



# Península de Azuero

POP 213,300 / AREA 9000 SQ KM / ELEV SEA LEVEL TO 3478M

## Includes ➔

Chitré .....	114
Interior Azuero .....	118
Macaracas .....	119
La Villa de Los Santos .....	119
Guararé .....	121
La Enea .....	122
Las Tablas .....	123
Pedasí .....	125
Azuero Coastline ....	129

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ El Sitio Restaurant (p132)
- ➔ Bienvenidush (p128)
- ➔ Mare Bonita (p128)
- ➔ Coleos Cafe (p132)
- ➔ El Mirador (p117)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Casa de Campo (p126)
- ➔ Eco Venao (p131)
- ➔ El Sitio Hotel (p132)
- ➔ Posada Los Destiladeros (p129)
- ➔ La Casa del Puerto (p122)

## Why Go?

Cherished as Panama's cultural heart and soul, Península de Azuero is a farming and ranching hub, and the strongest bastion of Spanish colonial influence extant in the country. The area's rolling hills are matched by a long and lovely coastline. Over time the peninsula has seen stark transformations – from verdant rainforest to cattle country, from indigenous land to Spanish stronghold and, finally, from sleepy backwater to surf central and one of Panama's travel hot spots.

The passage of time here is a countdown to the next festival, be it Carnaval, La Mejorana or Corpus Christi. Costumes range from swirling devils and dragons to curtsying *reinas* (queens) turned dolls in traditional lace finery. Joining the throngs on sticky rum-soaked streets for these celebrations is a first-rate introduction to the real Panama.

Península de Azuero consists of three provinces: Herrera, Los Santos and a slice of Veraguas.

## When to Go

- ➔ **Jul–Sep** Azuero is ground zero for Panama's best traditional festivals, with major celebrations all over the peninsula featuring oxcart parades, *seco* (alcoholic drink made from sugarcane) and live bands.
- ➔ **Aug–Nov** Thousands of endangered olive ridley sea turtles come ashore to nest on the broad beach of Isla Cañas; visitors come with guides to watch the nighttime hatchings.
- ➔ **Dec–Mar** Dry season is the best time to surf Pacific swells, and options from wilderness beaches to surf villages abound. Also hit Las Tablas' Carnaval – the country's best – in February or March.

## Península de Azuero Highlights

### 1 Playa Venao

(p131) Riding the waves and staying in cool lodgings at this surf destination that is managing to evade the mainstream.

### 2 Pedasí

(p125) Enjoying the down-home ambience of a small town with lovely boutique lodgings, a few good eateries and long bike rides to the beach.

### 3 Isla Cañas

(p133) Spotting sea turtles as they arrive by the thousands during their annual nesting.

### 4 Las Tablas

(p123) Squeezing through the multitudes of revelers dancing in the streets during Carnaval.

### 5 Parita

(p117) Visiting a mask-maker's studio and strolling the colonial center of this historic town.

### 6 Playa El Aguillito

(p119) Heading out for birdwatching at a tidal mudflat that attracts migratory seabirds.

