



Santiago de Cuba Province

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Best Places to Eat

- » El Barracón (p405)
- » Finca el Porvenir (p418)
- » Paladar Salón Tropical (p405)
- » Ristorante Italiano la Fontana (p405)
- » Restaurante Zunzún (p405)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hostal San Basilio (p402)
- » Hotel Horizontes el Saltón (p420)
- » Casa Colonial 'Maruchi' (p402)
- » Brisas Sierra Mar (p420)

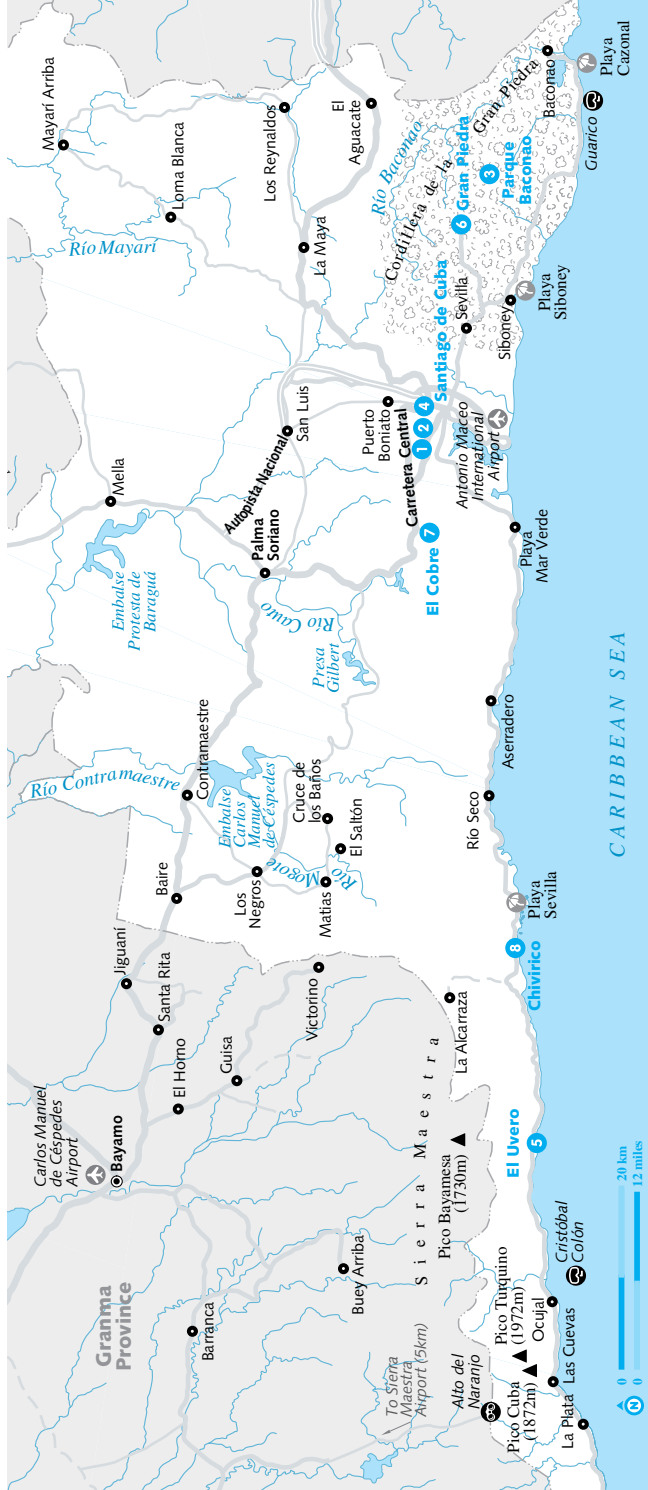
Why Go?

Stuck out in Cuba's mountainous 'Oriente' region, and long a hotbed of rebellion and sedition, Santiago's cultural influences have often come from the east, imported via Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados and Africa. For this reason the province is often cited as being Cuba's most 'Caribbean' enclave, with a raucous West Indian-style carnival and a cache of *folklórico* dance groups that owe as much to French-Haitian culture as they do to Spanish.

As the focus of Spain's new colony in the 16th and early 17th centuries, Santiago de Cuba enjoyed a brief spell as Cuba's capital until it was usurped by Havana in 1607. The subsequent slower pace of development has some distinct advantages. Drive 20km or so along the coast in either direction from the provincial capital and you're on a different planet, a land full of rugged coves, crashing surf, historical coffee plantations and hills replete with riotous endemism.

When to Go

July is the key month in Santiago de Cuba's cultural calendar when the city is *caliente* (hot) in more ways than one. The month begins with the vibrant Festival del Caribe and ends with the justifiably famous Carnaval. More music is on offer in March at the Festival Internacional de Trova when the city rediscovers its musical roots. The period between these two events (March through June) is renowned for its high water clarity, ensuring excellent diving conditions off the south coast.



Santiago de Cuba Province Highlights

- 1 Round off a musical evening in Santiago de Cuba's legendary **Casa de la Trova** (p408)
- 2 Visit the **Cuartel Moncada** (p395) in Santiago de Cuba and evaluate the audacity (or folly) of Castro's 1953 insurrection
- 3 Enjoy traditional food and a rodeo in Parque Baconao's **Fiesta Guajira** (p416)
- 4 Explore Cuba's numerous Afro-Cuban dance genres at a **folklorico show** (p407) in Santiago de Cuba
- 5 Take the coast road west toward **El Uvero** (p421) amid rolling mountains and crashing surf
- 6 Trace the history of Cuba's French-inspired coffee culture
- 7 Make a pilgrimage to **El Cobre** (p419) to visit the shrine of Cuba's patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad
- 8 Dive down to the wreck of Spanish warship **Cristóbal Colón** off the coast near **Chivirico** (p421)