



Facilities

Specialized vessels.
Scuba-diving equipment rentals.
Scuba-diving programs which include single dives, double-dive sessions and packages of different numbers of dives.

Instructors with years of experience who are accredited by the World Underwater Federation (CMAS), the American-Canadian Underwater Certification (ACUC) and other prestigious international schools run the programs which Cuba offers in close coordination with the national network of medical services. Several hyperbaric chambers are available to provide quick medical care for divers if needed.
The international scuba-diving centers offer scuba-diving courses at all levels and in all specialties and award certificates backed by prestigious international schools.

Scuba-Diving Areas

San Antonio Cape (27 scuba-diving sites)
This natural paradise is on the Guanahacabibes Peninsula, a world biosphere preserve at the western tip of Pinar del Río Province. It is one of the most unspoiled areas in Cuba, with a high proportion of endemic flora and fauna, and there are many legends about pirate ships and Spanish galleons that went down off its coasts. Natural riches and sunken ships are part of the treasures yet to be discovered by divers in this area.

María La Gorda (50 scuba-diving sites)
This scuba-diving area is in the Guanahacabibes Peninsula National Park, a world biosphere preserve in Pinar del Río Province. It is one of the least developed, most natural parts of Cuba.
Famous for its clean seabed, which is considered one of those with the greatest biological richness in Cuba, it has many sea sponges, a great variety of species of coral of different colors and shapes including the largest colony of Black Coral (*Antipathes* spp.) in Cuban waters and many species of marine fauna. It also has vertical walls containing tunnels, channels and caves (both underwater and on land) and sunken ships dating from the 18th century.
Recommended sites: *Paradiso Perdido*, *Yemayá*, *Jardín de las Gorgonias*, *Acuario*, *El Almirante*, *El Encanto*, *La Cadena Misteriosa* and *Las Cuevas de Pedro*.

Characteristics

Because of the wide insular shelf 26,190 square miles (just over 67,831 square kilometers) in size which surrounds Cuba, the water near its coasts is calm, clear and warm, with an average annual temperature that ranges between 75.2° and 83.3° F. (between 24° and 28.5° C.) and with average horizontal visibility of from 65 to 130 feet (from 20 to 40 meters).
Cuba's insular shelf contains around 527 miles (850 kilometers) of coral reefs. The most important one, in the Jardines del Rey Archipelago (or Sabana-Camagüey Archipelago), lies just off the northern coast of central Cuba and is 280 miles (450 kilometers) long the second largest in the world.
The four groups of islands and cays which surround the largest island, Cuba Colorados, Jardines del Rey, Jardines de la Reina and Canarreos have exceptionally good conditions for exploring the seabed.



Protect the Environment

Scuba diving in Cuba is based on the principle of preserving the underwater ecosystems. Modern scuba-diving equipment is available, and the diving sites are in the parts of the insular shelf that have the most beautiful natural attractions. Many of these zones have been declared protected areas.
Please follow these suggestions and help us to protect the environment.

- Find out about the area you are going to visit before you go there.
- Never anchor on the reef.
- Avoid excessive weights.
- Try to stay horizontal when in the water.
- Attach all of your equipment to your buoyancy compensator so it won't get caught on the seabed and break the coral.
- Do not remove damage or move the coral, living rock or other resources of historic value.
- If you want a memento of your dive, take photos nothing else and use simple equipment that



Types of Scuba Diving

Skilled divers at the scuba-diving centers make day and night dives as far as 130 feet (40 meters) down at

- coral reefs,
- walls,
- sunken ships and
- caves and tunnels.



Cayo Levisa (23 scuba-diving sites)
Cayo Levisa is one of the small cays in the Colorados Archipelago, off the northern coast of Pinar del Río Province.
Its scuba-diving sites are off the northern coast of the cay. There, you can see many varieties of coral; sponges; medium- and large-sized tropical fish; and sunken ships dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, in which you can see bits of English porcelain.
Recommended sites: *La Cadena Misteriosa*, *El Arco de Ludovico*, *El Infierno*, *La Corona de San Carlos*, *La Poza de los Tiburones*, *El Paraíso Perdido*, *El Valle de las Esponjas* and *La Pequeña Gruta*.

La Habana (45 scuba-diving sites)
The capital of the Republic of Cuba offers visitors both the attractions of a cosmopolitan port city and all the activities proper to its role as the center of the country's culture. It is an ideal destination for those who want to combine what the city has to offer with underwater activities. It has four scuba-diving centers, that cover a diving area 62 miles (100 kilometers) long and just under two miles (three kilometers) wide, including several sunken ships which have been declared a part of the country's historic patrimony.
Level areas carpeted with coral, beautiful gardens of gorgonians, prairies of sponges and sunken ships that are now the refuge of many Caribbean coral fish are part of its treasure.
Recommended sites: *La Chalupa*, *Canal de Tará*, *Posa del Militar*, *La Cueva*, *Canto de Santa Fe*, *Las Chopas*, *Canal del Salado*, *Barco Hundido del Comodoro*, *La Ferralla* and *Parque Jurásico*.

is easy to handle.

Some Good Reasons for Scuba-Diving in Cuba

Average horizontal visibility of 98 feet (30 meters), sometimes reaching more than 130 feet (40 meters).

- Warm water all year round, with temperatures averaging 75.2° F. (24° C.) in the winter and 86° F. (30° C.) in the summer.
- Magnificent seabeds.
- Diverse, well-preserved flora and fauna, considered among the richest in the Caribbean.
- Guaranteed medical assistance, with hyperbaric chambers and a warning system. Specialized medical personnel and a two-person hyperbaric chamber available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to handle emergencies.

Geographic Location

The Cuban archipelago consists of the island of Cuba, the Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Youth) and more than 4000 cays and islets. It is 87 miles (140 kilometers) from the Bahamas, 91 miles (146 kilometers) from Jamaica, 112 miles (180 kilometers) from Florida and 130 miles (210 kilometers) from Cancun.
Cuba has a privileged position in the heart of the Caribbean, between North and South America, at the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico which is why, historically, it has been called "the key to the Gulf."

Dimensions

The island of Cuba has a land area of 42,827 square miles (110,922 square kilometers) and is the largest island in the Antilles. It is long and thin 744 miles (1200 kilometers) long, to be exact. Its 3563 miles (5746 kilometers) of coastline contain over 200 bays and around 300 natural beaches.





Diving in Cuba



El Colony (56 scuba-diving sites)
This destination is an absolute must for all who love and practice scuba diving. Francés Point National Marine Park is a habitual site for underwater photography contests. In an area a little over three and a half miles (six kilometers) long, there are several beautiful coral reefs and a great diversity of seabed. Here, you can find sunken ships and many kinds of fish. You can scuba dive along walls, in tunnels and in deep channels, so it is a very popular choice. Coral (including a lot of Black Coral [Antipathes spp.]), gorgonians, sponges, caves, passageways, hillocks and valleys are typical of these areas.
Recommended sites: Pared de Coral Negro, Cueva de los Sábalos, Piedra de Coral, Ancla del Pirata, Paraíso de las Levisas, Pequeño Reino, Cabezo Solitario and El Reino de Sahara.



Cayo Largo (32 scuba-diving sites)
The area contains some practically untouched beaches and coral reefs in shallow water rich in Brain Coral (Diploria spp.), Pillar Coral (Dendrogyra cylindrus), Leaf Coral (Agaricia agaricites), Star Coral (Montastrea annularis), Feather Gorgonians, Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.) and Lavender Tube Sponges (Spinosella vaginalis). In addition, there are many tunnels, steep walls, ridges, hillocks and mountains of coral, colonies of Black Coral (Antipathes spp.) and a wide variety of fish and chelonians. The well preserved nature of this underwater setting and the marvelous contrasts in its attractions make it very popular among scuba-diving buffs.
Recommended sites: Cañón de Blanco, Russi Wall, Manos de Dios, Cañón de Sigüea, La Pared del pescador, Tunicates Ref, La Estatua, El Pino, Banco Blanco, Las Cadenas, Camila Ref. and El Valle de las Gorgonias.



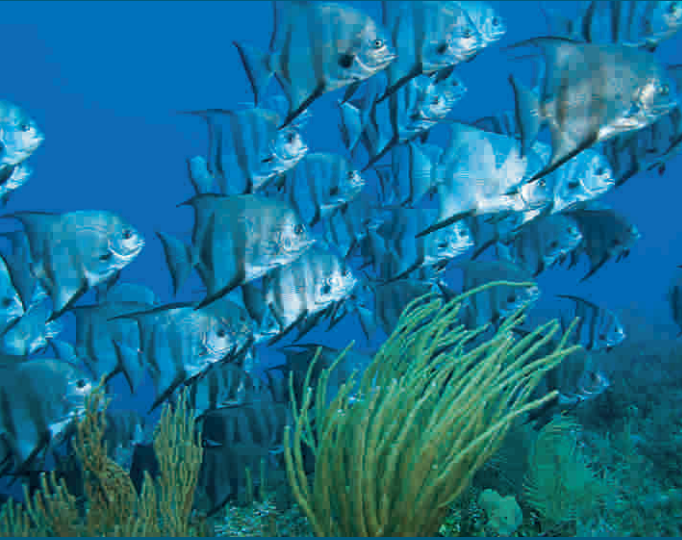
Varadero (30 scuba-diving sites)
Cuba's most famous beach resort lies along the coast of the Hicacos Peninsula, in northern Matanzas Province. It has around 12 and a half miles (20 kilometers) of beaches with fine white sand, clear warm water and five scuba-diving centers. The diving area is large and contains many coral formations, caves, channels and passageways. It also has many kinds of fish, coral, well-developed gorgonians and many sponges.
Recommended sites: El Parque Marino de Cayo Piedras del Norte, Playa Coral, Neptuno Wreck, Patrol Boat Wreck, Blue Hole, Las Mandarinas, Morena Show, Carbonera, Ciudadela and Las Claraboyas.



Bahía de Cochinos (32 scuba-diving sites)
Playa Larga, Playa Girón and Caleta Buena
The Zapata Peninsula, a world biosphere preserve and one of Cuba's most popular resorts, with the greatest ecological stability, is in the southern part of Matanzas Province, in western Cuba.
Dives are made directly from the coast, for beautiful species of coral (Elk Horn Coral (Acropora palmata), Leaf Coral (Agaricia agaricites), Star Coral (Porites porites), Pillar Coral (Dendrogyra cylindrus), Brain Coral (Diploria spp.) and Flower Coral (Eusmilia fastigiata) and Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.) can be found close to shore. These are accompanied by a multitude of multicolored fish, enormous Yellow-tube Sponges (Aplysina fistularis), Violet-tube Sponges (Aplysina archeri), Iridescent Tube Sponges (Spinosella plicifera), crabs, Spiny Lobsters (Panulirus argus) and Barracudas (Sphyræna barracuda).
Recommended sites: Punta Perdiz, El Tanque, El Cenote, El Brinco, Cueva de los Peces, La Corona de Maceo, Los Cañones, El Cabezo-Caleta Buena and El Alto de las Pailas



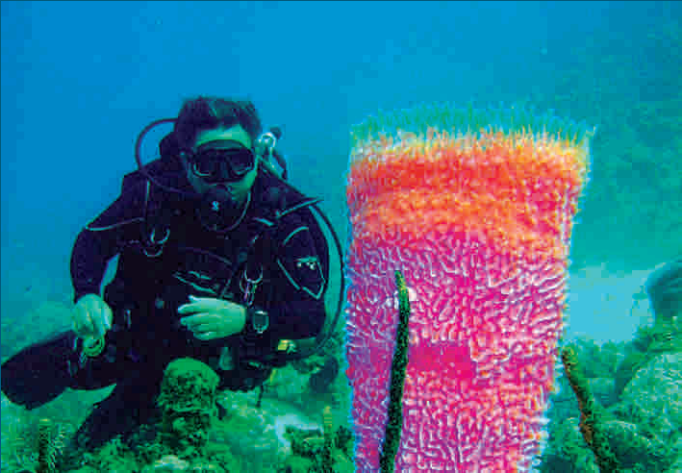
Santa Maria Cay (24 scuba-diving sites)
Jardines del Rey Archipelago
Santa Maria Cay five square miles (13 square kilometers) in size, with nearly seven miles (11 kilometers) of top-quality beaches is one of the cays in the Jardines del Rey Archipelago, off the northern coast of Villa Clara Province. Its practically untouched seabed and the great variety of species of coral and fish to be found here make this area very popular among both beginning and professional divers.
Recommended sites: the ones near Frágoso, Francés, Las Brujas, Borracho, Español de Afuera, Los Diablillos, Ensenachos, Santa Maria and Los Caimanes Cays, all of which have great natural beauty.



Coco and Guillermo Cays (46 scuba-diving sites)
Jardines del Rey Archipelago
Coco and Guillermo Cays are part of the Jardines del Rey Archipelago, which is also known as the Sabana-Camagüey Archipelago, off the northern coast of Ciego de Avila Province. The area contains a wide variety of scenery and has clear water, excellent sand and 20 miles (32 kilometers) of coral reefs at depths of from six and a half to 131 feet (from 2 to 40 meters). Its main attraction is the great diversity of fish which live here. Sponges, gorgonians and coral abound. A little under two miles (three kilometers) away, there are dunes up to 49 feet (15 meters) high, great rocky outcrops and cliffs.
Recommended sites: La Morena, Las Gorgonias, La Jaula, Los Mogotes, La Angélica, Felipe, La Finca, El Perro, Peñón 1 y 4, Casasa and Los Tiburones.



Cienfuegos (21 scuba-diving sites)
Its two scuba-diving centers cover an area of around three and a half nautical miles. The area has a long coral reef, with a lot of Elk Horn Coral (Acropora palmata), Brain Coral (Diploria spp.), Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.) and other gorgonians. Sunken ships, coral channels and a wide range of fauna such as Tarpon (Megalops atlanticus), Barracudas (Sphyræna barracuda), Groupers (Epinephelus morio), Snappers (Lutjanus spp.), Grunts (Haemulon spp.), Angelfish (Pomacantus spp.), Threespot Damselfish (Pomacentrus planifrons) and Ocean Surgeons (Acanthurus coeruleus) form part of its wealth. One of the special features of this area is a Pillar Coral (Dendrogyra cylindrus) whose great size, elegance and majesty has led to its being Called "Caribbean Lady" or "Notre Dame."
Recommended sites: La Corona, El Laberinto, Camaronero III, Notre Dame, La Patana, El Cable Inglés, Los Cabezos and Rancho Luna.



Guajimico (20 scuba-diving sites)
This scuba-diving area is just off the southern coast of central Cuba, along the highway that links the cities of Cienfuegos and Trinidad. It is a great natural area, with attractive woods, caves and small, hidden beaches.
The seabed has walls, tunnels, massive coral formations, a wide variety of sponges, Feather Gorgonians, Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.), gorgonians of other kinds and tropical fish.
Recommended sites: La Poza, Boca Naranjo, Boca Ambuila, Guanábana, La Ceiba, Farallón, Dama Azul, Paraíso and Real.



Trinidad (21 scuba-diving sites)
Some of the best beaches on Cuba's southern coast are on the Ancón Peninsula, which has a scuba-diving center. This area, which extends as far as Blanco Cay, consists of a narrow insular shelf with a sandy seabed that has patches of coral and ridges up to 16 feet (five meters) high, tunnels and channels. There are around 40 species of coral, a wide variety of sponges of different colors and shapes, Feather Gorgonians, Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.), gorgonians of other kinds and tropical fish.
Recommended sites: Los Cabezos de Maria Aguilar, los Túneles de Leonid, el Pesquero and los Barcos Hundidos.



Jardines de la Reina Archipelago (93 scuba-diving sites)
This world-class resort area is off the southern coasts of Ciego de Avila and Camagüey Provinces, 48 miles (77 kilometers) from the island of Cuba. To reach the archipelago, you take a boat from Júcaro, in Ciego de Avila y Province.
This is a veritable tropical paradise, with an impressive seabed, a scuba-diving area that extends for 43 miles (70 kilometers), coral reefs that many species of marine life have chosen as their habitat, deep areas, large fish and Hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata) and other kinds of turtles. The Avalón International Scuba-Diving Center is in the Jardines de la Reina Archipelago. It offers dives in the area surrounding Grande, Caballones, Ancitas, Piedra Grande and Cachiboca Cays. This resort's greatest attraction is its wide variety of species of coral, sponges, gorgonians, mollusks, crustaceans, Echinodermata and fish of different sizes such as Jewfish (Epinephelus itajara), which may weigh up to 500 pounds. Here, too, you can have a truly exciting underwater experience: scuba diving with sharks.
Recommended sites: Montaña Rusa, Pipín, Meseta de los Meros, Coral Negro I y II, El Peñón, Vicent, Gruta del Tampón, La Cana and Pequeño Paraíso.



Santa Lucia (35 scuba-diving sites)
Santa Lucia Beach is around 12 and a half miles (20 kilometers) long and is protected by one of the longest and best-preserved coral reefs in the tropics. The scuba-diving area here extends from Maternillos Point almost to Sabinal Cay, off the northern coast of Camagüey Province. Sunken ships abound such as the Nuestra Señora de Alta Gracia, the Mortera and the Pizarro, these last two dating from the 19th century. The nearby coral reef has ridges around 33 feet (over 10 meters) high, and the seabed is carpeted with coral and enormous gorgonians. Walls, caves, tunnels, Black Coral (Antipathes spp.), fish, crustaceans and mollusks are other attractions. Moreover, there's a spectacular Sharks' Friends Show featuring Bull Sharks (Carcharhinus leucas) that live at the entrance to the Bay of Nuevitas, and you can go scuba diving with them.
Recommended sites: Poseidón I-VI (six different sites of coral terraces), Nuestra Señora Virgen de Altigracia, Mortera, Las Anforas, El Escalón, Torre de Coral and Shark's Point (diving with Bull Sharks [Carcharhinus leucas]).

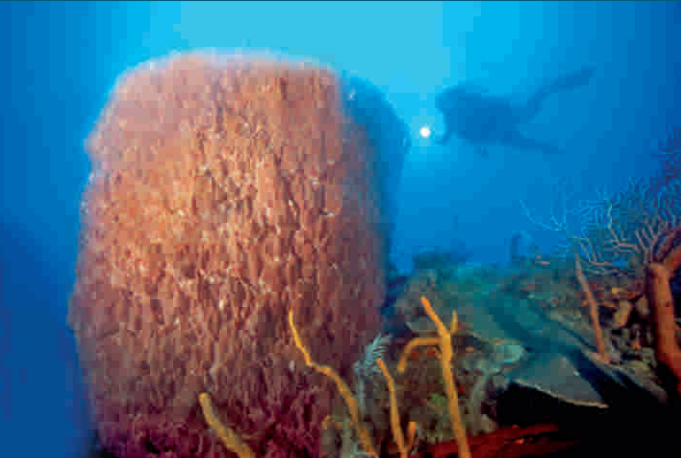
Covarrubias (36 scuba-diving sites)
Las Tunas Province has many practically untouched beaches of exceptional beauty. The ones on the northern coast are bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, and those on its southern coast, by the Gulf of Guacanayabo. The seabed is of great environmental value, with tunnels made of coral, gorgonians and sponges.
Recommended sites: Los Acuario, Los Canarreos, La Corona and Los Poseidones



Guardalavaca (47 scuba-diving sites)
This scuba-diving area is 11 miles (18 kilometers) long and has two scuba-diving centers: one at Guardalavaca Beach and the other at Esmeralda Beach. The seabed is irregular and complex, with high hillocks, caves, small valleys and cliffs with vertical walls that in some places descend gently to form terraces covered with Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.), other gorgonians and coral. The area is bounded on its seaward side by a typical Caribbean coral reef. The Coral Garden diving site and the manmade underwater park (with military tanks and artillery pieces) are some of the most outstanding sites in this fascinating area.
Recommended sites: Canto Azul, Coral Garden, Cueva II, Pesquero de Eponjas, Acuario, Sirena, Punta Arrcife, Casa Coral, La Corona, Laberinto, Canto Izi, Gran Cañón and La Cadena.



Santiago de Cuba (68 scuba-diving sites)
There are three scuba-diving centers. The Sigua, Bucanero, Daiquiri and Sierra Mar diving area extend for 93 miles (150 kilometers) along the coast. Here, the coral reef has assumed whimsical forms that go from reefs near the coast and hillocks scattered over large sandy areas to ridges, sharp drop-offs, terraces, deep areas and impressive walls. Common Sea Fans (Gorgonia spp.), other large gorgonians, sponges, areas carpeted with coral, schools of different species of fish, crustaceans and mollusks abound in this area.
The seabed near Santiago de Cuba is adorned with several ships from Admiral Cervera's famous Spanish fleet, which gives the area great historic value. Some other ships were purposely sunk at the Guarico and Spring Carol diving sites.
Recommended sites: Maze, Paraíso I and II, La Pared, Las Gorgonias, Mandinga, Los Cajizones, Juraguá, Fruit Cuba, Punta Cubera, El Ferri, El Sprint Carol, El Guarico and Morrillo.



Marea del Portillo (26 scuba-diving sites)
This area is part of the Sierra Maestra National Park, in Granma Province. Marea del Portillo Beach is on the southeastern coast of the island of Cuba, bathed by the Caribbean Sea and with the Sierra Maestra Mountains as a backdrop. Its seabed has many tall hillocks separated by narrow ravines with caves and tunnels where you can see enormous sponges of different species, colonies of Black Coral (Antipathes salix), gorgonians, soft coral, Brain Coral (Diploria spp.), Fire Coral (Millepora spp.). The area's most important treasures include ships sunk during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries: Spanish galleons, English schooners and ships that formed part of Admiral Cervera's famous fleets such as the battleship Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus), which is still in good condition.
Recommended sites: Wreck Blue, Coral Garden, Black Forest, Las Tortugas, Patana Reef, Barracudas, Sand Shark Reef, Steam Ship and El Colón.

