



Santiago de Cuba Province

📍 22 / POP 1,043,200

Includes ➔

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Best Battle Sites

- ➔ Cuartel Moncada (p398)
- ➔ Loma de San Juan (p402)
- ➔ El Uvero (p428)
- ➔ Museo de la Lucha Clandestina (p399)

Best Natural Sites

- ➔ La Gran Piedra (p420)
- ➔ Pico Turquino (p427)
- ➔ El Saltón (p425)
- ➔ Laguna Baconao (p422)

Why Go?

Lovely Santiago. Far from the capital in Cuba's mountainous 'Oriente' region, this perennial hotbed of rebellion and sedition is Cuba's most 'Caribbean' enclave. The difference is invigorating and sometimes overwhelming. Cultural influences here have often come from the east, imported via Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados and Africa. There's 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, one of rugged coves, crashing surf, historical coffee plantations and emerald hills riotous with 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 and the streets are bursting with revelers. The fun begins with the vibrant Festival del Caribe and ends with the justifiably famous Carnaval.
- ➔ More excellent music is on offer in March at the Festival Internacional de Trova, when the city rediscovers its musical roots.
- ➔ March through to June is renowned for its high water clarity, ensuring excellent diving conditions for wreck diving off the south coast.



Santiago de Cuba Province Highlights

- 1 Cementerio Santa Ingeña** (p402) Paying your respects to the nation's heroes at this gorgeous Santiago de Cuba cemetery.
- 2 Cuartel Moncada** (p398) Taking in the audacity (or folly) of Castro's 1953 insurrection at this Santiago de Cuba landmark.
- 3 El Saltón** (p425) Making an eco-escape to a luscious mountain getaway.
- 4 Cafetal la Isabelica** (p420) Tracing the history of Cuba's French-inspired coffee culture in Gran Piedra.
- 5 El Cobre** (p424) Undertaking a pilgrimage with countless believers visiting the shrine of Cuba's patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad.
- 6 Pico Turquino** (p427) Standing atop Cuba's highest mountain alongside the bust of José Martí and taking in the gaping panorama.
- 7 Cristóbal Colón** (p428) Diving to the wreck of a Spanish warship off the wild coast near Chivirico.