



Isla de la Juventud (Special Municipality)

📍 46 (45 ON CAYO LARGO DEL SUR) / POP 86,420

Includes ➔

Isla de la Juventud	160
Nueva Gerona	160
East of Nueva Gerona	166
South of Nueva Gerona	167
The Southern Military Zone	168
Cayo Largo del Sur	168

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Restaurante Tu Isla (p163)
- ➔ Restaurante Toti (p163)
- ➔ Ranchón Playa Sirena (p171)
- ➔ Restaurante El Abra (p164)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Tu Isla (p163)
- ➔ Sol Cayo Largo (p170)
- ➔ Villa Choli (p163)
- ➔ Hotel Pelicano (p171)

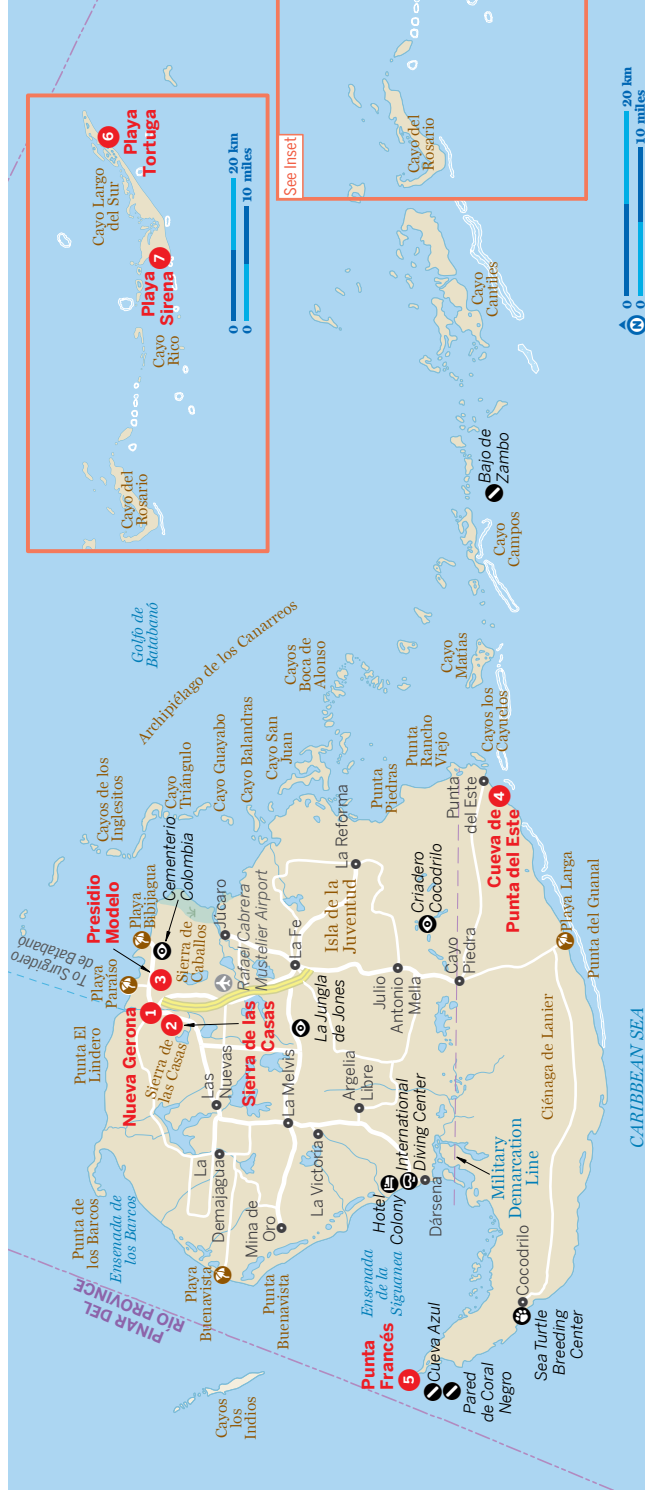
Why Go?

A historic refuge from the law for everyone from 16th-century pirates to 20th-century gangsters, La Isla is perhaps the quirkiest castaway destination you ever will see. Dumped like a crumpled apostrophe 100km off mainland Cuba, this pine-tree-clad island is the Caribbean's sixth-largest. But the Cayman Islands this isn't. Other tourists? Uh-uh. And if you thought mainland Cuba's towns were time-warped, try blowing the dust off island capital Nueva Gerona, where the main street doubles as a baseball diamond, and the food 'scene' is stuck in the Special Period. Yet, if you make it here, you're in for a true adventure. The main lure is diving some of the Caribbean's most pristine reefs, but otherwise get used to being becalmed with the coral, the odd crocodile and a colorful history that reads like an excerpt from *Treasure Island*.

Further east, Cayo Largo del Sur is La Isla's polar opposite, a manufactured tourist enclave renowned for its wide, white-sand beaches.

When to Go

- ➔ The beach life, diving and snorkeling are highlights of La Isla, Cayo Largo or any of the other mini-paradises in the Archipiélago de los Canarreos. The hottest times are the best: July to August along with the cooler-but-balmy high season in December to April.
- ➔ Always-spirited Nueva Gerona ups the ante for its biggest party, Carnaval, in March.
- ➔ The best time for diving in the waters off the Isla de la Juventud is January to May when water clarity is good and the seas are generally calm.



Isla de la Juventud (Special Municipality) Highlights

- 1 Nueva Gerona** (p160)
Getting the lowdown on local life in the petite, sleepy island capital.
- 2 Sierra de las Casas** (p161)
Climbing the steep hills above Nueva Gerona to see

- 4 Cueva de Punta del Este** (p168)
Seeing ancient cave paintings in the rarely visited militarized zone on the Isla de la Juventud.
- 5 Punta Francés** (p167)
Diving amid wrecks, walls,

- 6 Playa Sirena** (p169)
Trekking along the wide, white (sometimes nudist) beaches to Cayo Largo del Sur's finest stretch of sand.
- 7 Playa Tortuga** (p169)
Watching turtles nesting on the moonlit beaches of Cayo Largo del Sur.

- 8 Cueva de Punta del Este** (p168)
Seeing ancient cave paintings in the rarely visited militarized zone on the Isla de la Juventud.
- 9 Punta Francés** (p167)
Diving amid wrecks, walls,