



The Southwest & Península de Pedernales

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

Talk about criminally undervisited. Few travelers make it to the southwest: it's remote, its treasures yield themselves only to those who apply the effort and its highlights don't exactly roll off the traveler tongue – and that's exactly the reason to turn right out of Santo Domingo instead of left. The stunning coastline of the Península de Pedernales offers miles of pristine, empty beaches and otherworldly swirls of turquoise sea; there's a soundtrack set to twittering bird-song in the cloud forests of the mountains, and the striking dry desert landscape of cactus stretching all the way to the Haitian border will jar your preconceived Caribbean perceptions to the point of disbelief. Like the astounding Bahía de Las Águilas, a 10km deserted stretch of postcard-perfect beach in the far-flung corner of the southwest, you can have this region all to yourself – a notion long-harnessed but long-forgotten in most other parts of the world.

When to Go

Laguna Oviedo's biodiversity is in full swing in March and April, the best time for nature lovers and ecotourists to witness the area's impressive migratory feast. December to February offers up sunny skies and seemingly endless fiestas on every corner, the busiest time for the DR as a whole, with North American and European holidays in overdrive. But caffeine fiends will want to hold off until June: the first week sees the Polo Organic Coffee Festival percolating inland – yes, the coffee is *that* good.



The Southwest & Península de Pedernales Highlights

1 Taking the spectacular boat ride to **Bahía de Las Águilas** (p208), the most remote and beautiful beach in the country

2 Spotting flamingos and turtles on a boat tour to super-salty **Laguna Oviedo** (p207)

3 Leaving the stereotypical Caribbean behind in the

coolness and tranquility of the cloud forest at the remote cabins of **Cachóte** (p205)

4 Spotting cactus flowers, butterflies and beefy iguanas on **Isla Cabritos** (p210), the lowest point in the Caribbean

5 Killing a day cooling off in the idyllic freshwater pool at **Los Patos** (p204) near Paraiso

6 Renting some wheels and riding one of the most beautiful unheard-of coastal drives in the Americas along the eastern shoreline of the **Península de Pedernales** (p200)

7 Becoming a miner for a day and sourcing your own semiprecious stone at the **Larimar Mine** (p206), the only one of its kind in the world