

Chiriquí Province



Chiricanos claim to have it all and there's an element of truth to it: Panama's tallest mountains, longest rivers and most fertile valleys are in Chiriquí. The province is also home to spectacular highland rainforests and the country's most productive agricultural and cattle-ranching regions.

Bordering Costa Rica to the west, Chiriquí is often the first province in Panama encountered by overland travelers and serves as a subtle introduction to Panama's immense beauty. Although the mist-covered mountains near Boquete have been colonized by waves of North American and European retirees, the town is a good base for adventures like rafting and exploring the flanks of Panama's highest point, Volcán Barú (3478m). Boquete is also the center of Panama's coffee industry, which means that a potent cup of shade-grown Arabica is never more than a cafe away.

Chiriquí is home to the Parque Internacional La Amistad, which offers excellent hiking through lush rainforests that are largely unfettered by tourist crowds. If you're a serious white-water rafter, the region boasts more than 20 different runs, yet sees a fraction of the river-runners that descend annually on Costa Rica. On the coast, the pristine Golfo de Chiriquí boasts powder-white sand beaches and a rich diversity of marine life.

With so much to offer, it's no surprise that some *chiricanos* dream of creating an independent República de Chiriquí (Chiriquí Republic).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fueling yourself with mountain-grown coffee in **Boquete** (p188), the town of eternal spring
- Climbing to the top of **Volcán Barú** (p197) and spotting both coastlines – if the weather is clear!
- Hiking through cloud forests along the **Sendero Los Quetzales** (p197) in search of the elusive quetzal
- Wondering why you're the only one around in the pristine **Parque Internacional La Amistad** (p201)
- Island-hopping in the national marine park in the **Golfo de Chiriquí** (p185), the 'other side' of Chiriquí



■ POPULATION: 422,796

■ AREA: 8653 SQ KM

■ ELEVATION: SEA LEVEL TO 3478M

