FREE WITH PUERTO VIEJO THIS WEEK

The Puerto Viejo High-Season Guide 2026–27

Cahuita · Puerto Viejo · Cocles · Punta Uva · Manzanillo

Everything worth knowing for the Caribbean season along Ruta 256, in one phone-friendly guide: Cahuita National Park, the beaches, the standing music week and the big dates — village by village.

Get it free when you sign up for our weekly email: one message every Monday with what's on from Cahuita to Manzanillo — live music, events, markets, eats and deals, every item linked to where we found it.

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START HERE

Welcome to the Caribbean corridor

This coast is one road. **Ruta 256** runs about 30 km from **Cahuita** in the north to **Manzanillo** at the end of the road, and along it sit five villages that work as one market: people live in one, eat in a second and hear music in a third. **Puerto Viejo** is the centre of gravity, **Cocles** its surf beach, **Punta Uva** its postcard, and the two ends — the national park at Cahuita and the wildlife refuge at Manzanillo — are the wild bookends.

The corridor runs on a weekly rhythm, and this guide gives you that rhythm. Everything in it was checked against venues' own pages in November 2026, and the Manzanillo night was confirmed with the venue directly. Where something wasn't confirmed yet, we say so rather than guess — this coast's free guides get times wrong often enough that being the source that gets it right is the whole idea.

What's inside

- The five villages at a glance — which base suits you
- Two protected areas, practically — Cahuita National Park and the Gandoca-Manzanillo refuge
- Beaches, village by village
- Eat & drink — the places that anchor the week
- Every week: the standing nights, day by day
- A week on the corridor — the rhythm, put together
- Big dates, December 2026 to April 2027
- Seasons, practical tips, and how to use the weekly newsletter

No paid placements: nobody can buy their way into this guide.

Place names in teal open their map — and 'Add to your calendar' saves a big date.

THE CORRIDOR

The five villages at a glance

Cahuita — the quiet north end: a national-park town with a calypso heart. Its venues publish the least on the coast, so its bench is short and solid — a Thursday reggae night and a Friday reggae barbecue, both on the venues' own words — and it grows by direct confirmation, not by scraping.

Puerto Viejo — the corridor's centre: the market streets behind the **Casa de la Cultura**, the C. 213 bars and the beach road south. The deepest bench on the coast lives here — two markets, daily yoga and a music room for almost every night of the week.

Cocles — the surf beach five minutes south of town. One cantina, **Tasty Waves**, carries most of the standing week here — and carries it well, with a fixture on most nights.

Punta Uva — the protected bay in the quiet middle stretch: a handful of beach restaurants and the corridor's quietest evenings. No standing programme here has cleared our venue-own standard yet; one-off beach events run in the weekly issue.

Manzanillo — the end of the road: a fishing village on the edge of the refuge, and the corridor's quietest node. Its venues publish almost nothing online — its first confirmed weekly night was confirmed by asking the venue directly, and it starts this season (see Big Dates).

THE PARKS

Two protected areas, practically

Cahuita National Park guards the reef and the coastal trail at the corridor's north end, with entrances at the Kelly Creek side by the village and at Puerto Vargas. It is the corridor's classic morning: the flat trail runs between beach and forest, and the snorkelling over the reef is the area's signature trip — conditions-dependent, and best booked with a local guide at the entrance.

Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge wraps the coast at the south end, from Manzanillo village toward the Panama border. The walk from Manzanillo to Punta Mona is the refuge's famous hike — go early, take water, and check conditions locally before you set out; the trail is a real walk, not a stroll.

What to know before you go:

- **Mornings are best** for both parks — cooler, quieter, and the wildlife is moving.
- **Entry fees, hours and rules** change and are the parks' own to set — check the official source before you travel; the weekly issue carries current details when they change.
- **Pair a park morning with an evening** — the corridor's music starts early (much of it is done by ten), so a park day and a music night fit the same day comfortably.

LOCAL TIP — The corridor's two dry windows are February to April and September to October; December is the wettest month. In the wet weeks, plan the park for the morning and keep the evening for the music — the rain here usually has the courtesy to arrive in the afternoon.

BEACHES

Beaches

- **Playa Negra (Cahuita)** — the village beach by the **Reggae Bar**: dark sand, a local feel, and the corridor's Friday reggae night right on it.
- **Playa Negra (Puerto Viejo)** — the long beach on the town's north side, by the **Salsa Brava** reef break the surfers watch.
- **Puerto Viejo town beach** — the working waterfront in front of the village: boats, the **Casa de la Cultura** behind it, and the cacao house's deck above it.
- **Playa Cocles** — the surf beach: the break across from **Tasty Waves**, board rentals and the corridor's most reliable wave.
- **Playa Chiquita** — the quiet stretch between Cocles and Punta Uva, reached by short paths through the trees.
- **Punta Uva** — the postcard: a protected bay with calm water on its good days, and **Arrecife** on the sand.
- **Manzanillo** — the village beach at the end of the road, with **Cool & Calm** and **Maxi's** behind it and the refuge beyond.

LOCAL TIP — The Caribbean here has real currents and the Salsa Brava reef is an experts' wave. Swim where others swim, ask locally about the day's conditions, and treat the lifeguards' flags as the law of the beach.

EAT & DRINK

Eat & drink — the places that anchor the week

Cacao Huasi (Puerto Viejo) — the cacao house: a bean-to-bar chocolate house and Caribbean restaurant overlooking the sea in the centre of town. Its bookable pairings time the sunset — wine and chocolate at 4:30 p.m., mezcal and chocolate at 5:00 p.m., rum and chocolate at 5:30 p.m. — and its music nights carry the town's gentler evenings (next page). Closed Tuesdays.

Hot Rocks (Puerto Viejo) — the town's music room on C. 213: food, cold drinks and the corridor's longest-running open jam, on Wednesday nights. If one venue is the corridor's living room after dark, it is this one.

Lush Beach Bar (Puerto Viejo) — the beach bar with a billed Sunday series: Hovig with Elena Andreou at 5:30 p.m. (strictly 21+, reservations 7000 8089), plus billed one-off nights through the season.

Tasty Waves Cantina (Cocles) — the cantina across from the break: Taco Tuesday with live music, Thursday trivia, Saturday karaoke and an all-day Sunday happy hour with smash burgers. Closed Wednesdays.

Restaurante Éwa & Lounge Bar (Cahuita) — Cahuita's top-ranked restaurant beside the little park: Thursday reggae with DJ Mystic is its standing night.

Reggae Bar (Playa Negra, Cahuita) — the family-run bar on the beach: live reggae and a barbecue every Friday.

Every programme above was confirmed from the venue's own channels or by the venue directly in November 2026. The weekly issue re-checks them — and a quick check with the venue is never wasted.

EVERY WEEK

Every week: the standing nights

The corridor keeps a standing weekly programme — these are the recurrings confirmed for this season. Evenings start early here; much of the music wraps by ten.

- **Monday** — Live guitar, Cacao Huasi, 6:30 PM · Daily yoga, Svastha, from 8:00 AM
- **Tuesday** — Taco Tuesday + live music, Tasty Waves, Cocles (specials all day, music in the evening)
- **Wednesday** — Open Jam / Open Mic Night, Hot Rocks, 8:30 PM
- **Thursday** — Jueves de Reggae with DJ Mystic, Éwa, Cahuita · Calypso, Cacao Huasi · Trivia Night, Tasty Waves
- **Friday** — Live music with Alex & Alexis, Chino Beach, 4:00–5:30 PM · Reggae Night + BBQ, Reggae Bar, Cahuita · Trance Night with Alexio, Cacao Huasi, 9:30 PM (every other Friday)
- **Saturday** — Farmers' & artisans' market, Puerto Viejo, morning to 12:00 MD · Karaoke Show, Tasty Waves
- **Sunday** — Hovig with Elena Andreou, Lush Beach Bar, 5:30 PM · Cumbia Night, Cacao Huasi, 9:00 PM · Happy hour all day + smash burgers, Tasty Waves
- **Every day** — Yoga at Svastha (Cashew Hill): classes at 8:00 and 9:30 AM, styles rotating by day
- **From Dec 27** — Salsa Night, Cool & Calm, Manzanillo, Saturdays 6:00 PM (see Big Dates)

A second layer of corridor nights — Lazy Mon's music nights, Casa Rio's calypso and rock-and-blues, Green Jaguar's karaoke, Salsa Brava's reggae parties, Arrecife's Sunday salsa — is corroborated by local sources but not yet confirmed on the venues' own channels, so it is not printed here as fact. Each one joins this page the week its venue confirms; the weekly issue's verification pass is where they run first.

Every item above was confirmed from the venue's own page or by the venue directly in November 2026.

DAY BY DAY

A week on the corridor

Put it together and a high-season week here has a shape all of its own:

Mornings belong to the parks and the yoga deck: Cahuita National Park or the refuge trail early, then the 9:30 class at Svastha, then the beach your village does best. **Saturday morning** is the market behind the Casa de la Cultura — produce first, crafts after, home by noon.

Afternoons are the beach and the cacao house: Cocles for the surf, Punta Uva for the calm, and a 4:30 pairing at Cacao Huasi as the light turns. Friday's earliest music is at 4:00 on the beach at Chino Beach.

Evenings build through the week: Monday's guitar is the gentle start, Wednesday's open jam at Hot Rocks is the midweek party, Thursday splits three ways between Cahuita, the cacao house and Cocles, and the weekend stacks the market, karaoke and billed one-offs against Sunday's double — Hovig at Lush at 5:30, cumbia at Cacao Huasi at 9:00 — that closes the week.

And from the last weekend of December, the corridor gains a Saturday night at its far end: salsa in Manzanillo, at the end of the road.

BIG DATES

Big dates

The dates worth planning a trip around — tap a teal bar to save the date to your calendar. Christmas and New Year programming lands in the weekly issue as venues publish it.

Saturday, December 19 — Afrotican Vibes at Clan Vibes Club

The Afrobeats and Amapiano party bills this as its last date of 2026 at Clan Vibes, Puerto Viejo (9:00 p.m.–2:30 a.m.; tickets on the official ticketing page).

Add to your calendar

Friday, December 25 – Friday, January 1 — Christmas & New Year

Christmas Day and New Year's Day bookend the festive week. The corridor's venues publish their holiday programming through December; each Monday's issue carries what has been confirmed.

Add to your calendar

From Dec 27 — Salsa Night starts in Manzanillo

Cool & Calm's Salsa Night — live salsa by Puerto Vieja plus a DJ, Saturdays at 6:00 p.m. — is Manzanillo's first venue-confirmed weekly night. The venue named Dec 27 as the start; Dec 27 falls on a Sunday this year, so check the venue for the first night's exact date.

Add to your calendar

Sunday, December 27 — Clan Vibes: La Última del Año

Clan Vibes bills its Dec 27 club night (8:00 p.m.–2:30 a.m.) as the last of the year.

Add to your calendar

Beyond the holidays: the February-to-April dry window is the season's spine, Semana Santa runs Sunday, March 21 to Sunday, March 28, 2027 (book ahead — it is the year's biggest week), and the September–October window is this coast's second peak, the driest sea of the year.

THE SEASONS

Seasons — and how this coast is different

The Caribbean coast keeps its own calendar. It has no true dry season: rain can arrive in any month, December is statistically the wettest, and the two reliable dry windows — **February to April** and **September to October** — are when the corridor is at its best. That second window is this coast's secret: September and October are the Pacific side's wettest trough and the Caribbean's peak, which is why this guide treats them as high season too.

What that means in practice:

- **December to April** — the main season: the fullest venue schedules, the billed one-offs, and the Christmas and New Year weeks. Book the park tours and the good tables ahead.
- **May to August** — the greener shoulder: the corridor runs year-round (there is no true off-season here), with lusher jungle and a slower week.
- **September to October** — the second peak: the driest, calmest sea of the year on this coast, while the Pacific troughs.

The weekly issue runs 52 weeks a year — the Caribbean's venues do not close for a season, and neither do we.

GOOD TO KNOW

Good to know

- **One road** — Ruta 256 is the corridor's spine and its only road south; the ride from Cahuita to Manzanillo takes about 40 minutes in good conditions. Buses run the corridor through the day; bicycles are the local second car.
- **Money** — colones and dollars both circulate; cards are widely taken in the villages, cash is king at the market and the beach bars. ATMs sit in Puerto Viejo and Cahuita.
- **The weekly email** — Puerto Viejo This Week lands every Monday, free: the week's verified listings, the one-offs as they confirm, and the Save the Dates worth planning around. Your first issue arrives Monday, December 7, 2026.
- **Corrections welcome** — a guide like this is only as good as its corrections. If a night has moved, tell us at hello@puertoviejothisweek.com and we will check it for the next issue.

Checked November 2026. Venue programmes, park rules and prices change — confirm them with the venue or the official source before you travel, and the weekly issue carries the current week.