



Who ever knew that taking a taxi in Panama could be a sport? I live at the beaches and do not like driving in the city or to the city. I will do it but I would much rather hop on the bus which is \$2.75 to Albrook from Coronado and then hop into a cab who will take me where I need to go. The benefits being they will usually take short cuts and I can practice my Spanish while the driver battles the traffic through the city.

Taxis in Panama do not have meters. Instead they have a [Taxi Zone Chart](#) divided up in zones and subzones. Your fare depends on how many zones you travel through to get to your destination. If you travel within the same zone, e.g from one end of the Amador to the other you should not pay more than \$1-\$1.50. In reality however there are two ways of sorting out what the fare will be from point A to point B. As the drivers will not be resorting to the fare chart unless you ask. One way is to decide how much you will pay the driver at the end of the trip. The other option is to ask the driver before getting in how much the fare will be. This can prove to be very time consuming as they will always give you an inflated rate while you are standing on the street. I have included a quick guide on the areas that I travel to and from and what I pay and have been ask to pay by the honest taxi drivers. Some will always try and take you for more if you look like a tourist or come across as a 'newbie' to the system. Here is how I take a taxi always works for me and I get to my destination in one piece with money left in my wallet.

1. Hail the taxi and tell him where you are going before you get in. All you need to say is the destination e.g. "San Fernando Hospital" Do not ask how much; just get into the taxi if he says yes. Sometimes they will say no if it is not a preferred destination or they are off to another part of the city.

2. If there is already another person in the taxi never pay more than \$2. You are sharing your fare with someone else who will be paying the same.

3. Always carry a lot of one dollar bills when taking cabs in the city. Once you are at your destination give the driver the dollar bills and exit the taxi. I often leave my hand out expecting change if I think I deserve it. I am always polite and thank them and wish them a great day, even if they almost killed me while dodging trucks and SUV's.

The trick is by not asking the fare before you get in the taxi, you immediately deem yourself as a passenger who is in the "know" of what the fare should be. The following is a quick guide on what you should pay while jetting around the city. If they argue with you, ask them to show you

the “tarjeta de zona”, they will then settle for what you are prepared to give them.

My fares also include tip but the tip depends on condition of the taxi, attitude of the driver and how many times I had to close my eyes while we are weaving through the city. I sometimes take into consideration traffic if I am travelling through rush hour. For more than 2 people they will ask for a premium. Give them no more than .50 cents extra if there is 3 of you hopping into the cab.

- Albrook Mall to Price Mart on Via Espana/Brazil - \$3
- Multi Plaza to Albrook Mall - \$3
- Punta Pacifica to Albrook - \$2.5 - \$3
- Price Mart on Via Brazil to Balboa/Cinta Costara \$2.00-\$2.50

There is an official [Taxi Fare Calculator](#) you can use to find out exactly what the fare should be. This was found on the Autoridad Transito de Panama website. Getting from the airport is now quite expensive relatively speaking. What has happened is tourists have over payed the drivers not knowing what the fare should be. I am possibly one to blame from my tourist days. You can still get to the airport from the city for \$25. If you are leaving from a hotel they will usually ask you for \$30. Travelling with luggage anywhere equals you have money to spend. The actual fare according to the fare chart is \$10.25. If anyone ever gets to Tocumen for under \$15 please let me know and get your drivers name.

Enjoy the experience, practice your spanish or catch up on your Panama City history and always be safe.



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