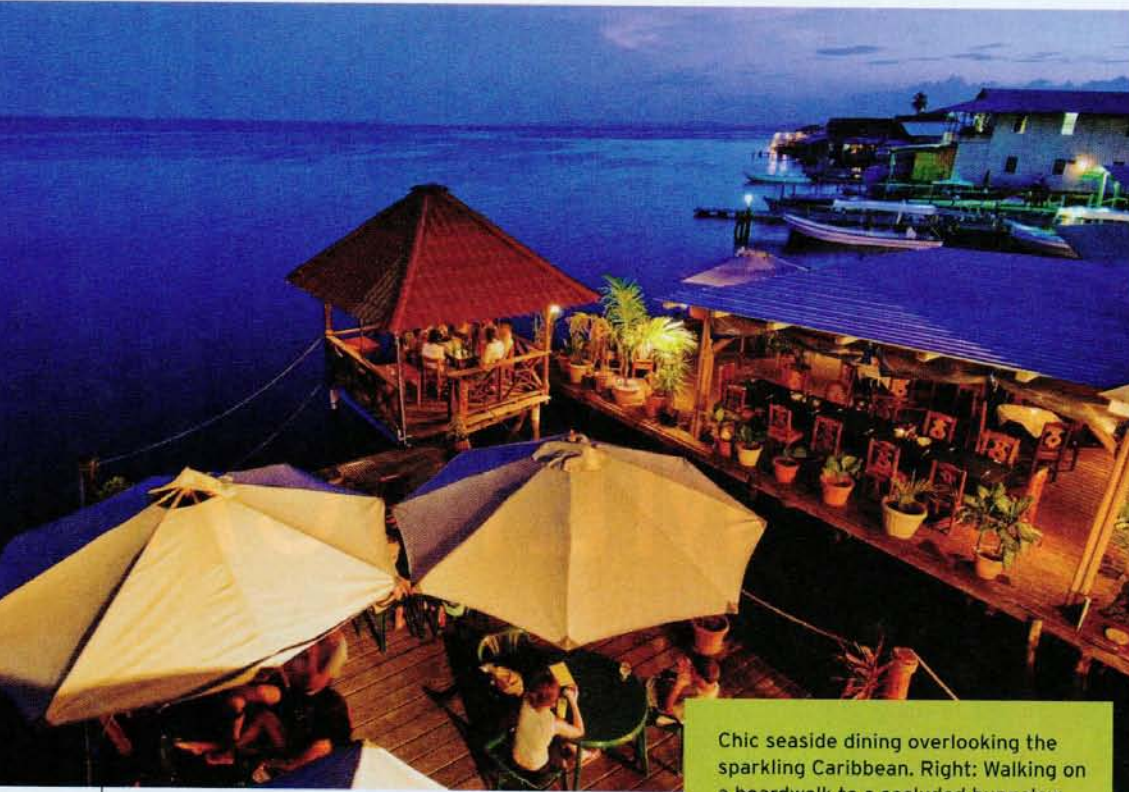


SPOTLIGHT: PANAMA



Chic seaside dining overlooking the sparkling Caribbean. Right: Walking on a boardwalk to a secluded bungalow.

From the lively mix of old and new to sugary beaches, Panama is one of Latin America's most buzzed-about destinations. This alluring gateway between nature and culture is an absolute must for ecotourism with a spark. Go for the lush rainforests, stay for the sustainable resorts, great restaurants, and stylish vibe that's garnered comparisons to Hong Kong and Miami.

■ **WHERE TO STAY:** Panama City is often described as three cities in one—old Panama, colonial Panama, and modern Panama—with hotels ranging from centuries-old mansions to five-star boutiques. Centrally located in the shopping and financial district, The Bristol strikes a balance with lovely old-world elegance and one of the best restaurants in town, Barandas, which serves Panamanian specialties by award-winning chef Cuquita Arias.

■ **WHAT TO SEE:** Going green gets a massive splash of style in Panama City. Located within city limits, minutes from downtown's shops, the Metropolitan National Park is a true "urban jungle." However, an even sleeker take on ecotourism is the new Museum of Biodiversity, which looks more like a contemporary art museum than an ecological showcase.

■ **WHERE TO GO:** The city's seamless flow between nature and skyline only hints at the extraordinary beauty that lies beyond.

San Blas Islands: The fully sustainable Coral Lodge has secluded bungalows right on the water's edge with infinity-pool-like access to snorkeling and diving.

Bocas del Toro Archipelago: Relax in the pure surroundings of the solar-powered Punta Caracol Acqua-Lodge, then explore mangrove forests and off-shore coral reefs in the Isla Bastimentos National Marine Park, which is just a short boat ride away.

Mountain Region: In the Chiriquí province, visit the soaring Baru Volcano National Park—from its peak, travelers can see both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

LATIN AMERICA

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