



Artemisa & Mayabeque Provinces

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Best Places to Eat

- » El Romero (p150)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Moka (p150)
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Why Go?

Glancing from your window as you leave Havana, you will see a flat, fertile plain stretching away from the capital. As far as the eye can see – west to the mountainous Sierra de Rosario and east to Matanzas province's wildlife-rich swamps – spreads a patchwork of dusty farmland and cheerful one-horse towns and hamlets. Travel-wise this has been bypassed by tourists, and has instead long been the bastion of weekendening *habaneros* (Havana folk).

This could – possibly – be changing. Formerly Havana province, this region has been redefined in 2011 as the all-new dual provinces of Artemisa and Mayabeque.

Artemisa's big draw is Cuba's gorgeously situated eco-capital, Las Terrazas. Mayabeque beckons with beaches of Varadero-quality sand (without the crowds), and one of Cuba's greatest train journeys: the delightful Hershey train, which traverses the gentle, lolling countryside to Matanzas.

Time, maybe, to step back and live Cuban-style: in the slow, infinitely more intriguing lane.

When to Go

The provinces' big attractions vary considerably climate-wise. Because of their unique geographical situation, Soroa and Las Terrazas have a microclimate: more rain and minimum monthly temperatures 2°C to 3°C colder than Havana. As it gets hotter later here than elsewhere in the region, February through May is the optimum time to visit, being warm without being significantly wet. April sees the provinces' premier festival, the International Humor Festival in San Antonio de los Baños; December through April is best for the beaches at Playa Jibacoa.



Artemisa & Mayabeque Provinces Highlights

- 1** Split your sides at San Antonio de los Baños: **Museo del Humor** (p144)

2 Hike the hills above verdant **Soroa** (p147)
- 3** Go green at **Las Terrazas** (p149). Cuba's primary eco-village where the slopes have been replanted with trees, orchids, painters and poets
- 4** Luxuriate at the **Hotel Moka** (p150) at Las Terrazas, the country's first and best eco-hotel
- 5** Escape the tourist trails on the historic **Hershey Electric Railway** (p154)

6 Bag a beach retreat with a cabin at **Campismo los Cocos Jaruco** (p155)
- 7** Feast with a view and with weekendend Havana folk at scenic **Parque Escaleras de Jaruco** (p153) beside alluring Playa Jibacoa