



Santiago de Cuba Province

22 / POP 1,048,000

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Best Battle Sites

- ➔ Cuartel Moncada (p402)
- ➔ Loma de San Juan (p403)
- ➔ El Uvero (p425)
- ➔ Museo de la Lucha Clandestina (p400)

Best Natural Sites

- ➔ La Gran Piedra (p419)
- ➔ Pico Turquino (p426)
- ➔ El Saltón (p424)
- ➔ Laguna Baconao (p421)

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 *folklorico* 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** Stroll around Santiago de Cuba's **Cementerio Santa Ifigenia** (p404).
- 2** Visit the **Cuartel Moncada** (p402) in Santiago de Cuba and evaluate the audacity
- (or folly) of Castro's 1953
- insurrection.
- 3** Escape to luscious mountain getaway **El Saltón** (p424).
- 4** Explore Cuba's numerous Afro-Cuban dance genres at
- a **folklorico show** (p412) in Santiago de Cuba.
- 5** Trace the history of Cuba's French-inspired coffee culture at **Cafetal la Isabelica** (p419) in Gran Piedra.
- 6** Undertake a pilgrimage to **El Cobre** (p423) to visit the shrine of Cuba's patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad.
- 8** Dive to the wreck of Spanish warship **Cristóbal Colón** (p426) off the wild coast near Chivirico.
- 7** Stand atop Cuba's highest mountain, **Pico Turquino**

