

"Gran Piedra": Cuba has its second geopark



Viewpoint on "Gran Piedra" in the Province of Santiago de Cuba with the weather radar of the same name (Source: [Commons](#))

With "La Gran Piedra", Cuba has created its second national geopark - and taken a further step towards preserving its natural beauty and opening it up to sustainable tourism. The region in the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba is known for its impressive geology, which gives the area its name (Spanish for "big stone"). The eponymous stone itself is a massive rock formation located on a mountain peak, 1225 meters above sea level, offering breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape.

At 51 meters long, 25 meters high and 30 meters wide, the rock is one of the largest monoliths in the world. The region is part of the Sierra Maestra mountain range, rich in biodiversity and home to many endemic species, making it an important location for ecological studies. Speleologists are also drawn to the area. With the declaration as a Geopark by the law published in the Official Gazette on April 26, access to the region's caves could also be possible for guided groups of visitors in the future.

Similar to other special ecological zones in Cuba, special attention is being paid to the education and inclusion of local communities in the region. Through various initiatives, residents are to be involved in the protection and sustainable use of their environment, which will help to preserve the area for future generations.

The park is located around 30 kilometers east of Santiago de Cuba. In addition to the natural beauty, there are several ruins of French coffee plantations from the colonial era in the area that can be visited. Beyond the region, "Gran Piedra" in Cuba is associated with the weather

radar of the same name at this location. Built in 1966, the facility has been modernized several times since then and is now one of the most powerful and important in the country. It records all storms in the eastern part of the island, which is particularly frequently affected by hurricanes.

In 2021, the Viñales Valley in Pinar del Río was declared the first geopark in the Greater Antilles. This set a precedent for the designation of natural areas of high geological value that are attractive for tourism and whose conservation and management are based on the principles of environmental protection and sustainable development. ([Cubaheute](#))