

Panama and Its Fascinating History

The history of Panama dates back to almost 11,000 years before Christopher Columbus discovered Panama. Before the sixteenth century it was the time of the indigenous people in Panama. These people were rich in heritage and secluded from the developing world. The flute projectile points are one of the oldest proofs of their existence in Panama. The antique potteries and artifacts excavated and collected from Panama date back to 2500-1700 BC. Cueva were the largest group of people settled in the isthmus besides Chibchan and the Chocoan. The European explorers described Panama to have various different groups with diverse culture and customs. In the sixteenth century the Spaniards explored and colonized Central America and the history of Panama took a sharp turn. They brought in with them weapons, conflicts and diseases and the indigenous people slowly moved out of the main stream. In 1501 Rodrigo de Bastidas was the first person to explore Panama and then Christopher Columbus in 1502. After colonization, Panama became a major shipping point for goods to and from the South and Central America. Galleons after galleons loaded with gold left Panama for Spain. But all this wealth attracted Pirates and the importance of Panama slowly fell. Finally in 1821 when Central America revolted against the Spanish colonization Panama gained historical independence as a part of Columbia. Then for the next 82 years, Panama made failing efforts to break away from Columbia. Columbia formed a treaty with France to construct a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. But the construction was halted by an outbreak of yellow fever which claimed the lives of 22,000. But then when the United States of America claimed rights to construct the canal, Columbia rejected it. But strategically Panama would allow it. And then history was made when, with United States behind there back, Panama finally gained independence 1903. The Panama Canal was finally completed in 1914 and it remains an important shipping route till present times. The United States paid Panama \$10 million for the perpetual Canal rights on both sides and agreed to pay \$250,000 annually which increased to \$1.93 million per year by 1955. Along with the canal rights the United States had considerable influence in all sectors of Panama. And slowly tension began to break lose between Panama and the United States regarding the control over the Canal after the Panamanian National Guard, Omar Torrijos Herrera took control over the government. He later turned out to be hero in the history of Panama as he negotiated the United States in returning the Canal rights back to Panama. On December 31st 1999, the United States of America officially handed back the canal rights to Panama and removed their soldiers from Panama. Throughout history Panama has always had a significant amount of narcotics and money laundering problem. But the governments of Panama have been taking considerable measures against it through history and till now. It is now a country rich in historical heritage. It is a harmonious mix between their native culture and the fast modern world.

About the Author

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