Facts about Panama

◦Panama is a narrow, S-shaped country that links the continents of North and South America.

◦Panama is an *isthmus*—a narrow strip of land that connects two larger land areas (North and South America).

◦Panama is bordered by two oceans. The Caribbean Sea, which is part of the Atlantic Ocean, is to the north of Panama. The Pacific Ocean is to the south.

◦The countries that border Panama are Costa Rica to the west and Colombia to the east.

◦About 4 million people live in Panama.

◦The official language is Spanish.

◦The capital is Panama City, which is the largest city in the country.

◦Panama has an area of about 29,000 square miles (75,400 square kilometers). It is about the size of South Carolina.

◦The Panama Canal is a man-made channel completed in 1914 that cuts through the middle of Panama. It was built to make a shorter route for ships to pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.







◦Even though it is small, Panama has a variety of landscapes. It has a chain of mountains running through the middle of the country, coastlines with beaches and mangroves, large areas of tropical forests, and over one thousand islands.

◦Panama has a tropical climate. Temperatures remain about the same throughout the year. In most parts of the country, the temperature stays between 70 and 90 degrees. Temperatures are cooler the higher up you go on the mountains. Instead of four seasons as we have in the United

States, in Panama there are two. The dry season is from December through April, and the wet season is from May through November.

◦ The school year in Panama starts at the end of February and goes through December.

◦ Panama is proud to have a mix of people and cultures from many different parts of the world. Most Panamanians come from a mixture of Spanish and Indian heritage. There is also a significant number of people of both African and indigenous heritage. "Indigenous" means descendants of the people who lived in Panama before people from Spain and other parts of Europe came.



Photo by Rita Willaert

◦ There are three main indigenous groups in Panama that still follow the traditional ways of life of their ancestors: the Guna, the Guaymí (also known as the Ngöbe-Buglé), and the Emberá-Wounaan (also known as the Chocó).

◦ With two long coastlines, it's not surprising that fish and seafood such as crab, lobster and shrimp are common foods in Panama. The national dish though is called *sancocho*, which is a chicken and cassava soup flavored with cilantro and served with rice.



◦ Soccer and basketball are popular in Panama, but the most popular sport is baseball.

◦ Close to 1,000 species of birds live in Panama for all or part of the year. That is more than in all of Canada and the United States combined!

◦ Panama's national bird is the harpy eagle, the largest bird of prey in all of the Americas.

◦ Panama is home to over 200 species of mammals, including jaguars, sloths, giant anteaters, several species of monkeys, and capybaras (the world's largest rodent, which looks like a giant guinea pig).



Harpy eagle (Image source: Wikipedia)

◦ Reptiles include over 100 species of snakes, 4 species of sea turtles, and green iguanas.

◦ Amphibians in Panama include 160 species of frogs and 25 species of salamanders. Thirty of these amphibians live nowhere else in the world.