# Comarca de Kuna Yala

POP 33,100 / ELEV SEA LEVEL TO 748M / AREA 2360 SQ KM

## Includes ➡

## Best Off-the-Beaten-Path Spots

➡ Cayos Holandeses (p232)

➡ East Lemons (p230)

➡ Cayos Los Grullos (p232)

➡ Beyond Achutupu (p234)

## Best Places to Stay

➡ Dolphin Lodge (p234)

➡ Cabañas Kuanidup (p231)

➡ Cabañas Tigre (p233)

➡ Sapibenega (p234)

➡ Yandup Lodge (p233)

## Why Go?

Imagine a turquoise tropical archipelago with an island for every day of the year. With white sand and waving palms, these Caribbean islands cheat no one's version of paradise. The Comarca is home to the Kuna, the first group in Latin America to gain indigenous autonomy. Though they have had contact with Europeans since Columbus sailed these waters in 1502, clan identity is paramount, and many Kuna make tenacious efforts to preserve a traditional way of life.

In 2009 the road to Cartí was completed, making the region far more accessible than it has ever been. Still off the beaten track, this narrow, 226km-long strip on the Caribbean coast stretches from the Golfo de San Blás to the Colombian border.

Community islands are acre-sized cays packed with bamboo huts, livestock and people. Visitors often prefer the more remote outer islands with few inhabitants. Most areas require landing fees.

## When to Go

➡ **Dec–Apr** During trade-wind season there's little rain. It can get hot in the thatched huts, but conditions are ideal for sailing with winds from the north and northeast.

➡ **Oct** Isla Tigre celebrates traditional dance at the Nogagope, which brings communities together for a week of dancing as well as canoe races and an art fair.

➡ **May–Aug** Good visibility for snorkeling, though rainstorms are around and so are annoying *chitras* (sand flies). Thunderstorms mean it's not a preferable time to sail.

# Comarca de Kuna Yala Highlights

**1** Interact responsibly and sustainably with the **Kuna** (p225), a fiercely independent people who maintain their traditions in a changing world

**2** Cruise white-sand cays, swim in clear waters and soak up sunrise on a **sailboat** (p228)

**3** Shop the **community islands** (p225) for *molas*, a traditional Kuna textile that has become the national handicraft of Panama

**4** See traditional dances or just soak up the friendly vibe on the community island of **Isla Tigre** (p233)

**5** Snorkel aquamarine waters through the reefs and wrecks in the magical **Cayos Holandeses** (p232)

**6** Camp on sandy beaches and live the adventure of a three-day motorboat trip to **Colombia** (p228)



**Boat trip to Colombia 6**

*Bahía de Masargandí*

Ustupo

Achutupu
Uaguitupo
Mamitupú
Ustupo Ogobsucum

Akwadup
Ailigandí
Isla Uaguitupo

Isla Tupile

Playón Chico
Yandup
Isla Iskardup

**Comarca de Kuna Yala**

*CARIBBEAN SEA*

Tortí

Ipetí

*Lago Bayano*

Interamericana

**Panamá**

Cañita

El Llano

Chepo

Nusagandi

*Serranía de San Blás*

*Río Piragua*
*Río Espavá*
*Río Bayano*
*Río Majé*
*Río Chepo*

*Archipiélago de San Blás*

Corazón de Jesús
Nargana
Río Azúcar

**Isla Tigre 4**

Cayos Ordupuquip
Naranjo Chico
Río Sidra/Mamartupo
Nusatupo
Senidup

**Cayos Holandeses 5**

Kuanidup Grande/
Kuanidup Chico
Cayos Los Grullos

Ogobsibudup
**El Porvenir**
Corbiski
Nalunega
Wichub-Walá
Ukuptupu

Cartí Suitupo
Cartí

*Área Silvestre de Narganá*

*Golfo de San Blás*

*Río Mandinga*
*Río Cartí Grande*
*Río Nergalá*

**Colón**

*Parque Nacional Chagres*

Panama City (46km)

Yaviza (91km)

**Darién**

*Río Chucunaque*
*Río Cañazas*

0       20 km
0       12 miles