



## FACT SHEET

### OVERVIEW

Situated in the geographic center of Northwest Florida, Panama City is the largest city between Pensacola and Tallahassee and the seat of Bay County. Embraced by the shores of St. Andrews Bay, Panama City and its neighborhoods retain much of the charm and beauty of a fishing village while benefiting from the creative energy of a progressive city.

### COMMUNITIES

Panama City is comprised of four distinct neighborhoods, all adding their own color and charm. Pedestrian-friendly **Downtown** serves as the area's art and theater district, anchored by the Martin Theater, the City Marina and the Marina Civic Center. It also hosts the Visual Arts Center and CityArts Cooperative, along with several galleries and a variety of restaurants.

Historic **St. Andrews** is a sidewalk community built on the shores of the Bay, and with its large Marina still evokes the air of a quaint fishing village. Beck Avenue, the main thoroughfare, is lined with shops, restaurants, galleries and entertainment venues. Bucolic Oaks by the Bay Park overlooks the water and is shaded by ancient moss-laced live oaks.

**Downtown North**, bisected by Massalina Bayou, has long been the cultural hub of Panama City's African American community. It is home to the Martin Luther King Boulevard retail, dining and entertainment corridor, historic Rosenwald School and the African American Cultural Center, as well as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Panama City Shopping District. It is also the healthcare hub of Panama City, hosting both Bay Medical Center and Gulf Coast Medical Center.

Hugging the coast of Watson Bayou, east of Downtown, **Millville** is so named as it has served as the area's paper manufacturing and shipbuilding center for generations. The community is anchored by Watson Bayou Waterfront Park and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street retail, dining and entertainment district. Watson's Marina provides ready access for boating excursions, and waterfront condos are available for rent.

### ARTS & CULTURE

Panama City is on the cusp of becoming an artist's and art lover's mecca for both the performing and visual arts.

A thriving live-music scene ranges from numerous underground performance spaces and eateries highlighting the talents of local and regional musicians, while larger venues host national acts.

## PANAMA CITY, FL/2

### ARTS & CULTURE (CTD.)

The stage of the 1936 art deco **Martin Theater** welcomes national acts and touring tribute groups as well as its ongoing Martin Marquee series combining drinks and a show.

Overlooking St. Andrews Bay, the 2,500-seat auditorium at the **Marina Civic Center** showcases international touring acts, Broadway performances and national competitions. It also houses meeting rooms ideal for conferences, seminars and receptions within an easy walk of shops, restaurants and art galleries.

Bay Arts Alliance (BAA) operates the **Panama City Center for the Arts**, with the mission of fostering a lifelong appreciation for the arts and providing cultural enrichment for the city. The Centre and BAA host the Bay Annual, a juried art contest and exhibition which has been going strong for more than 50 years.

**Public Eye Soar** festival capitalizes on the global trend of the intersection of art and technology. The city's growing digital arts scene is rounded out by a new degree program in visual arts and technology offered by Gulf Coast State College.

**Global Arts Society** further undergirds Panama City's arts foundation by providing opportunities and access for all citizens, including school children, to participate in and gain exposure to both visual and performing arts.

**CityArts Cooperative**, the largest creative cooperative in Northwest Florida, is a 7,000-square-foot facility serving the needs of visual, performing and literary artists by providing studio space, rooms for meetings and classes, and gallery space. CityArts Cooperative is a dedicated space that allows creatives to foster a community for teaching, learning and collaborating.

**Gulf Coast Community College** hosts the annual **Creative Con**, a two-day convention that draws artists and attendees, with a particular focus on career development for artists and other creatives, while also encouraging artistic students to explore career opportunities in the arts and other creative fields.

Hosted by **Bay County Public Library Foundation**, the annual **booksALIVE** festival draws noted writers – including New York Times Best Selling Authors – to Panama City from around the country for a three-day celebration of books and the written word.

**Science & Discovery Center of Northwest Florida** promotes the discovery of science, technology and history through hands-on, interactive exhibits and programs aimed to educate and inspire children and adults.

### WATER ADVENTURES

Panama City's history and culture has been determined by water, from St. Andrews Bay, which offers ready access to the Gulf of Mexico, to the many bayous and creeks that run through the city and empty into the bay.

## PANAMA CITY, FL/3

### WATER ADVENTURES (CTD.)

With several large marinas, charters provide ready access to outstanding year-round inshore and offshore fishing and shelling excursions to unpopulated barrier islands. Located on the boating world's "Great Loop," waters around Panama City boast ideal wind conditions that make Panama City a world-class sailing destination, hosting numerous regattas.

### AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE

African Americans have contributed deeply to Panama City's cultural heritage throughout the city's history. Even during the Black Diaspora, when many African Americans were fleeing other sections of the South, many African Americans chose to stay in the community, and many other black families arrived to Bay County from other Southern states.

Even before the Civil War, a thriving community of free blacks, led by Jose and Narcisco Massilina, settled around Massilina Bayou. During Reconstruction and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Glenwood area, dominated by the presence of the still active **Rosenwald School**, became the cultural epicenter for African American culture in Bay County, with African American leaders taking the initiative to form progressive institutions, such as the **Glenwood Improvement League**, for bettering the lives of and increasing opportunities for community members.

### DINING

Panama City offers some of the freshest seafood found anywhere, with dining options ranging from fish-houses and oyster bars – many of them waterfront – to casually elegant fine cuisine.

Numerous independent dining establishments, coffee shops, and bars round out Panama City's diverse dining scene, offering cuisine ranging from Mexican to Italian to downhome Southern barbecue and other comfort food. On Wednesday nights, many local eateries partake in the Music Matters initiative and host live music allowing locals and visitors alike the opportunity to enjoy authentic downtown Panama City culture.

### LODGING

Panama City offers diverse lodging options at nationally branded hotels.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) provides easy access to Panama City with numerous flights by Delta, United, Southwest and Silver Airways. For the drive market, Panama City beach is also easily accessible via Interstate 10, and less than five hours from Atlanta, Birmingham and New Orleans, four hours from Jacksonville and two hours from Tallahassee and Pensacola.

### ADDRESS

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