

The Northwest



If Venezuela was a restaurant, the northwest would be the chef's *menu de dégustation* – a chance to savor all the delicious morsels that make up the country. There's something for every taste – rainforests and deserts, coral islands and beaches, caves and waterfalls, and South America's largest lake.

Colorful Coro is one of the oldest settlements in the New World, and a popular traveler's chill-out spot. Nearby are two strikingly different environs – the desert wildness of the Peninsula de Paraguaná, and the misty green forests of the Sierra de San Luis. The favorable winds off Adícora, on Paraguaná's east coast, have made it the top spot for budget kitesurfers in Venezuela.

The white-sand cays of Parque Nacional Morrocoy beckon beach-lovers with warm Caribbean waves and colorful reefs. Or escape the heat, if you prefer, and head for the hills – relax in the small colonial towns around Barquisimeto, sample Venezuela's finest wines in Carora or indulge in an all-night, cigar-smoking séance with the faithful at the shrines of María Lionza.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Let the afternoon breeze gently rock your hammock, or fly down a dune on a sandboard in colorful, oh-so-groovy **Coro** (p118)
- Test your mettle against wind and wave going kitesurfing in **Adícora** (p126)
- Work on your tan lines on the white-sand beaches of the **Parque Nacional Morrocoy** (p129)
- Discover *gaita*, the music of **Maracaibo** (p147), during the Feria de la Chinita in November
- Marvel at the unique lightning phenomenon of **Catatumbo** (p150)



