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by Simon | Gambling and Casinos in Panama, Online gambling | 2 comments

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Gambling is legal and regulated in Panama (officially the Republic of Panama, a Central American offishore tax haven, with a population of 4.2 million, best known for the Panama Canal and the Panama Papers scandal) since 1886. But until 1997, only state owned gambling operators were allowed to operate officially (e.g.: lottery, horse racing betting, casinos).

However, due to corruption, organized crime involvement and mismanagement, the casinos were privatized, and private operators were allowed on the market in 1997.

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This has resulted in a gambling boom, but a lot of legal issues surfaced as well, and casinos in particular needed to be specifically regulated, which has happened in 1998, with Law 2 of 1998*, which tasked the Gaming Commission – Junta de Control de Juegos within the Ministry of Economics & Finance to control casinos, issues licenses, and keep an eye on money laundering in particular.

This was further strengthened by Resolutions No 29 and No. 39 in 2003.

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Back in the 90s and early 2000s land-based, offline casinos were the primary means of money laundering.

UPDATE 2021: This has changed, and nowadays it is mostly bitcoin, and other cryptocurrency accepting internet casinos are the main culprits).

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Online gambling is also legal in Panama since 2002, according to the Online Gaming Act of 2002**. Because online gambling operators licensed in Panama don't have to pay any taxes (just a some fixed fees), the country has become quite the licensing hub, with hundreds of online casinos licensed here. However, due to the bad reputation, and the reluctance of payment processors, financial institutions to work with Panama online gambling operators, the number of licensed digital betting platforms has decreased significantly over time.

Land-based games of chance is strictly controlled, and in order to receive a brick mortar license from the Panamanian authorities, companies adhere to strict rules and standards (details of this can be found in the Panama gambling licensing section below).

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Panama has very liberal, pro-business online gambling regulations. It is reported, that the licensing is conducted in a rather laissez-faire manner and online casinos registered in Panama are not strictly audited, and player protection and regulations are not really enforced. Basically, all operators that have the money to pay the fees and don't do anything extremely conspicuous or illegal can obtain and maintain their Panamanian licenses.

Therefore, the reputability of Panama licensed online casinos and gambling sites can vary greatly. Because of these issues I do not recommend using Panama licensed wagering platforms. With so many options online, there is no need to risk it.

If you scroll down, you can find a list of online gambling websites, which accept players from Panama (none of them are companies licensed in Panama because of the reasons mentioned above).

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If you are new to the country of Panama, watch the following video to understand why 2.5 million tourists choose this beautiful country every year (UPDATE COVID-19: the number of tourist has fallen from 2.5 million in 2019 to 670 K in 2020*** due to the global pandemic).

Yes, the laws of any country only apply to citizens and lawful permanent residents, if you are a tourist (or a non-citizen expat, or illegal), you can play online freely while enjoying your vacation.

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The Panama Gaming Control Board is charged with licensing, regulating and controlling operations that are considered "games of chance and wagering activities". Their website is only available in Spanish. You have to contact them if you wish to set up any sort of gambling establishment or to get an online gambling license (you need to get a translator if you don't speak Spanish).

The up to date licensing fees and process is only available in Spanish, and upon request, from the Gaming Control Board. But in general:

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The cost of permits starts from US\$ 40,000 valid for 7 years, after that, the annual renewal is US\$ 20,000. To get a license you will definitely need:

Casinos must be accredited and approved by the Tourist Board of Panama. They must be located in a hotel rated three stars or above, and at least 100 meters (one block) away from places of worship, hospitals, clinics, and schools.

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All software is required to meet the required standards of the jurisdiction of Panama. Anti-money laundering controls are implemented, there is a signed tax agreement with the United States. All transactions regarding real money wagering must be made available to the Panamanian Government upon request.

Free advertisement for licensed local lawyers, law firms from this country

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Land-based gaming venues are required to pay municipality operational fees, facility health permits, and any other tax applicable, just like other businesses based in Panama. In addition, they pay an extra 10% tax on the monthly net revenue (depending on location, can be more than 10%), and need to pay 50,000 colones (roughly \$80) per table (and probably there is a fee per slot machine as well, bu I couldn't find info on that, if you know please drop a comment).

Internet gambling companies are exempt from any taxes, provided they don't accept any players from Panama (and that is the reason why all Panama licensed online gambling platforms don't accept players from Panama).

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For players, taxation of gambling winnings in Panama: there was a 5.5% tax on all gambling winnings, but it was eliminated in 2019****

Free advertisement for local accountants, CPAs and accounting firms from this country

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Loot boxes, skin gambling, fantasy sports betting and social gambling are not regulated in Panama.

***Statista - Number of international visitor arrivals in Panama from 2017 to 2020

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****iGamingBusiness - Panama announces end of 5.5% tax on gambling winnings

The following online gambling websites accept players from Panama

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888 online gambling: casino games, poker, bingo & bookmaker, current 2022 promos, UK players accepted (no USA)

Playthrough requirements, wagering limitations, terms and conditions and list of restricted countries

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FairGo - click to check out the digital casino, latest promotions, offers, hundreds of pokies, Aussie players welcome

Mr. Bit casino & bookmaker, current 2022 bonus offers, welcome bonus, free spins and offers for returning players, 18+

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Land-based casino venues in Panama: legal since 1998, requires licence

Online casino gambling in Panama: legal since 2002, requires licence

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Casinos are legal in Panama since 1998. However, there were unique rules restricting them in the beginning. Only games, where the person's skill is the main determinant of outcome were technically legal, e.g.: billiards, card games, canasta, draughts (U.S. checkers), dominoes, casino (the card game), rummy, darts, 13, poker. This meant that the most common table games e.g.: baccarat, dice, twenty-one, roulette, blackjack and slot machines, video poker machines were illegal. Of course, if you look at any of the Panama casinos today, you will see that they are full of slots and table games, and this is no longer true (and even back then, these restrictions were widely ignored). Slot machines were legalized by Resolution No. 40 in 2003, and over time all the other main forms of casino gambling were legalized similarly.

Casino venues are regulated and licensed by the Gaming Commission (Junta de Control de Juegos) and must meet strict standards in order to obtain and retain their permit. There are around 50 casinos in Panama, at least 25 of which can be found in the capital, Panama City. However, most of these venues reportedly are only called casinos, but in reality they are slot halls with no table games (this is true for all 34 "casinos" of the Fantastic casinos brand, they are only slot halls technically), or electronic casinos with only electronic, automated tables, and no live tables with dealers or croupiers. In fact, there is only about approx. 10 de facto casino in all of Panama.

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UPDATE COVID-19: The coronavirus pandemic decimated the tourism industry of Panama, and all countries in the region (number of visitors fallen from 2.5 to 670 K in 2020, casinos are reliant on tourists). This has resulted in a few closure, but because most gambling establishments have very little or no online presence at all, it is not known how many of the gambling establishments have actually closed.

Online casinos in Panama are legal since 2002. also licensed by the Gaming Commission. However, the standards these operations must adhere to arr not as strict as their land-based counterparts'. Therefore, we do not recommend Panama licensed online casinos.

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Panama licensed digital casinos do not accept Panama players for tax reasons (details above in the taxation section). Therefore, local players can only paly in international online casinos, which you can see below.

Bingo halls in Panama: legal, and specifically regulated since 2003, license required

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Land based bingo halls are legal and regulated in Panama by Resolution No. 9 and No. 25 of 2003. Bingo parlors are eligible for a license issued by the Gaming Control Board. There are quite a few such venues in the country, with the most of them located in the capital, Panama City.

Online bingo sites – as other types of online gambling operations – are eligible for a license in Panama that allows them to offer their services on the international market, but they do not accept players from Panama for taxation reasons.

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Poker is legal and regulated in Panama. Casinos in Panama can operate poker tables under a Panamanian casino license. However, many casinos in Panama are more like slot halls with no table games. To play poker, one must visit one of the larger venues.

Online poker in Panama is legal with an internet gambling licence from the Panamanian authorities. Online gambling sites with a license from Panama reportedly do not have to adhere to as stringent criteria, as their counterparts licensed in first-class gambling jurisdictions, such as Malta, Gibraltar or the Channel Islands.

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The following online casino websites have poker and accept players from Panama:

Land-based sports betting is legal and regulated in Panama. Just like all other gambling operators, bookmakers can obtain their license from the Gaming Commission of the country.

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Local authorities also license online sports books that are allowed to offer their services globally from the country.

Lottery in Panama: legal since 1903, monopoly of Loteria Nacional de Beneficiencia

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In Panama, lottery is a state monopoly, and it is the oldest form of gambling, legal since 1903. The state-run company, which conducts the national lottery games is Loteria Nacional de Beneficiencia (LNB). They sell tickets with pre-printed numbers through resellers, who receive a certain percentage of the amount won by tickets they sold. The Panama lottery has a deal with Scientific Games, which handles their online lottery platform

The following websites allow people from Panama to purchase lottery tickets online:

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The Lottery, official reseller of US lottery tickets online, licensed legally operating online lottery retailer

Cryptocurrency wagering in Panama: not specifically regulated, de facto legal

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There are no specific regulations pertaining to bitcoin gambling and bitcoin casinos in Panama. However, some of the Panama licensed online casinos reportedly do accept bitcoin, litecoin and etherum and other digital alternative currencies, which means it is de facto legal.

The following online casino websites accept bitcoin, litecoin and ethereum, and accept players from Panama:

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If you have questions or any feedback don't hesitate to drop a comment below. Please let me know in the comments section if you think I might have gotten something wrong or if you have additional information, clarification about the legal status of online gambling in this country.

This page is part of Simon's List – Legal Status of Online Gambling – a definitive guide to the legal status of all forms of online gambling activities in every country around the world.

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I am hoping if you can help, by telling of you provide a gambling license to a casino called playatharrys.com if so they are fraudulantly money laundering through fake companies in Nigeria. I found a company on my bank statement called FLW PAINT AND SUPPLIES based in lekki Nigeria. When i asked the casino ref this they closed my account. It is also against the law for players from the UK to gamble on that website. When i realised this i asked for my deposits to be refunded, the casino replied saying they had closed my account. This is unacceptable response. I have contacted the UKGC and they are not investigating this company to prove it is operating illegally. All i want is my deposited money back nothing more.

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *