Cuba: Off the Beaten Track

SANTA CRUZ DEL SUR
Known mainly for disappearing off the map completely after a 1932 hurricane, this end-of-the-road fishing port, sporting fascinating monuments and a lovely casa, could kick-start a trip to the tranquil cayos of the Jardines de la Reina.

JOBO ROSADO RESERVE
This little-explored reserve in northern Sancti Spiritus Province is accessible from the town of Yaguajay. There are paths and guided treks led by Ecotur among rivers, semi-deciduous forest and unusual karst topography.

SAN MIGUEL DE LOS BAÑOS
Come to this somnolent town to see the magnificent ruins of an abandoned hotel and bathhouse, and climb a steep hill marked by the stations of the cross.

THE SOUTHERN ISLA
Cave paintings, wild monkeys, deserted beaches and vast swamps characterize the southern half of La Isla de la Juventud, which is both a military zone and a national park.

PLAYA LAS TUMBAS
Cuba’s most isolated and beautiful beach is set at the Isla Grande’s western tip encased in the Parque Nacional Península de Guanahacabibes and a Unesco Biosphere Reserve.

SIERRA DEL CHORRILLO
Reconnoiter Camagüey Province’s surprise swath of serene upland with a stay in a sumptuous old hacienda, a ride on one of Cuba’s finest steeds and an excursion to find rare birds or rarer-yet petrified trees.

GIBARA BEACH-BAGGING
Starting in colorful, off-the-radar Gibara, things only get more wild as you voyage via boat or bumpy track to desolate beaches with names such as Playa Blanca or Playa Caletones, where there are also cave systems to explore.

BARACOA TO HOLGUÍN – THE BACK ROAD
Ever wondered what Cuba’s most pristine and biodiverse protected area (Parque Nacional Alejandro de Humboldt) would look like were it juxtaposed with its ugliest industrial sight (Moa)? Hit this rarely traversed, pothole-ravaged back road to find out.