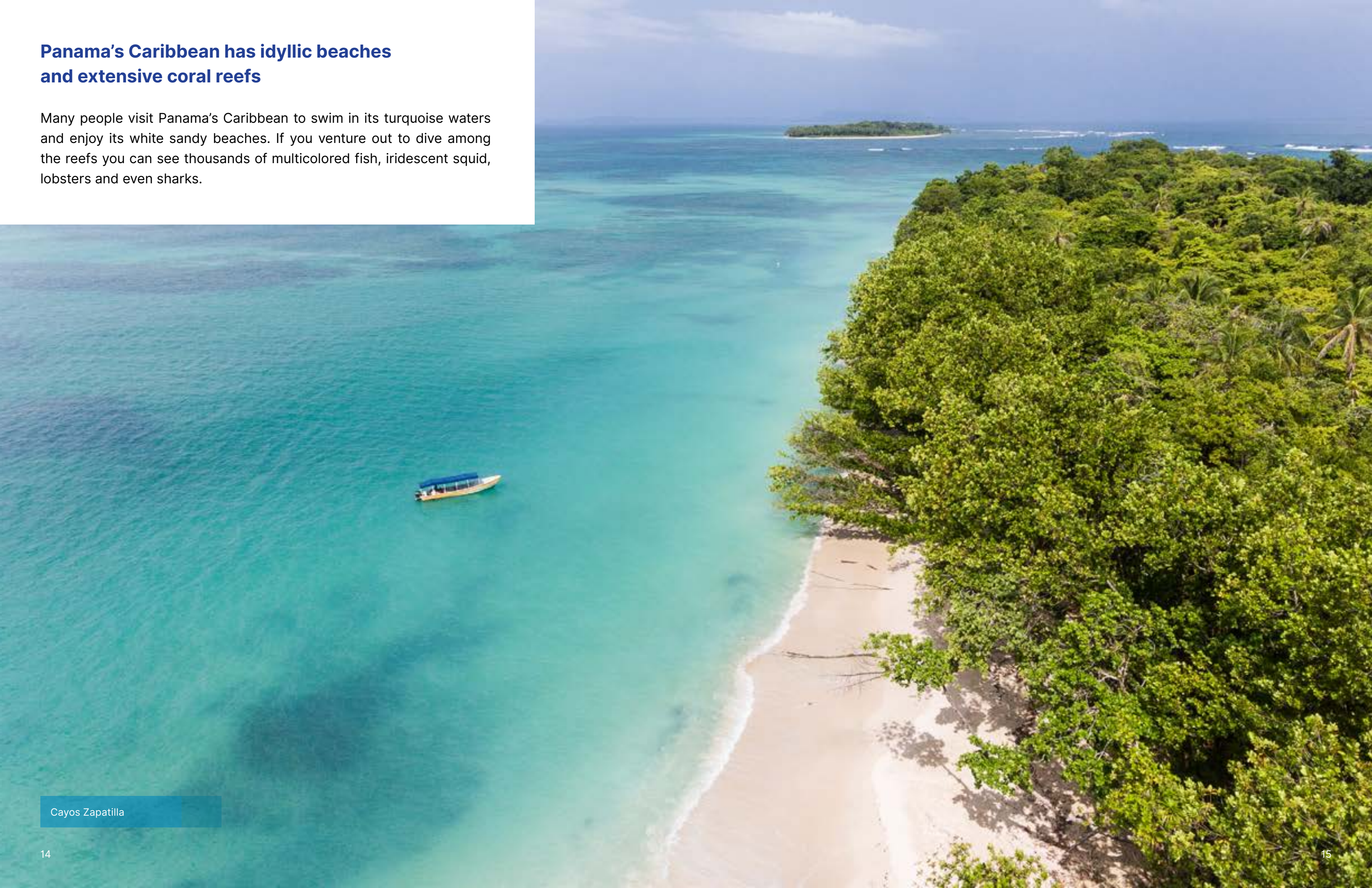
Isla Pájaros

The islands and islets on both coasts host important seabird nesting colonies

In Isla Pájaros in Bocas del Toro nests one of the most elegant birds of the sea: the red-billed tropicbird. In the Pacific are the Frailes Islands, where boobies and terns nest, and the islands of Taboga and Urabá, home to one of the largest colonies of pelicans in the world.

**Panama’s Caribbean has idyllic beaches
and extensive coral reefs**

Many people visit Panama’s Caribbean to swim in its turquoise waters and enjoy its white sandy beaches. If you venture out to dive among the reefs you can see thousands of multicolored fish, iridescent squid, lobsters and even sharks.



Cayos Zapatilla

**Panama has five wetlands
of international importance**

Mangroves, swamps and other wetlands are home to an enormous diversity of animals and plants. San San Pond Sak, in Bocas del Toro, is home to the enormous manatee, which finds here one of the few remaining refuges in Panama.



West Indian manatee
Trichechus manatus

**In Panama’s islands you can see animals and plants
that don’t live anywhere else in the world**

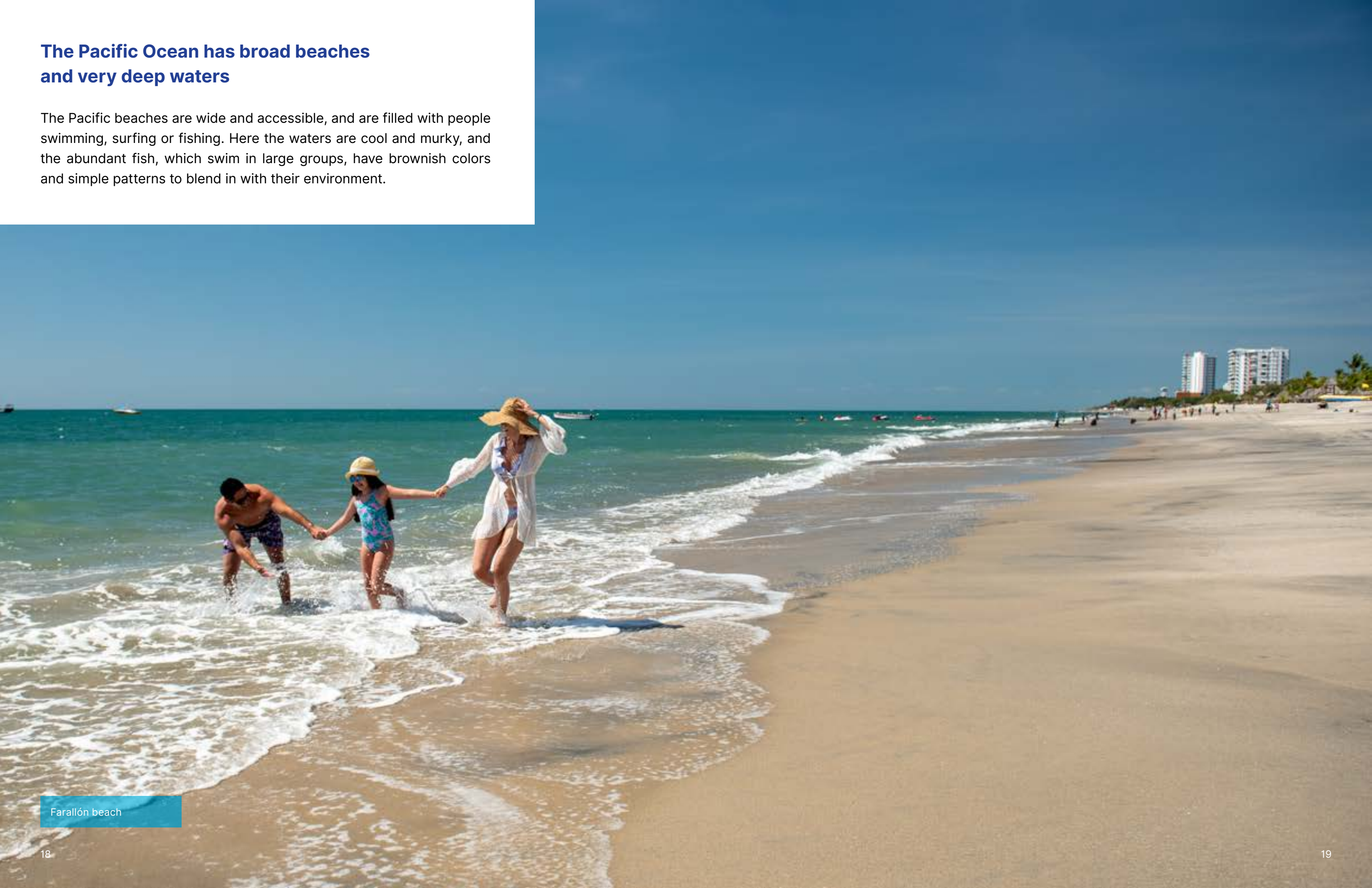
Some of our islands are home to endemic species found only there. Escudo de Veraguas is home to the pygmy three-toed sloth, which is much smaller than those found on the mainland and was identified as a new species only in 2001. There is also an endemic species of bat, a salamander, and a plant called zamia.



Pygmy three-toed sloth
Bradypus pygmaeus

**The Pacific Ocean has broad beaches
and very deep waters**

The Pacific beaches are wide and accessible, and are filled with people swimming, surfing or fishing. Here the waters are cool and murky, and the abundant fish, which swim in large groups, have brownish colors and simple patterns to blend in with their environment.



Farallón beach



Blue marlin
Makaira mazara

Panama is a world-class destination for sport fishing

The productive waters of both oceans include species prized by fishermen, such as blue marlin, sailfish, dorado, roosterfish, wahoo and snappers of various species. In sites such as Piñas Bay, specimens of impressive sizes are regularly caught.

The Panama Canal is a crossroads for multiple cruiseship lines

Every year, the Panama Canal attracts hundreds of cruise ships of all sizes. These range from huge mega-cruises that almost fill the locks to small luxury vessels that after crossing our coasts and archipelagos.



Panama Canal



Santa Catalina beach

Panamanian waves are ideal for surfing

Many Panamanian beaches, including those of Bocas del Toro and Azuero, are famous for their waves. Some have waves of up to 9 meters that attract surfers from all over the world to participate in big championships or in search of the perfect wave.



The cuisine of Panama’s Caribbean offers delicious dishes

Bocas del Toro and Colon offer authentic samples of Panama’s Caribbean gastronomy. In its restaurants and fondas you can enjoy specialties such as rondón, octopus in coconut milk, pickled fish and other Caribbean delicacies.

Panama has the highest diversity of mangroves in all of the Americas

On both coasts of Panama you can find more than twelve species of mangroves, including black mangrove, white mangrove, red mangrove and piñuelo mangrove. In places like Bocas del Toro and Portobelo in the Caribbean, or Isla Caña and Punta Chame in the Pacific you can explore them in the best way: paddling silently in a kayak.



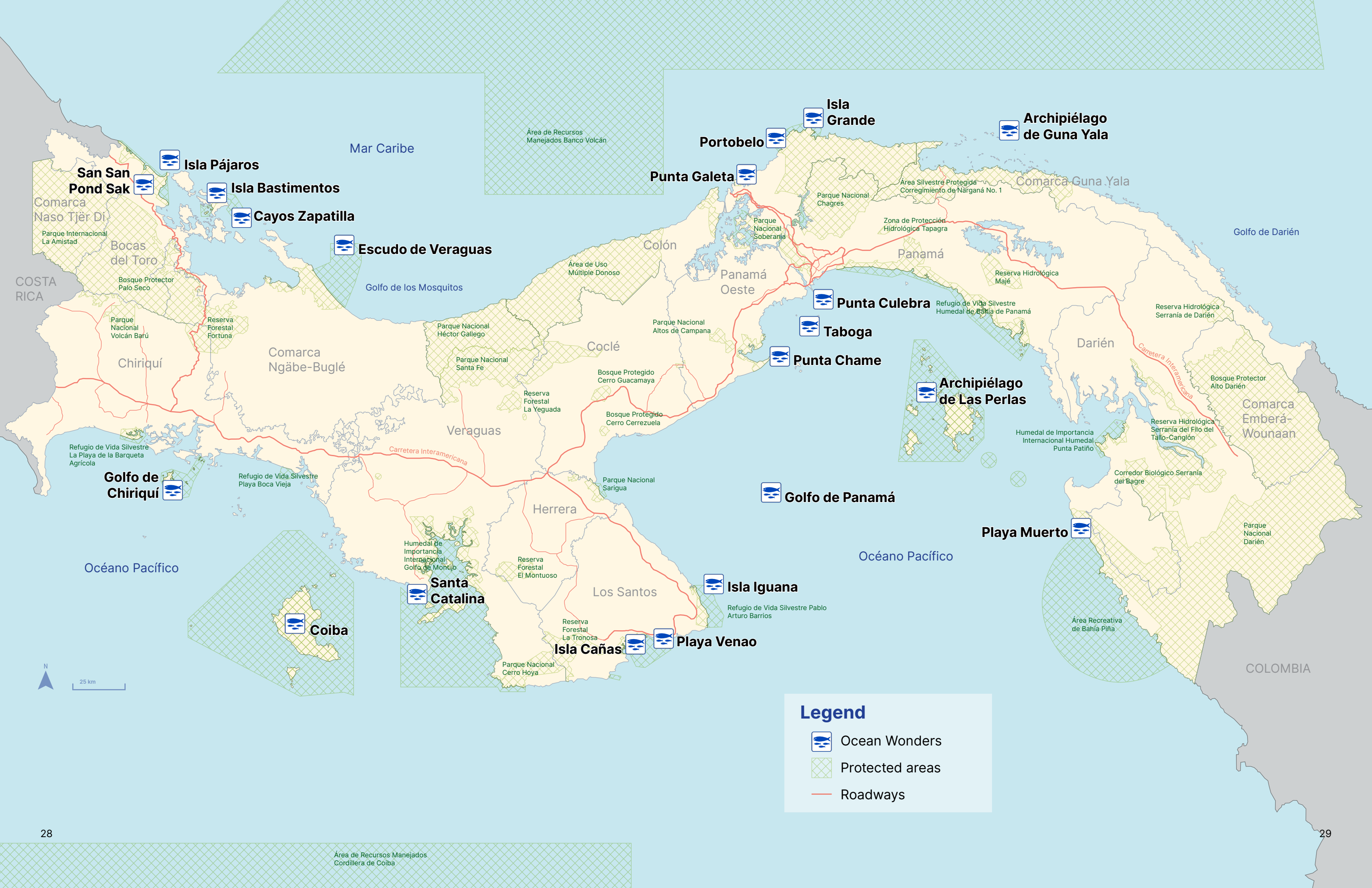
Portobelo National Park

**Guna Yala has perfect beaches
and an ancient culture**

The Guna Yala region is home to the Guna people, one of Panama’s seven indigenous groups. It is said that there are 365 islands and islets here, one for each day of the year. On each one you can enjoy the hospitality of the Guna people and learn about their culture and traditions, or take a dip and snorkel in the crystal clear waters.



Guna Yala Archipelago



Be a conscious traveler

With the decisions you make during your visit you can help us preserve the Ocean Wonders of Panama.

Respect marine life:

Keep a safe distance from marine animals and avoid interfering with their behavior.

Don't leave trash behind:

Take with you all waste and garbage generated during your activities and deposit it in the appropriate garbage containers on land.

Use eco-friendly products:

Opt for biodegradable and environmentally friendly products, such as organic sunscreens and personal care products without chemicals harmful to ecosystems.

Support the local economy:

Prefer local businesses and tour operators that implement sustainable practices and contribute to the economic development of Panama's coastal communities.

Education and awareness:

Learn about marine ecosystems and the importance of their conservation, and share your knowledge with other travelers to promote responsible tourism.

Support conservation:

Participate in volunteer programs or donate to organizations dedicated to the conservation of marine habitats.

Responsible whale watching:

If you go whale or dolphin watching, be sure to do so with tour operators that follow ethical and respectful guidelines for the animals, maintaining a safe distance and avoiding interfering with their behavior.

Sustainable reef diving practices:

When diving or snorkeling on coral reefs, be sure not to touch or step on the corals, as they are fragile organisms that can be easily damaged.

Promote sustainable fishing practices:

Support sustainable fishing and avoid consuming seafood products obtained from destructive or illegal practices that may affect sea turtle populations and other marine organisms.

Take part in monitoring programs:

Join sea turtle monitoring programs and other conservation projects, contributing scientific data and supporting initiatives to protect these endangered species.

Preserving the Ocean Wonders

Throughout Panama, multiple institutions and community-based organizations collaborate to study and protect the flora and fauna of our marine and coastal ecosystems. These are some of them.

Organización Tortuguías
<https://www.tortuguias.org/>

Develops sea turtle conservation projects throughout the country, including Esmeralda and La Marinera beaches, Punta Chame, Cambutal, Horcones, and Morrillo.

Fundacion Agua y Tierra
<https://aguaytierra.wixsite.com/fundat>

Works for the conservation of nature and the promotion of community ecotourism within the Special Zone of Coastal Marine Management (ZEMMC) Zona Sur de Veraguas.

AAMVECONA
[@aamvecona_obc](#)

La Asociación de Amigos y Vecinos de las Cosstas y la Naturaleza was founded in 2000 to promote the conservation and protection of the natural resources of the San San Pond Sak Wetland.

ANABOCA
Facebook: anaboca

Asociación Natural Bocas Carey created an ecotourism program where local and international volunteers guide visitors on public walks to observe nesting turtles.

Panacetacea
<https://panacetacea.org/es/>

Panacetacea works for the conservation of marine mammals by incorporating local communities with the national government, local authorities, universities and other organizations. It uses the results of its research to inform conservation measures.

Tortugas Pedasi
<https://www.tortugaspedasi.org/>

Tortugas Pedasi is a conservation group for sea turtles and their habitat in the Pablo A. Barrios Wildlife Refuge in Pedasi, Panama. .

Panasea
<https://panasea.io/>

Founded in 2018, PanaSea is the first open ocean sea cucumber farm. Sea cucumber aquaculture production is more restorative than environmentally destructive: it prevents harmful algal blooms, releases calcium carbonate essential for coral growth, and they increase the pH of the water, which counteracts harmful ocean acidification.

Sea Turtle Conservancy
<https://conserveturtles.org/>

It works to protect and restore the significant hawksbill turtle population that existed on the beaches of Soropta and Chiriqui. The program consists of intensive monitoring of hawksbill and leatherback nesting activity, protection of females and their nests, and environmental education in the area.

Reef2Reef
<https://reefpty.com/>

Reef2Reef Restoration was born in 2018 to support the Coral Reef Restoration Research Project being carried out in the marine area of Portobelo National Park.

Threatened marine fauna of Panama

More than 1400 of Panama’s marine species are in danger of extinction according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. These are some of them.



Hawksbill turtle

Eretmochelys imbricata

Critically Endangered (CR)

Their main threat is the hunting of adults for their shells and meat and the plundering of their nests.



Whale shark

Rhincodon typus

Endangered (EN)

It lives in the open sea and feeds on plankton. It is threatened by fishing and collisions with ships.



West Indian manatee

Trichechus manatus

Vulnerable (VU)

It inhabits mangroves and wetlands and is threatened by habitat degradation and loss, hunting and irresponsible tourism.



Rainbow parrotfish

Scarus guacamaia

Near Threatened (NT)

This huge parrotfish inhabits reefs and feeds on corals. It is threatened by fishing and habitat loss.



Visit [tourismpanama.com](https://www.tourismpanama.com)

Visit <https://www.tourismpanama.com> for additional information about the Heritage Routes of Panama.

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