BLOCK BEACHES
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THE BLOCK BEACHES GUIDE · PANAMA · 2026

Photo: Panama City waterfront, Panama

Coastal living, property & relocation

The complete 2026 guide to Panama — residency, taxes, where to live, how to buy safely, and your first 90 days. Honest and sourced.

#1
expat destination, 3 yrs running (InterNations)

$300K
investor-residency threshold as of Sept 2026 — confirm current rules

0%
tax on foreign-source income (territorial)

01 · THE BIG PICTURE

Why Panama, why now

Panama is a dollarized, territorially-taxed hub with some of the region's strongest fundamentals. GDP grew **4.4% in 2025** (nearly double the Latin-American average), inflation ran near **0.9%**, and tourism rose **17.4% in the first half of 2026** after a record 2025. A multi-billion-dollar infrastructure wave — Metro Line 3, the fourth Canal bridge, and the Panama–David railway with future Chame/Coronado and Río Hato stations — is raising the floor under every well-located sub-market.

> **Residency rules change — check before you act.** As of September 2026, public sources describe Panama's Qualified Investor ("Golden") Visa as granting **permanent residency** for **$300,000** of titled real estate, with a reported increase to **$500,000** under Decreto 193/2024. Thresholds and effective dates can change, so confirm the current amount and timing with a licensed Panama attorney before you make any decision based on them.

What this guide covers

- The three residency paths, compared
- Taxes, exonerations & banking reality
- Where to live — 9 sub-markets with real prices & yields
- How to buy safely (titled vs. rights-of-possession)
- Cost of living, healthcare & schools
- Your first 90 days, step by step

Every figure here is sourced from public 2026 data or observed listings and is a starting point for your own due diligence — never a substitute for a Panama-licensed attorney of your own.

02 · RESIDENCY

Three paths to residency

Panama offers unusually accessible residency, and two of the three main paths are tied to a property purchase — so the home you buy can also be the key to your visa.

PROGRAM	WHAT IT TAKES	YOU GET
Qualified Investor ("Golden Visa")	**$300,000** in titled real estate as of Sept 2026 (cash or financed with a local component). A rise to **$500,000** has been reported — confirm the current threshold with a licensed Panama attorney.	**Permanent residency on day one.** The fastest path; no prior residency period.
Friendly Nations	Nationals of 50+ countries; **$200,000** in real estate *or* a Panama job *or* a $200K bank deposit.	2-year temporary → permanent. The most popular route for buyers under $300K.
Pensionado (retiree)	A verifiable lifetime pension of **$1,000/mo** ($750 if you also buy $100K+ of real estate).	Permanent residency + Panama's famous retiree discount card (below).

The Pensionado discount card is one of the world's best retiree benefits: ~25% off flights, 20% off medical bills & professional services, 15% off hospital bills & dental, 25% off utilities, 50% off entertainment.

Who clusters where

$200K–$300K buyers concentrate in Panama City (Friendly Nations) and the Coronado / San Carlos beach corridor (both programs); Boquete and Pedasí draw Qualified-Investor and Pensionado buyers. A single well-chosen purchase can satisfy both your lifestyle and your visa.

03 · TAXES & MONEY

The money picture

Panama uses the US dollar and a **territorial tax system** — income earned *outside* Panama is not taxed here. That, plus low property taxes, is a core reason Panama attracts globally-mobile buyers.

What you'll pay (and won't)

- **Foreign-source income:** untaxed.
- **Property tax:** 0% on the first **$120,000** of a primary residence's value; tiered above.
- **Transfer tax:** ~2%; **capital gains:** 10%.
- **ITBI relief:** new homes up to $120,000 have benefited from transfer-tax exoneration — confirm the current rule at purchase.

The short-term-rental rule

Inside the **District of Panama**, rentals under 45 days need an ATP tourism permit (fines $5K–$50K). This **does not apply** to Coronado, San Carlos, Boquete, Pedasí, or Bocas — the beach and mountain markets where Airbnb income is a core thesis.

Banking is the hard part. Opening a Panama bank account as a foreigner is slow and document-heavy (references, source-of-funds, sometimes an in-person interview). Start early, and use an attorney who does this weekly — it is the step most relocations underestimate.

Panama isn't one market

It's several, each with a different price, yield, and personality. Prices and gross rental yields below are 2026 observed ranges — a compass, not a quote.

SUB-MARKET	TYPICAL HOME	GROSS YIELD	APPRECIATION	CHARACTER
Coronado	$180K–$800K	5.5–7.0%	7–9%/yr	Mature corridor anchor; waterfront lots $85+/m², beachfront homes $300K-800K.
El Palmar / San Carlos	$200K–$400K	6–9%	6–8%/yr	Strongest STR case; walkable surf beach, low HOA ($131/mo one project).
Gorgona	$150K–$450K	5–7%	5–7%/yr	Mid-corridor, less expat density.
Buenaventura	$300K–$900K	5–7%	5–7%/yr	Premium gated (Nicklaus golf); less upside than El Palmar. Buenamar sits here.
Pedasi	$180K–$580K	5–8%	6–9%/yr	Cleanest title environment; titled ocean-view homes still under $300K. Owner-occupier/appreciation-led.
Playa Venao	$400K–$900K	7–10%	7–10%/yr	Higher-yield surf/tourism node; land $1,000/m² beachfront, $106/m² inland.
Boquete	$180K–$480K	5–7%	6–8%/yr	Stable expat highlands; ~8,200 expats, no A/C. Title>acreage drives coffee-farm price.
Bocas Del Toro	$135K–$425K	6–9%	5–8%/yr	Highest title RISK (mostly ROP, unfinanceable); highest yields for diligent operators. ROP ~40-60% cheaper than titled.
Panama City	$150K–$600K	5–8%	4–8%/yr	Only deep condo market; citywide ~$1,850-2,050/m², median home ~$295K. QIV sweet spot $300-400K band doubled YoY.

For beach + rental income
Coronado (mature) or El Palmar / San Carlos (frontier value, strongest Airbnb case).

For clean title + value
Pedasí / Azuero — one of the few markets with mostly clean title and titled ocean-view homes under $300K.

Titled vs. rights-of-possession

The single most expensive mistake foreign buyers make is confusing **titled** land with **Rights of Possession (ROP / derecho posesorio)**. ROP is an occupancy claim on state land — common on the coast and in Bocas. It **cannot be bank-financed, carries no title insurance,** and converting it to title can take years with no guaranteed outcome. Never accept a seller's verbal "we're working on titling" in place of a current Public Registry certificate.

The coastal rule

On the Pacific coast, the first **22 meters** from the high-tide line is public and un-titleable; the band from **22–200 m** is the titleable zone (subject to Ley 80 conditions — not inside a protected area, mangrove, comarca, or concession). This is why "beachfront" pricing varies so widely.

The process, in order

1. **Engage your own Panama attorney** — not the seller's. This is non-negotiable.
2. **Verify at the Registro Público** — pull a current certificate; confirm titled status, owner, liens, and that property tax is paid (an unpaid "paz y salvo" can freeze a sale).
3. **Promise-to-buy + deposit in escrow**, contingent on clean diligence.
4. **Close** — public deed, registration, ~5–7% total closing overlay on the land transaction.

Cost of living, health & schools

Cost of living

Boquete runs ~**$1,500–$2,500/mo** for a comfortable couple; electricity is **$25–$50/mo** in the highlands (no A/C needed) versus **$150–$300** on the beach and in the city. Broadband is $30–$90/mo (fast and reliable in Panama City, more variable in the interior).

Schools (for families)

Panama City has 14–25 international schools (International School of Panama, Metropolitan, King's, Balboa Academy). Outside the capital, options thin out sharply — families with school-age children cluster in Panama City or Boquete. The beach corridor is largely a lifestyle/retirement market.

Punta Pacifica, Panama City

Healthcare

Panama City is the regional benchmark — **Hospital Punta Pacífica** (a Johns Hopkins affiliate, JCI-accredited) and **Hospital San Fernando** lead a strong private system priced **40–60% below the US** (a specialist consult is $60–$100). Care quality drops outside the capital, so most expats plan serious procedures in Panama City. Pensionado holders get 20% off consultations.

07 · THE PLAN

Your first 90 days

1. **Weeks 1–2 · Scout.** A guided trip to 2–3 sub-markets that fit your budget, visa path, and lifestyle. Meet an attorney and a banker in person.
2. **Weeks 3–6 · Choose + verify.** Shortlist properties; run Registro Público diligence on the top one or two; confirm titled status and visa eligibility of the purchase.
3. **Weeks 5–8 · Bank + entity.** Open your Panama bank account and (if advised) form the holding entity — start this early; it's the long pole.
4. **Weeks 7–10 · Close.** Escrow deposit → clean diligence → public deed → registration.
5. **Weeks 9–13 · File residency.** Submit your visa (Qualified Investor / Friendly Nations / Pensionado) with the purchase as the qualifying asset.
6. **Settle in.** Utilities, SIM, driver's license, healthcare, schools, and community. This is where a concierge earns its keep.

Find your place in Panama

Relocating isn't buying a property — it's moving a life. A person on our team reads every request and replies with the next practical step.

Choose an area

Talk through Panama City, the beach towns, the mountains and the Caribbean side against how you want to live.

Visit and view

Help planning a scouting trip, or video viewings of specific homes before you travel.

Rent first, or buy

A rental search done for you, or homes for sale that fit your budget range — with title status checked by your own attorney.

The right professionals

Pointers to licensed local professionals — for example attorneys for residency — when you need them. We don't give legal, tax or immigration advice.

Ready to start?

Reply to the email this guide came from, or go to **blockbeaches.com/plan-my-move**. Tell us your budget, your timeline, and whether the beach or the mountains is calling — a person on our team will reply with a next step.

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