



# Villa Clara Province

42 / POP 803,690

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## Best Beaches

- ➔ Playa Ensenachos (p277)
- ➔ Playa Las Salinas (p277)
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## Best Local Life

- ➔ Parque Vidal (p261)
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## Why Go?

He wasn't born here, never lived here and died in the distant Bolivian mountains, but Che Guevara is synonymous with Villa Clara, for liberating its capital, Santa Clara, from Batista's corrupt gambling party. Yet, the patchwork of misty tobacco fields and placid lakes wedged between the Sierra del Escambray and Cuba's northern keys offers reasons other than Che to drop by.

The city of Santa Clara is an important junction for cross-country travelers, with a cutting-edge nightlife and some palatial *casas particulares*, while nearby the Escambray peaks glimmer with adventure possibilities centered on the mirror-like Hanabanilla lake.

Picturesque Remedios is the region's oldest settlement, and its somnolence is annually shattered by a frenzied firework party, Las Parrandas. Northeastward, on Villa Clara's coveted coast, beach life revolves around the archipelago of the Cayerías del Norte, Cuba's fastest-growing resort zone. The presence of an adjacent Unesco Biosphere Reserve has meant development has been relatively sustainable – so far.

## When to Go

- ➔ It's hard to conceive of a better time to take a trip to Villa Clara than December. The 24th, specifically. That's right. Swap a boring Christmas for one of the Caribbean's hottest street parties in Remedios.
- ➔ Head over to the Cayerías del Norte for the start of the high season, which runs December through March, when the chances of the skies raining on your beach parade are as low as they get.

## Villa Clara Province Highlights

- 1 Trace the legend at Santa Clara's **monument to Ernesto Che Guevara** (p264) and **Monumento a la Toma del Tren Blindado** (p264).
- 2 Tour Santa Clara's cigar factory, **Fábrica de Tabacos Constantino Pérez Carrodegua** (p263), followed by sublime coffee at **La Veguita** (p263).
- 3 Plug into the electric nightlife in Santa Clara's **Club Mejunje** (p269).
- 4 Hike the trails and soak up the solitude of **Embalse Hanabanilla** (p270).

- 5 People-watch from the plaza's cafes in the colonial pocket of **Remedios** (p272).
  - 6 See the Villa Clara the tourist board forgot to mention
- at ramshackle yet heart-warming **Caibarién** (p275).
- 7 Bask on the balmy beaches of the **Cayo Santa María** (p276).

