

Panama the Place

Panama is a land bridge between two continents, linking Costa Rica in Central America and Columbia in South America; it is also the narrowest barrier between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The 51-mile-long Panama Canal was first suggested in 1564 by the King of Spain as a way for his country to reach Peru, then in 1669 by the British as a way for them to reach the East Indies and China. Inspired by the commercial success of the Erie Canal, in 1826 the United States government began to negotiate land for a canal to shorten the length of time it took to sail from the East to West coasts of the United States. Construction, however, did not begin until 1881, started by France and then finished by the United States in 1914.

Panama is a complex country that includes an 11,000 foot volcano and the nearly impenetrable jungle of the Darién Gap, but also a sophisticated capital city of two million people. Construction of the canal has made the country the second most economically competitive country in Latin America.