



# Veraguas Province

POP 244,415 / AREA 10,590 SQ KM / ELEV TO 3478M

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## Best Places to Eat

- Anachoreo Restaurant (p140)
- Chano's Point (p145)
- Hibiscus Garden Restaurant (p144)
- Palati Fini (p144)
- La Moncheria Heladería (p144)

## Best Places to Sleep

- Hostal La Qhia (p139)
- Hibiscus Garden (p142)
- La Buena Vida (p143)
- Hotel Heliconia (p151)
- Oasis Surf Camp (p142)

## Why Go?

The name of Veraguas province (literally 'see waters') is both descriptive and accurate – it is the only one of Panama's provinces and *comarcas* (indigenous districts) to border both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

But there's much more here to attract visitors than endless coastline. Unesco World Heritage Site Isla Coiba, the so-called Galápagos of Central America, draws divers, birdwatchers and paradise seekers. Surfing village Santa Catalina is a destination in its own right. Hikes to waterfalls and swimming holes around the highland village of Santa Fé offer an off-the-beaten path retreat.

Veraguas' isolated Caribbean coast will one day be accessible on the Carretera de Caribe, an east-west highway that will link Miguel de la Borda in Colón Province with Rambala in Bocas de Toro, some 230km away. This, and tourism, will help this deforested region of ranchers and subsistence farmers redefine itself and recast its fragile fortunes.

## When to Go

➤ **Feb & Mar** The best months to hit the world-class surf breaks in Santa Catalina and elsewhere along the Veraguas coast.

➤ **Aug–Dec** Three species of turtles nest on the beaches of Malena on the Sunset Coast; community volunteers guide these very off-the-beaten-path trips.

➤ **May–Nov** Dry season means the the best weather for the beach, but the rainy season means waterfalls near highland Santa Fé are big – though trails may be muddy.



## Veraguas Province Highlights

### 1 Parque Nacional Coiba (p145)

Exploring the astounding natural beauty of Parque Nacional Coiba, both above and below the water.

### 2 Santa Catalina (p140)

Surfing some serious waves at Panama's top spot for surfing.

### 3 Santa Fé (p137)

Ascending to this highland village, famous for its waterfalls, steep hills and lush forests.

### 4 Sunset Coast (p149)

Adventuring through the delightfully untrampled Sunset Coast, with remote beaches, great surfing and community turtle tours.

### 5 San Francisco (p136)

Visiting the Iglesia de San Francisco de la Montaña, one of the best examples of baroque religious art and architecture in the Americas.

### 6 Isla Cébaco (p148)

Getting inspired off the beaten path with a retreat to this crowd-free island.