

Coiba National Park - Panama

A visit to the Coiba National Park in Panama

The Coiba National Park is a group of 38 islands including Coiba Island (Isla Coiba), a jewel of the Veraguas province in Panama in the Pacific Ocean. Coiba is well known to divers and a paradise for any explorer with many still unknown species to discover or just to relax and take a swim or snorkel around Isla Granito de Oro, plus make the trip down its coast to visit the old prison facilities. Coiba can be reached by boat either from Santa Catalina, Puerto Mutis or El Banco with any of the local boats. The only overnight facility available in the Coiba National Park is at the ANAM ranger station on Isla Coiba, that offer some basic cabins, they must be reserved and visiting permissions established well in advance at ANAM in Santiago de Veraguas. We recommend you arrange your trip with a local travel agent to do all those things for you. You need to bring all food and beverages with you as there are no facilities on the island to buy anything. For more details on the Coiba National Park see this [website here](#). This trip is an adventure and only suited for those who can live without a whatever star rated hotel.

From Wikipedia:

Coiba is the largest island in Central America, with an area of 503 square kilometres (194 sq mi), off the Pacific coast of the Panamanian province of Veraguas.

History

Coiba separated from continental Panama about 12,000 to 18,000 years ago when sea levels rose. Plants and animals on the new island became isolated from mainland populations and over the millennia most animals have diverged in appearance and behavior from their mainland counterparts. The island is home to many endemic subspecies, including the Coiba Island Howler monkey, the Coiba Agouti and the Coiba Spinetail.

Coiba was home to the Coiba Cacique Indians until about 1560, when they were conquered by the Spanish and forced into slavery. In 1919 a penal colony was built on the island and during the years that Panama was under the dictatorships of Omar Torrijos and Manuel Noriega, the prison on Coiba was a feared place with a reputation for brutal conditions, extreme tortures, executions and political murder. Nobody knows exactly how many people were killed in the prison during this period, but sources claim that the number could be close to three hundred. As such, the island was avoided by locals, and other than the prison, was completely undeveloped.

After the prison was closed down in 2004, its pristine condition made it ideal as a reserve. It is now said that the prison is haunted by the ghosts of prisoners. One story is that a guard was chasing a prisoner, but the prisoner was a ghost. The guard was so scared that he shot himself. It is also one of the last places in Central America where the Scarlet Macaw can be found in large numbers in the wild. The island is about 75% forested with a large fraction standing as ancient forest. Coiba Island is home to rare plant species found only on the island. The island also harbors tree species that have

long disappeared from the mainland due to deforestation and overharvesting.

The island was declared a National Park in 1992 and in July 2005, Unesco declared the entire Coiba National Park a “World Heritage Site”.



Coiba Island prison
Panama



Boat to Coiba



Coiba Island



Coiba Beach



Coiba Prison Cell



Coiba Dolphin



Coiba Penitentiary



Isla Granito de Oro



Fishing Boat Panama



Saltwater Crocodile Coiba



Sunset Coiba



Coiba Ranger Station
