



Guantánamo Province

📍 021 / POP 510,863

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Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel El Castillo (p436)
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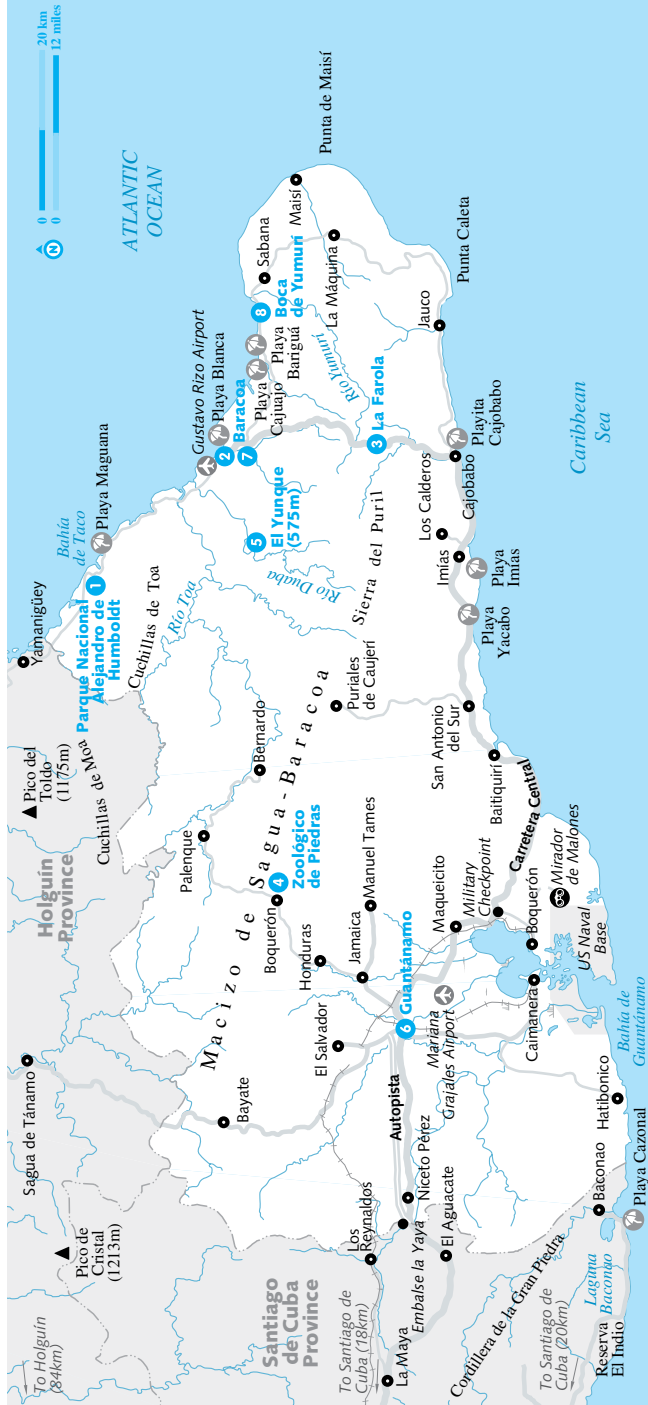
Why Go?

To most of the world Guantánamo conjures up pictures of nameless prisoners in orange jumpsuits. But Cuba's wettest, driest, hottest, oldest and most mountainous province is far more than an anachronistic US Naval Base. Cuba in the modern sense started here in 1511, when Diego Velázquez and his band of colonizers landed uninvited on the rain-lashed eastern coastline. Today it lives on in Baracoa, the city Velázquez founded, one of the country's most isolated settlements and beautifully unique as a consequence.

The province's rugged transport artery is La Farola, one of the seven engineering marvels of modern Cuba, a weaving roller-coaster that travels from the dry cacti-littered southern coast up into the humid Cuchillas de Toa Mountains. Overlaid by the fecund Parque Nacional Alejandro de Humboldt, this heavily protected zone is one of the last few swaths of virgin rainforest left in the Caribbean and guards an incredible array of endemic species.

When to Go

Baracoa's biggest festival is in April when locals hit the streets to celebrate the 1895 landing of Antonio Maceo. The city of Guantánamo gets equally animated in mid-December when it lifts the cloak on its indigenous music in the Festival Nacional de Changüí. Guantánamo's climate varies hugely, but it's dependent more on geography than season. Baracoa is prone to some heavy storms. To avoid the worst of them, don't come during September and October.



- 1 Search for the world's smallest frog in **Parque Nacional Alejandro de Humboldt** (p442)
- 2 Sample the culinary smorgasbord of exotic **Baracoa** (p438)
- 3 Cycle **La Farola** (p441), the lighthouse road from Cajababo to Baracoa
- 4 Get an eye-full of the stony statues at the **Zoológico de Piedras** (p433)
- 5 Hike through the tropical jungle to the top of Baracoa's mysterious flat-topped mountain, **El Yunque** (p440)
- 6 Uncover the mysteries of *changüí* music during **Paraiso** (p434)
- 7 Imagine Taino life pre-Columbus at Baracoa's **Museo Arqueológico 'La Cueva del Paraiso'** (p434)
- 8 Take a local boat upstream from the **Boca de Yumurí** (p433) through the jaws of a mysterious river gorge.

a stopover in the City of **Guantánamo** (p430)