

DID YOU KNOW?

The Volcano Next Door Used to Be a Kilometer Taller

Volcán Barú, looming a few kilometers from town, is Panama's highest point at **3,475 meters** — and Boquete sits right on its eastern flank, the main gateway to the summit. On a clear day, it's one of the only spots on Earth where you can see two oceans at once: the Pacific and the Caribbean, both visible from the same peak.

It's also still a volcano, not a mountain that used to be one. Geologists classify Barú as potentially active; its most recent eruption was a relatively minor event around **1550**. The real story is older: around **500 AD**, a major lateral eruption blew out the side of the mountain and collapsed its summit. Before that, Barú is estimated to have stood over **4,600 meters** — more than a kilometer taller than today — with a permanently snow-capped peak. The blast sent a massive debris avalanche down the slopes, remnants of which are still visible in the surrounding terrain. Today's summit, still cold enough for occasional graupel (granular snow) between December and March, is essentially the stump of a far larger mountain.

Sources: Wikipedia, "Volcán Barú" (citing Sherrod, Vallance, Tapia Espinoza & McGeehin, "Volcán Barú: Eruptive History and Volcano-Hazards Assessment," USGS Open-File Report 2007-1401, 2008); Visit Panamá and regional Chiriquí reporting.