

Come to Panama!

PANAMA - home of the SAN LORENZO CONCLAVE and the PANAMA CANAL

By, John Bamber, Intendant General for the Division of Panama

The SAN LORENZO CONCLAVE is honored to be host of the 151st Annual Assembly which will be held June 8th, 9th, and 10th, 2023. This shall be the first time that the Annual Assembly has been held outside of the United States in our long Red Cross history! At our annual meeting, Grand Sovereign Marcos David Ostrander shall preside over our annual business, and we will have fun!

As some may know already, the Republic of Panama was founded in 1903 after seceding from the Republic of Colombia with help from the United States of America and some very ardent locals later to become Panamanians. Panama was formed in order for the United States government to build the Panama Canal, construction of which commenced in 1904. To learn more about our founding, I would recommend *Path Between the Seas* written by the renowned historian, David McCullough. It is available in either book or audio format. Both are exceptional and available on Amazon! The Canal opened in 1914 and is still very, very active today - over 100 years later and a fine tribute to the US CORPS of ENGINEERS! Only a few years ago, the last of the 1.5 horsepower electric motors, used to open lock gates from the Canal's inception, were retired. The entire canal, from the ditch to the motors, was a fantastic engineering feat!



The Republic of Panama today is a representative democracy in a presidential republic. In my eyes it is a Tropical Paradise. The pertinent information about the country is the following.

1. Population of Panama is approximately just under 4.5 million people.
2. The official language is Spanish with English widely spoken.
3. The capital is Panama City where the Annual Assembly shall be held.
4. Panama is a United States dollar-based economy with US dollar as legal tender with only coinage known as Panamanian Balboa as equivalent to USD.
5. Panama has territorial borders with Costa Rica on one end and Colombia on the other with the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Caribbean Sea on the other. I, ironically, drive between the Pacific and Caribbean sides most days; a drive of about one hour - yet I have never to this day taken a dip on the Pacific and on the Caribbean side during the same day!
6. Temperature rarely drops below 80 degrees Fahrenheit, day or night in Panama City!
7. Excellent private medical care is available in the unlikely case of need with doctors fluent in English!



Historic Fort San Lorenzo

The 151st Annual Assembly will be held at the Hotel Sheraton / Aloft complex. This location is approximately 20 minutes from Tocumen (PTY) Airport. Transportation to and from the airport is available on your registration form.

Flying to Panama (PTY) is very easy. There are daily flights, in some cases more, from the following origins in the US: New York/Newark, Houston, Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco,

Chicago, Tampa, Denver, Washington, DC, Atlanta, Orlando and Ft. Lauderdale (with Spirit Airlines - low cost).

Please do not fly to Panama City, Florida; it actually happens quite frequently!

There are no visa requirements for our visitors from the US. A valid passport is required with a minimum of six-month validity from time of arrival to departure. Regarding COVID-19, there is no need to present negative test results, proof of vaccination or a declaration form upon entry to Panama.

Panama City is very cosmopolitan with a myriad of cultures and immigration waves dating back to Spanish exploration and settlement during the 16th Century.



Old Town

Panama's administrative division has ten provinces and four indigenous regions, including Panama province. Panama City is within Panama province with a population of around 1.5 million people in its metropolitan area. There is very good shopping for the ladies and good restaurants. The UBER ride hailing service is widely available in Panama City.

We look forward to seeing you in Panama this June!