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Pinar del Río Province

48 / POP 594,279

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Best Tobacco Tours

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Why Go?

If you love green you'll love Pinar del Río province whose all-pervading emerald sheen protects more land than any other province of Cuba. Joint jewels in the crown are the Península de Guanahacabibes, a Unesco Biosphere Reserve, and the Valle de Viñales, a Unesco World Heritage Site. This is also the best place in the world to grow tobacco, a blessing that fosters one of Cuba's most quintessential landscapes: fertile, rust-red, oxen-furrowed fields guarded by thatched tobacco-drying houses and sombrero-wearing *guajiros*.

The tough but gentle *guajiros* are one of Cuba's classic regional stereotypes, amiable rural farmers almost too generous for their own good. Appropriately, their spiritual home is Viñales, a serene, hassle-free village ringed by craggy hills and Van Gogh-like rustic beauty.

Beyond the countryside, Pinar's highlights are the idyllic sandy beaches of Cayo Jutías and Cayo Levisa, along with María la Gorda in the remote west where over 50 dazzling dive sites await offshore.

When to Go

- Come from May through August to see prized wildlife, such as the Guanahacabibes turtles.
- October through March is best for bird-watching.
- December through March for the best beach weather.

Pinar del Río Province Highlights

1 Get in touch with the region's cosmopolitan side with a walk around **Pinar del Río** (p184).

2 Experience scuba diving at translucent **Playa María la Gorda** (p191).

3 Get out of the tour bus and see, smell and taste the agricultural beauty of **Valle de Viñales** (p193).

4 Mount a horse and take a ride with the *guajiros* into the Valle de Palmarito in **Parque Nacional Viñales** (p198).

5 Get gobsmacked by the grottos and caves of **Gran**