

THINK — — IMPACT COUNTRY GUIDE

PANAMA

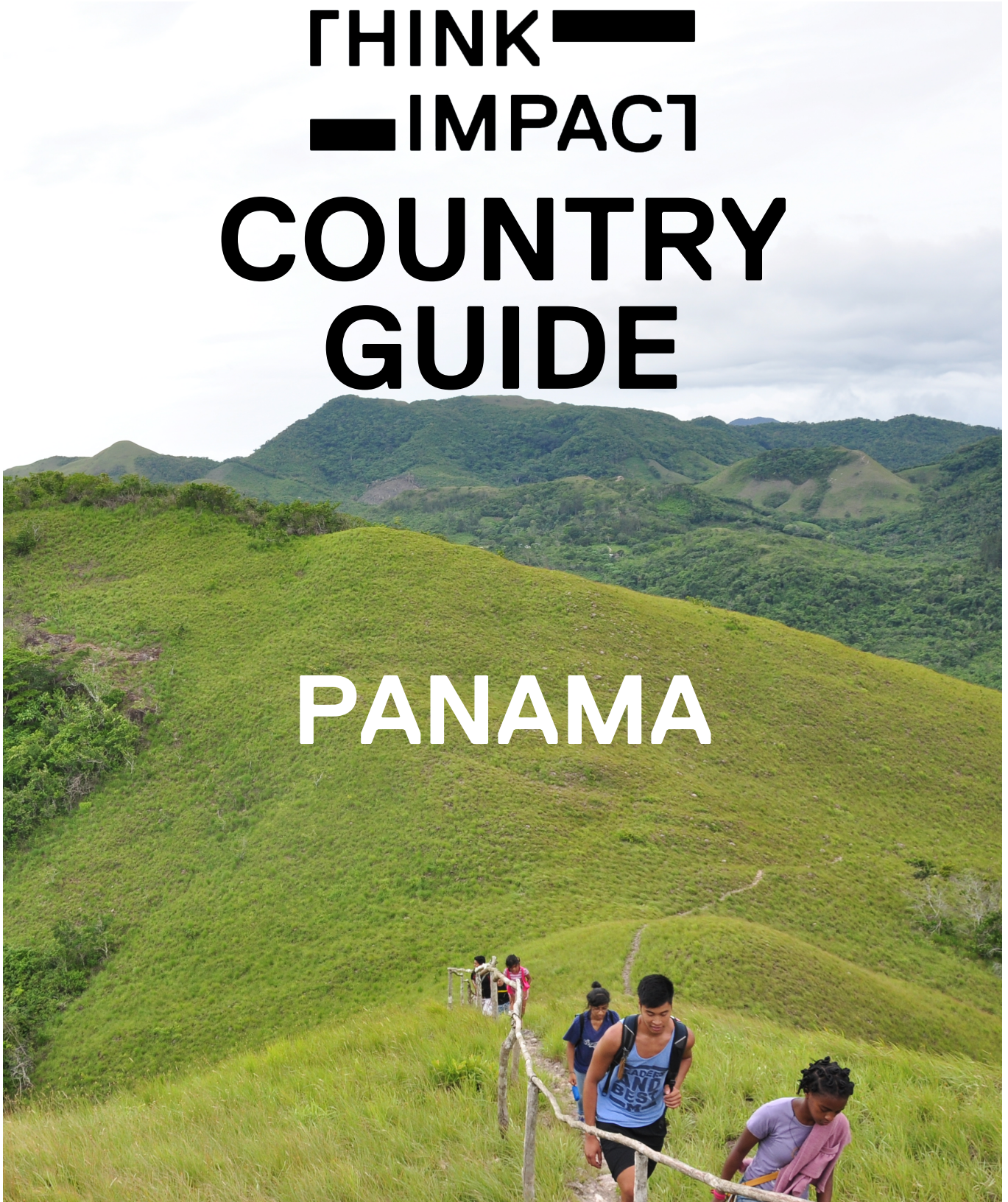


TABLE OF CONTENTS

¡BIENVENIDO A PANAMÁ!	3
MEET THE PANAMA COUNTRY TEAM	3
THINKIMPACT'S HISTORY IN PANAMA	4
PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION	6
PANAMA VISA INFORMATION	6
BOOKING FLIGHTS	6
HEALTH AND SAFETY	6
BUDGETING YOUR MONEY	6
ADDITIONAL EXPENSES - 2015	7
THE PACKING LIST	8
LIVING IN PANAMA	10
ARRIVAL INFORMATION	10
THINKIMPACT UNIVERSITY IN PANAMA CITY	10
RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATIONS	10
COUNTRY OVERVIEW	10
GEOGRAPHY	11
CLIMATE	11
CURRENT COMMUNITIES	11
FAMILY	12
HOMESTAY FAMILIES	12
FOOD	12
PANAMA ELECTRICITY	12
COMMUNICATION	12
MAIL	13
LOCAL LANGUAGE	13
LIFESTYLES	13
DATING AND MARRIAGE	14
CULTURAL TIPS	14
UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN PANAMA CITY	14
STAYING HEALTHY	15
EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION	15
PANAMA MEDICAL CARE	15
BLOOD SUPPLIES	16
POLITICAL SITUATION	16
SOCIAL DEMONSTRATIONS	16
CRIME	16
CRIMINAL PENALTIES	16
TRANSPORTATION	17
TIPPING	17
TRAVEL IN PANAMA	17
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES: PANAMA	17
RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESOURCES	17
TYPICAL EXCURSIONS	18

¡BIENVENIDO A PANAMÁ!

Your journey begins now, as you take the intellectual and logistical steps necessary to prepare for the Panama Institute. The Institute is more than a traditional internship or study abroad program. Throughout your time in Panama you will be fully immersed in what we call the innovation process.

Through this process you will build meaningful relationships with community partners, begin to appreciate a new culture in a new and exciting way, formulate meaningful questions that guide your understanding of economic development, and ultimately prototype new products and services that will change lives in your community.



You will wear many hats. You will be a scholar, a facilitator, a leader, an innovator, a designer and ultimately a catalyst for sustainable social change.

Please read through this entire guide in order to be fully prepared before the Institute. You can also follow this Panama Country Guide on your mobile device with the Unleesh App!

Get the most out of this guide and connect with fellow students on your mobile device now by downloading the Unleesh App, if you haven't done so already! Available in the App Store for Apple devices and Google Play for Android users, just search "Unleesh" (with two e's). Just like the Pre-Departure Handbook, the App will allow you to access the guide anytime on your phone and guide you step-by-step through your journey, while allowing you to share your experiences and knowledge with others.

All students have been automatically enrolled in the Panama Country Guide Path on Unleesh. Make sure to register and login with the emails you have provided to ThinkImpact to gain access.

MEET THE PANAMA COUNTRY TEAM



Ulises Hernandez, Country Director, Panama,
ulises@thinkimpact.com

Ulises Hernandez received a Bachelors degree from Rutgers University in Agricultural Science, a Masters degree in Biotechnology from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA and Masters of International Agribusiness Management (MIAM) from INCAE Business School/CATIE in Costa Rica. He is from a small, rural town in Panamá, where family farming was the basis of their livelihood and where he witnessed firsthand the need for innovative strategies for sustainable development. He understands the challenges impacting remote areas in Panamá and has a deep-rooted personal commitment to using his management skills and experience to help his country.

He has worked on a variety of research projects at academic institutions including Rutgers, the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories; and as a plant scientist, conducting research that supported technology and innovation for the agriculture sector. As part of his MBA training, he worked as a consultant for the National Bank of Panamá, where he provided recommendations on how to improve management practices and productivity of dairy farms in order to increase income and milk production. This work involved interacting with a variety of stakeholders within the dairy supply chain, including the government, private companies, and farm owners to identify the main issues affecting the supply chain. Being passionate about education and social entrepreneurship, he is eager to use his skills to help ThinkImpact scholars achieve concrete results and make lasting change in their community partnerships.

THINKIMPACT'S HISTORY IN PANAMA

ThinkImpact expanded its global operations to Panama in 2013. Full time country staff members are based in Panama City, and Institutes typically take place in the Coclé region outside of the capital. In a relatively short time, ThinkImpact Panama has already developed deep ties with local communities, where students have collaborated to create five separate design teams, or small enterprises working to create economic opportunities.

PAST INNOVATIONS

Mango Jam Design Team

Community: El Cocal, Coclé province

Status: Active

Program: 8 Week Social Innovation, 2014

Description: During Panama's winter months, communities like El Cocal find themselves with an abundance of mangos. Thousands of mangos go unconsumed each year as people quickly tire of the fruit, leaving the mangos to rot on the ground, attracting flies and snakes. This team worked with Scholars to invent creative ways to preserve and consume mangos, including jams and flans. They sold their products at community events and at a nearby ecotourism farm. Now that mango season has ended the team is focusing on creating new products from underutilized seasonal fruits like nance (a small yellow fruit) and orange.



Trash Collection Design Team

Community: El Cocal, Coclé province

Status: Active

Program: 8 Week Social Innovation, 2014



Description: Trash disposal is a major public health concern throughout rural Panama. With no formal service to collect trash, many community members dispose of trash by burning or burying waste, including plastics, metals, or compostable materials. Residents of El Cocal knew of the health risks associated with burning trash but did not have a feasible alternative for waste disposal. After the two week immersion process scholars had identified community members who were passionate about the trash issue, as well as a local man with a pickup truck. The team now offers a trash collection service that picks up trash from homes every Monday morning and disposes it at a local trash collection facility. The team charges \$1 per family each week, which is more than enough to cover the cost of

gas and the monthly \$10 permit at the local center.

Recycled Rain Gutter Design Team

Community: El Cocal, Coclé a Province

Status: Inactive

Program: 8 Week Social Innovation, 2014

Description: During our eight week program in 2014 the Coclé region was experiencing a severe drought due to the El Niño effect. The rainy season normally sees downpours on a daily basis, which provides water for important crops like corn and yuca, as well as for families' personal gardens. During the El Niño phenomena it only rained in El Cocal once or twice every two weeks. Tap water in rural Panama is often treated with bleach, making it an undesirable option for watering gardens. To take full advantage of the sporadic downpours, this team created a gutter-like rain collection system built from recycled soda bottles. Rain water is collected from the roof into the gutter, and then channeled into five gallon tanks that can be carried to water nearby gardens. The final prototype could fill a five gallon tank in less than 60 seconds. The drought has now ended so the community no longer needs the collection system, but they hope to begin to install more gutters once the dry season begins.



Natural Dyes Design Team

Community: Piedras Gordas, Coclé province

Status: Active

Program: 3 Week Social Innovation, 2014

Description: The community of Piedras Gordas is located in the La Pintada county, which is known for its handmade hats and handicrafts made from the dried leaves of a palm plant. Hats are traditionally made with black and white fibers, but some hat makers choose to incorporate other colored fibers into their products. Colored dyes are created from boiling chemicals like cough syrup or tissue paper, which must be bought outside of the community. A community member in Piedras Gordas wanted to create natural dyes from local plants as an alternative to artificial, imported dyes. A group of interested community members formed and worked together with students to experiment with different plants and colors. The team is now organizing the process of creating gardens to grow fibers and plants for the dyes, and they currently sell their colored fibers at local festivals and to hat makers in Piedras Gordas and other nearby communities.



PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

PANAMA VISA INFORMATION

U.S. Citizens do not need to obtain a tourist visa in advance of arrival if they plan to be in Panama for less than 180 days. If you will be remaining in the country after the Institute please plan accordingly. Passports must be valid 3 months beyond the intended stay.

Citizens of other nationalities must verify your home country's restrictions. You may need to apply for a Visa in advance of arrival depending on your nationality. However, if you are a foreign student and already have a U.S. Visa, you won't be required to apply for a Visa for Panama. Your U.S. Visa is enough for you to enter the country. Visa approvals may take several weeks so please verify immediately to assure you will be able to obtain the visa in time for the program start date. We also recommend Atlas Visa Services should you like assistance in obtaining your visa as a Non-U.S. student: <http://www.atlasvisa.com/>

BOOKING FLIGHTS

You will want to budget around \$500 to \$1,000 for your international airfare. We recommend that you book your travel sooner rather than later.

ThinkImpact has partnered with Fly For Good, which allows all ThinkImpact Scholars to receive discounted humanitarian flight fares through their site. To receive these discounted fares just sign up on <http://www.flyforgood.com/> and use the Approval code: TI12.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

"Consider getting multiple doctor opinions on meds to take and safe practices while in country, many doctors recommend different things. Also take your doctor's contact information with you in case you have questions during the program."

Your health and safety is our number one priority. Everyone on the ThinkImpact Team from our Headquarter Staff to our In-country coordinators and associates are trained in health and safety protocol and adhere to the Standards of Good Practice, Forum for Education Abroad.

You must visit a Health Clinic or personal physician before departing for Panama. Explain to them that you will be traveling to rural communities two – three hours west of Panama City, Panama Malaria is a risk only in the Darien region (east of Panama City near the border with Colombia). ThinkImpact does not work in the Darien region, so malaria pills are not necessary during your Institute stay unless you plan to travel independently to Darien after the program ends.

The Doctor or Nurse Practitioner will give you a list of recommended and required vaccinations. Also consult the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov. ThinkImpact does not provide any medical

consultation. Please consult your medical professional and the State Department and CDC websites for further guidance.

BUDGETING YOUR MONEY

Panama uses the U.S. dollar as its currency. The official name for it is the Balboa, but it's exactly the same bill, and in practice people use the terms 'dollar' and 'Balboa' interchangeably. Although, Panama doesn't have their own bills, they do mint their own coins (aside from the U.S. coins that they also use). Panamanian coins are of the same value, size and metal as U.S. coins, and both are frequently used.

ThinkImpact recommends that you budget \$50-\$75 per week for spending money for the program (not including excursions). You may choose to bring cash or you can bring a debit card and take out money from an ATM in Panama City. You should be prepared to enter the communities with the cash

that you need for the program. There won't always be opportunities to access ATMs during the Institute. Make sure to notify your bank that you will be leaving your home country; confirm that your debit card works in Panama and get your bank's international calling code and phone number.

Never carry large sums of cash on you at any given time. We recommend that you bring a money belt or a bag that can be tightly strapped to your body for when you are in larger cities. Although personal security may seem less concerning in the rural communities, we still encourage you to wear the money belt.



ADDITIONAL EXPENSES - 2015

Additional Expenses excluded from the program fee	8 Day Winter – Health	3 Week Summer - Health	8 Week Summer - Social	Notes
International Airfare	\$500 - \$1,000	\$500 - \$1,000	\$500 - \$1,000	
Immunizations and medicines	Varies	Varies	Varies	Consult with your medical professionals. Prescription and over-the-counter medicines for the duration of the program.
Tourist Visa	Varies by citizenship	Varies by citizenship	Varies by citizenship	Not required for U.S. citizens or foreign students holding a U.S. visa
Personal Spending Money	\$50-\$75 per week	\$50-\$75 per week	\$50-\$75 per week	Dependent on location and personal spending habits to include mobile phone minutes, airport transfer at program end, entertainment, snacks, and souvenirs. Does not include vacation travel.
Excursions (optional)	\$110 - \$500	\$110 - \$500	\$100- \$750	Optional

University of the Pacific course credit (2-3 optional)	n/a	\$240	\$360	\$120 Per credit
Many scholars have spent much less than this throughout their time in Panama. This really comes down to personal spending habits and preferences.				

THE PACKING LIST

*PACK LIGHT AND DO NOT BRING ANY LUGGAGE YOU CAN'T CARRY. We recommend a backpackers or duffle bag, but it is fine if you bring a suitcase with wheels as you won't be carrying it around a lot – it will mostly be from the airport to the van or bus and vice-versa.

Clothing

Workout Items – We encourage to you to keep up your workout routine!

Pants – Preferably lightweight. Consider bringing a pair of the kind that you can either roll up or they zip off into something shorter (below the knee) for your time in the communities

Jeans – Good for excursions, and to have something that's not covered in dirt.

Shorts – For those hot Panamanian days. While in the community we require that shorts reach the knee, but shorter shorts are fine for the city or excursions.

Women may wear skirts or dresses up to the knee.

Dresses – Great for the day-to-day in Panama City or in the communities.

"Bring a nice outfit or two for dinners in the city and excursion outings."

T-shirts – Easy to wash, and good to layer under other clothes.

Tank Tops – Remember to be conservative, no spaghetti straps and don't show cleavage in the community

Light sweater or jacket

Raincoat and umbrella

Sleep clothes

Lots of underwear and socks

Must Have

Passport and Passport Photocopies (X2)

Immunization record (Yellow book)

Personal Medication

Student ID and/or Driver's License

Washcloth- For bucket bathing

Towel- Best to have a thin quick dry towel

Hand sanitizer- Bring larger tubes to refill your smaller stash

Sunscreen/Aloe Vera

Chapstick with SPF (X2)

Watch/Travel Alarm Clock

Insect Repellent (Deet)

Headlamp (see photo)

Bucket Bath Sandals

Comfortable Walking Shoes

Water Bottle (X2)

Kindle/Books – We encourage you to swap with your team!

Extra batteries

Personal Toiletries (Ziploc's are great for organizing)

Small Day Pack- Backpack or Messenger Bag

Personal Reflection Journal

Pens or Pencils (X5)

Sunglasses

Glasses (If applicable)

Feminine hygiene products for entire duration of program (however, there is a supermarket in the main town where they can be purchased).

Gifts for Homestays – We recommend bringing a small, edible gift to present to your homestay family on the first day (ex: candies, peanut butter, maple syrup, etc.) We also recommend bringing a separate, non-edible gift to give to your homestay family on the last day to show your appreciation (ex: calendars, games, t-shirts, coloring books, playing cards, markers or a small gift from your school or hometown)

Pictures from home to show your hosts (they love this! Pictures can either be printed out or saved on a camera/other electronic device. Having pictures of you and your family, activities that you like to do, and where you come from can help you introduce yourself to your homestay family, regardless of any language barriers)

Nice to Have

Plastic Bags

Face Wipes (instead of face wash)

Wet Wipes

Nail Clippers

Pictures from home to show your hosts

Clif Bars/Granola Bars/Protein Bars

Peanut butter

Electrolyte Powder

Personal First Aid Kit

Playing Cards

Extra blanket and travel pillow

Spanish/English dictionary

*"Take a flash drive
especially if you
want to share music
and pictures."*

What Is Provided

Bedding- however pillows are not always provided

Drinking Water

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner (provided by homestay)

Toilet Paper

ThinkImpact Staff First Aid Kit

Innovator Kit (curriculum guides and supplies)

Mosquito Nets

* For the personal First Aid Kit we suggest looking into the following: Anti-Diarrheal Medication (i.e.: dehydration salts, Pepto), Pain Killers/Anti-inflammatory (i.e. Advil, Tylenol, etc.), Antihistamines (i.e. Benadryl), Band-aids and Gauze, Anti-bacterial Ointment, Antiseptic Wipes, Hydrocortisone Cream.

** We highly discourage you from wearing contact lenses in the community. There is a lot of dust and dirt and you will be very uncomfortable

LIVING IN PANAMA

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Getting there is your first challenge on this exciting journey. ThinkImpact is here to help you at every step along the way. You should be arriving at Tocumen International Airport on the program start date. ThinkImpact country staff will arrange for airport pick-up and transfer to the ThinkImpact University locale on the program start date only. If you schedule your arrival on any date other than the program start date you will be responsible for getting from the airport to the TIU hotel and making any arrangements for extra night hotel stays at your expense.

On the day of arrival you will be taken to the TIU hotel. Scholars will be arriving at different times on that day. You will be able to rest and settle in on the first day. ThinkImpact University will begin with breakfast on the following day.

THINKIMPACT UNIVERSITY IN PANAMA CITY

TIU is the training that you will go through upon arrival in Panama City before meeting your homestay family and beginning the Institute. During TIU you will get to know your Country Coordinator and team and begin to explore the language, context and curriculum.

ThinkImpact University will be held at the **Magnolia Inn** (see details below). This location is subject to change and you will be notified if the site location changes before the start date of the program.

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are arriving a day early or leaving a day later, ThinkImpact recommends the following Guest Houses in Panama City:

Magnolia Inn (<http://magnoliapanama.com>)

The Magnolia Inn is located 20-30 minutes away from the Panama City Airport, in the heart of Casco Viejo (a European style old town with lots of restaurants, shops and cultural outlets); approximately \$15 per night for a dorm style room.

Hostal Amador (<http://www.hostalamadorfamiliar.com>)

The Hostal Amador is located just 10 minutes away from the Panama City Airport. It is safe, affordable and rates start at \$15 per night.

Luna's Castle (<http://www.lunascastlehostel.com/>)

Luna's Castle is located 20-30 minutes away from the Panama City Airport, in the heart of Casco Viejo. This is a fun and popular hostel among back packers, approximately \$15-20 per night for a dorm style room.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

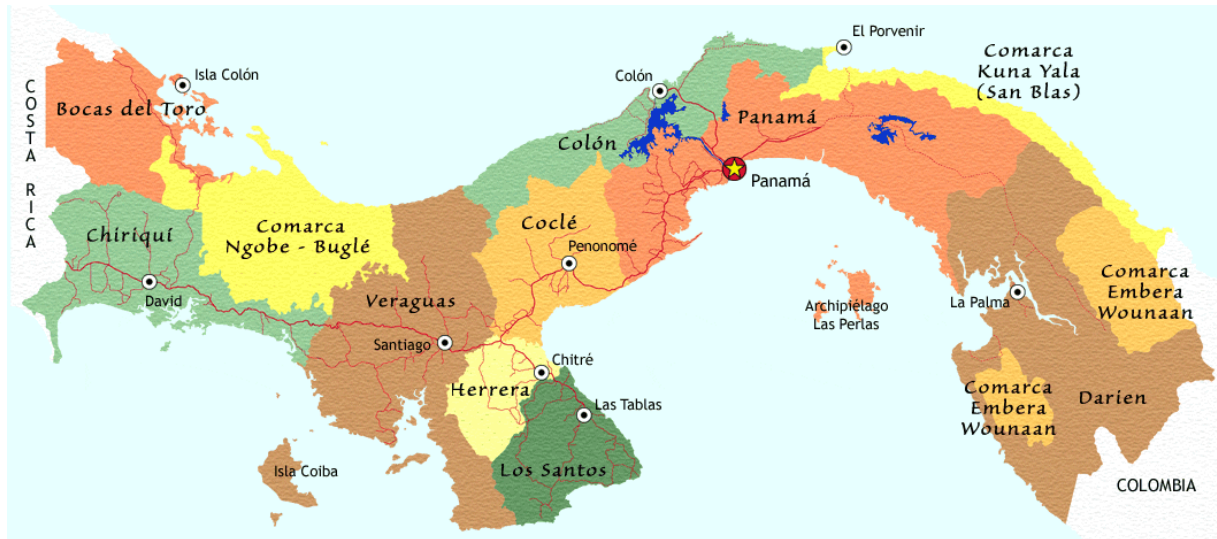
Panama, officially the Republic of Panama, is the southernmost country of Central America and the whole of North America. The capital is Panama City.

Panama was inhabited by several indigenous tribes prior to settlement by the Spanish in the 16th century. It was independent from Spain in 1821 and joined a union of Nueva Granada, Ecuador, and Venezuela named the Republic of Gran Colombia. When Gran Colombia dissolved in 1831, Panama and Nueva Granada remained joined. Nueva Granada later became the Republic of Colombia. With the backing of the United States, Panama seceded from Colombia in 1903, allowing the Panama Canal to be built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1904 and 1914.

In 1977, an agreement was signed for the total transfer of the Canal from the United States to Panama by the end of the 20th century, which culminated on 31 December 1999.

Revenue from canal tolls continues to represent a significant portion of Panama's GDP. Panama has the second largest economy in Central America and it is also the fastest growing economy and the largest per capita consumer in Central America. In 2013, Panama ranked 5th among Latin American countries in terms of the Human Development Index and 59th in the world. Since 2010, Panama remains as the second most competitive economy in Latin America according to the Global Competitiveness Index from the World Economic Forum. Panama's jungle is home to an abundance of tropical plants, animals and birds – some of them to be found nowhere else in the world.

GEOGRAPHY



Panama is bordered by Colombia to the east, Costa Rica to the west, the Caribbean Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. The Isthmus of Panama links North and South America. At its narrowest and lowest point, is the Panama Canal, which allows ships to pass from the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. The country is divided geographically by a chain of mountains in the west, moderate hills in the interior and a low range on the east coast. There are nine provinces: Bocas del Toro, Coclé, Colón, Chiriquí, Darién, Herrera, Los Santos, Panamá, Veraguas. Along with 5 indigenous reserves: Guna Yala, Emberá-Wounaan, Ngäbe-Bugle, Madungandi and Wargandi.

CLIMATE

Panama's climate is tropical, with temperatures usually ranging between 32°C (90°F) during the day to 21°C (70°F) at night. The dry season runs from January to March. Rainfall is heaviest during October and November. The wettest area is on the Caribbean coast.

CURRENT COMMUNITIES

Scholars on ThinkImpact's Institute in Panama work in the Coclé region. ThinkImpact has built relationships through past Institutes in the Piedras Gordas and El Cocal communities in the Coclé region, each about 2-3 hours from Panama City. The nearest large town is Penonomé, where Scholars have access to police, hospitals, ATMs, and other infrastructure.

"During the immerse and inspire phases, really listen to what community members are telling you, but understand your source's bias and interpret accordingly."

ThinkImpact vets all potential communities to ensure they are safe and accessible, and not in areas prone to natural disasters or political unrest. ThinkImpact only begins operations in a community once the community has demonstrated buy-in, usually verbally or in the form of a letter of invitation from community leadership. Most of the communities where ThinkImpact Panama operates are

rural, though houses tend to be made of concrete and have electricity and running water. Mobile phone service is widely available, yet there is signal only in specific spots of the community.

FAMILY

Community members don't speak English, and on average, adults have completed a sixth grade education while youth traditionally complete through ninth grade. Women in the communities tend the households and care for children while men to go work in the countryside or travel to surrounding towns usually working for construction activities.

"Start brainstorming some games to play with the kids: hop scotch, patty cake, kid songs."

HOMESTAY FAMILIES

The makeup of homestay families will be very different from home to home. It is possible that you will be living with a single mother and her children or an older couple or any other combination. You will likely be placed with another Scholar in the same house to increase your comfort level while in this setting. This may also mean that you might share a bed with another Scholar of your own gender.

"I never felt uncomfortable at the homestay, but be sure to be respectful. Everyone watches everything you do and you don't want to make a bad impression."

Make an effort to fully immerse yourself in your host family. Set a goal to spend a few minutes each day learning about the local culture. Offer assistance with household chores as much as possible. This is a great way to learn about the local culture. Family members may be shy and introverted which can create some awkward silences and uncomfortable situations. Express appreciation for your host family's hospitality as often as possible. Smile and say thank you regularly. It is a privilege for you to stay in their home.

FOOD

Food served in large hotels and well-known restaurants should be safe, but always choose food that has been cooked and is served hot because heat kills most bacteria. Do not buy food from street vendors or sidewalk cafes, because the standard of hygiene may be low and food may not be fresh. Do not buy fruit or salad that is already peeled. Fruit that you wash and peel yourself should be safe. Avoid shellfish. Some common cuisine includes rice, beans, chicken, fish, beef, pork, lentils, tropical fruit, plantains, coconut, corn and yucca.

It is advisable to drink bottled or boiled water and carbonated beverages. Use major brands or local brands (suggested by local staff) always ensuring that the tops are sealed. Avoid ice because it may have been made from unsafe water. Always wash your hands with soap before eating, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Keep in mind that the ThinkImpact Panama staff will only take you to restaurants where they know the water, juices or food are safe to drink/eat. Panama is all about the tropical fruits so if they recommend you to try a juice, go for it! You won't get anything fresher than a juice in a tropical country.

PANAMA ELECTRICITY

Voltage: 110/120 volts

Frequency: 60 Hz

It is common to have electricity in your homestay, however not all of the houses have electricity. You should limit bringing any electrical items. Laptop computers are not required.

COMMUNICATION

"Consider downloading 'whatsapp' before you leave. You can text any number including internationally for free when using wifi or for a small amount other times."

You will be given a simple mobile phone as part of the program. The ThinkImpact staff will guide you in purchasing the airtime for this phone during the first couple days of ThinkImpact University (TIU).

It will be much cheaper to purchase the airtime in country than to roam with your U.S. mobile phone. If you have an Apple IOS product please bring it to the Institute to use for ThinkImpact's new app, Unleesh. We will also provide you with an optional mobile version of your curriculum. If you have any type of smartphone, you may want to have it along to utilize some apps, but again data cover and usage can get expensive.

It will not take you long to realize that people in the communities might own mobile phones and possibly even have access to Facebook. When you are networking with community members and forming your design team in the "Inspire" phase of the Institute, it will be helpful for you to have access to a mobile phone so you can contact community members and keep their information organized.

All ThinkImpact staff will have mobile phones and their mobile contact information will be distributed during ThinkImpact University (TIU). Internet access will be minimal. Computers and Internet are not part of daily life for local residents in these communities. If there is a local Internet connection, it is not reliable and often is not functioning for days at a time. The ThinkImpact Country Staff will be equipped with Internet sticks so that they can maintain correspondence with ThinkImpact Headquarters in Denver and post regular updates to the ThinkImpact blog.

You will be able to charge mobile phones and small electronics at most homestays. Larger electronics may be charged during TIU and on excursion. Personal computers are okay to bring on the Institute, but not necessary. Remember Panama is a tropical country so whether it's a dry or rainy season it's always humid. If you bring your laptop keep in mind that involves a risk. We recommend that you keep all expensive electronics hidden out of site during the day and bring a durable case to keep dust or humidity out of crevices. ThinkImpact is not responsible for any lost or damaged personal items.

MAIL

Please note that friends and family will not be able to mail you letters or packages. Homestays do not have traditional mailing addresses and it takes staff time and resources to collect such mail. Only in case of medical emergency will the ThinkImpact team arrange to have something delivered to you in the community.



LOCAL LANGUAGE

Spanish is the main language spoken in Panama; however, the vocabulary varies depending if the person is from the city or from the country side. In the country side, like in many other Latin American countries, people tend to shorten the words and exclude letters. For example: "Ven pa'ca" (Ven para acá) which means "come here". Many people from the city use "Spanglish" or Panamanian words that come from a combination between a Spanish and English word – this is due in part to United States influence when the Panama Canal Zone was a U.S. territory (until 1999). Some examples of these words are: "cuara" (a deviation from "quarter" = 25cents), "la man" (referring to "the woman"), "pritty" (to say something is "cool") and "fren" (from "friend"), among others. In addition, the country's indigenous languages such as Guna, Embera, Wounaan, Ngöbe, and Buglé are well preserved.

LIFESTYLES

LGBT Rights: Same sex marriages are not conducted nor recognized in Panama. However homosexuality was decriminalized in 2008. (<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2008/08/14/gay-sex-becomes-legal-in-panama/>) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals enjoy full legal rights in Panama. Although Panamanian law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, there is societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Accessibility: While in Panama, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what you find in the United States. Panamanian law only mandates access to new or remodeled public buildings for persons with disabilities, which is being enforced for new construction. While some public buses and buildings do accommodate wheelchairs, many do not. Handicapped parking is often available at many larger parking lots.

Minority students: Panama saw a large influx of immigrants from all over the world come to the country during the construction of the Panama Canal. As a result, most of the time Panamanians are open to other cultures and races. However, there are issues of discrimination against Asians and Colombians due to the significant arrival of these groups coming to the country. Unfortunately, like in many other countries as well, there sometimes is discrimination between whites and colored skin or indigenous people. Recognize this as an opportunity to promote tolerance and share your culture and upbringing.

DATING AND MARRIAGE

Most Panamanians practice the Christian religion with high rates of Catholicism and believe in marriage between a man and woman. The reality is, however, that many women become single mothers at a young age. Often these women are from the country side or from low-income families. This trend makes it common for couples to have children first and then get married or just have the children and never get married. It is also very common, specifically in the country side to be "united". This means to live with a person for more than five consecutive years under the same roof without getting married. Under Panamanian law, after five years the united couple earns the rights of a married couple.

CULTURAL TIPS

- When invited to a Panamanian home, bring candy or crafts from your home country.
- You are expected to arrive late to dinner parties. Anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour is customary.
- Shorts are acceptable for use in the city, but most Panamanians opt for jeans, long pants, or capris.
- It is advisable to avoid discussing political matters, particularly Panama's relations with the U.S, when meeting new acquaintances.
- It is customary in the city for women to greet men or other women with a kiss on the left cheek. Men usually greet each other with a handshake. The countryside is more conservative, so it is customary to greet with a handshake for both men and women.
- Punctuality is expected from visitors. However, "Panamanian time" usually runs late, so this point is flexible.
- Establishing personal relationships before delving into business is typical.
- Be aware that Panamanians in the countryside try not to disagree openly. Thus, they avoid saying 'no'. An unenthusiastic 'yes' may in reality mean 'no'. They are shy and want to make you always feel comfortable as they are aware you are a guest in their community. In the city people are blunter.

"Make the most of your time in the community. Many students did not appreciate the real experience they were gaining from being in the home. Do things with your family."

UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN PANAMA CITY

Avenida Demetrio Basilio Lakas,
Building No.783
Clayton, Panama
Telephone: +507 317 5000
Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +507 317 5000
Fax: +507 317 5568
Panama-ACS@state.gov

"Mental health: You are probably going to be surrounded by people 24/7. So, if you are an introvert like me, find ways to spend some time alone to debrief and hear yourself think. But at the same time, lean on your fellow scholars- remember you are going through the same overall experience."

STAYING HEALTHY

Malaria risks: In Panama, malaria pills are recommended for rural areas in certain provinces and you must consult your doctor when deciding which preventative measures to take in country. However, there is no risk of Malaria in the Cocle province where ThinkImpact works.

Water: The water from the tap in the city is safe to drink. ThinkImpact will provide bottled drinking water for you throughout the Institutes when you are in the communities.

Raw vegetables and fruits: Do not eat fruits and vegetables with skins; or if you do make sure you wash them properly, it's better if everything is peeled. Do not eat raw vegetables, only eat vegetables that have been properly cleaned and cooked.

Rabies: Stay away from stray animals, especially dogs and cats. Do not pet, stroke or feed these animals. Some animals may appear healthy, but they are probably not immunized.

HIV: Do not practice high-risk behavior. HIV is a high risk in Panama.

Diarrhea: Diarrhea is common while traveling, especially in a foreign environment. If you experience any serious issues, be sure to inform the staff. Try to maintain a light diet, avoid caffeine, fruit juice and greasy foods should this occur.

Stagnant water and Dengue: Avoid stepping in still or stagnant water because it is an incubator for many kinds of bacteria, parasites and particularly the Dengue mosquito. Often times, stagnant water is contaminated with human and animal feces, particularly in deserts or other areas of low rain.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

*This information will also be sent to you as an Emergency Contact Card in your pre-departure final mailing 1-2 weeks prior to departure. We recommend that you have it on you at all times.

*From USA: Dial 011 (US Exit Code,) then 507 (Country Code,) then phone number

*From USA via Skype: Type +, then 507 (Country Code,) then phone number

*7-digit numbers are land lines, 8-digit numbers are cell phones

U.S. EMERGENCY CONTACT	
ThinkImpact Denver Office (9:00 to 6:00 p.m. MST Monday-Friday)	Calling from Panama: 001 303 377 3776 Calling from the U.S.: 1 303 377 3776
Steve Fox, Chief Executive Officer (after hours noted above)	Calling from Panama: 001 617 947 6048 Calling from the U.S.: 1 617 947 6048

PANAMA EMERGENCY CONTACT	
Ulises Mobile (Country Coordinator)	Calling from Panama: 64980241 Calling from the U.S.: 011-50764980241
Emergency (911)	104
U.S. Consulate Afterhours Emergency	011 507 317 5000
Ace International Emergency Health Insurance	1 202 659 7777
Ace Insurance Toll Free Numbers	Calling from Panama: 011 800 0200 8888 Calling from the U.S.: 1 202 766 8206
Ace Insurance Collect Number	Calling from Panama: 011 202 659 7777

PANAMA MEDICAL CARE

ThinkImpact has an extensive network of in-country medical providers to address any of your health needs. In Panama City there is good quality health care. Outside Panama City, generally only basic health care is available. There are a number of well-qualified, English-speaking doctors, many trained in the U.S., who provide quality medical care.

These hospitals in Panama City are often recommended by embassies and/or used by expatriates.

Centro Médico Paitilla

Address: Avenida Balboa y Calle 53
Panama 5
Panama City,
Telephone: 507 265-8800 Ext. 7040

Clinica Hospital San Fernando

Address: Las Sabanas 3a Via Espana Final
Panama City, 083400
Telephone: 507 305 6300 / 6408

Hospital Nacional

Address: Av Cuba, entre Calle 38 Y 39
Panama City, NA
Telephone: 507 207 8100

"Always travel in pairs, even when you know the community well. In general common sense will go a long way in terms of safety. And as much as the community feels like home, you are an outsider; conduct yourself in such manner. As far as health, use wipes and hand sanitizer. Focus on balancing out sleep and work as well as a balanced diet. Your body needs the proper fuel to protect you from other health concerns."

BLOOD SUPPLIES

The blood supplies should not be considered safe throughout Panama, as it may not be in line with international standards. Screening procedures are improving, and blood may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis. You should not have elective transfusions of blood while in Panama.

POLITICAL SITUATION

The country is a democratic republic where the president acts as both head of state and head of government. The executive branch consists of a president and a vice president. The legislative branch is a 71 member body which makes up the National Assembly. Juan Carlos Varela of the Panameñista Party won the May 2014 presidential elections. The ruling Democratic Change party emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly elections by winning 29 seats. Panama's democratic institutions are stable and there are no significant organizations or groups that threaten the state.

SOCIAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Political protests and demonstrations are common and remain centered around socio-economic grievances. They are mostly organized by labor unions, students, indigenous groups, teachers and civic bodies. Generally, they take place in the city center or near local government offices. Protests by indigenous groups in more remote areas of the country can often result in temporary blockades of key thoroughfares, such as the Pan-American Highway. Protests are usually non-violent, though as a basic security precaution, you should avoid any such gathering.

CRIME

Petty crime such as pickpocketing and bag-snatching represents the biggest risk to foreigners, particularly in Panama City, Colón and the province of Chiriquí. This is common in public places and around establishments that cater to tourists, such as airports and bus terminals. You should exercise caution when using ATMs as there have been reports of assaults on individuals withdrawing cash. Credit or debit card skimming also remains a concern. Instances of theft from hotel rooms are also known to occur. The Panama Country team will discuss some of the higher crime areas within the capital. Violent crimes, such as armed robbery and mugging, are less common but do occur throughout the country. It is advisable not to resist when accosted by criminals as they are frequently armed.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES

While you are in Panama, you are subject to its laws. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. If you break local laws in Panama, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution, and the embassy cannot get you out of jail or prison. Keep in mind, if you are

arrested for an offence, tried and convicted, you must be sentenced before you can be repatriated to the United States to complete your sentence in the United States. This process can last three or more years. It is very important to know what is legal and what is not. Violating Panamanian laws, even unknowingly, may be grounds to be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Panama are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Special circumstances: Anyone not bearing identification at all times, including tourists, may be held and will be penalized by the Panamanian authorities. Make sure to always carry a photocopy of your passport (the photo page and the page with your entry stamp).

TRANSPORTATION

Participants are not to use any transportation that is not organized by ThinkImpact while on the Institute, except in the case of an emergency. This includes bikes, horses, and any form of motorized transportation not organized by or provided by ThinkImpact, including motorbikes, private cars (even from your host family), public vans or taxis, and scooters.

TIPPING

Servers at good restaurants in big cities and resorts expect a 10% tip. However, you don't need to tip taxi drivers, as fares should be agreed prior to departure.

TRAVEL IN PANAMA

It is a relatively safe and straightforward travel environment. ThinkImpact will keep you abreast to any developments impacting our participants. You should have signed up for the State Department STEP alert program as noted in your prior pre-departure packet.

"Take a multivitamin while in the village- you probably will not be getting all the vitamins and nutrients you usually do at home. Bring lots of energy bars!! You will want the extra protein especially if you get sick."

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES: PANAMA

- Panama Country Profile: Overview, Facts, Leaders, Media, and Timeline: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1229332.stm
- Panama's Growing Economy and the importance of Entrepreneurship and Innovation: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7QZYkr5U_U
- Panama Canal History: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/tr-panama/>
- City of Knowledge (hub for international institutions and organizations such as UN, UNICEF, Red Cross, Peace Corps, and includes a Technopark – a group of companies promoting innovation through technology). <http://ciudadelsaber.org/en>

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESOURCES

If you plan to travel before or after the Institute, we recommend the following travel resources for your time in Panama. Have fun and be safe!

- Panama Canal <http://www.pancanal.com/eng/>
- Adventure/Eco/City Tours (Panama Canal Transit, Ziplining, Visiting Monkey Island, etc.) <http://www.barefootpanama.com/panama-tours/>
- Community Based Adventure Travel (a site done by former Peace Corps volunteers to promote tourism to the communities they worked with) <https://www.keteka.com/>
- Isla Bastimentos National Park, Bocas del Toro <http://bit.ly/1diQ5ea>
- General guide to traveling in Panama

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/panama>

- Official Panama Site (done by the Tourism Panamanian Authorities)
<http://www.visitpanama.com/>

TYPICAL EXCURSIONS

You can choose to join the group for a number of optional excursions that will take place in the middle of the Institute. Depending on your Institute length, options include an overnight excursion and a two-night excursion. This is a great way to incorporate additional attractions into your itinerary and make the most of your time abroad. You'll stay overnight in a hotel or guesthouse, and enjoy free time to explore on your own. The excursions are optional and are not included in the program fee. If you would like to attend any of the excursions, purchases must be complete by the end of ThinkImpact University. You will be provided a link to the Panama Marketplace where you can purchase excursions closer to your Institute departure date.

San Blas Islands and Panama City



Two Night Excursion offered during both the 8 week and 3 week Institutes: The San Blas islands are a group of islands in the archipelago de San Blas, located in the Northwest of Panama facing the Caribbean Sea. There are 378 islands within the archipelago and they are scattered around in an area of about 100 square miles.

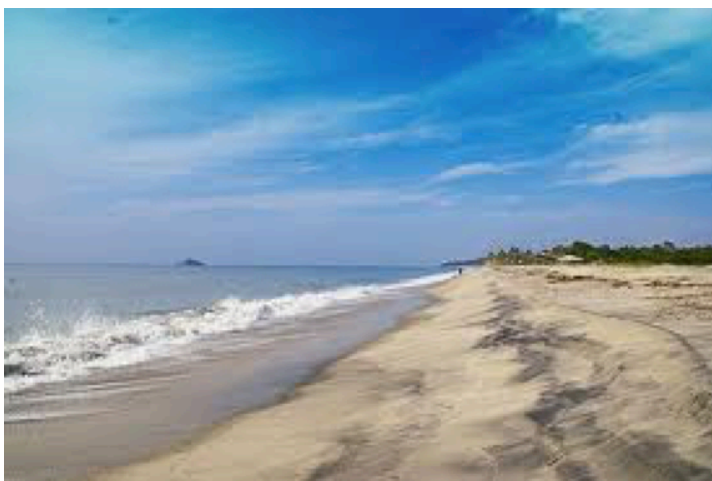
Scholars will have the opportunity to travel to Panama City and have free time to enjoy the historic district of the city and its surroundings. The following day, Scholars will take a boat to one of the islands where they will have time to hangout in the crystal blue water and either go on a snorkel tour to a sunken boat or visit to an indigenous Kuna community (get to choose one)

El Valle Adventures



Scholars will get to go to "El Valle" which is a town located in a volcano crater, surrounded by mountains in the shape of a sleeping Indian woman (reason why these mountains are called: "La India Dormida"). Scholars will get to go ziplining, swim at a waterfall or a natural pool, go hiking or just relax.

Santa Clara Beach



Scholars will spend the full day relaxing at the Santa Clara beach and enjoy Caribbean food at a local bar.

Scholars will also spend the second day enjoying cultural activities (like building a house made out of mud as in a traditional Panamanian ceremony called "Junta de Embarre", making sugar in a sugar cane mill, and eating traditional Panamanian food, etc). Scholars may also go to the river or hike.