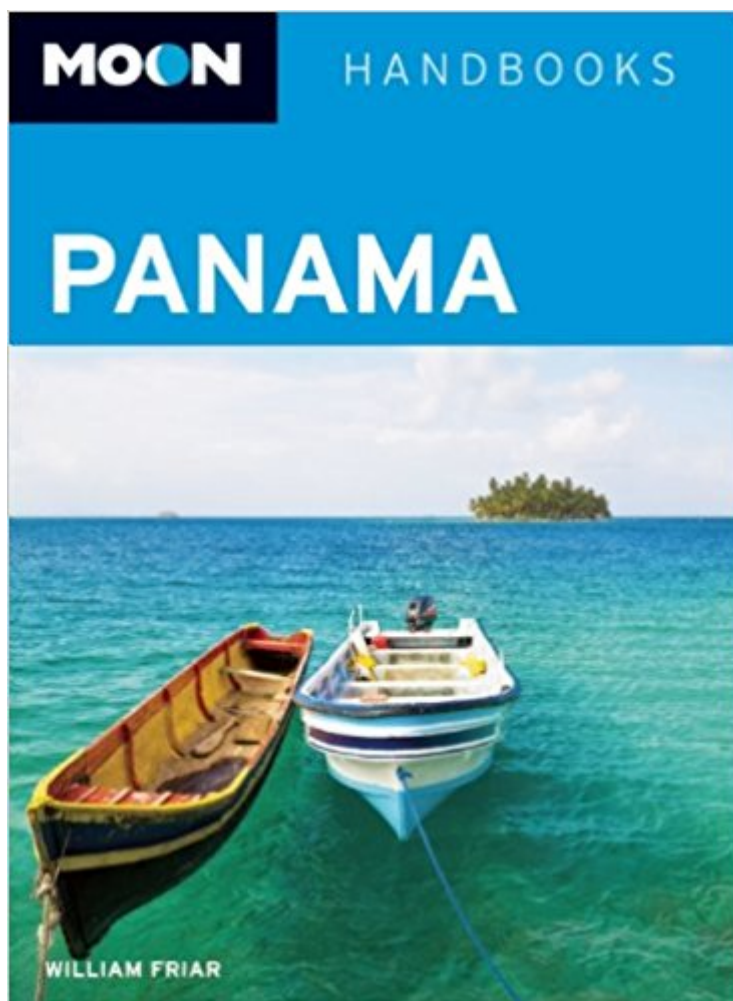


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# Moon Panama (Moon Handbooks)



## Synopsis

Writer and Panama native William Friar offers unique tips for visiting this up-and-coming destination, from lounging in the Caribbean islands of Bocas del Toro to hiking the highlands of Boquete and exploring Panama City. Friar uses his local knowledge to craft unique trip strategies, such as The 14-day Outdoor Adventure and Six Days for History Buffs. Complete with details for navigating jungle trails, finding cheap taxis and underground bars, and planning a river expedition, Moon Panama gives travelers the tools they need to create a more personal and memorable experience.

## Book Information

Series: Moon Handbooks

Paperback: 640 pages

Publisher: Moon Travel; 8 edition (January 29, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1612383483

ISBN-13: 978-1612383484

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 64 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #442,635 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in [Books > Travel > Central America > Panama](#) #163 in [Books > Travel > Central America > General](#)

## Customer Reviews

There are several well thought out itineraries available in the beginning of the book which are catalogued by length of stay and various interests....This is a must have book for those planning a trip to Panama. --Dave's Travel Corner, November, 2008  
Friar provides great trips for travelers exploring his native Panama. This second edition includes tips such as the 14-day Outdoor Adventure and Six Days for History Buffs. --Planeta.com, December 2008 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

William Friar grew up near the banks of the Panama Canal. Though an American citizen, he has lived much of his life overseas. Besides Panama, he has called Denmark, India, and the United Kingdom home, and he spends as much time as possible traveling. Moon Panama is Bill's third Panama-related book. The others are an ecotourist guide, Adventures in Nature: Panama, and a photo-essay book, Portrait of the Panama Canal. He also writes about England, San Francisco, and

various bits of South America. Bill began his writing career as a stringer for the metro desk of The New York Times, where he found that covering stabbings, shootings, blizzards, and hockey parades was surprisingly good training for travel writing. He has also worked as a rock music critic, technology news editor, human biology instructor, writing coach, fundraiser, software manual author, and reporter for three daily newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area. His current day job is press officer for the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. Bill's work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, Arizona Republic, Neuen Zürcher Zeitung, San Jose Mercury News, Orange County Register, and Houston Chronicle, among other publications. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Stanford University, Bill also holds master's degrees in English and American literature from Stanford and in journalism from Columbia University. He lives in London with his wife.

I took the print version of this guide with me to Panama last December, and I found it fairly useful, but with some gaping surprises. The coverage on Panama City's main attractions was sufficient, as well as those for the Canal Zone and Canal itself, where I spent all of my trip. I stayed in El Congrejo and ended up using a lot of the restaurant and shopping recommendations while I was there. What I found a little odd was the safety precautions over Panama La Vieja and Casco Viejo. For example, in Casco Antiguo, I arrived thinking I needed to cautiously crawl from block to block and you really need a taxi to take you from spot to spot. This was ridiculous advice - this was one of the safest-feeling areas in Panama City with people all around, even during the night time, as it is one of the most popular restaurant/bar locations, too. Also, the area is not particularly large and you can cross the whole thing in 10 or 15 minutes, so I am not sure why one would need a taxi to be waiting to take them from spot to spot, especially since it can get crowded. On the flipside, Plaza Cinco de Mayo and Avenida Central are highly recommended with no warning whatsoever - what gives? This was the part, while interestingly gritty, that he should have very clear to leave most things back at your hostel/hotel and try to blend in as much as possible. So, while this guide overall gives some decent recommendations, some of the pre-arrival impressions it leaves are just not accurate, in my opinion.

This review is for the edition published in fall of 2010. The guide book is a comprehensive look at Panama from an author who grew up in the country. That means the tone is a bit more opinionated than you might find in other guides, but there are also more insights into the culture and history of Panama. What's refreshing is that the guide avoids talking up or dismissing individual towns you

may be interested in visiting. It's clear the author loves the country, but he's not really gushing like other guide book writers. He's nuanced when praising or critiquing a locale, which not only gives you a more realistic preview of different places, but also reflects realistically the way travelers tend to experience them. There are some minor flaws. The maps tend to be a bit off; the one for Valle de Anton has a place or two on the wrong street, and the scale doesn't seem right. In Panama City, the author's favorite restaurant, Siete Mares, is actually on the other side of the road. The restaurant recommendations generally are a bit hit or miss. The author writes you can go by taxi almost anywhere in the capital for \$1 or \$2, but don't be surprised if reality doesn't deliver those fares. Apart from things like that, though, it's a thorough, well-researched book. And again, the author's personal involvement with the country really makes it a more unique read. I chose this over Lonely Planet and would do so again.

I went on a trip to Panama for about a week in early October, and brought this book with me. I thought the book was great - I really read through it and brought it with me pretty much wherever I went out in Panama. The descriptions are really thorough and comprehensive, but at the same time it is filled with personal details from the author (spent part of his childhood in Panama). When you first get the book, it is somewhat daunting; there's a lot of information to digest at first, so it may seem overwhelming, but really it's an easy read, and once you actually get to Panama the content starts to make sense. The organization is sort of awkward; the majority of the book is broken up by region, but there is a section in the back that gives you overall tips for the country (currency, taxi, etc.), so don't forget to read that as well. The short Spanish section in the back is also helpful. Even the maps were helpful - I actually used them to navigate my way around - since Panama is pretty small, this was feasible. Some improvements:- some things are a little outdated, but that's mainly with regards to the clubs/bars in Panama City - this book is from 2010, and things like nightclubs change all the time, especially in the city, so I don't really think it was that big of a deal, especially since you could go on the Internet.- As nice as the maps were, more maps would be great- Book is a little big, so kind of bulky to bring around with you if you don't have a backpack.

Although it needs updating to reflect the Canal expansion, this is a well-crafted and skillfully written overview of everything Panama. From a former native of the Canal Zone, we learn what neighborhoods to stay away from, the interesting history of each region, whether the local beer is okay, and how the Panama national bird could eat the US national bird for lunch.

This was my second trip to Panama and the Panama Moon guide book was great! I had the older Moon Panama book but I wanted an up to date version and this one did not dissappoint. Everything was very accurate the only things I noticed that changed were the bus and taxi fares which were higher now due to rising fuel cost. I would highly recommend this book!

Well written, easy to find info.Helpful information on places to see, how to travel, where to stay, etc.It even covered the immunizations required/ recommended for different parts of the country.

This is a guide book, it is supposed to act as a field guide and point of reference while traveling. I paged through it for less than an hour and the pages started coming out of the binding. Once one let go, they all started falling out. The information is valuable, the writing is good and well researched, but I will never buy a Moon guide again, and I don't suggest any other traveler settle for Moon Guide's shotty craftsmanship.

This is your guidebook to get for visiting Panama. We just used it for travel across country and found it very accurate and detailed with maps and thorough coverage of highlights and things to know. It was a constant reference source. Thanks for writing such a helpful book, and to those who gave it a positive review.

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