



# Isla de la Juventud (Special Municipality)

046 / POP 86,256

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## Best Beaches

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Sol Cayo Largo (p168)
- » Playa Blanca Beach  
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- » Villa Choli – Ramberto  
Pena Silva (p161)
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## Why Go?

Fabulous dive sites (Cuba's best) and phenomenal beaches seduce travelers to the country's quirkiest island these days, but Isla de la Juventud has in its past lives been a pirate's hideaway, a prison and even a giant school.

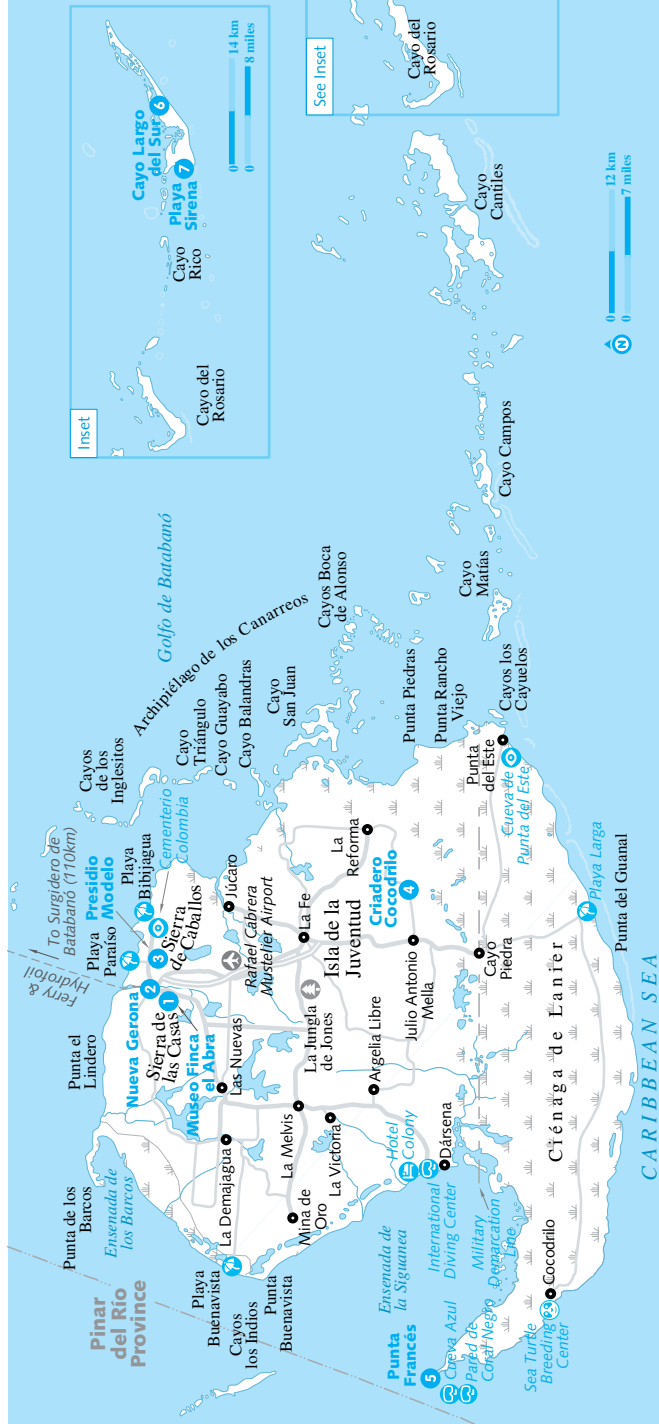
The history of La Isla – as locals call it – is as colorful as the shoals of fish off its idyllic shores. Prior inhabitants include the Siboney Indians (who left behind some of the Caribbean's most important prehistoric art), a young José Martí, countless crocodiles and prisoner number RN3859, better known as Fidel Castro.

Today life on La Isla is so laid-back it's almost becalmed. Few visit, but adventures far from the tourist loop beckon for the intrepid: reefs, sun-kissed sands and overwhelmingly hospitable locals.

At the other end of the Archipiélago de los Canarreos from La Isla is Cayo Largo del Sur, a tourist paradise famous for its turtles and large white (nudist) beaches.

## When to Go

The highlights of a holiday to La Isla, Cayo Largo or any of the other mini-paradises in the Archipiélago de los Canarreos are the beach life, diving and snorkeling. The hottest times are therefore the best: July to August along with the cooler-but-balmy high season months of December to April. Anglers may wish to flock to Cayo Largo's September fishing tournaments.



## Isla de la Juventud Highlights

- 1 Meditate on revolutionary days gone by at the hacienda home of José Martí, **Museo Finca el Abra** (p159)
- 2 Dance the night away in petite but party-mad **Nueva Gerona** (p162)
- 3 Explore the ominous prison where Fidel Castro was once incarcerated at **Presidio Modelo** (p164)
- 4 Investigate an important crocodile conservation project at the Isla's **Criadero Cocodrilos** (p165)
- 5 Dive amid wrecks, walls, coral gardens and caves at

**Punta Francés** (p159), the best place to dive in Cuba

- 6 Watch turtles nesting on the moonlit beaches of **Cayo Largo del Sur** (p167)

**7** Trek along the wide, white (sometimes nudist) beaches to Cayo Largo del Sur's **Playa Sirena** (p167)