



Colón Province

POP 242,000 / ELEV SEA LEVEL TO 979M / AREA 4890 SQ KM

Includes ➔

Colón	208
Around Colón	209
South of Colón	210
Parque Nacional San Lorenzo	210
Portobelo	213
Around Portobelo	218
Isla Grande	219

Best Surf Spots

- Isla Grande (p216)
- Isla Mamei (p216)
- Playa Grande (p216)
- Turtles Beach (p216)
- V-Land Beach (p216)

Best Places to Stay

- Casa de La Bruja (p217)
- Hostel Puerto Lindo (p219)
- Sister Moon Eco Lodge (p220)
- Casa Rayo Verde (p217)
- Sierra Llorona Panama Lodge (p210)

Why Go?

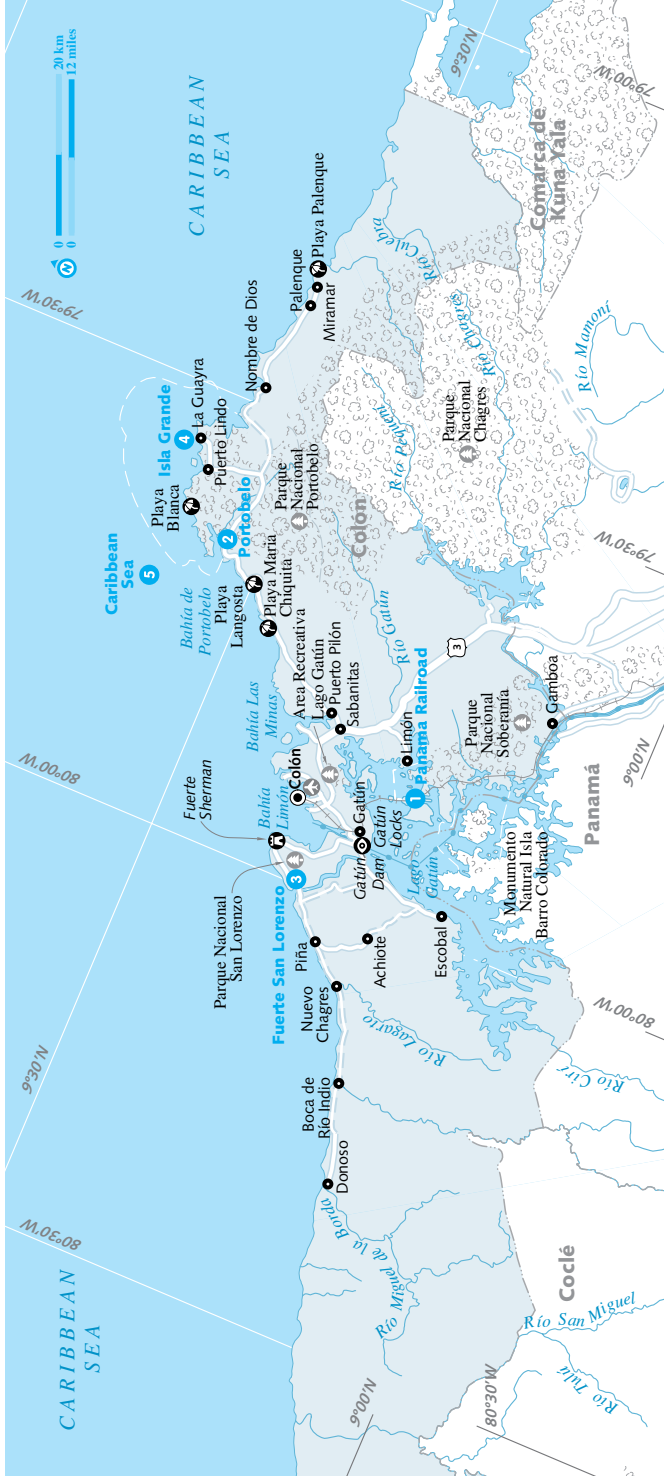
With an edgy reputation more true crime than travel, Colón rarely makes travel wish lists. But there is more to this Caribbean province than its downtrodden capital. Think pristine beaches and lowland rainforests, colonial splendors and modern engineering marvels. Portobelo, with its growing music and art scene, shows the best of vibrant Congo culture. The luxury train between Panama City and Colón remains one of the greatest rail journeys in the Americas.

The region's incredible history dates back to the earliest European explorers. Black roots also run deep; Colón is the birthplace of today's ultra-popular *punta* music (better known abroad as reggaetón).

During the colonial era these coastal cities ranked among the world's richest; their gold and silver stores enticed pirates from English privateer Sir Francis Drake to Admiral Edward Vernon. Today, the fallen fortresses and cannons embedded in the coral reefs recall the fallen Spanish empire.

When to Go

- **Dec–Apr** Dry season is a great time for snorkeling or diving for Caribbean treasure, as visibility is at its best. It's high season for lodging and beaches fill up.
- **Oct** Pilgrims set out walking from all over Panama weeks ahead to attend the Black Christ Festival, an enormous event with masses and street celebrations in Portobelo.
- **May–Jul** A relatively good time to visit, with some rain showers and off-season prices.



Colón Province Highlights

- 1 Ride through lush vistas in a 1st-class luxury car heading from Panama City to Colón along the historical **Panama Railroad** (p211)
- 2 Explore hallowed colonial ruins or find festival frenzy in **Portobelo** (p213), once the Caribbean's greatest port
- 3 Live out your *Pirates of the Caribbean* fantasy at **Fuerte San Lorenzo** (p212), a historic Spanish fort that once stood guard over the Caribbean
- 4 Soak up the natural beauty and laid-back vibe of **Isla Grande** (p219), a picture-perfect gem of a Caribbean island
- 5 Find sharks, cargo ships and military planes while scuba diving the **Caribbean sea** (p216) around Portobelo