

PANAMA

Special Report



**Panama City's Path Of Progress:
A Look At The Future Of Panama City...**



PSR
PANAMA
SPECIAL REPORT

Staff

Kathleen Peddicord

Founding Publisher

Kat Kalashian

Editor in Chief

Charles Conn

Managing Editor

Sophia Titley

Editorial Assistant

Hélène Kletochkina

Design Director

If you have queries relating to your subscription, get in touch at: CustomerService@PanamaLetter.com.

For editorial comments and contributions, reach us at: Editorial@PanamaLetter.com.

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PANAMA

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Path Of Progress Along Panama's Corredor Sur



By Charles Conn

Roads have long served as ready metaphors to describe the path forward...

They can be open, bumpy, have forks in them, or, as Robert Frost famously put it, be ones less traveled by... but they all share one trait—they lead to a destination.

In the case of Panama, the destination it has its sights on is First World-nation status.

Since being handed control of the canal from the United States, Panama has blazed a trail

of economic advancement and prosperity, a course it's still on today. The results are plain to see: a recently expanded canal, skyscrapers left and right (and new ones being built), and additional lines for the city metro system getting established... Panama is synonymous with growth.

But to uncover which direction Panama City will be growing next, go east, young man, where all along the Corredor Sur toll road between downtown and the Tocumen International Airport, the last remaining open spaces for

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development within the city proper are slowly being transformed into a vast logistics center, replete with American-style residential projects, world-class recreation facilities, and expat amenities to support the workers who are driving this sector forward.

The future along this road appears bright, but to fully grasp how Panama got here, and where it's set to go, come with me on a brief trip down memory lane...

Setting A Course East Of Eden

For the past decade or so, development in Panama City has been focused west of town, across the Bridge of the Americas following the Pacific coast through La Chorrera and Arraiján, and farther on towards the City Beaches—all forming part of Panamá Oeste (West Panama), the country's 10th province.

Accelerating this evolution is a Japanese-led public works project tasked with building a fourth bridge over the canal that will trace the route of a new extension of the metro, known as Line 3.

Train service established, millions of residents living west of Panama City will obtain relief from one of the country's most challenging traffic bottlenecks at the Bridge of the Americas. This bodes well for commuters residing in Panamá Oeste, and, though the project is years away from fruition, urban development west of Panama City has been and continues to increase.

A major problem with Panamá Oeste has been a lack of city planning during a prolonged period of unencumbered growth, which has led to high urban density with nowhere left to grow. Apart from traffic, issues with water supply have popped up repeatedly, with concerns over safety—the expected problems that come with large population centers—being felt as well.

The situation is echoed on the other side of the bridge in Panama City proper, which is reaching the tail end of a construction boom that has transformed the skyline into a Miami-like marvel, earning it the nickname of “little Dubai.” The population density here is unsurprisingly the highest in the country, and the only room left for growth is up, with prices per square meter rising in tandem.

The pricing out of low-wage workers from the Panama City metro area has been a driving factor spurring the expansion of La Chorrera and Arraiján. But with these towns reaching their saturation point, east of the city is now picking up speed.

Laying Down The Economic Welcome Mat

Wherever you look, growth is taking place throughout the country. Rates peaked in 2011 during the Martinelli administration (2009–2014) when the overheated economy generated double-digit GDP growth. At 11.8%, Panama surpassed China, whose GDP growth for that year held at 9.5%.



Path Of Progress Along Panama's Corredor Sur

For 2015, Panama's GDP grew by 5.8%, while last year's GDP grew by 4.9%, with construction—along with the Panama Canal, tourism, and the logistics/services sectors—leading the way in contributing to the country's bottom line.

This deceleration (more a correction) reflects normalized figures, ones whose prognosis indicate a country in robust economic health. (Consider that the United States' GDP growth for 2015 was a respectable 2.6%.)

Any way you slice the pie, Panama's economy is turning in an enviable performance, and, should all indicators hold, Panama will lead the region, surpassing Chile, for top GDP per capita in Latin America by 2018.

A sustaining factor has been a steady stream of foreign direct investment that, for 2015, boosted the economy by the tune of US\$5.8 billion. Each year, more money floods into Panama, and all signs point to FDI trending up with no end in sight.

This investor confidence is backed by solid economic indicators, such as those in the World Economic Forum's 2016–2017 Global Competitiveness Report, whose stats reveal this tiny isthmian powerhouse to be the largest upward mover in the index overall.

Panama, the report says, "leads the region in macroeconomic environment, goods market efficiency, financial market development, and business sophistication," all of which has helped earn it top spot for 2017 in U.S. News & World Report's ranking of 80 countries in the category of "Open For Business," looking at criteria such as its favorable tax environment and cheap manufacturing costs as well as corruption and transparency.

Today's positive outlook is the result of the policies and strategies pursued by Panama since well before Martinelli took office. Soon after the Canal Zone reverted to Panamanian control in the year 2000, the Panama government began to court foreign direct investment by creating special economic zones, such as Panamá Pacífico and Costa del Este, which have attracted multinationals to establish their headquarters with the lure of tax incentives and other benefits, including the creation of special visa categories to attract a well-qualified workforce.

Now the industrial sector is forecast to see further improvement with a presidential decree by current head of state, Juan Carlos Varela, announcing more funding for agricultural and manufacturing investment, research and development, personnel training, and environmental management.

I expect a lot of this development to play out along the expanse of the Corredor Sur, where the groundwork has been laid for residential tracts with First World city planning, business parks and new free zone districts, and a host of services, conveniences, and amenities suggesting an upwardly mobile and affluent society on the move.

All of this began with the master-planned community of Costa del Este.

Taking Off From Costa Del Este

Costa del Este looks across the curve of the Bay of Panama to the downtown city lights just 10 minutes away. Despite this proximity, Costa del Este is very much a world apart...a "First World" apart.

This neighborhood was conceived in the mid-1990s as a city within a city, planned around a large park, served with underground electrical cables, an independent wastewater processing system, and a 4-km boardwalk along the water, with spacious roads, sidewalks, and recreational areas.

Costa del Este's success was predicated on access to the Corredor Sur, inaugurated in 2000, the same year as the handover of the canal. Initially, the development had many skeptics, as the 310-hectare development was partially built on a landfill, which didn't lend itself to the imagery of modern refinement that the developer was pitching.

Now, Costa del Este is Panama's most valuable, modern, and exclusive area. It features a wide variety of real estate options, including condo skyscrapers, single-family homes, and gated communities. In true American fashion, this suburban neighborhood has wide, smooth, clean roads, and without the canopy of electrical wires that hangs over many other roads in Panama City.

Path Of Progress Along Panama's Corredor Sur

Plenty of multinational corporations have moved headquarters or operations here, and many of their executives live in the neighborhood. Within Costa del Este you will find the regional headquarters of United Airlines, Deloitte, GBM, Novartis, Johnson & Johnson, Hyundai Motors, Syngenta, and more.

You will also find local retail chains including a Riba Smith supermarket and Farmacias Arrocha, international franchises like Papa John's Pizza and Starbucks Coffee, courier and mail services like DHL and Mailboxes, Etc., as well as luxury car dealerships Lexus, Jaguar, Porsche, Land Rover, and BMW, and a variety of banks, malls, and numerous high-end restaurants offering international fine dining for all tastes.

The lack of a hip and happening nightlife doesn't seem to worry the older, more family-orientated residents. They're more interested in the schooling options, which include the Catholic Colegio San Agustín, Costa Kids, and the bilingual Academia Interamericana de Panamá, as well as many dance and recreational after-school activities for all ages.

The area is expanding fast... several business and commercial parks are under construction. Soon, a Johns Hopkins-affiliated hospital is set to open here, as well as the city's only hotel licensed to accept short-term rentals.

Panama's Premier Business Park

Here, on 9.3 acres off the Corredor Sur toll road, stands a prominent business structure comprising a five-building suburban complex. Completed in 2005, Business Park Panama features state-of-the-art construction equipped with contemporary mechanical, security, building control, and life safety systems.



Business Park Panama

The complex offers 58,000 square meters (624,000 square feet) of office and amenity space with glass and aluminum-clad, Class A architectural standards. Two buildings stand at four stories, and two stand at seven stories high. Restaurant facilities are located in the single-level amenity building, along with a gym.

Exterior landscaping accentuates the buildings' designs. The park has 107,000 square feet of manicured areas that include a large reflection pond. Parking accommodations provide sufficient space for 1,400 cars in an underground garage with an additional 100 parking spaces on the surface level. Adidas, Copa Airlines, Maersk, and Telefónica are a few of the major tenants doing business here.

Torre V stands adjacent to Business Park Panama, and worth a mention. This tower is the first in the Republic of Panama to be awarded the LEED Gold Pre-Certification, LEED being the most widely used green building rating system in the world. Torre V has 44,700 square meters (481,000 square feet) of space, and is located in an area accessible from many parts of town. Major tenants here include Bladex, Dräger, Procter & Gamble, and SLI.

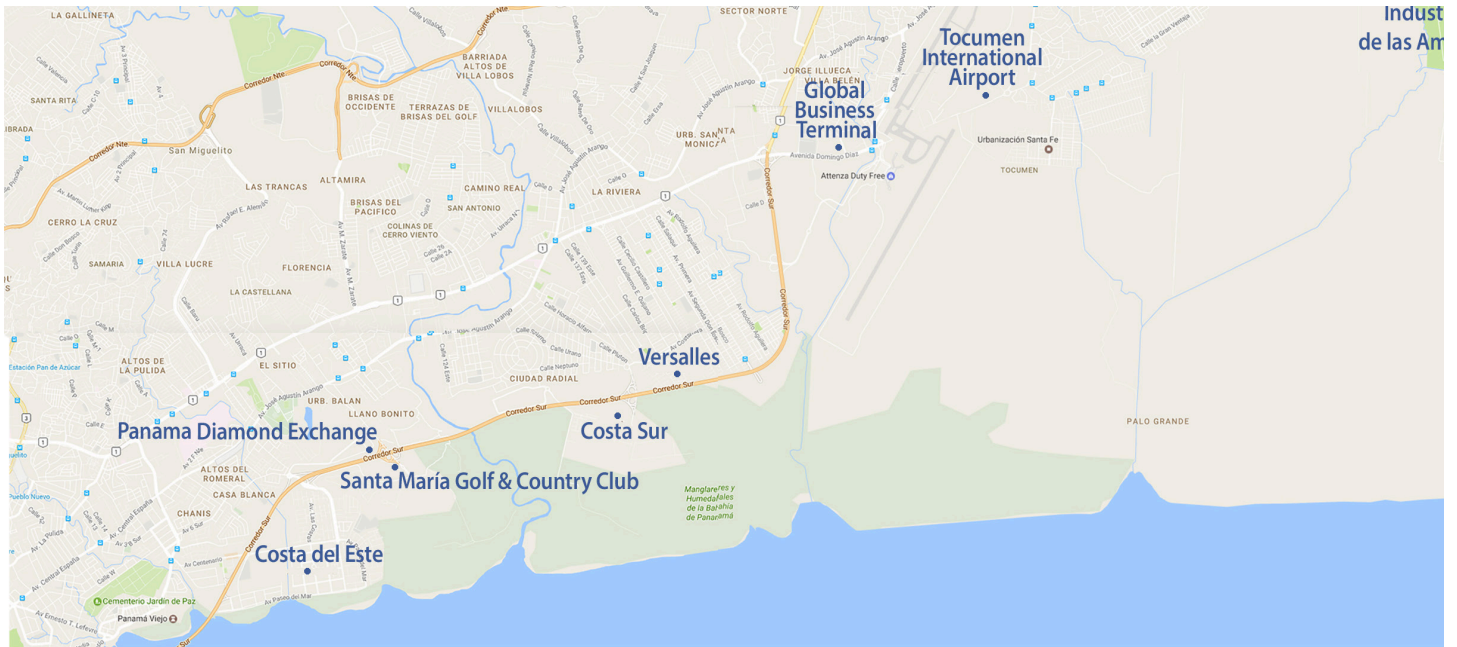
Blazing The Trail Through Santa María

Situated directly beside Costa del Este is the Jack Nicklaus-designed, resort-style Santa María golf course, impossible not to notice when traveling between Costa del Este and Tocumen.

It's one of the amenities of the sprawling, 700-acre Santa María Golf and Country Club located on the Corredor Sur, east of Costa del Este.

To get to practice your swing here, you must first own a home in the development, then receive an invitation to join the golf club. Residents can choose from over 20 home models. Duplexes with backyards, residential towers, luxury condos, and apartments make up the array of options offered in this exclusive neighborhood.

The ground-breaking for the US\$80 million Country Club took place here last March. The club will feature restaurants, bars, event spaces, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, tennis



courts, racquetball courts, basketball courts, and a fitness center. A boutique hotel is being built on the second floor. Family memberships are now available and, unlike with the golf club, you don't have to own a house in Santa María to become a member.

Across the Corredor Sur is the Santa María Business District, where Audi and BMW dealerships keep the community riding in style. All around, the Santa María Business District is becoming home to green office buildings—not green on the outside, but green within. Some are already completed and others are in the works, but what they have in common is enhanced indoor environmental quality, energy efficient design, built with responsible selection of materials, waste management, and water-use reduction.



The Panama Diamond Exchange

The district is better known for being the location of Latin America's first and only diamond bourse, the World Jewelry and Diamond Hub. Serving as the trading headquarters for the diamond, gemstone, and jewelry sectors of Latin America and the Caribbean, this diamond exchange operates as the gateway for suppliers and buyers globally.

A Pit Stop In Costa Sur

Costa Sur is a 44-hectare (109-acre) urban development consisting of eight independent gated residential housing estates, with a shopping center, just 15 minutes (without traffic) from both downtown Panama City and the Tocumen International Airport. Developed by Shahani Group, Costa Sur is partially built on a landfill and it's one of the largest single-family housing developments on Corredor Sur.

Designed by renowned architect firms Pinzón Lozano and Abras & López these 705 family-homes offer contemporary and colonial-design houses, with exceptional environment for family living and unique high-value amenities such as swimming pool, hot tubs, tennis courts, gardens, hiking trails, party room, and 24-hour security for all the residents.

Already there is one private school in Costa Sur, the 7.2-hectare (18-acre) Colegio de Panamá, offering bilingual primary and

The Amador Causeway, Renewing Itself Once More

secondary education, and don't forget, the schools in neighboring Costa del Este are easily accessible from the Corredor Sur. The Costa Sur Plaza Shopping Center is strategically located at the exit of Costa Sur, almost everything that one would need can be found here, including banks, grocery stores, salon, gym, day care, a medical clinic, restaurants, and pubs. In addition to its residents, it has the advantage of being the last shopping center on Corredor Sur before the Tocumen International Airport.

There is a lot of green space in Costa Sur, where people can walk, run, and cycle throughout the day. In true gated-community style, the sidewalks are kept clean and well-manicured at the residents cost. And the wide roads and abundance of parking lots means getting around isn't a gridlocked nightmare.



Homes like these in Costa Sur can run over half a million dollars

Real estate in Costa Sur isn't cheap. Typically, prices are around US\$2,800 per square meter and rents around US\$2,500 per month. And construction still continues... The upcoming commercial center will house corporate offices and other businesses.

Versalles On The Move

Less than five minutes away from Costa Sur is Versalles, the first master-planned community in the district of Juan Díaz, developed by Grupo Provivienda, comprising a gated, American-style, tract housing development and a complement of mid-rise apartment buildings.

When the project was first announced, buyers had to speculate on a lot of risk factors, primarily knowing the project was built

on wetlands and mangroves that hug and protect the coastline, which had to be landfilled for construction to take place. These same concerns have been expressed by some owners in Costa del Este, and anyone thinking of investing anywhere along the Corredor needs to do the due diligence of inspecting the structural integrity of their purchase.



Homes in Versalles are less expensive than Costa Sur, but still command a premium

Another issue is safety because of the proximity of the neighborhoods of Ciudad Radial and Las Acacias—areas where crime has been known to pop up from time to time. Most incidents are sporadic in nature, and as long as you observe basic safety precautions—like avoiding going to the ATM at night, especially if by yourself—you'd be as OK as you'd be in any major U.S. city with a substantial urban population.

In the time since the first houses in Versalles came on the market, an El Rey supermarket opened, as well as a few restaurants, and little other businesses. This was in 2012.

Little under five years later, the neighborhood today boasts American-style amenities similar to Costa del Este's, with a growing number of casual dining options, more banks, and several clinics treating minor ailments and offering dentistry.

In Versalles, a 428-square-meter, three-bedroom house is being offered at US\$378,000 (US\$880 per square meter), and a 407-square-meter, three-bedroom house is on the market for US\$415,700 (US\$1,020 per square meter).

A 90-square-meter, three-bedroom apartment in Torre de Versalles II will set you back US\$163,000 (US\$1,800 per square

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meter). In 2013, a similar apartment in Torre I would have run you US\$127,600 (US\$1,400 per square meter).

Like its cousin Costa Sur, Versalles' success hinged on its proximity to the Corredor Sur freeway, with easy access to both Panama City and the Tocumen Airport, each a short, 15-minute ride away in opposite directions.

These are the factors that enticed someone I know who runs a DHL-style shipping company to give up his Costa del Este apartment to move to Versalles, where he's content to be closer to his work obligations in Tocumen without having to give up the conveniences of being in town. For most of his needs, he doesn't have to venture past Costa del Este.

Investors seeking rental properties should take note of these neighborhoods. Rents in Versalles can run around US\$2,600 per month for a three-bed, two-and-a-half bath, single-family home with two-car garage. Three-bedroom apartments go for around US\$1,500.

International workers aren't the only ones making the move here. Tenants of a different breed are appearing, drawn by the area's new business parks and free zones, and getting in on the ground floor as Panama gets ready to play a bigger role in the logistics of global commerce.

A Zone Where Business Prospers

Snuggled between Costa Sur and Versalles, just to the side of the Corredor Sur, lies **Metro Park**, a modern complex of glass-walled office space, with retail and residential space planned for the future. Partially functioning as the developers sort out issues with water drainage affecting the neighbors in the adjacent low-lying areas, projects like Metro Park are beginning to crop up all along the Corredor, finding the location between the city and the airport to be ideal for business.

CEVA Logistics, one of the world's leading supply chain management companies operates farther down the Corredor at the **Parque Sur Industrial Park**, which offers 4,400 square meters of space just five minutes from Tocumen International Airport. CEVA, which provides warehousing and distribution, also operates out of Tocumen's cargo terminal and Colón Free Zone.



CEVA Logistics, a leading supply chain management company, operates on the Corredor Sur at the Parque Sur Industrial Park

The free trade zone regime is a mainstay of Panama's export and investment promotion strategy, which offers a set of tax incentives and immigration and labor benefits granted by the Panamanian government to companies making new investments in the country. Panama has 19 registered free zones but only 12 are currently active. For decades, the best known has been the Colón Free Zone, the largest free port in the Americas, and the second largest free trade zone in the world.

Pana Park Free Zone is an upcoming, privately-owned free zone that's in the works, located five minutes east of the airport along the PanAmerican Highway, close to the Line 2 Felipillo metro station and next to the **Parque Industrial de las Américas**, a vast Shahani Group project comprising 200 hectares (490 acres) of land dedicated to warehousing and distribution of goods.

Pana Park is set on 53 hectares (131 acres), of which 48.5 hectares (120 acres) are free zone while the remaining 4.5 hectares (12 acres) will be for commercial development. Based on urbanization and modern technology construction that is ongoing on Corredor Sur, Pana Park will have an edge by using solar panels to reduce dependency on traditional power sources, with green areas for environmental benefits, and underground electrical cables.

Stalls are currently available for sale from 360 square meters to 1,458 square meters, and lots ranging from 2,500 square meters up to 49.4 acres. Price per square meter ranges between US\$1,350 and US\$1,450 for stalls and lots respectively.

The Amador Causeway, Renewing Itself Once More

Targeting the needs of business travelers is the **Global Business Terminal**, a project offering state-of-the-art office-space to be located behind the recently inaugurated, 144-room Hotel Crowne Plaza just outside of the Tocumen Airport.

Tocumen... Then, Now, And Tomorrow



One of the centerpieces of Panama logistics, crucial in the movement of airfreight and passengers, is the Tocumen International Airport.

Since its inauguration in 1978, the Tocumen Airport wouldn't change much through its career in the 80s and 90s. It wasn't until 2003 when Law 23 of Jan. 29 established new parameters for managing the airport. The law created Aeropuerto Internacional de Tocumen, S.A. as an independent administrator of the facilities, acting under the government, and this company is the one still in charge today.

They recognized that handling future passenger volumes hinged on expanding the terminal capacity. Their plan called for increasing passenger capacity from 5.8 in 2011 to 18 million passengers a year by 2022, cementing Tocumen's place as the hub for travel in the Americas.

Tocumen International Airport presently connects 80 destinations in 34 countries in America and Europe, with new destinations landing all the time. To keep up with projected growth, an ambitious expansion plan has been underway.

The future airport's visionary concept caters to the international passengers in transit, as well as to those arriving, presenting the Panamanian landscape as a centerpiece of the design, with structures that allow intuitive way-finding and reduced connection times and streamlined scheduling under tropical conditions.

Phase 1 kicked off in 2006 with a major expansion and renovation of the main passenger terminal at a cost of US\$21 million. Phase 2 involved expansion of the North Terminal, increasing the total number of gates to 40 and improving platforms, taxiways, cargo facilities, and passenger walkways at a cost of US\$60 million.

Phase 3 contemplated the building of a new terminal, T2, a project awarded to Odebrecht in 2012, with an investment of US\$780 million for the building of 20 additional gates among others improvements to parking, taxiways, and importantly, four new direct access lanes to the airport connecting from the Corredor Sur.



Tocumen's T2 terminal is expected to open sometime next year

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Now open, the palm-lined, illuminated, 2.6-km access lanes are helping the 10,000 vehicles that visit the airport daily to funnel back and forth from the city bypassing the Avenida Domingo Díaz with direct access to the toll road.

Construction of T2 began March 2013, but because of Odebrecht's involvement in a worldwide bribery scandal that made headlines last year, the airport project has experienced a hiccup.

The Brazilian construction giant is still in the game to complete the works, but an internal restructuring at Tocumen put a new general manager in place and is looking at ways of establishing a new credit structure to see the plan through.

T2 is expected to go live in 2018, in time for Tocumen to receive six new—which depends on the new terminal to be functioning to begin service.

A third runway is also being contemplated, as well as a new "Logistics Platform," an area of 200 hectares (494 acres) dedicated

to storing merchandise, assembly line goods, high tech products, and goods associated with aviation technology manufacturing.

On The Road To A Bright Future

Panama still has a ways to go, but it's well on the way to achieving its goal of becoming the logistics and transportation hub *par excellence* for the region.

The elements are falling in to place, all of which can be seen from one end of the Corredor Sur to the other, be it new places to live, work, or play. With the completion of the Metro's Line 2 set for 2019, in time to receive the influx of visitors expected for the Catholic Church's World Youth Day celebrations, the east side of the city will continue to expand, along with areas outside the scope of this paper.

With all the international attention this small country has been justifiably receiving in terms of investment, infrastructure, and finance for the past several decades, Panama will soon be riding into the sunset of its own bright future. **PL**

About The Author

Charles Conn is a Canal Zone-born world traveler with a film degree from the University of Southern California and a passion for all things Panama. When he's not scouting isthmian locations far and near, Charles can be found at his farm on the outskirts of Panama City where he likes to read, do yoga, and listen to dance music.




Panama Papers For The Rest Of Us

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**This Volatile Election Could Well Set The U.S. Dollar Back 20% to 30%
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A stack of gold coins is positioned in the center of the image, set against a background of a brick wall. The coins are stacked in several columns, with some individual coins scattered in the foreground. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the metallic texture of the coins.

[CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE](#)

Pollo Frito (Fried Chicken)



By Pamela Nyaga

Don't be surprised if you never see any green food on your Panamanian plate... you might get some cilantro sparingly sprinkled on your dish if you're lucky.

A lot of food here in Panama is fried—including the vegetables. It's not exactly healthy... but definitely delicious. Ditch your diet and enjoy some crunchy, tasty Panamanian fried chicken, one of the most popular foods in the country.

Ingredients:

- 3 lbs. chicken cut in to medium-size pieces
- 4 cups all-purpose flour for coating
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup vegetable cooking oil
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- Salt

Directions:

1. Skin chicken if you prefer. In a shallow bowl mix flour, garlic powder, paprika, salt, and pepper. Coat chicken with the flour mixture until fully covered.
2. In another small bowl beat the eggs add salt and pepper and pour in the mixture in to a large ziplock bag.
3. Put chicken pieces into the ziplock and shake thoroughly making sure all the chicken is well covered.
4. One piece at a time, roll the chicken into the flour mix bowl again, and let it sit for a while until the chicken is fully covered.
5. Heat vegetable oil in a large deep pot —do not fill more than half full—to avoid overflow.
6. Fry chicken in hot oil until brown and crunchy.
7. Drain on paper towel and serve while hot.

Buen provecho!





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Understanding Panama's Maze Of Mail Services

By Michael Curtis

Panama is one of the most developed countries in the region—fully appointed in nearly every aspect... except postal service, which barely exists.

Utility companies sending out bills each month deliver them by courier. Most businesses rely on messenger services or hire a driver to deliver anything that needs to be sent and received within the city. Courier services even exist to shuttle things across the country. The post here is used exclusively, it seems, for family members to send cards to one another.

What are expats to do? How do you get things from back home or to friends across the country?

If you want to send or receive anything within the country, you could try the local post, but a messenger service is likely more convenient unless you're expecting lots of domestic mail in Panama. Nevertheless, if you'd like to try the local post, here's what you'd do...

For Local Post

Correo y Telégrafos de Panamá (or COTEL) is Panama's public postal service. COTEL doesn't deliver to homes (because how can you in a country with no formal address system?), instead, all mail is delivered in Panama through a P.O. Box.

To get a box, all you have to do is head to the nearest post office and ask for one (and pay a small annual fee—US\$20, or US\$15 a year for seniors). Unfortunately, many post offices don't have enough empty boxes available... that can be your biggest hurdle. If you are among the lucky and do manage to get one, domestic mail can take two to three days depending upon the destination.

COTEL does deliver overseas, and airmail letters to the United States and Europe are said to arrive anywhere between 5 and 10 days. Receiving overseas mail can take weeks or months, or not arrive at all, so this service isn't advised.

Address formats in Panama should be laid out as follows:

- Name, Building Name, Apartment Number (if applicable)
- Street Name, House Number

- Locality (*barrio*)
- P.O. Box Number
- Post Office Name and Town
- Province
- Panama

In reality, most addresses will not contain the house/apartment number and street name, instead they will only have the P.O. Box information.

A general rule of thumb is that mail addressed to a home address runs likely never arrive. Any Panamanian will warn you off of this service—it's good for almost nothing, they say.

COTEL is currently trying to compete with the U.S. mail forwarding services by offering a "Correobox," to which you can deliver goods bought online. Everyone I've spoken to about this initiative is wary, saying they wouldn't trust it.

Which is why expats use alternative methods for their overseas mail... Enter: the forwarding services.

For International Post

There are several mail forwarding services in the United States that service Panama. Mail Boxes, Etc., Airbox Express, and Miami Express are the most popular.

These companies work by renting you a P.O. Box in the States (mostly in Florida, though there are also some that work through Texas). Through this address, you can receive your monthly magazines, cards from your family, postcards from your friends, and bills (though we recommend strongly against this; safer to go paperless).

However, as you likely know, a P.O. Box is only good for letters. To receive packages, you need a real address. This is where the true value of these forwarding services comes in...

Mail Boxes, Etc. is the gold standard (if you're in or near the city), offering not just a P.O. Box but also a physical address.

They use warehouses in Florida to give you a true address to use, as well as an associated phone number. (This also provides you with a U.S. address that can be used for banks, credit cards, etc.)

To this address you can have your birthday presents and online buys sent. They usually take three to seven days to make it from Florida to Panama, and you can track your order through their easy-to-use online tracking system. You'll be sent an email to notify you of the arrival, then you go in and pick up your item. The downside for these services is that most of their offices are in or near Panama City.

Plans start at US\$27 a month for 4.4 pounds worth of incoming packages, or you can use a pay-as-you-go plan, through which you just pay for each individual package. For those who want fast delivery, this service has a 48-hour turnaround from when it arrives in Florida to when it arrives in your Panama P.O. Box.

Airbox Express also provides a Florida P.O. Box address, much in the same way as Mail Boxes, Etc., but they do not offer a physical address. You can both ship and receive standard mail and larger items with their service, and they also offer an online tracking service.

Delivery time for packages is two to four business days once the shipment is received in their warehouse in Miami, and they even offer free delivery to your home or office within the Panama City limits.

The Platinum Plan runs US\$75 per month and would only be a deal for those who are receiving large amounts of mail. The Platinum Plan does offer a nice feature of junk mail being returned free of charge, whereas with the basic plan, you pay for junk mail.

Another big advantage is that Airbox Express has offices just about everywhere, from Colón to Panama City to Boquete. So, in many cases, this might be an expat's best and only viable option. The one area they don't cover is eastern Panama.

Setting up an account with either Mail Boxes, Etc. or Airbox Express is free. With Mail Boxes, Etc. you can simply go to one of their stores and they'll sign you up, or you can fill out the forms on their website. Airbox Express offers an online signup, but doesn't expressly offer in-visit signups. Likely because in many cases they don't have their own offices, but work out of another chain (like an El Rey grocery store).

During my two years in Panama, I have only used Airbox Express, and up until this point, I have had little to complain about. Once I didn't receive an email notification about the

arrival of mail... and, as said earlier, you have to pay for the mail before you can see what it is, so junk mail has come at a cost. But this option has served me well... and, because I live in the interior, there was little other option.

And colleagues and friends who use Mail Boxes, Etc. speak very highly of the service. You can even connect your account with them to your Copa frequent flyer account to earn extra miles if you're a PreferMember.

For Shipping

FedEx, DHL, and Worldwide Express all operate in Panama the same way they do back up north. Just go to one of their locations to either send or receive a shipment. They offer expediency, security, and near worldwide coverage.

The only downsides to these modes are price and convenience. If you are only receiving standard mail, the price tag of these couriers could amount to a small fortune.

And all three have only a few locations in Panama. If you live in Panama City, or the city of Colón... no problem. But, if not, however long it takes you to travel to either of these cities is the amount of extra time you'll have to invest into your mailing process. FedEx offers the most coverage with 10 stores throughout both cities. DHL has three locations and Worldwide Express but a single store—all only in the city. **PL**

Helpful Reminders About Shipping To Panama

- Merchandise valued under US\$100.00 is free of custom duties.
- Average customs duty is 12%, but specific tariff costs vary.
- Always check list of prohibited items before shipping.
- The size of item can factor in as much as weight.
- Certain items like pharmaceuticals take longer to arrive and have unique procedural requirements.
- Certain items need special permits.
- To avoid guesswork and issues, use your shipper's customer service.

While Panama struggles with its public international courier service, there are private companies that offer quality solutions to that problem. So in most circumstances, the maze of Panamanian mail services is easily navigated.

Importing, Storing, And Mailing Stuff

By Pamela Nyaga

Is “I don’t speak Spanish” stopping you from shipping your stuff to Panama? Whether you’re coming to live with your family, invest in the city, or to retire in style on one of Panama’s fabulous beachfront homes, you’re going to need some stuff... And if you plan on bringing it all with you from back home, knowing the “logistic jargon” used in Panama will help you navigate these waters. **PL**

- Business(es) - *Negocio(s)*
- Shipping - *Envío*
- Cargo - *El cargamento*
- Freight - *El flete*
- Airport - *Aeropuerto*
- Surveillance - *Vigilancia*
- Warehouse - *Almacén*
- Containers - *Contenedores*
- Distribution - *Distribución*
- Industry - *Industria*
- Economy - *Economía*
- Mail - *Correo*
- Scheduling - *Programación*
- Delivery - *Entrega*
- Storage - *Almacenamiento*
- Package - *Paquete*
- Mailing list - *Lista de correo*
- Supply - *Suministro*
- Security - *Seguridad*
- Inventory - *Inventario*
- Production - *Producción*
- Control - *Control*
- Goods - *Mercancías*
- Services - *Servicios*



Kenyan Strides In Panama

By Shaun Chappell

Kenyans are globally revered for their striding capacity on the track in the world's greatest competitions, but the subtle strides of Pamela Brusa are notable.

Born into a humble, tea-farming family in the countryside of Kenya, Pamela worked as an advocate for peace, striding her way across Africa, to Europe, through the Caribbean, south to Bolivia, and now in Panama.

Panama Letter: What was your upbringing like in Kenya... and how did you serve in the country before taking your skill sets abroad?

Pamela Brusa: My beginnings were very humble, but we were not an impoverished family. We were tea farmers, and tea is a big deal in Kenya. With that resource, I was able to live a good life with my parents and two younger siblings. I had a perspective that I wanted to expand, and so I received my bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism.

The degree led to work as a part-time reporter and assistant editor for the Kenya News Agency, where we reported directly to and for the government. It was an interesting experience, but I desired to do more. I also worked at Nation Television Kenya (NTV) doing similar work. My life gained a different kind of momentum when awarded a scholarship to the International Communications Institute in the U.K.

PL: How intense was the transition from Kenya to the United Kingdom, considering the disparity of the regions?

PB: Oh my goodness... the countries are totally different... extremely different. Kenya is warm, hot, and humid throughout the whole year. On the farm, we spend most of the days enjoying the outdoors while working, basking in the sun. The weather in the U.K. is very cold. I had not felt cold like that, or even imagined cold like that. It was a big shock. I had to adjust to spending most of my day indoors.

This change of conditions, changed my outlook on work. The work seems to intensify indoors compared to outdoor work. Being away from the sun for longer periods had subtle effects on me as well.

The speed of London is much faster than life in Kenya, actually too fast and too busy. It was quite an adjustment getting used to the city lights, a massive amount of people, cars everywhere, and many large corporations.

Coming from the Kenyan countryside, the U.K. was a different world. The food was different, the use of the language and accents, gloomy skies,

and Europeans in general. Again, the contrast is extreme, but it was worth it to experience this life to gain new perspective on the world.

PL: What advantages in life did you gain from your experience in the U.K., and how has your life progressed since?

PB: I earned a degree in public relations and communications. These are fields I continue to work in today. Experience in the U.K. equipped me to be able to keep up with an ever-changing world. I knew I could thrive as an intellect in modern society before leaving.

I am more diverse with a unique form of confidence. I was confident in my abilities before leaving Kenya, but the confidence gained in the U.K. is of a different sort. Now, I am not intimidated by circumstances or conditions. Meeting the man that would be my husband may have helped with that.

My experiences attracted me to world challenges that need to be resolved for the sake of humanity. I moved back to Kenya after graduating and worked for a couple public relations agencies.

Kenya seemed so much slower at that point in my life. Too slow to tolerate and too unstable for my pursuits. The public relations work did not satisfy my passion to serve humanity. I decided to leave Kenya shortly after I returned... for good this time.

PL: So... Kenya is too slow, and the U.K. is too cold and busy. Where does life take you when you are prepared to go anywhere?

PB: To Haiti... life took me to Haiti with my husband and daughter. My husband and I began work with the Heifer International foundation. Haiti had been devastated by natural disasters and internal strife, to the extent of becoming a near irreparable country. These communities need great assistance from citizens of the world beyond its own borders. Haiti introduced me to poverty on a surreal level. I was overwhelmed by the conditions and the state of the people. My perspective was shocked again by realities I could not have fathomed.



There are parts of Kenya that are very poor, but Haiti showed me a different kind of poor. I had some experience with poverty in Kenya, but it was not comparable to what seems to be the majority for Haiti.

It was in Haiti that I consciously committed to prioritizing humanity over corporate pursuits. I simply could not live with myself knowing that these people suffer to this extent when I can take action to help them. In a way, I knew that helping them was helping myself. It brought an ease to my heart, although unsatisfying.

PL: What kind of assistance did you render to the Haitians while working with the Heifer International foundation?

PB: Haiti was in total distress when I arrived. Thousands and thousands were dying from disease and required emergency care. My initial work was to save as many lives as could be saved. For many of them, there was simply nothing we could do. I was working with a broken heart most of the time.

I mainly worked in the emergency tents. My primary focus was on the young mothers and their charges. Being a mother myself caused me to gravitate to them and be more empathetic and connected to their suffering. It was quite a rough experience for me.



PL: How has your family and personal life been effected since the direct experience with the trauma in Haiti?

PB: Well... for my daughter I think it has been positive. She has experienced a lot of harsh realities at a young age. She has also adjusted well to living in several countries, and now speaks six languages fluently. I am certain I will learn a great deal from her as she matures, and begins to internalize these experiences from her youth. My husband still works with nonprofit organizations. It is a field I don't think he will let go of. We left Haiti after five years to continue working with Heifer International in Bolivia.

We worked in Bolivia on similar causes. It was not as extreme as Haiti, and the problems are a bit dissimilar. By the time we arrived to Bolivia, the stress of constant moving set in on my daughter. She started to let us know she wanted more consistency and stability—a reasonable stance that must be acknowledged and respected regardless of her age. We discussed as a family what we would do permanently. We needed to consider our own well-being, health, and future. Nonprofit work can often cause ones to neglect themselves.

It took one year of discussion, research, and traveling to narrow down our next home to Costa Rica or Panama. We specifically sought out immigration friendly countries with reputations for culture and diverse backgrounds. I became a subscriber to Live and Invest Overseas to assist with my research. We chose Panama.

PL: Now living in Panama, has the decision to be here been supported or discouraged from your experiences so far?

PB: Totally supported... Panama has been good to my family. I was quite impressed with the school system here available for our daughter. She has been the primary focus and inspiration when determining where we would make our home. Her fluency in multiple languages allows for a smooth transition, and she makes friends very easily.

My husband was able to link up with a nonprofit organization here and begin work right away. I was fortunate to discover that the publishing company used to research places to live in the world had a job opening in my field shortly after we moved. It had to be a sign.

My heart still goes out to struggling mothers and victims of disastrous areas in the world, and I will return to their service at some point in my life. For now, my family intends to permanently reside here in Panama and make due with all of the life lessons we've learned prior to our arrival. **PL**

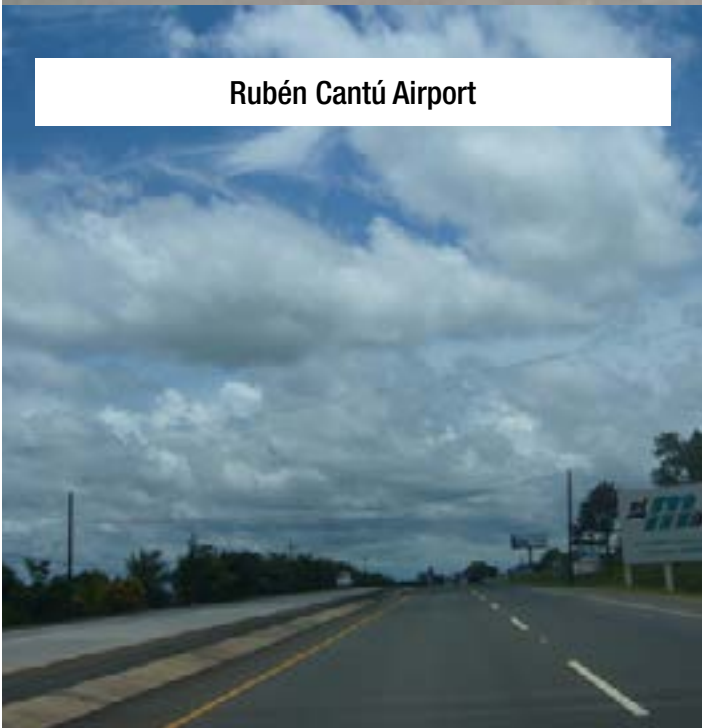
A Tour Of Panama's Airports

Airports in Panama run the gamut, offering everything from top-of-the line, First World convenience and technology to bare bones, see-it-to-believe-it rudimentary basics.

Here is a tour some of Panama's main landing strips. Some you may have been on, like when landing in the country from overseas. Others you would only see when visiting the more remote corners of the isthmus.



Río Hato Airport



Rubén Cantú Airport



Sambú Airport

Los Islotes' Own Little Air Strip

Panama's Azuero Sunset Coast is located in the province of Veraguas, on the western side of the Azuero Peninsula. This region is remarkable for many reasons, including its long, long stretches of spectacular and dramatically beautiful coastline. In addition, this western side of Azuero is unique because, thanks to the way the peninsula is situated, it is the only accessible part of this country that allows for sunset views over the water.

Most of the investment to date on Panama's Azuero Peninsula has been focused on the eastern coast, in the province of Los Santos, where several developments are under way. The western-facing coast, where Los Islotes lies, is less developed and more dramatic.

Los Islotes, Live and Invest Overseas' own master-planned community, is perched on one Panama's most beautiful stretches of Pacific coast. Nearby are Cerro Hoya National Park, Coiba National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where jaguars and ocelots roam free and the scarlet macaw is common), deep-sea fishing (some of the best in the world), surfing, snorkeling, and scuba diving. Around Coiba lies the largest coral reef on the Pacific side of the Americas.

[Come visit us on the Azuero Peninsula to discover Los Islotes yourself \(and try out this little makeshift runway!\).](#)





Yaviza Airport



Tocumen International Airport

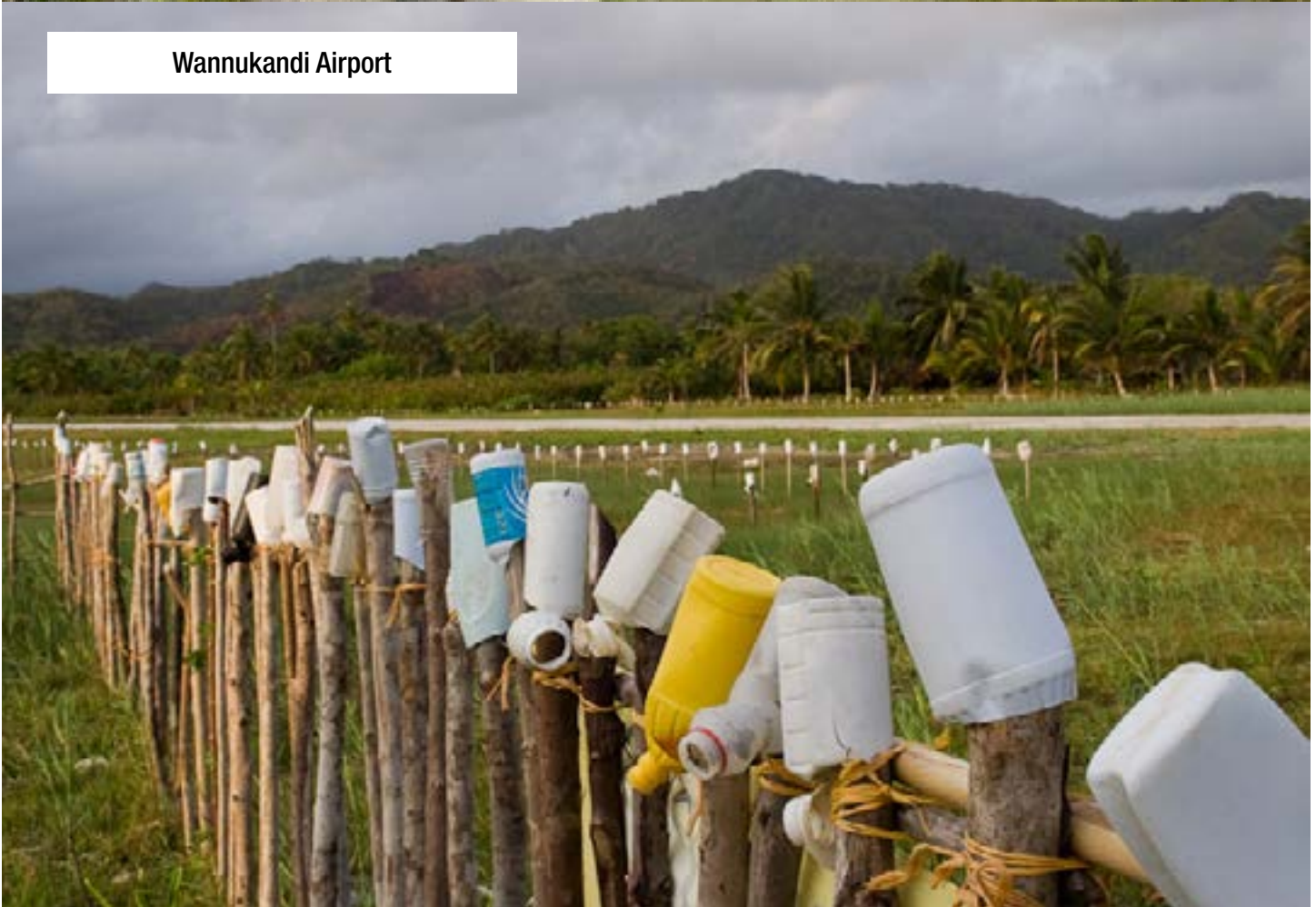


Ustupo Airport



Ustupo Airport

Wannukandi Airport



A red and orange leather passport cover is centered on a dark, textured wooden background. The cover has a white card tucked into the top. The text on the cover is as follows:

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Panama**

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and citizenship options in
Panama [here](#).

PASSPORT

Read all about visas, residency,
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Every month, subscribers to the ***Panama Letter*** receive an honest, current, and complete introduction to one of the places we've identified as offering tremendous advantages for the would-be retiree, investor, or part-timer in Panama. These are the locations that should be on your radar, either for your immediate retirement or as places to invest today as part of a longer-term plan in Panama.

Each of these comprehensive reports addresses not only the pros, but also the cons of each destination featured. This is critical if you want to make a smart, informed choice. You'd be hard-pressed to find this information anywhere else in the world.

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- **“What's On In Panama This Month”**...a guide to events and activities in the country this month. Where to go to watch the playoffs...how to plan your Carnaval adventure...who's appearing live in concert this month... and what's playing at Panama City's English-language theater...

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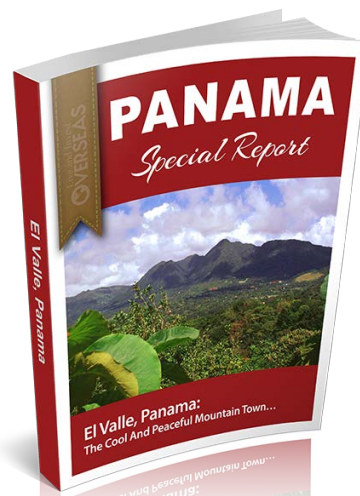
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Additional Two-Year Bonus Report #1: Top 5 Medical Insurance Options for the Expat in Panama (a US\$19.95 value) introduces you to Panama's health care systems, both public and private. This country boasts some of the best health care facilities in region. In fact, Panama is increasingly recognized as a leading medical tourism destination. And the top-notch medical facilities aren't limited to the capital city.

Certainly, you'll find the best services in Panama City, but some smaller towns also offer good public and private hospital and clinic options. This report shows you where, beyond the capital, you can find them...plus it also details your top in-country health insurance options (including policies that could provide all the coverage you need for as little as US\$50 per month...

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