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Salsa**
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photo by Nicolas Oriolonez

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Cover picture by Alex Mene

EDITORIAL

‘Sensual, surreal, and seductive, Havana is simply sensational. To call the city “unique” is no cliché. Arguably Latin America’s best-preserved capital city, Havana is one of the oldest, grandest and most seductive cities in the Americas. It glories in historic import.’

Christopher Baker, author of the Moon Guide to Cuba

If Havana was a woman, perhaps she would not like you asking her age later this month (November 16) when she turns 495. You could at least reply with a straight face that she gets better with age. This issue is dedicated to my beautiful Havana. From the colours of the city to its architecture, its renovation and renaissance in Old Havana under the stewardship of Eusebio Leal and finally to the gregarious and unique habaneros who really give the city its style, its character and its life.

In the Last Summer of Salsa award-winning British writer Kester Aspden transforms himself from a patón (someone with two left feet who can’t dance) into a salsaero. Thank you Kester. If you are feeling energetic this month, don’t miss Havana’s marathon on November 16 (7am start by the Capitolio). If you don’t want to do the full two laps, try the 10km. It is a good atmosphere and a nice way to see the city early in the morning. Fine, stay in bed—I am not convinced either!

November sees the start of Havana’s packed winter cultural calendar. From art to photography, theatre and dance, November really does have something for everyone and is a reminder of just what a cosmopolitan, cultured and simply great place Havana is. The International Ballet Festival continues until November 7. The Lucas Music Video Awards are Cuba’s most prestigious and a chance to see who’s hot in the music video medium—think pop, reggaeton, rock and Buena Vista, too! And Nov 15-23 sees the interesting Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea take center stage.

Do check out our expanded Havana Guide, which is growing to accommodate the new bars, restaurants and casas particulares that continue to spring forth adding vitality and energy to Havana’s entertainment and hospitality scene.

November 2014 Highlights (Havana, unless stated

- Oct 28-Nov 7, International Ballet Festival
- Nov 10-16, IBSEN Norwegian theatre week
- Nov 15-23, Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea
- Nov 16, Marabana (7am start)
- Nov 16, Anniversary of the founding of Havana
- Nov 22-24, Lucas Video Music Awards
- Nov 27, Commemoration of the student martyrs

Thanks to all of our contributors, sponsors, partners and readers. Do please keep providing us with your feedback, comments and suggestions. All enquiries should be directed to Sophia Beckman at CubaAbsolutely@gmail.com. All the best. Viva Cuba!



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The Last Summer of Salsa

by Kester Aspden

The first time I went to a club to dance salsa, I elbowed the British ambassador's wife in the face. I was in the Café Cantante trying out the *setenta y uno*, a new move which involved resting my elbow on her upper arm. It's not a complex figure but requires a measure of care and grace. My partner didn't expect the elbow and turned her head straight into it.

'How's your wife?' I emailed the ambassador the next day. 'Apart from a fractured jaw she's fine,' he replied. 'Tell me you're joking,' I wrote.

Dance of any kind doesn't come easy to me as a 6'3", gangly, inflexible, middle-aged white academic Englishman. I was the one who would scurry to the safety of the bar at the slightest risk of being dragged onto any dance floor. My wife remembers the 'first dance' on our wedding day – literally our first in a long relationship – as being more like a mugging than a meeting of hearts and bodies. Still, something was unlocked that night. At almost forty I discovered that losing yourself in dance could be fun; fuelled by champagne and the excitement of the day, I was hardly off the dance floor.

On arriving on this tropical island at the end of 2011, it wasn't long before I was watching Cubans dance with a mixture of curiosity, amazement and envy. I was nagged by the thought that if I didn't dance in Havana I wouldn't dance anywhere. But,

still nursing inhibitions, it was almost two years into my time in Cuba before I signed up to my first salsa class. I was still at that beginner's stage, dancing anxiously and over-excitedly in a club for the first time, when I clumped the ambassador's wife in the face.

'Dance is in my blood,' Cubans often told me. But as it was clearly not in mine, I decided to learn some fundamentals before launching myself onto Havana's dance floors.

The first challenge was picking out the beat in the multi-layered rhythms of Cuban salsa and its grittier, faster sister – timba. Then there's the moves. Salsa, like most pop and rock, has a 4/4 time signature, but you step on a different beat: one, two, three – pause, five, six, seven – pause. It took me a whole class to feel comfortable even with the basic step of Cuban-style salsa: *behind, step, side, pause; behind, step, side, pause*. It took another entire class to pull off a simple turn. Our group of diplomats, journalists and businessmen, meeting once a week at the British ambassador's residence, moved slowly through the fundamentals – the *dile que no*, the *enchufla* – gradually increasing our repertoire. 'Poco a poco,' my teacher would tell me, each time I stumbled.

There were times when I was so awkward and clumsy – so far from a *salsero* – I felt like packing

it in. One class I couldn't put a step right and pulled out half-way through to sit on the sidelines, grumpily nursing my Cristal beer. I still have the text my teacher Daines sent later that night: *Amigo, me sentí mal al verte así hoy. Espero que la próxima vez sea mejor. La Salsa es para disfrutar... Tú has avanzado muchísimo.*

There comes a point when you have to take what little you know to the clubs. That prospect made me as anxious as I had been on my wedding day. To my untrained eye, every Cuban looked to be a salsa expert.

My stomach was churning the first time I ventured into La Gruta, a club on La Rampa, and not only because I started the night with lasagne, red wine and milky-cocktails – though that can't have helped. 'It's definitely the hottest day of the year,' I said to my wife on the way in, my hands clammy, my shirt dampening. 'You said that yesterday,' Sarah said.

We paid the 3 CUC entrance and descended into a large, dark and slightly musty room complete with lights from a 1980s school disco and a glitter

ball. It took some time before I summoned up the courage to dance. A six-minute song can seem an eternity when you're repeating the same couple of moves over and over again. Didn't Cubans know how to make two-minute records like Motown?

'Were you sick earlier?' Sarah wondered afterwards. 'Retched a little,' I lied. 'Why?' 'You smell a bit,' she said. I was relieved that most of the Cuban *salseros* were five or six inches shorter than my wife.

Salsa isn't supposed to smell of sick. Salsa, I was once told by a teacher, is sex on the dance floor.

In Havana's clubs you see European women of a certain age who perhaps left unsuspecting husbands at home for a 'salsa holiday' with their female friends, clinging to new Cuban boyfriends. Hot music, hot weather, hot *salseros* – and strong cocktails – can be an intoxicating mix. One night at La Casa de la Musica, Daines and I watched a young German girl dancing in what looked more like underwear than shorts. 'She's forgot her *pantalones*,' Daines commented. Perhaps that's what salsa was: music to make you forget your *pantalones*.





In those first months learning salsa, I veered between inhibited, rigid Englishman – worried mind whirring away as I wondered whether to do a safe *sombrero* or risk a *setenta complicado* – and over-eager teenage boy. On such nights, I would watch Daines and her husband Pavel dancing together so sweetly, smiling so radiantly, weaving intricate hand movements around each other.

‘You’re doing good, but you have a few problems,’ Pavel confided one night. ‘You get excited by the people around you. You lose your timing and forget the lady you’re dancing with. Oh, and another thing, you drink too much Cristal.’

Daines liked her Cristal too. But one day in the spring she announced that she was pregnant, and though she danced with me as late as possible there came a point when she had to set aside the two things at the heart of our friendship: dancing and beer.

It seemed somehow disloyal to Daines to choose one new teacher, so I started having private classes with three of her fellow dancers from the Salsa en Casa school, which raised some eyebrows at my apartment block. I was so eager to learn that sometimes two would come in one day, one after the other. ‘*Es mi nueva profesora de baile,*’ I explained to the security man after seeing one of them out of the door. He put a knowing forefinger to his lips.

There was Lill. ‘You’re not washing the windows,’

she said, with a corrective slap, teaching me to hold my partner more firmly. ‘*Mas fuerte. Macho.*’ If my Dile que no lacked conviction, she would throw me an unnerving look. There was Anisley, a former rhythmic gymnast who tried to get my stiff English body moving more freely. If I fell out of time, she would beckon me back with a *tum-tum-pa, tum-tum-pa*. Anisley helped to expand my range of figures and put them together better so that I could make it through an entire song more convincingly and with more fluidity. And there was Dayana, who was also a mine of knowledge on Cuba’s rich musical traditions, from son to rumba to reggaeton. She also tried to loosen me up with some salsa free steps. *Jump it! Bounce! Italiano! Mambo! Rumba!* She was nothing if not an optimist.

All my teachers were busy professional graduates with other jobs: scientific research, information technology, insurance, journalism. It is still normal in Havana to find highly-educated people spinning foreigners round dance floors on an evening. ‘A couple of hours teaching you and I’ll earn what I get in my normal job in a month,’ one of my teachers told me plainly. It’s this social reality which currently allows foreigners on an average income to get access to the kind of top-quality personal training they could probably not afford in London, New York or Madrid.

For me all the extra teaching appeared to be paying off. When we met again, a friend of Lill’s told me that I was so much better than when we had first

danced together at the Hotel Florida. With all the extra hours in classes, I shed a few pounds too as we went into the humid summer. Dancing was making me healthier as well as happier.

The trials of learning salsa turned out to be nothing when set against the fun, the friendships I formed and the new world of music I discovered in the process. Legends like Los Van Van and Isaac Delgado were not just names on a CD or distant stars. I don't think I've seen a cooler, more assured performance than Isaac Delgado at El Sauce, a chilled-out venue where you can see top acts for a few CUCs under an open sky. Delgado had been in exile in Florida and this was something of a homecoming, greeted by a still-devoted crowd.

The most memorable show was Havana D'Primera at La Tropical, a large open-air club with a broken stone floor and tradition of exuberant performances, with over-heated audiences given to brawling. Whilst even the cheapest matinee ticket for La Casa de la Música puts a serious dent in a state salary – and at the more expensive evening shows most Cubans are guests of foreigners or workers in some capacity – the cheap entrance price at La Tropical means that thousands of locals are able to attend. It must have been close to its 5,000 capacity on the Sunday in July when we saw Havana D'Primera.

Heavy rain kept delaying the start of the show and sending the crowd back to the cover of a few trees. Just as the road crew began taking covers off the amplifiers and speakers, down it came again. All the bars ran out of beer, *Plancha*'o rum and even water. Fights started to break out. We wondered if we hadn't slipped up in not paying more to go in the raised 'VIP section' as our Cuban friends had all advised. It was an untamed Havana I hadn't seen before, a long way from the orderly prosperity of our life in Miramar, or the 'Buena Vista' experience packaged for tourists.

But by the time Havana D'Primera took to the stage, we were as boisterous as anyone. 'Pasaporte!!!' Sarah's petite Spanish friend bellowed for their classic, to the curious and bemused looks of those around us. 'Necesito pasaporte!!!' A mass brawl broke out during a song which had an anti-violence message. The crowd parted and young men slugged it out for a minute before white-shirted security piled in and ejected the bloodied hooligans.

The overwhelming mood, though, was joyous. Led by the charismatic Alexander Abreu – *el gordo* – women in their sixties, seventies and perhaps older were going crazy, hanging off the railings, shaking every inch of their bodies. There are some things you will never learn in a salsa class.

* * *



In the early-summer Sarah was sent to report on the crisis in Ukraine. In the past I've fretted in front of the television when she's been away on testing assignments. This time I decided on fun, music and Cristal. To live in the moment, as the Marc Anthony song advises. 'Hey, *charanguero*,' a regular at a favourite *paladar* would call out when he saw me. A waitress explained that a *charanguero* was one who lives for parties and dance, one who has to be where the best music is.

There is a circuit of clubs and venues in Havana where you can dance salsa. I learned that the committed *salsero* might be found at La Gruta on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, the open-air 1830 on Thursdays and Sundays, Hotel Florida in old Havana on Fridays. Though not as pretty as other venues, La Gruta became my favourite. There are fewer *jineteros* to vex you and the Cuban *salseros* are welcoming and deliver bruising 'high-fives' when they recognise you. Seeing the same people every week, Havana sometimes seemed closer to a village than a bustling capital city of two million people.

One thing you'll rarely hear a Cuban saying is, 'I can't go out tonight, it's work tomorrow.' When it came to the clubs, Lill was the complete *charanguera*. 'All the world knows Lil,' Anisley laughed one night at La Gruta as yet another dancer came over to embrace her. 'How does she get so low?' an amazed American film director who was in town wondered as she arched backwards until her pony tail was sweeping the floor. A Slovakian friend was equally captivated, noting how wide Lill's eyes were and the way they narrowed when she spotted a man she wanted to dance with. Even hard-to-impress Cubans seemed drawn to her flamboyance. 'Just do some fancy stuff around me and make me look better,' I pleaded when she led me to the floor. And she obliged.

By this time I was venturing out of my dance-teacher comfort zone to partner regular party-

goers, like the pretty girl at La Gruta who, when she stood up, only came up to my navel. One night, Osmany, who runs the Salsa en Casa school, encouraged me to dance with an eager-looking young woman who was sitting with two friends. She turned out to be a hairdresser from Granma with a sing-song accent. We talked first and she offered to put some colour in my hair. I said I was used to being grey and was comfortable with it. She said it was *lindo* but insisted it would look even better with some colour. If I was indeed having mid-life crisis, as some English friends suggested when I took up salsa dancing, I suspected I shouldn't advertise the fact with chestnut-brown hair. I had to decline her kind offer.

Whilst the hairdresser and I chatted away, her two friends sat alongside, frozen and expressionless. Not all Cubans, I was discovering, are exuberant. The hairdresser and I got up to dance and though she moved well she didn't really know salsa. I had mainly danced with girls who knew what I was going to do it before I did it. In reality, they were leading me. With others, any hesitation and uncertainty travelled through my fingers to theirs. At one point the hairdresser and I got in a muddle. But this time I heeded Pavel's advice: Never stop. We danced again to the last song of the night, 'Anda Pégate' by Maykel Blanco, and afterwards she said I danced 'muy lindo'. I know it's slightly pathetic to recall this compliment, but it was the reassurance I needed that I didn't look like a complete idiot up there with the Cubans.

Another night in La Gruta, a European gentleman in his sixties grabbed Anisley to dance as soon as she was down the staircase. She explained later that her frisky ex-client didn't start dancing salsa until he was fifty years old, but that once he'd taken it up he couldn't stop. 'He wants to dance with every lady in the club,' she said.

I wasn't quite such a salsa machine but as Havana heated up I became more free-spirited than ever.





One *salsera* told me that you only improve by dancing on every occasion you can, with as many people as possible. I took the advice to heart; sometimes I didn't wait for the night-time to dance. I danced with the cleaning staff at our apartment block, practiced figures with the waitresses in my favourite *paladar* when they had a quiet moment. 'Show me,' a waitress at a cafe on La Rampa said when I told her I was into salsa, and so in the middle of a humid Sunday afternoon we danced to Los Van Van 'La Maquinaria' to the amusement of a girl waiting for her bus and the bemusement of a visiting English friend who wondered what Latin demon had taken possession of my body. 'Él sabe,' the waitress called over to her colleague. 'Él sabe.'

Él Sabe. Well, I don't kid myself: I know very little apart from how little I know. With a thousand hours of classes, I could never dance like Pavel or Osmany. Watching the best *salseros* you see how salsa isn't a skill to be mastered, it is something felt within, an expression of their personalities—of their soul, if you like. What I express, I think, is only that I'm an enthusiastic learner of salsa. But maybe that's not a bad thing to be.

The reassuring thing is that Cubans don't expect Europeans to be able to dance – certainly not as well as them – and they are invariably generous, even proud, when they see that someone loves their music and has a go on the dance floor.

Well, maybe not all the time. One night my wife Sarah and I were on our way back from a club, talking enthusiastically about salsa. The taxi driver started to chuckle and Sarah asked what was amusing him. 'The thought of you two doing salsa,' he said. 'I can't imagine it.' He continued to chuckle. 'Outrageous,' Sarah said. 'He's not even trying to hide it.' He was still smiling when he dropped us off at our apartment two minutes later.

* * *

When Sarah found out she'd been appointed to a new job in Moscow one of my first thoughts was: *well, that's the end of salsa*. I started to have regrets: that I had spent too long immersed in a writing project that had made me miserable; that I had moaned too much about the things Havana didn't have, instead of being more appreciative of that which it did. Most of all I wished – and before I came to Cuba I would never imagined writing this – that I had done more dancing.

'Salsa is more than just a good time, wiggling your butt and working up a sweat,' the legendary Puerto Rican *salsero* Willie Colón once said. He saw it also as a validation of a cultural heritage for displaced Latinos in New York and other strange new urban environments in the 1960s and 70s. Salsa was a 'sense of home'.

Reading those words, I recalled a conversation Dayana and I had over lunch in a pop-up restaurant in the park close to where I lived. Between forkfuls of chicken, rice and *frijoles*, Dayana warmed to her theme of salsa as a 'bridge'. Through salsa she had seen foreigners finding friendship across the cultural divide, love or just sex—though she pointed out that there are easier ways to get laid than learning salsa. For some Cubans, salsa was their means of access to foreigners and with that some hard currency to allow them access to the better things in life. For some, salsa was even their ticket out of Cuba for a new life abroad.

And what about me? Salsa had opened me up to new feelings and emotions. On a Havana dance floor I was often painfully aware of my Englishness, but there were moments when I was someone less inhibited, less rational, more instinctive, perhaps even – can I admit it? – more sensual. I felt like someone, to reverse Willie Colón, rather less at home.

Salsa had also taken me a little closer to the Cuban people. I had got to know and admire their resourcefulness, humour and spirit in the face of adversity. Over that very Cuban meal, on that sweltering August afternoon, Dayana told me of her sadness that some of the old sense of community and togetherness was disappearing. She reminisced warmly about her early childhood during the 'Special Period', tough times of dire food shortages and power cuts, but also a time when everyone in the neighbourhood would be out on the streets until the early hours, playing dominoes, gossiping, dancing. Havana is a very different place today, though it may not be changing quickly enough for some. Every week some new stylish *paladar* or bar is opening, not only to serve the ex-pat or tourist but increasingly the new monied Cubans. 'We don't really know what the future will bring,' Dayana said. 'But as long as we have food and music we are happy, because that's all we have.'

Sarah and I held our leaving party at Bella Ciao, our favourite *paladar*. It was a very humid evening; even the air conditioner was blowing out warm

air. My shirt was saturated after a few dances, a sensation I was getting used to that summer. At one point almost the entire party ended up in a conga, led by the high-spirited waitresses.

'English people dancing salsa!' an Argentinian friend declared at the end of the night. 'Next you'll be playing football.' 'I'm impressed,' a Cuban friend admitted to Sarah. 'OK, he'll never dance like a black guy from Guanabacoa, but...I'm surprised.' There was talk amongst other European men of taking up salsa: *if he can do it, anyone can* was the theme. I had become an improbable evangelist for Cuban dance.

The next day Sarah said she hadn't smiled so much since our wedding party. That was the other night in our lives when we danced all night and didn't have a single coherent conversation. Perhaps that was a lesson for life: *talk less, dance more*.

Leaving Cuba was harder than leaving all the other places we had loved: it felt like 'goodbye' could really mean 'goodbye'. The morning of the day we left, Dayana came round to the flat and gave me a gift. It was a wooden ornament shaped in the treble clef and came with a note: '*Para una de las personas que más disfruta la música cubana en el mundo*'.

I made sure that 'la música cubana' was playing right to the end. 'Mi Música' by Havana D'Primera was the song on my i-pod as our plane left the runway at José Martí airport.

* * *

I had thought that I would leave salsa behind in Havana. I imagined that back in grey old Europe its appeal would fade. I had an image of classes in chilly English church halls conducted by some wannabe-Latino with perma-tan and sparkly shirt. But less than forty-eight hours after arriving at Heathrow, run-down with a cold, I was in a salsa club on the Charing Cross Road.

On the bus back to my brother's flat, I worked out that I'd been dancing for over six hours. I wondered whether there was something pitiful about a



middle-aged *charanguero*. The bus snaked towards north London past kebab houses and twenty-four hour Turkish supermarkets. Two weeks earlier I had been heading back from a night in La Gruta in Sandy's rusty Fiat, rattling down the Malecón with the window down and a warm breeze in my face, the Atlantic Ocean to the right, singing along to that Pupy song. *No te dejé por mala, yo te dejé por loca*.

I knew that night, though, that it wouldn't be my last summer of salsa. That I would soon return to Havana, to dance with Lill, Anisley, Dayana, Osmany and all the other *salseros* I met, and to drink Cristal with Pavel and Daines and snigger about German girls who've forgotten their *pantalones*. Ya 'tá bueno, ya!

* * *

Summer was over. Before I joined Sarah in Moscow, I had to go on a short trip to Madrid. My business soon completed, I went on a bar crawl. On my own and semi-drunk, I stumbled across a bar with a poster in the window advertising a Cuban night. I peered through the window and saw an attractive Cuban couple leading a row of *madrileños* in their twenties and thirties through salsa free steps. I wasn't going to let the opportunity pass. I entered the bar and pushed my way into the line. *Jump it! Bounce! Italiano! Mambo! Rumba!*

'*Baila bien!*' the surprised *salsera* from Artemisa exclaimed at the end of the last dance some four hours later. 'Where did you learn the Cuban style?' 'Oh, I'm just a beginner,' I said, waving her compliment away. 'I had a couple of classes when I went to Havana.'

CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW



If you would like to learn salsa dancing, in a group or in a private class, visit the website of Salsa en Casa for information and rates: <http://www.salsaencasa.com>

They can also be contacted at @bailasalsa_cu on twitter and www.fb.com/salsaencasa.

I can strongly recommend them.]

Kester Aspden is the author of *The Hounding of David Oluwale (Vintage)*, winner of the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction. He currently lives in Moscow and is already planning his return visit to Havana in 2015.

November 16, 1519: Havana's birth

by Victoria Alcalá



The Temple is a small neo classical building constructed in the early 19th century to commemorate the first Mass and council held in the town of San Cristóbal de La Habana on November 16, 1519. Each year this event is celebrated by a series of commemorative events the most notable of which is the custom of walking three times around the ceiba tree that is planted at the entrance of the Temple. As Eusebio Leal has explained: "Someone asked me once to explain why we walk around the ceiba, as if poetry, which is the spice of life, could be explained." The clock is ticking down to the 500th Anniversary on November 16, 2019.

Havana, November 15, hundreds of people wait at the door of the former Palace of the Captains General, today Museum of the City, for a curious procession to begin. The motley crowd is composed of smiling youths and solemn elderly people, couples with their children and grandparents with their grandchildren, lovers and lonely hearts.

Many are wearing their everyday clothes; others, their Sunday best and even new clothes for the occasion.

It's 6 o'clock and the chimes of the bells from the Castillo de La Real Fuerza announce that the ceremony is about to start. Preceded by children from nearby schools who carry the silver maces

that once belonged to the Council of Havana, and accompanied by a group of his collaborators, Eusebio leal Spengler, Historian of the City of Havana, exits the Palace of the Captains General. Someone cries: "Here comes Leal!" and the people who have been waiting hours for this moment quickly join the procession and walk across the Plaza de Armas to the Temple.

Although Leal's words are always received with pleasure, the crowd is always impatient. The Historian, who for many years has headed the procession, senses this and is brief. He reminds his listeners that Havana will be commemorating its half millennium in a few years and until then, Habaneros rejoice in the celebration of the founding of the town called San Cristóbal de La Habana."

On the custom of walking three times around the ceiba tree that is planted at the entrance of the Temple, Leal has said that "it is essential that we walk around the tree and, in that spiral, ask time to stretch out its hand...and know that the future can be only approached from the past."

At the mere mention of the ceiba, which recalls the tree that existed back in the 16th century and under whose shade the first Mass was held, a stir takes hold of the long line of people, sensing that the time is near for the procession round the tree to begin. The first person to walk to the ceiba is Leal himself, who walks three times round the tree throwing a coin on every turn. Then, the historian invites the public to follow suit and the ritual begins and continues all night and into the morning of the 16th.

Although according to tradition, waiting in line must be done in absolute silence and what you are going to ask the tree for should be kept a secret, it is almost impossible for a Cuban to keep quiet so long, and pretty soon you can hear absolute strangers telling each other their reasons for coming this night to Old Havana: cures for illnesses, happy endings to unrequited loves, prosperity for newly started businesses, the solution to lengthy immigration procedures, success in infertility treatments, good results in university entrance examinations, finding prince charming... Those with a more pragmatic approach to life simply ask what the Spaniards sum up as "health and wealth."

The details of the ritual have never been really established. No one can say for sure if you only ask for one wish or a different one with every turn; if you throw a coin every time you go round the tree or only one coin or several at the end. The two currencies in Cuba also pose unprecedented concerns. What will be most effective, an offering in moneda nacional or in convertible pesos? Others are suspicious about the destination of the money left under the tree or inserted in the tree trunk and the well-known answer is that it is used for social works in Old Havana.

So, amidst, conversations, questions and suspicions, the hours go by and with the break of day, the line begins to grow with workers before they head off to their jobs in schools, hospitals, banks, stores, offices...They too wish to dedicate some time and make a wish at the ceiba of good fortune.

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photos by Alex Mene



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Havana Blue

by Juliet Barclay

'Beneath the centuries of multi-coloured limewash in Old Havana's eighteenth-century mansions, archaeologists often discover elaborate and beautiful mural paintings in which an exquisite powdery blue predominates. This has come to be known as "Havana Blue" and the colour is still used all over the city, gently echoing the triumphant azure of the Cuban sky.' Juliet Barclay takes this theme and floats through this Caribbean city.

"Havana is a window to the sea Havana's blue air sings in my lungs"

From *Habanera* by Jesús Orta Ruiz

Havana breathes blue. Its shutters, doors and walls are painted in every shade from baby blue to lapis lazuli. Its streets are lined with indigo shadows. It is wrapped about by the blue-black Quink Ink Atlantic, which looks as though anyone swimming in it would come out tinted ultramarine. Hot, blowy afternoons in Havana are blue and white with windy washing, billowing and flapping on lines strung across the innumerable *azoteas* of Centro Habana. On Saturday mornings, huge blue cakes with exuberant white trimmings are collected from the San José Bakery in Obispo Street and carried solicitously home, their pastel meringue icing gleaming sweetly in the sun. Classic American cars restored with thick coats of cerulean gloss paint growl throatily past in a cloud of blue fumes. Trumpeters whose neighbours object to the noise of their practising sit on the wall of the Malecón moodily blowing their blues out over the glittering azure expanses of the ocean.

A traditional dance event in one of the squares features a beautiful girl in a blue and silver dress and turban; she represents the Black Virgin who presides over the church of the fishing village of Regla, on the eastern shore of Havana harbour. Her Afro-Cuban alter ego, Yemaya, goddess of the

sea, is associated with marine symbolism—anchors, boats, fish, the moon. Her swaying devotees mutter powerful charms and clasp their blue and white bead necklaces and amulets.

In the mossy eighteenth century courtyards of Old Havana, pale blue trumpet-shaped flowers cascade down the Tuscan columns. The stained-glass fanlights contain eighteenth-century glass of such a deep blue it appears almost purple, casting startling patches of ultraviolet light onto the white walls when the afternoon sun slants through the windows.

Blue gleams and shimmers on sunny mornings in the frills and furbelows of the crinolines worn by girls celebrating their fifteenth-birthdays. Flouncing round Old Havana in frantically frothy frocks, they preen and pout for the camera. Aquamarine satin trimmed with a frenzy of nylon lace provides an especially pleasing effect when its wearer leans provocatively against the baby blue walls of the Bar Taberna in the Plaza Vieja.

One seldom feels blue in Havana but one sees it everywhere; the colour is one of the city's strongest visual leitmotifs. "What would I be without you, my city of Havana?" asked the poet Fayad Jamis. "When I wandered through the world you went with me / You were...a fragment of blue in my shirt / An amulet against nostalgia." Once seen, never forgotten: Havana's fathomless blues saturate your visual memory.

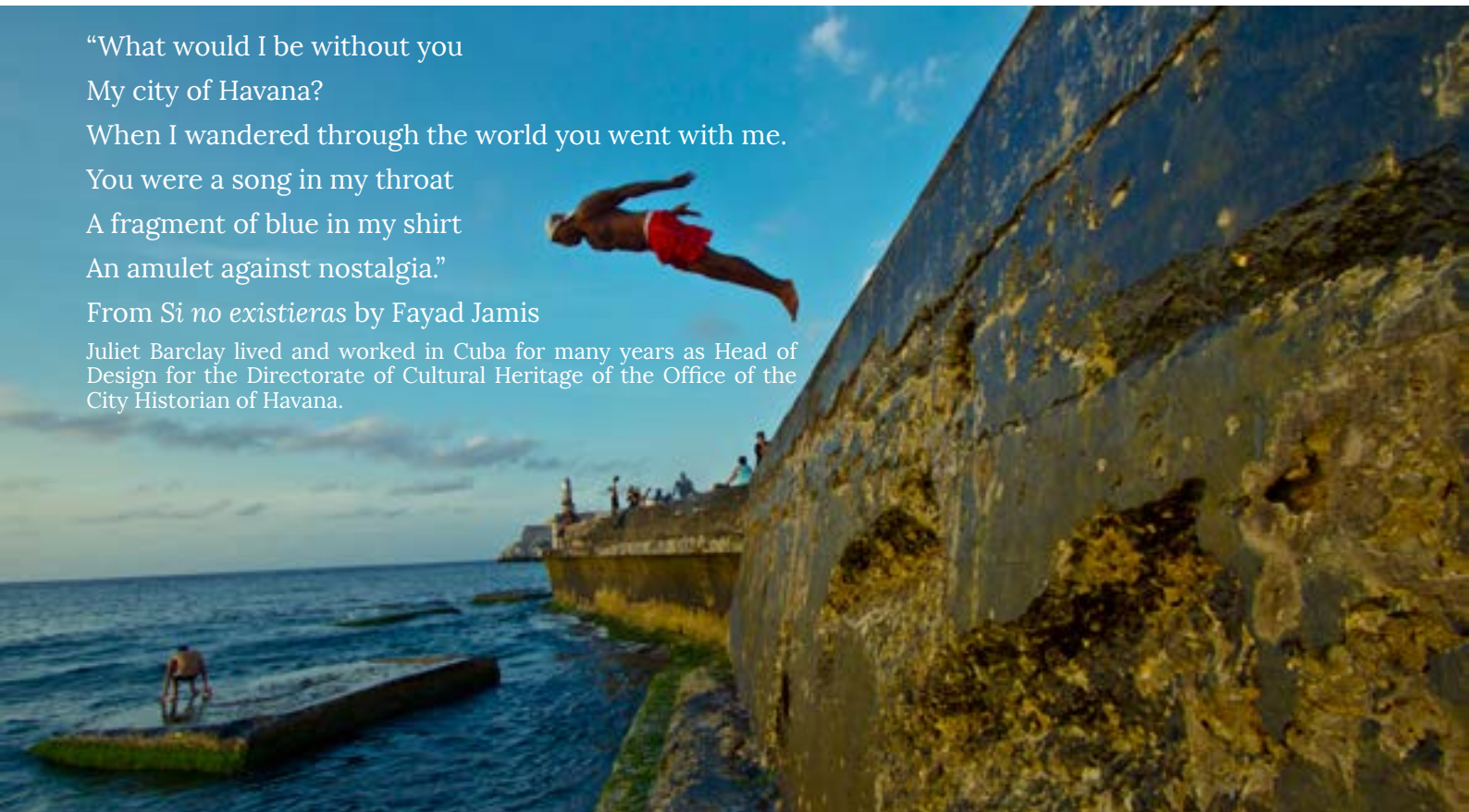


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“What would I be without you
My city of Havana?
When I wandered through the world you went with me.
You were a song in my throat
A fragment of blue in my shirt
An amulet against nostalgia.”

From *Si no existieras* by Fayad Jamis

Juliet Barclay lived and worked in Cuba for many years as Head of Design for the Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the Office of the City Historian of Havana.

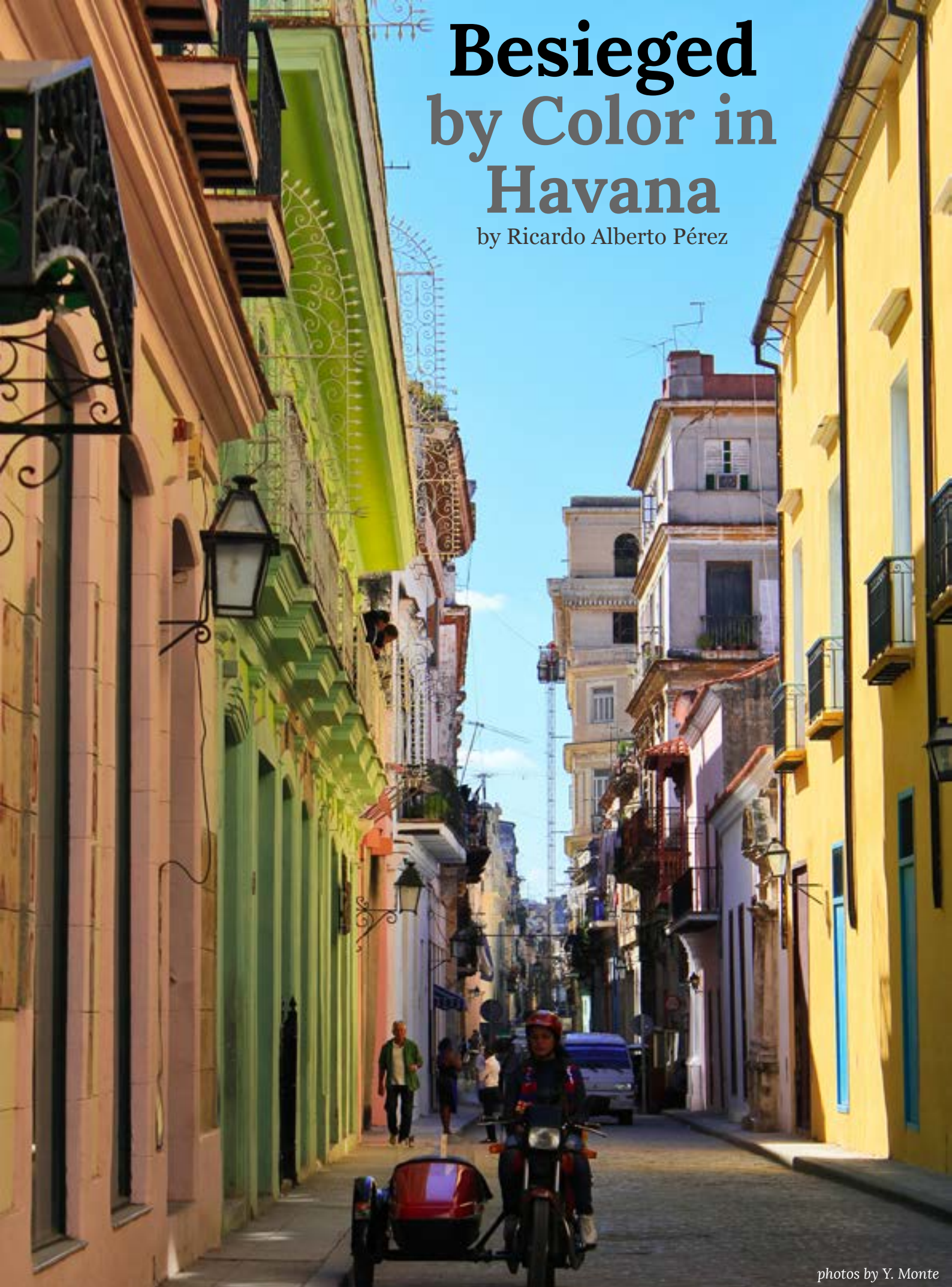


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Besieged by Color in Havana

by Ricardo Alberto Pérez



photos by Y. Monte

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Sometimes tourists see things that locals don't. In fact, sometimes tourists open our eyes to see our own city in an entirely new light. This occurred to me recently when a visitor from abroad started speaking to me, visibly excited, about the exuberant colors emanating from Havana's architecture. Colorful? This caught me off guard, so I decided to reacquaint myself with the city's façades. It did not take long to understand why so many tourists are amazed with the city's tremendously varied and vigorous colors.

Havana's colorful architecture is a product of its historical development. Havana of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a highly colored urban space. Chronicles written by Dutch, English, French and Spanish visitors provide an image of Havana as a city painted in blue and green. After all, this was the period in which the well-known "colonial blue" was born. These colors, of course, were highlighted by the highly elaborate roofs done in the Moorish style. All you have to do is gaze upon the old colonial house at the corner of Teniente Rey and Aguiar in the heart of Old Havana to see one of the best examples of Havana's colonial architecture.

The nineteenth century witnessed a new addition to many of the buildings: stained-glass windows that bathed the architecture with color. Most of the houses surrounding Plaza Vieja, for instance, contain entrance porches, held up by slim arcades and columns that boast stained-glass details.

The Republican Period turned Havana into the eclectic city as it is known today. The majestic mansions of El Vedado are richly decorated both inside and out. Built in 1927, the home of siblings José Gómez Mena and María Luisa Gómez Mena at 17th Street on the corner of E, is a striking example.

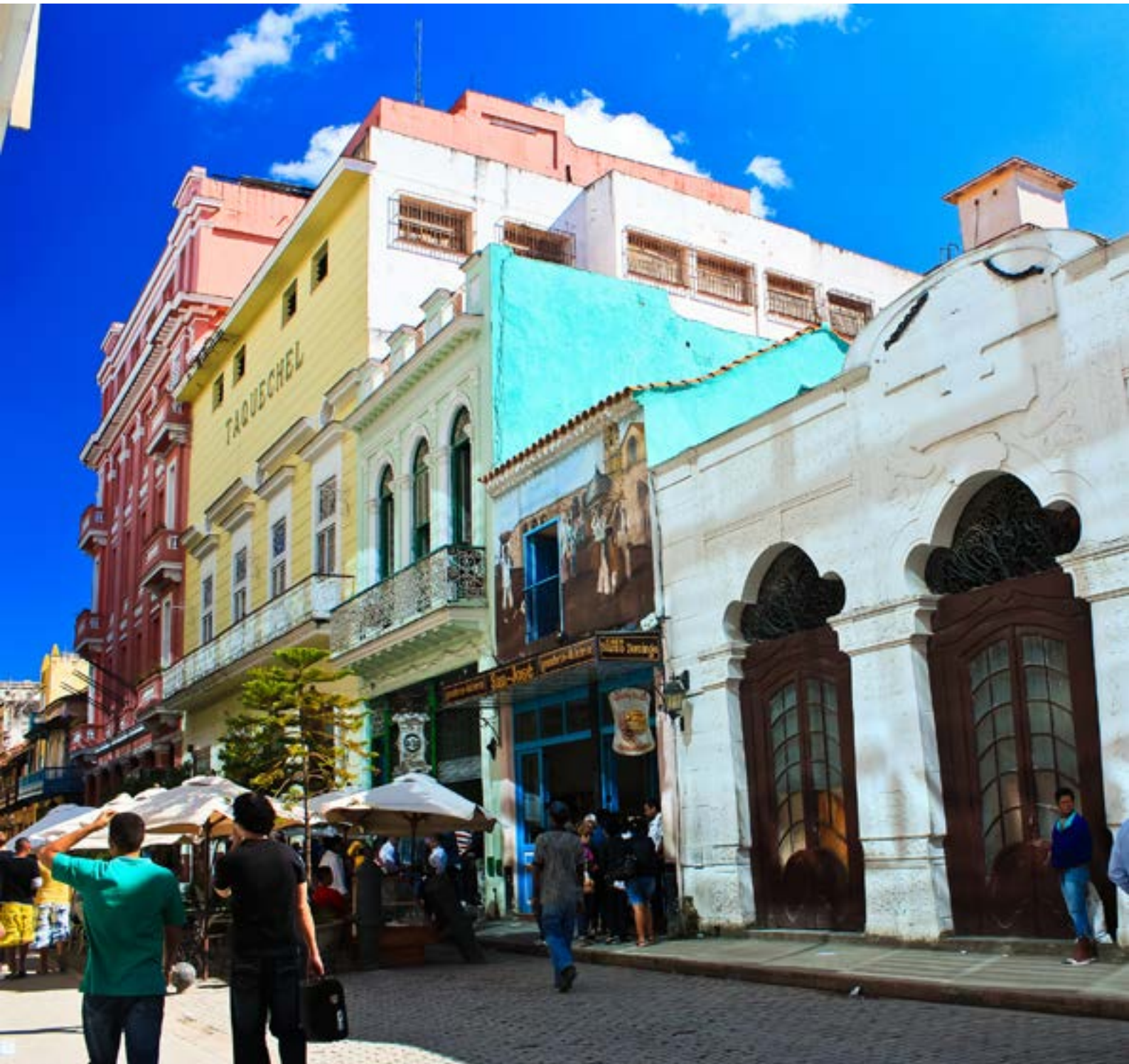
Art deco decoration also made an appearance as seen in the Fausto Theatre on Paseo del Prado with its pure art deco façade faced with a mixture of white cement and stone dust that reflect color changes in its illumination.

Then there is the home of Catalina Lasa and Juan Pedro Baró on Paseo Street between 17th and 19th Streets in El Vedado, which is also a remarkable example of art deco. And an art deco pantheon with a stained-glass window with rose motifs was commissioned by Pedro to commemorate his wife's early death.

The arrival of the Modernist Movement in Cuba marked another important turning point. In this case, Cuban gaze was redirected away from Europe. No longer were European styles simply copied. Instead, a distinct Cuban architectural culture was born, resulting from the adaptation to the climate and the use of native materials. This provided an important spark that gradually changed the image of the city. Architects such as Nicolás Arroyo, Gabriela Menéndez and Antonio Quintana were supported by artists such as Amelia Peláez, Wifredo Lam and René Portocarrero and buildings such as the Habana Libre Hotel, the Retiro Odontológico, and the Riviera Hotel were born.

The city is a reflection of the nation. Much like with the mixing of so many races and cultures, the architecture has benefited from the mixing of so many traditions making the eclectic buildings, in the words of architect Nicolás Quintana, “sing within the symphony of the city.”

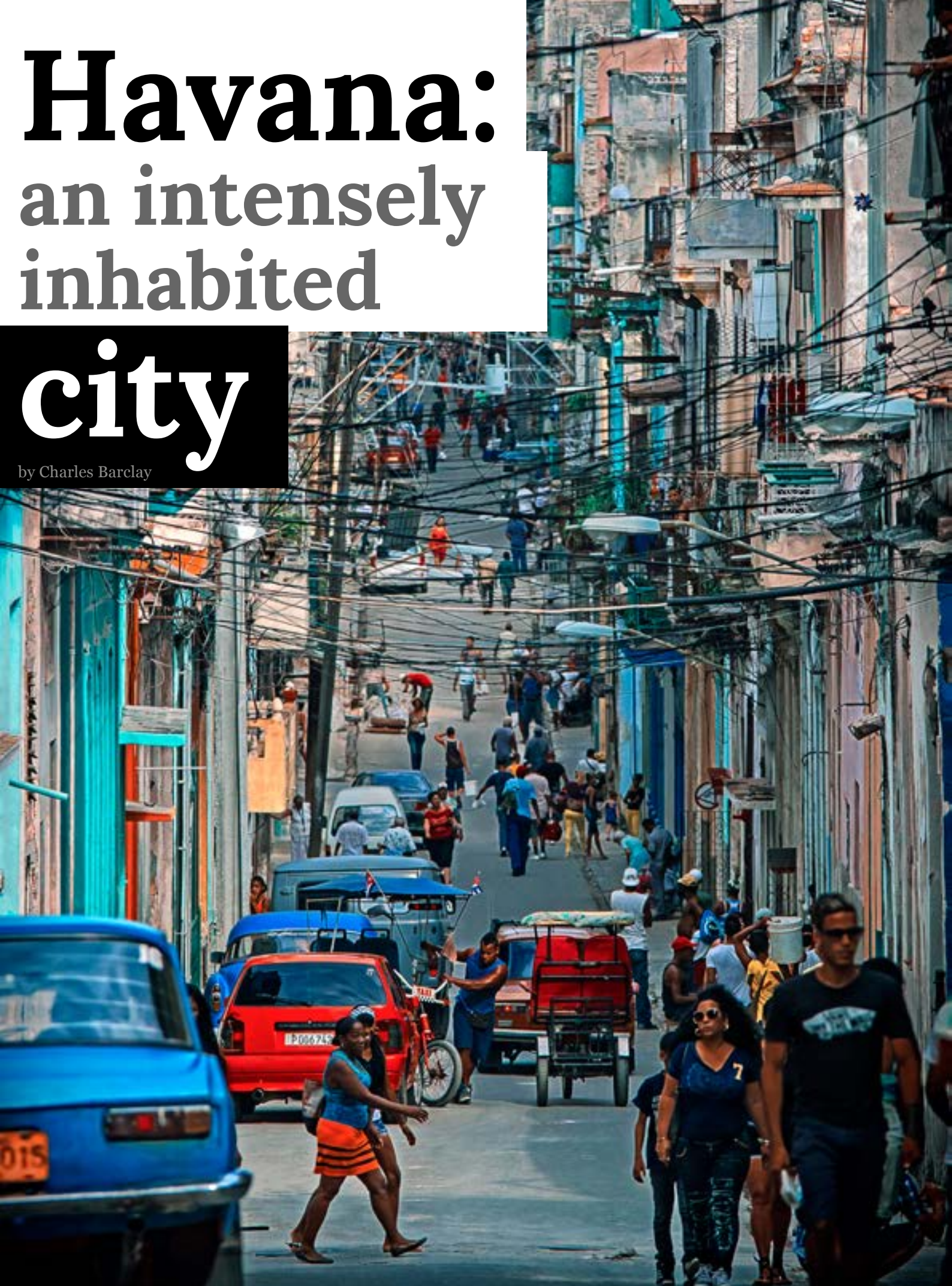
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Havana: an intensely inhabited

city

by Charles Barclay



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Visitors to the Cuban capital frequently remark on how busy the city seems to be, how the life of the city is inescapable and either delightful or irritating, depending on their disposition and expectations as a tourist in a socialist Caribbean island. The fabric of the city is often crumbling, yet Cuban life goes on with a kind of cheerful self-absorption and confidence despite (or because of?) the lack of material trappings and 'advances' that we are used to in western cities.

The very fabric of Havana within a socialist state is a paradox. How can a city that is so spectacularly stocked with rich architectural examples from the 16th century onwards, built with the fruits of Spanish colonialism, Cuban capitalism and then an insidious new form of American economic colonization, become part of the new socialist order? Is not every C18th palace, every art deco apartment block, every 1950's hotel a reminder of past abuses of the people of Cuba by a wealthy elite at home and exploitative forces from abroad? How can the modern habaneros inhabit the city so blithely and embrace it with such confidence and affection? The Revolutionary Government had no interest in the wholesale demolition of the beautiful city that they had taken control of in 1959, not least because of the amount of resources that would be needed to build some "other" Havana in its place, resources needed to make other pressing social changes in the country. There would be no symbolic new architecture that would speak of Cuban nationalism, such as the adoption of functionalist/modernist architecture by the new Czech Republic during the inter-war years in opposition to the C19th architecture of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Instead, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara made a number of clever inversions of the uses of existing buildings and spaces, re-assigning them in a way that "neutralised" their associations with foreign capital and made them useful to the people. They started by appropriating the newly-completed Havana Hilton, now the Habana Libre, and making it the revolutionary headquarters. The huge blank facing in the centre of the main elevation became the backdrop to an enormous Cuban flag; it looked as though it had been designed for the purpose. A high-rise bank in Centro Habana was converted into a hospital for the people and, most famously, the grounds of the Country Club in Cubanacán were ear-marked as the site for the new national school of art. The playground of the rich was to become an incubator for the creative talents of the youth of the nation, an experiment that was only partially completed. Ordinary Cubans took part in this city-wide appropriation too, notably in the run-down Old City, where many of the historic

palaces were being used as warehouses by middle-class Cubans who had more recently built fine houses in the leafy western suburbs of Vedado or Miramar. A palace originally built for one aristocrat and his family and slaves might house a dozen or more Cuban families, with the high-ceilinged rooms ingeniously partitioned and mezzanined to provide maximum accommodation.

The Old City certainly had people living in it pre-1959, with barrios such as San Isidro providing labour for the docks and the industry associated with them, but the area was dominated by the financial institutions and commerce, which used the old buildings with little regard for their historic value or erected new banks, bombastic and heavily corniced in the American style. Post-Revolution, more people came to live in Old Havana than at any time in its history and this gave it a unique social imperative.

What is most striking about this new occupancy of the old historic centre of Havana is the ingenuity and energy with which ordinary Cubans have re-shaped the city to suit their needs. Whether building makeshift partitions out of packing cases in a former palacio, cultivating empty lots as market gardens, using derelict buildings as workshops to repair "bicitaxis" (rickshaws), using an art deco balcony as a home for the family pig or converting a disused warehouse into the neighbourhood boxing school, there is a creative "ad hoc" sensibility that seems to pervade the city. Cubans have become masters of finding solutions to the problems of shelter, employment and social welfare (they call it "resolving") against the backdrop of an uncertain economic situation and the privations caused by the US blockade of the island.

This sensibility frequently runs in direct and surreal opposition to the social aspiration expressed by the grand architecture which forms its backdrop. The re-use of old buildings is often an inversion of the aristocratic order manifest in the building's fabric and facade. Palacios that were designed to be exclusive and keep the teeming street life at bay are now the centre of that teeming life; the exclusive social clubs of the peninsulares are now open to all, as dance schools or community centres. And this peoples' re-habitation of the city fabric seems to bring with it a positive energy, from the intense play of children on an empty lot, the elegant dancing of octogenarians in a corner bar or the appreciative remarks of young men towards the objects of their affections. The life of the barrio is there for all to see and be part of, confidently occupying the streets and squares; the social hierarchies, racial divisions and class-regulated territories that once characterized the city are long forgotten.

Not all visitors feel at ease with this condition and feel the city to be chaotic and illegible, the mismatch of aristocratic architecture and vigorous occupation grates on their nerves. There is also the issue of preserving the historic city from decay, an ever-present problem in the tropical climate and salt-laden winds off the Atlantic. The City Historian of Old Havana, Dr Eusebio Leal Spengler, has assumed responsibility for the restoration of the historic city centre (a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1982) and has designed an economic structure by which to do it.

Leal's team strives to restore valued buildings and public spaces whilst simultaneously supporting the life of the old city. Social housing is built to re-house as many as possible of the habaneros displaced by restoration projects (whilst many of the original inhabitants of buildings move back after their restoration, to move everyone back would be to return them to an overcrowding and inappropriately shared resources) and clinics, schools and old peoples' homes are frequently included in large redevelopment projects. Creating new means of employment in the area is a broader problem, with old wharves now closed and tourism only able to generate a limited number of new jobs. La Oficina, as it is universally known in La Habana Vieja, encourages the self-help ethos of the populace by enabling small building projects to be carried out by local citizens with the help

of the Oficina's own construction workers and architects who help the "amateurs" achieve home improvements and extensions.

The Plaza Vieja was for many years dominated by an underground car park with tall, ugly air vents built in the 1940s and is now almost restored to its former glory, with a replica of its original fountain as the centrepiece.

Part of the Oficina's task in Old Havana is to inspire and educate the Cubans there to value their country's heritage and participate willingly in the steps needed to preserve it, even when this involves a curtailing of the cubanía of life in the barrio. This is not the uphill task one might be faced with in Britain. Havana has a long history of civic pride that goes beyond mere self-aggrandizement, as the exceptional standard of public spaces and monuments from every era of its development testify. Today's habaneros' natural pride in their city is bolstered by a sense of ownership of the built heritage that the socialist state has given them and a deep-felt appreciation of their elegant surroundings. Who would not be seduced by the pink evening light on the coral stone of the Morro Castle, the reflected light on a Cuban baroque arch in a midday patio or the flash of sun-on-spray when waves break over the sea wall of the Malecón?

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photo by Ana Lorena



Havana's Renaissance

by Juliet Barclay

photo by Y. Monte

This piece by the well-respected Juliet Barclay looks at the phoenix-like renaissance of Old Havana over the past 20 years. This has been done under the stewardship of the enigmatic Historian of the City, Eusebio Leal. Juliet worked very closely with Eusebio for many years and provides a real inside look.

The restoration of Old Havana is internationally acclaimed as one of the world's most innovative and exciting projects of urban renaissance. It is all more the remarkable for the context in which it is taking place: Cuba's ongoing struggle to establish itself as a political and economic force to be reckoned with. This immense national effort has a long history, having begun in the nineteenth century with a series of hard-fought wars during which the attempts of intelligent and ambitious Cubans to achieve independence from Spain only ultimately resulted in the island's being delivered into the hands of the United States of America. The North American grip was broken by the 1959 Revolution but its influence is unlikely ever to cease, due to the island's close geographical proximity to its 'neighbor to the north'. Overseas admirers of the restoration of Old Havana feel that this is a fact which the *habaneros* would do well to bear in mind, given the potential for cultural disaster, which a new American control over Cuba would bring.

The organization responsible for the renaissance of Cuba's capital is the Office of the City Historian. The post of City Historian is a time-honored institution in Latin American cities, with some having had a historian since the eighteenth century. Havana remained without a historian until the early twentieth century, having throughout its existence been a city in which the inhabitants lived for the moment, rather than with any particular awareness of or respect for posterity. However, Havana has never been bombed, or developed, and the majority of its historical buildings are constructed of materials so monumental that it takes a great deal of hard work to completely destroy them.

This is not to say, however, that Old Havana's grand palaces, churches and mansions are in a satisfactory state of repair. Although the city has never experienced attack by the forces of man, those of time have wrought havoc with plaster, metal, glass and wood. The massive mahogany and cedar beams used for construction at a time when



photo by Alex Mene

the island of Cuba was thickly covered with ancient forests of hardwoods have suffered severely from centuries of depredations by energetic termites. It is often the case that only the facades of noble old buildings have survived relatively intact; with collapsing floors throughout their interiors there is little left to be saved internally. In these cases, huge efforts are made to shore up the facades, and indeed the conservation teams of the Office of the City Historian are highly expert at propping up structures, given that there are 900-odd important buildings within the area of what was the walled city of Havana, amongst which well over half urgently require attention.

Havana's first City Historian was appointed in the 1930s. His name was Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring who was a respected historian and writer, and in addition to his efforts to save Old Havana and to document lesser-known details of its past, he wrote regularly for the Cuban press. His weekly column in *Social*, the magazine published by the *minoristas* group for whom Cuban cultural identity and nationalism was a guiding principle, made wry and penetrating observations on Cuban cultural mores. Dr Roig's function as City Historian was more defensive than proactive: he spent much of his time lobbying to prevent successive unscrupulous

politicians from trying to do away with Old Havana in order to develop the site into a cross between Las Vegas and Disneyland. He successfully prevented the destruction of the Church of San Francisco de Paula, but sadly failed to preserve the University of Havana, which was located in the Convent of San Juan de Letrán, occupying a full block behind the Palace of the Captains General (Museum of the City of Havana). Roig was unable to do very much actual restoration due to lack of funds, but when the Revolutionary government took over in 1959 the restoration of Old Havana was immediately given high priority as well as an annual budget. The funding was respectable rather than enormous, but it did enable the restoration of a few of the historical centre's more important buildings.

Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring died in the early sixties and his assistant, Dr Eusebio Leal Spengler, took over the post. Leal's first task was to complete the restoration of the Palace of the Captains General. Without a doubt the grandest, most historically significant and most beautiful of Havana's buildings, the Palace presented a considerable restoration challenge, not least because of the complex archaeological studies that had to take place before work could begin: part of the palace covers the site of the original Main Parish Church. Having completed the building's repair and established it as a highly successful museum (*Museo de la Ciudad de La Habana*), Leal went on to restore a number of other important edifices including fortresses, churches, early domestic buildings and more grand palaces.

For over two decades the project jogged along satisfactorily, although there was never enough money and progress was not fast. Visitors continued to remark with a mixture of dismay and delight at the plethora of romantically crumbling ruins which constituted the historical centre. However, major change was just around the corner: when the Soviet Bloc collapsed, Cuba's preferential trade deals and economic support disappeared almost overnight and the island was plunged into the so-called 'Special Period in a time of peace', a crisis that implied that everyone should be ready to tighten their belts and cultivate a Blitz Spirit. Foodstuffs and services were dramatically reduced, challenging, once more, the spirit of sacrifice that has always been a constant feature of the Cuban people.

Needless to say that under those circumstances, funding for the restoration of Old Havana had drastically to be cut. Leal, however, was not the sort of person to passively stand by whilst the project bit the dust. Having already had the historical centre of Old Havana and its system of fortresses listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, he swung



into action and after much discussion and debate, a law was passed which allowed the Office of the City Historian to set up a commercial arm through which it could earn hard currency to be invested in the ongoing restoration of the historical centre.

The progress of the project then became exceedingly exciting. Catapulted overnight from relative obscurity amongst his dusty tomes into the public eye, Leal effectively became over the next few years Chief Executive of Habaguanex, a holding company to which belong all Old Havana's hotels, restaurants and real estate organisations, whilst still fulfilling his responsibilities as Director of the Museum of the City and Historian of the City of Havana. The Office now employs over 7,000 people involved in cultural, restoration, commercial, constructive and management-related activities.

The decade of the nineties saw an absolute transformation of the heart of the historical centre, and major changes around its periphery. From the outset, Leal made it very clear that this was not to be solely a physical restoration, creating a sanitised and prettified Old Havana for tourists to love and leave, robbing the city of its life and turning it into a ghost town at weekends or during the low season. The key phrase used to describe the project was 'an integral restoration', meaning that Old Havana's restoration would constitute a renaissance in every aspect of the life of the city, not just stone, wood and plaster.

The revivification of Old Havana's cultural life has been high on the Office of the City Historian's list of priorities from the outset. The historical centre is full of churches, some functioning, others deconsecrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they were put to various other uses, usually destructive to the fabric of the buildings. Three of these have now been restored to act as a trio of important, and complementary, concert venues. The Basilica Menor de San Francisco de Asis, which stands in the Plaza de San Francisco, was originally the church attached to a monastery from which all Franciscan missionary activity on the South American continent was coordinated. In 1762 it was seized by the British invaders for Protestant worship, and after being deconsecrated was used for Customs warehousing, as a Post Office and finally as a cold store. It lost its noble dome and crossing during a hurricane in the mid-nineteenth century, and it was a sad structure to which the Office of the City Historian turned its energetically benevolent attentions.

After an exceedingly painstaking restoration during which a massive concrete cold store had to be removed from the nave of the church, the Basilica Menor was reopened as Old Havana's largest concert hall. Its acoustics are superb, it is air conditioned throughout, and now audiences attending the excellent Saturday night concerts of chamber music, choral concerts and piano recitals can ponder the elegant asceticism of the



building whilst listening to distinguished classical musicians from Cuba and abroad. The Basilica is closely linked with the Iglesia de San Francisco de Paula, which stands at the end of the Alameda de Paula, overlooking the harbour. The Alameda used to be Havana's principal promenade ground and it is Eusebio Leal's intention to return it to its bygone beauties, removing the unsightly remains of old wharves which lie before it and restoring its decorative wrought iron and classical statuary. The church is the chosen rehearsal space of *Ars Longa*, the Office of the City Historian's ancient music group, and it is from there that they coordinate Havana's annual Early Music Festival.

To these two concert halls has recently been added the Iglesia de San Felipe Neri, a beautiful seventeenth-century oratory which was converted to banking premises in the 1920s. Architecturally it is a rather curious combination of soaring ecclesiastical spaces with distinctly earthbound bankerly detailing, but it works beautifully as a venue for song recitals and lyric theatre. Its large wooden stage is floated over the original altar area, under which archaeologists discovered the foundation stone of the building together with a handful of silver and gold coins, which are now on display in a glass case to one side of the stage according to an old custom.

It is not only music that is being rejuvenated in Old Havana, but dance as well—not the all-pervading salsa from whose strains it is virtually impossible to escape, but exciting modern dance which takes place throughout the streets and

squares of the historical centre during the annual City in Movement Festival. This innovatory event, conceived and organised by the Office of the City Historian's Cultural Programming Department, involves dance groups from all over Cuba and the world interacting in a relay of movement which starts in the Plaza de Armas and ripples out in every direction, linked logistically by the 'Stiltwalkers of Old Havana' whose task it is to stride like gaudy beribboned giraffes between the groups to activate each performance, accompanied by a running, shouting crowd of thoroughly overexcited children.

Balancing the requirements of visitors and residents is vital to the success of the restoration of Old Havana. It is an appallingly overcrowded area of the city where many people live in very poor conditions, sharing completely inadequate sanitary facilities; housing is thus absolutely first priority with the planners and architects of the Office of the City Historian. However, without the income from tourism very little can be built, so facilities must be provided for visitors, but only the kind of visitors who will respect and enjoy the area. All the hotels in the historical centre are housed in old buildings of exceptional historical and architectural interest and they are all charming. Perhaps the most charming of all is the Hotel Santa Isabel, housed in the Palace of the Counts of Santovenia on the Plaza de Armas. It has an incomparable view of the leafy Plaza de Armas and has been chosen by a glittering parade of dignitaries and their entourages, from film

stars, socialites and supermodels to illustrious clergymen, important diplomatists and visiting heads of state.

The practical way in, which the restoration of Old Havana is now being achieved, is a join-the-dots theory whereby small groups of buildings are restored for a carefully considered mixture of end uses. Afterwards, the spaces between these areas are gradually transformed as the renaissance effect radiates outwards. An interesting case in point, currently in progress, is that of the corner of Teniente Rey and Compostela Streets, where the restoration of the exquisite neo-Gothic and neoclassical excesses of the *Farmacia La Reunion* is providing the focal point for a group of buildings including a school (this is already restored and opened), shops (principally the pharmacy, which sells herbs, spices, medicines and all sorts of pharmaceutical supplies and also houses a small museum), a bakery, a church (still open for worship, but in sore need of repair), a small hotel (in the potentially extremely pretty but currently ruined cloisters of the Convent of the Little Sisters of Santa Teresa) and above all, lots of housing, both for those already in need in the area and also the families who will move out of the Convent prior to its conversion to a hotel. All these families will be housed in spacious conversions of the old offices above the pharmacy, and in restored buildings

nearby, in addition to an interesting new building project in the area.

In amongst the more earnest social aspects of the restoration project there are delicious doses of frivolity. Perhaps the most popular of these to open in recent years is the *Museo del Chocolate*, where a small exhibition of chocolate-making equipment provides an excellent pretext for the sale of sinfully delectable hot and cold chocolate, and truffles made on the premises by graduates of the Cuban School

A great deal has been done in Old Havana but there is still a quite staggering amount left to be tackled and funds are in short supply. However, no-one in their right mind would advocate an indiscriminate opening-up of the area to general and foreign investment. The longer the current (albeit economically unsatisfactory) situation continues, the longer the Cubans will have to consolidate their enviable achievements in Havana's restoration, to strengthen the habaneros' sense of individuality and to fortify their cultural bastions against the stifling blanket of North American homogeneity which is already flapping threateningly in their direction. As Hugh Thomas quoted on the frontispiece of his monumental *Cuba, the Pursuit of Freedom*: 'Yet, Freedom! Yet thy banner, torn, but flying/Streams like the thunder-storm *against* the wind.'



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The many faces of an extraordinary city: La Habana

by Juan José González

Few cities in the world have such a varied and extraordinary architectural legacy—also unknown to most tourists. From the 17th to the 20th centuries, from the Calzada del Cerro to the El Vedado district, the city of Havana holds true gems that now face the challenge of restoration.

One of the great attractions of Havana is that there is not only one, but many Havanas. The most well-known and less run-down is colonial Havana, the city of five plazas—Plaza de Armas, Plaza de San Francisco, Plaza Vieja, Plaza de la Catedral and Plaza del Cristo; the city of La Fuerza and La Cabaña fortresses; the city of Obispo Street. But beyond the historical centre lies a fabulously eclectic Havana; and an Art Deco Havana; and a modern 1950s Havana.

You also have the Havana of Carpentier with its columns and arcades. The Havana of wide avenues—Calzada del Cerro, Monte, Infanta—winding in all directions and lined with covered walks that protect passers-by from the rain and sun. And the stately Havana of El Vedado, divided and subdivided into a regular grid pattern; or the exclusive Havana of Quinta Avenida and the Country Club; or the Havana of the coastal villages of Regla and Casablanca.

Few visitors, however, really get to appreciate and take joy in these “other” Havanas.

Havana is perhaps the only city in the Americas—and one of the few in the world—that enjoys two rare privileges: having an immense and valuable architectural heritage of different periods and styles, and having survived real estate speculation and unbridled development. Owing to historical and political circumstances, the Cuban capital all but froze at the end of the 1950s.

Atop the Loma de Chaple, a group of houses, which are superimposed in a labyrinthine plan, have the best views of Havana. Built between the 1920s and 1950s on an elevation of 60 metres, the small neighbourhood is as much a hidden treasure for the tourist as the Calzada del Cerro, the former primitive road which connected the capital with the tobacco vegas in the Vuelta Abajo region in Pinar del Río.

This long, arcaded road, which is today in a deplorable state yet still beautiful in its decadence, still flaunts a great many of the large estates built there in the 19th century by the Havana patriarchy, who fled from the congested walled city. “El Cerro was the first escape option for the rich to new territories. There, they built independent houses, surrounded by gardens and preceded by ample columned porches—true mansions in the neoclassical style. Richly ornamental materials, including precious woods, polychrome marbles,

bronze, stained glass and wrought-iron railings that still today dazzle thanks to their originality, were used in their construction,” claims María Elena Martín, co-author of the best documented architecture guide of Havana.

The Calzada del Cerro was completed during the first half of the 20th century with the construction of homes and services for the middle and working classes, who observed the planning standards with regard to ceilings, continuous facades and front porches. Today, walking down this majestic zigzagging road, you stumble upon the past that has been incorporated into present-day life: old women seated in rocking chairs made of majagua under shaded porches; people playing dominoes in front of partly destroyed mansions; trucks and bicycles going up and down the bustling street; self-employed workers filling lighters or repairing watches next to cracked pilasters, laurel and grape ornaments, and a jumble of washed-out Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and eclectic columns, in every form you can imagine.

Owing to its patrimonial value, a large part of El Cerro was declared protected area in 1987. But this has not been of much use—deterioration progresses and outstanding examples of a significant architectural period in the city’s history are lost every day. Other Havana neighbourhoods concentrate a great many important buildings, which have been equally forgotten, although not only by the usual tourist route, but by the municipal authorities and the Government as well.

Richness and architecture

On one corner of El Vedado district, across the John Lennon Park, stands a palatial house in eclectic style with an exceptional two-storey tower that no one ever notices. Today, this 1920s mansion is home to 15 families, who have subdivided the original spaces according to their possibilities and needs. The former kitchen is today a tiny apartment. The dining room, library, remaining rooms and halls have all suffered a similar fate. The terraces are plain and simple delirium: one family has built a tiny apartment, which is the exact opposite of the majestic original high ceilings. High up, the tower accommodates two different families.

Unfortunately, this is a pretty common sight in El Vedado, a district which began to be built during the colonial days and introduced a modern urban-structure model in Havana. “Unlike the old city, El Vedado included wide tree-lined avenues, entire blocks for parks, and spaces reserved for schools, churches, markets and other services. Built on separate lots, the houses all boasted their own private gardens and porches, and many of them were designed by the best architects of the time,” explains Martín.

Such is the case of the former mansion of Catalina Lasa, for years the Cuban-Soviet Friendship House; or the former mansion owned by José Gómez Mena, today the Museum of Decorative Arts. Two French firms participated in both projects: the former was decorated by French designer René Lalique, and the latter was designed by French architects Viard and Destugue.

“In Havana, the rich were very rich, and there were also many...And wealth always helps to hand down good architecture,” observed Mario Coyula, who directed the group for the Integral Development of the Capital. In the opinion of this architect, “Havana’s principal patrimonial value lies in the extensive body of buildings constructed for an omnipresent middle class.” And this patrimony—deteriorated but still standing and serviceable—covers a range of architectural styles from almost five centuries of constructive activity: pre-Baroque, Baroque, neo-Classicism, eclecticism, art nouveau, art deco and the important contribution of the modern movement.”

On San Lázaro Street, which connects the historical centre with the modern city, you find an assortment of facades, most of which are of the eclectic style, shamelessly combining columns, pilasters, balconies, cornices, balustrades and other architectural elements. On this main road of Centro Habana, there is no spectacular building that stands out for its intrinsic values. Like an orchestra, it is the harmonious sound of the ensemble that attracts and prevails. And this is characteristic of every neighbourhood in Centro Habana, a fact that fascinates visitors without exactly knowing why.

The 14 blocks from Paseo del Prado to the Antonio Maceo Park, along Havana’s Malecón, are an exceptional testimony of this unique architectural heritage...and a heartbreaking manifestation of what is happening. Almost the entire two kilometres of this great window to the city are seriously damaged and some buildings have already collapsed. Surely millions of Euros would be needed to restore these blocks, which constitute one of the most wonderful environments in the city.

Walking down the Malecón on the Vedado side of town, it isn’t difficult to realize that if a normal urban development had continued in the 1960s, many of Havana’s incredible neighbourhoods would have disappeared. “Luckily, Havana was freed of this menace, but not of others,” says Martín, who defends architecture, and especially the patrimony of the 20th century, as one of the most precious virtues of the city, disregarded today due to its deterioration.



Gran Teatro de la Habana
photo by Ana Lorena

Havana's principal enemy today is negligence and the lack of resources for its restoration. But also, paradoxically, in some areas of the city, the "excess" of money is becoming a problem, according to several architects.

The Historical Centre serves as example

The work of restoration and preservation of Old Havana is a good example of how things should be done to save the city. In the 214 hectares that comprise the historical centre, there are 3,370 buildings. Of these, 551 are architectural monuments and 22,663 are dwellings that accommodate approximately 70,000 people. Over 45 percent of the houses counted during the last census lack adequate living conditions and half of these are situated in tenements where several families share common areas, including lavatories.

In 1981, the authorities approved the Restoration Plan for the Historical Centre, which, one year later, was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Since then, the City Historian's Office, headed by Eusebio Leal, has been in charge of restoring palaces, plazas, buildings, streets and houses in Old Havana, combining the restoration of the buildings for commercial purposes with the creation of social institutions, such as old people's homes, schools, day-care centres, and maternal and child homes, for its dwellers.

From 1994 to 2004, in the midst of one of the worst economic crisis in Cuba, over 80 construction works within the cultural heritage were restored and completed, including 14 hotels with a total of 413 guestrooms, and 100 tourist facilities, such as

cafes, and shops, and 11 apartment buildings. Also, 171 social works and 3,092 dwellings were benefited. During this period, 10 times more properties were recovered than in the previous 15 years, and more than 11,000 direct jobs and around 2,000 indirect jobs were created.

The figures speak for themselves but do not really reflect the real impact of what has been done. Taking a stroll down any of the restored streets or plazas, such as Mercaderes, Oficios or the Plaza de San Francisco, filled with horse-drawn carriages, terraces and pigeons, or Plaza de Armas, taken by second-hand booksellers and newspaper vendors, is a real delight. At present, the ongoing work for the completion of the Colegio Universitario de San Jerónimo aims at reincorporating the academy to the Historical Centre, its place of origin.

Cuban and international experts agree that the model that has been implemented in Old Havana has worked efficiently. But many wonder if it is also applicable to other places in Havana with architectural merits and at risk of disappearing. No doubt, for a while now the Government and the people have become more sensitive and responsive to preserving Old Havana, but, according to the architect Juan García, this is not the case with other areas, despite the fact that some of them are protected by law.

Lack of sensitivity

Like many of his colleagues, he believes—and has expressed it officially—that the state of abandonment of many neighbourhoods and buildings today is due, among other reasons, to a



Agromercado
Photo Ana Lorena

general lack of sensitivity and awareness. In Cuba, when the topic of culture comes up, everybody thinks music, dance, theatre, literature, filmmaking or art, but, complains García, architecture does not have the adequate official recognition, despite being one of the greatest cultural legacies in the island.

The El Vedado district was declared architectural and urban heritage protected zone in 1999, yet it is continuously being transformed under the unpunished actions of its inhabitants and also of state entities. Mario Coyula and other Cuban professionals have denounced a worrying phenomenon that tends to become worse: “If the lack of resources to rehabilitate the city is a problem, so is the excess of money.”

He is referring to the way that some people who have advanced financially or who receive money from their relatives abroad are doing atrocities in their homes, which range from transforming architecturally valuable facades to constructing

improvised garages in gardens and porches, substituting cemented floors for the necessary greenery, among many other transgressions. And all of this is done without the authorities taking any action at all or at least seeming to be interested in the solution to this increasing problem.

This is perhaps just a prelude. What will happen when the money really starts rolling in and real estate speculation becomes the city’s worst enemy? This is a question that many architects from Cuba and other parts of the world, who have seen the disasters in other cities, are asking themselves. Martín, Coyula, Leal and others agree that the essential thing is to be aware of what we have and to appreciate it as it deserves, and, of course, to protect the city fiercely. Havana is many Havanas at the same time, and yet unique. To discover it and save it is an adventure and there are many people who believe that it’s not too late. Let’s hope it can be done.

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Havana view
photo Alex Mene

The Habanero horror of precipitation

by Juliet Barclay

'When necessity compels them to appear,' wrote one nineteenth-century observer of Habaneros in the rain, 'they walk with the peculiar circumspection of a cat, picking their way with a care and timidity that often seems highly ludicrous'. As with many things Cuban, while this is true the converse is also true; of kids surfing behind buses on flooded roads, people braving enormous waves off the Malecón and a stoicism in the face of huge annual storms that lash the island in hurricane season.

photos by Alex Mene



Habaneros hate rain and can be cast into depression by what any British person, accustomed as one is to endless meteorological variations on the theme of wetness, would consider a mere caprice. The slightest hint of impending rainfall can keep the city's entire workforce at home and no demur whatsoever is made by their bosses if workers fail to appear on a wet day. The very notion of venturing out of the house in the rain is seen as dangerous madness, likely to bring on agues, seizures, fevers and a whole range of obscure disorders which may only be countered by a series of stressful and expensive visits to the *babalawo*. 'When necessity compels them to appear,' wrote one nineteenth-century observer of *Habaneros* in the rain, 'they walk with the peculiar circumspection of a cat, picking their way with a care and timidity that often seems highly ludicrous'.

But much of the horror with which rain is viewed is justified. The damage caused by hurricane winds is as nothing compared to the devastating effects of the downpours that follow such storms. They saturate Havana's shaky eighteenth-century palaces which, as they dry out, have a tendency to fall down without warning.

Rain in Havana falls in a roaring whoosh of water that foams out of gutters, jets from downpipes, courses along pavements, pounds on the leaves in the courtyards of the palaces and fills the squares to fabulously Venetian effect. There aren't many umbrellas to be had in the city and it's a waste of time to use one, for the water bounces up from the pavement with at least as much force as it falls, soaking one from the bottom up.

A serious catastrophe for an *Habanero* is rainfall at the end of the working day, and a miserable chorus of *ay, mi madre* rings out when the first drops fall at 4:40pm. But a bottle of *añejo* is found in someone's filing cabinet and with music downloaded from the internet everyone dances until the rising tide resulting from the leaky office roof starts lapping at their ankles. Then it is time to espouse the Revolutionary spirit of *trabajo voluntario*, dig out the mops and engage with the flood. And if it's still raining by midnight everyone's drunk enough to brave it, keeping off the worst of the deluge as they slosh homewards by sidling along the sides of the streets, under the protective overhang of the balconies, agreeing with each other in ever-so-slightly slurred tones that there's no rainproofing like rum.

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Getting under Havana's skin

by Conner Gorry

Havana is hot and I'm not talking about mulatas or the weather—from Cayo Hueso to Regla, Cementerio Colón to Ciudad Deportiva, you can't swing a dead *gato* around here these days without hitting a tourist. To tell you the truth, I don't think I've seen this many foreigners in Havana since the 2006 Non-Aligned Meeting (*see note 1*).

There are reasons of course. The Cigar and Young Filmmakers Festivals are going strong as I write this, we're getting a couple of monster cruise ships docking each week, and all-inclusive packages from Canada are mad cheap (*see note 2*). But most importantly, Havana's streets teem thanks to Obama's rollback to Clinton's policy whereby US college students and select others can travel "legally" to the island. I'm surprised the effects have been so lightning fast—the new/old regulations were just announced in January—but everywhere I turn these days there seems to be a fresh-faced co-ed in Wesleyan gear or a Teva-shod geek.

Many of these people won't end up liking Havana (hell, even I don't like Havana some times). Starting with poor air quality; negative travelogues grouse about the expense of this place; perceived levels of state control; difficulties scratching below the surface +/- contextualizing their experience; and of course, crappy goods and even shittier services.

The dramatic economic changes happening around here—legalizing 178 types of private business from clown to cook, masseur to manicurist—are altering the traveler's landscape (*see note 3*). So that Here is Havana readers can maximize their visit to this enigmatic city, I dedicate this post to travel strategies designed to get you beneath Havana's skin.



#1. Talk the talk.

There is no better way to maximize an independent holiday here than to speak *cubano*, with all its chopped off words, odd pronunciation and slang (see note 4). Even if “¿qué bolá, asere?” isn't in your repertoire, try at least to dust off that high school Spanish since surprisingly few Cubans dominate English (and many of those that do are unusually accomplished charlatans). Not speaking Spanish doesn't mean you'll have a bad time—on the contrary. But it will limit your ability to get information, negotiate, learn and arrange logistics.



#2. Embrace pesos cubanos.

As soon as you're able, get some *moneda nacional*, also known as pesos cubanos and CUP. There's a myth out there as tenacious as herpes in a whorehouse and which no amount of posting, commenting, and conversing seems to dispel: that tourists can't use this 'local' currency. Complete rubbish. The truth is, most visitors simply don't know how to use CUP. I suggest starting your trip by changing \$5 of hard currency (24 CUP = 1 CUC = 0.82 USD) into this funny money to use for fixed route taxis, movies, food, condoms, cigars, and stepping out.

#3. Roll like a local.

Long-finned Pontiacs, Capone-era Dodges, and other 'Yank tanks' leap to most minds when Cuba is mentioned. Undeniably cliché, these cars are everywhere, plying Havana's streets working as communal, fixed-route taxis. For 10 pesos cubanos (about 0.40 USD), you can hail one of these endearing jalopies (I climbed into one yesterday that had packing tape upholstery and a ceiling lined with old refrigerator boxes) between Playa and Vedado or Habana Vieja, out to Miramar or Marianao. Longer routes—from Habana Vieja out to the Playas del Este beaches for example—will

run double. To grab one, just stick out your arm parallel to the ground and ask the driver if he's going to where you need to be. It helps to be on the right thoroughfare: 23 or Línea in Vedado, San Lázaro or Neptuno in Centro Habana, Avenida 31 or 41 in Playa, Calle 51 in Marianao, or 3ra Avenida in Miramar.

Even lower down on the transportation food chain is the *guagua* (pronounced wa-wa)—the Cuban bus. A ride literally costs pennies and while not especially comfortable or efficient, riding the *guagua* gives a real taste of Cuban daily life with all its attendant humor and hardships.

If these options don't appeal, consider renting a car and driver. Part of the new regulations stipulate that licensed freelance drivers can now be contracted (by anyone, including foreigners as I understand it) to provide transport islandwide. There are no set fares, with rates to be determined between driver and client. Already nearly 6,000 *choferes* in Havana have applied for the freelance license; 2,000 have been granted. If the market has its way, the increased competition should make for more bargaining power and improved service. At the very least, it provides visitors an alternative to renting a car for \$100 a day (which will somehow end up costing more when the agency is done with



you). I predict that freelance drivers who speak English are going to do very well under these new regulations.

#4. Make yourself at home.

One of the great benefits presented by the new regulations for travelers is the possibility to legally rent an entire house. This means you can shop at the agro (using those pesos cubanos) and cook for yourself, throw a dinner party, or introduce Cuban friends to the concept of brunch. Having your own private space means you can channel surf Cuban state TV (University for All! Little House on the Prairie! Seinfeld!), take mojitos on your porch to the delight of the neighborhood gossips, or stumble in carefree at 4am.

Another idea for a different Havana experience is to take lodging in more off-the-beaten-track places like the beach towns of Guanabo or Baracoa or Cojimar—the fishing village made famous by Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea. These are close enough to enjoy Havana but just far enough removed to give a taste of small town life.

#5. Get primped & pampered.

The new regulations approve all sorts of services which visitors can now enjoy without any sneaking around. Now your visit can include a 1-hr massage for \$20 (really \$10, but you might be charged double—the foreigner tax, *digamos*), manicures for \$2, and haircuts for \$5 (careful with this last however).

If you're interested to learn if someone—driver, masseuse, pizza maker—proffering these and other goods and services is licensed to do so, ask to see their *licencia de cuentapropista*. Most people are proud to flash their spiffy new ID cards.

#6. Spread the wealth.

Frankly I weary of travelers asking me how they can avoid patronizing state businesses. That's like asking how to avoid death or taxes. From the moment you buy your \$20 tourist card to enter the country, to the minute you're paying the \$25 tax to leave, you're supporting the Cuban government. What's so evolved about this place is that paying into government coffers does in turn support the Cuban people (maybe not how or to the extent you'd like, but in my book the Cuban approach is fundamentally better than subsidizing bombs in Afghanistan and spies in Caracas). If you have a problem with this, do us all a favor and go to Cancun.

Having said that, I do recommend spending your hard-earned cash at a mix of state and private enterprises, but how to tell the difference? With



eateries, there are some telltale signs. If your server is wearing a uniform or hairnet the place is probably state-owned. If your food descends from a balcony in a bucket it's definitely private.

With taxis it's even clearer: 99% of the old Motor City monsters (and many of the Ladas) brandishing taxi signs are privately owned. When in doubt, do like the Cubans do and look at the license plate (see note 5). There's an entire code for plates here, with the first clue being the color: blue is for state-owned, yellow is private. All hotels, meanwhile, are at least 51% state-owned, but *casas particulares* (rooms or independent houses for rent) are privately operated. Look for the blue 'arrendador en divisa' sign. If you're interested in learning more of the Havana 'mécánica' including bus and fixed-fare taxi routes, the best spot for 75 cent whisky shots and \$1 lunch, Cuban line etiquette and more, please check out my iapp Havana Good Time.

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photos by Alex Mene

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NOTES

1. It's highly doubtful we'll reap the same benefits however: when Cuba hosted the meeting as is customary for the country holding the rotating presidency, Havana's main roads were repaved, trees were planted (including many of the trees lining Boyeros every visitor zooms by on their way from the airport) and house facades all along the arrival route were painted up nice and spiffy for the visiting delegations.
 2. These 7-day all inclusive deals are oftentimes cheaper than just a Toronto-Havana Cubana flight. Savvy travelers just book the package and stay a day or two at their resort and then travel independently. Top countries visiting Cuba: Canada, Italy, Germany, France, Russia, Argentina, and Mexico.
 3. I say travelers here instead of tourists because I believe there is a fundamental difference between a person who passively observes a culture and someone who desires to actively participate in it. If you're one of those disposed to take issue with the tourist vs traveler terminology, I invite you to focus on the phenomenon/philosophy I'm talking about rather than the etymology of the terms used to describe it.
 4. Those interested in Cuban slang and phrases should check out this Dichos iapp. I haven't been able to get it yet (the US government blocks iTunes from operating in Cuba) but am loca to try it.
 5. This national reflex is widespread and wild to watch: no matter what type of car you're in, observe how passing Cubans immediately drop their eyes to check out the license plate. Via the coded plates, they'll know if your car is from Havana or the provinces, whether you're a foreign resident or visiting, even if you work for the state, a mixed Cuban-foreign enterprise, a church or an NGO.
-



Conner Gorry is one of the most insightful writers about Cuba. Author of *Here is Havana* blog (<http://hereishavana.wordpress.com/>), she also puts together the Havana Good Time iPad/Phone/Touch application <http://itunes.apple.com/app/havana-good-time/id385663683?mt=8> (Android version) http://sutromedia.com/android/Havana_Good_Time – essential guide to What's On in Havana.

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About the Author ★

Travel writer, essayist, and journalist Conner Gorry first landed in Havana in 1993. Conner has traveled the length and breadth of Cuba writing on everything from wild camping to disaster medicine, 5-cent cigars and funerals.



Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes Edificio de Arte Cubano Through January 2015

Bésame mucho

Solo exhibition by Eduardo Ponjuán, National Art prizewinner 2013, made up of large paintings and 3-D works that show a novel visual morphology in his career. Regarding the title, Bésame mucho, or Kiss Me a Lot, the artist has said: "I have always liked this bolero by Mexican composer very much for its lyrics...the notion that in face all things transient, fleeting, ephemeral, of the end of things, a simple kiss can make one go on living."

Variaciones contempladas en silencio

Group exhibition by five young Cuban artists, Analía Amaya, Yaima Carrazana Susana Pilar Delhante, Glenda León and Grethell Rasúa, in which the conceptual and formal diversity (paintings, photographs, videos, performances and installations) revolve around a unifying principle, as the show's curator, Aylet Ojeda, has said: "The best way to perceive these works that have been inspired by reflecting on the world of these five artists, a world that is also ours, the viewers, is in silence. On meditating on our universe and existence, it is in silence how we can best grasp ideas and become aware of our surroundings."

Biblioteca Pública Rubén Martínez Villena

▶ THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER **Molaskine.** First solo exhibition by the young Cuban designer Edel “Mola” Rodríguez, consisting of a selection of drawings, illustrations and interventions in space.

Casa de Asia

▶ THROUGH NOV 15 **Olvidate de todo y pinta.** Watercolors and ink on cardboard by César Towie, who uses Havana’s architecture as an object of meditation to induce concentration, introspection and reflection in pieces featuring the traditional format in which kakemonos were made in Japan, or the hanging scrolls of China.

Casa del Marqués de Arcos

▶ OPENS NOV 19 José Luis Fariñas. Exhibition by a young Cuban master of drawing. A poetry reading with Fariñas himself, Juana García Abás, Lina de Feria and Reina María Rodríguez, among other poets, will be held on opening day, along with the special performance of the Chamber Orchestra of Havana.

Casa de la Obrapía

▶ OPENS NOV 14 **Puntada a puntada rehago el universo.** Large-scale works by Carlos Guzmán who in this exhibition, depicts a magical, fantastic world using the medium of acrylic on canvas.

Centro Hispano Americano de Cultura

▶ THROUGH NOV 22 **Japón: reino de personajes.** Exhibition of anime and manga characters as an essential part modern popular culture.

Factoría Habana

▶ THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER **Legado.** Young artistas Alex Hernández, Aluán Argüelles, Glenda Salazar, Rafael Villares and Rigoberto Díaz exhibit works characterized by the relation with the natural environment, landscape and ecological awareness.

Centro Hispano Americano de Cultura

▶ THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER **La utilidad de la historia.** The curatorial project, which includes the participation of Abel Barroso, Celia y Yuniór, Arianna Contino, Rigoberto Díaz, Ricardo Elías, Alex Hernández, José Manuel Mesías, Frank Mujica, Fernando Reyna, Lázaro Saavedra and José Ángel Toirac, takes as its starting point the creative processes and historical research that sometimes become artistic events. The project includes works by a group of young artists who prioritize research and the use of documents linked to the final result, as well as artists from the 1980s and 90s, representing the generations that have influenced the newer generations in their way of understanding art.

Galería El Reino de Este Mundo. Biblioteca Nacional José Martí

▶ THROUGH NOV 20 **Maestro, ¿podiera usted explicarme?** These recent medium- and large-scale works made with different techniques by Eduardo M. Abela Torrás become a playful reflection on the history of art, some of its more significant movements, periods and artists, brought to date using iconic elements in contemporary art and the mechanisms of distribution and recognition.

Galería Espacio Abierto

▶ THROUGH NOV 14 **Horizontes difuminados.** Using different formats and techniques, Lissy Sarraff and Malcolm Jarrosay delve into the topic of transculturation, especially regarding the influence of two significant human groups who arrived in Cuba, from almost anthropological research studies on the original cultures of their respective families (Lebaneses and French-Haitian, respectively).

Galería Servando

▶ THROUGH NOV 8 **Mundo de mi mundo.** Rodney Batista presents his world of immaterial and timeless figures and environments.

Librería Fayad Jamís

THROUGHOUT
NOVEMBER

Disfraces para el barro. Valores al fuego. An exhibition of ten small- and medium-size pieces by Yosniel Olay Mirabal made with the technique of glazed clay.

Lloyd's Register

THROUGHOUT
NOVEMBER

Hacia el poeta. The Spanish artist Mariví Nebreda reinterprets the work of great Spanish-speaking poets.

Restaurante El Templete

THROUGH
NOV 12

Verso a verso. Exhibition of works from the series La verdad parece un cuento by Cuban artist Maykel Herrera, who recently received the World Quality Commitment Award in the Gold category by the BID World Quality Convention Quality, Innovation and Excellence, Paris, France. The prize was awarded for the social project he leads designed to raise funds for institutions for orphans and children's oncological hospitals.

Sala Taganana, hotel Habana Libre

NOVEMBER 5,
6PM

Subasta "A Viva Voz". Around 50 lots of Cuban modern and contemporary art will be put up for sale through an open auction at Subasta Habana 2014 (Wifredo Lam, Servando Cabrera Moreno, José María Mijares, Ángel Acosta León, Víctor Manuel, René Portocarrero, Eduardo Abela, Cundo Bermúdez, Ruperto Jay Matamoros, Mariano Rodríguez, Loló Soldevilla, Sandú Darié, Rigoberto Mena, Yoan Capote, Iván Capote and Los Carpinteros, among other artists)

Villa Manuela

THROUGH
NOV 17

Lo que no se vio. Lithographs, collages and prints on acetate by Rafael Zarza made from the 1970s to the present day, in which he uses the old recourse of humanizing animals (in this case, cattle) seeking to satirize, to the point of sarcasm, human behavior.



PHOTOGRAPHY

NOVIEMBRE
FOTOGRAFICO
FOTOTECA
DE CUBA
Mercedero 107, Plaza Vieja,
Habana Vieja
EXPOSICIONES
CONFERENCIAS
MESAS REDONDAS
PRESENTACIÓN DE PROYECTOS
REVISIÓN DE PORTAFOLIOS
VISITAS GUIADAS
C.N.F.P.

INAUGURACIÓN

1 de Noviembre

6:00pm



Noviembre fotográfico

Throughout November

Art galleries in Havana

Since 2008, the Fototeca de Cuba, along with the National Visual Arts Council, has organized "Noviembre Fotográfico," an entire month devoted to Cuban photography. The event aims to combine the efforts of all art institutions and galleries in the capital to promote Cuban photography and photographers. The program includes exhibitions in galleries and cultural centers as well as the colloquium Fototeca de Cuba, with lectures, round tables and the presentation of projects. The following is a selection of the exhibitions that will be held in practically all of the districts in Havana.

Fototeca de Cuba

THROUGH NOVEMBER 24	Centenario Osvaldo Salas 1914-2014 exhibits a large selection of photos, most of which have never been published, by one of the masters of Cuban photography.
THROUGH DECEMBER 1	El silencio del cuerpo , by Alejandro Pérez, deals with drag queens, travesties, transsexuals and their spaces.

Sala de la Diversidad

OPENS NOVEMBER 5	De(s)velos exhibits works by Jackselyn Estévez, Jorge García Alonso, Joel Guerra, Abel Correa, Joel P. Ramírez y Chris Erland who offer a panorama of Havana at night.
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Galería Espacio Abierto

OPENS NOVEMBER 6	Be here now , an exhibition by the group Colectivo F8 (Dany del Pino, Javier Bobadilla, Yomer Montejo Harrys, Yangtse Clemente, Lourdes Bermúdez, Yuri Obregón Batard and Yoanny Aldaya Ramírez) and guest photographer Irolan Maroselli, is characterized by a visuality that seeks to disturb the viewer.
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Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales

NOVEMBER 7-30	Eros y Thánato , by Jaime Prendes. El árbol que no me pudieron cortar , by María Cienfuegos.
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Casa de Asia

OPENS NOVEMBER 13	Los últimos Samurai , group show from the Photography Museum of Japan.
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Villa Manuela

OPENS NOVEMBER 14	V..... , by Liudmila & Nelson and Alfredo Sarabia, Jr.
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Palacio de Lombillo

OPENS NOVEMBER 12	Enfoques , by José Manuel Fors and Jorge López Pardo.
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Galería Julio Larramendi

OPENS NOVEMBER 16	La Habana fotográfica y fotogénica by photographers Pilar Rubí and Julio Larramendi.
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Fábrica de Arte Cubano

OPENS NOVEMBER 20	Group show Arte y moda-Trajes Xtremos .
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BALLET

XXIV Festival Internacional de Ballet de La Habana



Through November 7

Mella, Karl Marx and Nacional theaters

Presided over since 1960 by the legendary Alicia Alonso, the International Havana Ballet Festival brings together outstanding international ballet stars, companies and celebrities of the ballet world, as well as critics and entrepreneurs alongside the Cuban National Ballet. More than 200 world premieres to its name and over a thousand guests attest to the significance of the Havana Ballet Festivals in the world of dance. The festival, which is not competitive, focuses on the fraternal meeting of ballet artists from all over the world. This year's festival is dedicated to the 450th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare and to the 250th anniversary of the birth of Cuban poet and playwright Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda.

PROGRAM

Sala Avellaneda. Teatro Nacional de Cuba

NOVEMBER 1, 9PM	<i>La pavana del moro</i> (Eric Vu An An, Celine Marcinno, César Rubio Sancho and Verónica Colombo, Ballet de la Ópera de Niza), <i>Festival de las flores en Genzano</i> (Gudrun Bojesen and Jonathan Chmelensky, Real Ballet Danés), <i>In Light and Shadow</i> (Liu Miaomiao and Li Lin, Ballet de Hong Kong), <i>Sinnerman</i> (Daniel Proietto, Compañía Winter Guests, Noruega), <i>La tempestad</i> (María Riceto and Ciro Tamayo, Ballet Nacional de Uruguay SODRE) and <i>A la luz de tus canciones and Celeste</i> (BNC).
NOVEMBER 2, 9PM	<i>Giselle</i> (Anette Delgado, Dani Hernández, soloists and corps de ballet of the BNC)
NOVEMBER 3, 9PM	<i>Tula</i> (Amaya Rodríguez, soloists and corps de ballet of the BNC)
NOVEMBER 5, 9PM	<i>Las sílfides, Hamlet [scenes]</i> (Anette Delgado, Javier Torres and Camilo Ramos, BNC), <i>Dido abandonada</i> (BNC), <i>Nous sommes</i> (Gretel Morejón and Serafín Castro, BNC), <i>Aus Holberg Zeit</i> (Alicia Amatriam and Alexander Jones, Stuttgart Ballet), <i>Chaikovsky pas de deux</i> (Paloma Herrera, American Ballet Theatre, and Gonzalo García, New York City Ballet).
NOVEMBER 6, 9PM	<i>Prólogo para una tragedia, Caleidos, Gavotte and Percusión para seis hombres</i> (BNC); <i>Tango</i> (Ballet Estable del Teatro Colón, Argentina), <i>Love Fear Loss</i> (Aki Saito and Wim Vanlessen, Ballet Real de Flandes), <i>As You Like It</i> (Carolina Agüero, Ballet de Hamburgo, and Javier Torres, Northern Ballet, England).

Sala Covarrubias. Teatro Nacional de Cuba

NOVEMBER 7, 9PM	<i>Closing gala.</i>
NOVEMBER 2, 5PM	<i>Other Dances (Ashley Bouder and Joaquín de Luz, New York City Ballet), Cantata (Filipa de Castro and Carlos Pinillos, Ballet de Portugal), La sílfide (Gudrun Bojesen and Jonathan Chmelensky, Real Ballet Danés), In Light and Shadow (Liu Miaomiao and Li Lin, Ballet de Hong Kong), Diana y Acteón (Viengsay Valdés, BNC, and Brooklyn Mack, Ballet de Washington), Concert-O (Compañía Linga, Switzerland)</i>
NOVEMBER 3, 5PM	<i>Other Dances (Ashley Bouder and Joaquín de Luz, New York City Ballet), El cisne negro, pas de deux (Ballet de Camagüey), Mia eterna primavera (Claudia D'Antonio and Salvatore Manzo, Ballet del Teatro San Carlo de Nápoles), Espartaco (Yanela Piñera and Camilo Ramos, BNC), Don Quijote, pas de deux (Laura Valentín, Ballet de Puerto Rico, and Luis Valle, BNC), Concert-O (Compañía Linga, Switzerland).</i>
NOVEMBER 2, 5PM	<i>Cascanueces, pas de deux (Laura Valentín, Ballet de Puerto Rico, and Luis Valle, BNC), Pulso romántico (Chanell Cabrera and Yankiel Vázquez, BNC), Diana y Acteón (Carla Vincelli and Juan Pablo Ledo, Ballet del Teatro Colón, Argentina), Carmen (Natalia Berrios and Juan Manuel Ghiso, Ballet del Teatro Municipal de Santiago de Chile), Chaikovsky pas de deux (Aki Saito and Wim Vanlessen, Ballet Real de Flandes), As You Like It (Carolina Agüero, Ballet de Hamburgo, and Javier Torres, Northern Ballet, England), Coppélia, pas de deux (Xiomara Reyes, American Ballet Theatre, and Carlos López, Spain), Preludios en la noche (BNC).</i>

Teatro Mella

NOVEMBER 1/2, 5PM	<i>Asuka, Sombrerísimo, Sortijas and El beso (Ballet Hispánico de Nueva York).</i>
NOVEMBER 4, 5PM	<i>El relato and Synergia (BNC); El corsario, pas de deux (Qiu Yunting and Wu Sicong, Ballet Nacional de China), Otelo (Carolina Agüero, del Ballet de Hamburgo, and Javier Torres, del Northern Ballet, England), Las llamas de París (Grettel Morejón, BNC, and Rodrigo Amarales, Ballet de Cincinatti), Mona Lisa (Alicia Amatriain and Alexander Jones, Ballet de Stuttgart), Aldabal (Compañía Irene Rodríguez, Cuba).</i>
NOVEMBER 6, 5PM	<i>Coppélia, pas de deux (Claudia D'Antonio and Salvatore Manzo, Ballet del Teatro San Carlo de Nápoles), La fierecilla domada, pas de deux (Natalia Berrios and Juan Manuel Ghiso, Ballet de Santiago de Chile), Motley (Qiu Yunting and Wu Sicong, Ballet Nacional de China), Desequilibrio (Viengsay Valdés, BNC), Great Galloping Gottschalk (Xiomara Reyes, American Ballet Theatre, and Carlos López, Spain), Cinco variaciones sobre un tema (Joaquín de Luz, New York City Ballet), Chaikovski pas de deux (Paloma Herrera, American Ballet Theatre, and Gonzalo García, New York City Ballet), Rosas rojas (Centro ProDanza, Cuba).</i>
NOVEMBER 7, 5PM	<i>Las llamas de París (Grettel Morejón, del BNC, and Rodrigo Amarales, del Ballet de Cincinatti), Carmen (Natalia Berrios and José Manuel Ghiso, Ballet de Santiago de Chile), Retrato (Jessie Domínguez and Alfredo Ibáñez, BNC), Tango (Ballet Estable del Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires), Don Quijote, pas de deux (Laura Valentín, Ballet de Puerto Rico, and Luis Valle, del BNC), Brindis por Paganini (Serafín Castro, BNC), Love Fear Loss (Aki Saito and Wim Vanlessen, Ballet Real de Flandes), El corsario, pas de deux (Yanela Piñera and Camilo Ramos, BNC).</i>
NOVEMBER 1, 5PM	<i>La magia de la danza (Yanela Piñera, Dayesi Torriente, Grettel Morejón, Amaya Rodríguez, Sadaise Arencibia, Camilo Ramos, Arián Molina, Ernesto Álvarez, José Losada and Víctor Estévez, BNC, and Filipa de Castro and Carlos Pinillos, Compañía Nacional de Portugal).</i>
NOVEMBER 4, 5PM	<i>El lago de los cisnes (Viengsay Valdés, del BNC, and Ivan Putrov, Ucrania; soloists and corps de ballet of the BNC).</i>
NOVEMBER 6, 5PM	<i>El lago de los cisnes (Yolanda Correa, del BNC, and Joel Carreño, Ballet Nacional de Noruega; soloists and corps de ballet of the BNC).</i>
NOVEMBER 7, 5PM	<i>El lago de los cisnes (Sadaise Arencibia, Amaya Rodríguez and José Losada, soloists and corps de ballet of the BNC).</i>

MUSIC

CONTEMPORARY FUSION



Club Habana Party
Photo Alex Mene

The contemporary fusion and electronic music scene has expanded recently as new bars and clubs have opened party promoters have organized events in parks and public spaces. Good live music venues include Bertolt Brecht (Wed: Interactivo, Sunday: Déjà-vu) and El Sauce (check out the Sunday afternoon Máquina de la Melancolía) as well as the newly opened Fábrica de Arte Cubano which has concerts most nights Thursday through Sunday as well as impromptu smaller performances inside.

In Havana's burgeoning entertainment district along First Avenue from the Karl Marx theatre to the aquarium you are spoilt for choice with the always popular Don Cangreco featuring good live music (Kelvis Ochoas and David Torrens alternate Fridays), Las Piedras (insanely busy from 3am) and El Palio and Melem bar—both featuring different singers and acts in smaller more intimate venues.

Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional

TUESDAYS 5 & 11pm	Arnaldo Rodríguez y su Talismán
WEDNESDAYS 5 pm	Qva Libre
THURSDAYS 5 pm	Elaín Morales

Café Concert El Sauce

THURSDAYS 10 pm	Mucho Ruido
SUNDAYS 5 pm	La Máquina de la Melancolía, with Frank Delgado and Luis Alberto García

Tercera y 8

MONDAYS 11 pm	Baby Lores
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Fresa y Chocolate

SUNDAYS 10 pm	Aceituna Sin Hueso
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Havana Hard Rock

EVERY OTHER FRIDAY	Soul Train, a show of soul music
SAT & SUN 10 pm	Cover bands

Submarino Amarillo

SUNDAYS, 9 pm	Los Kents
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Centro Cultural Bertolt Brecht

WEDNESDAYS 10 pm	Roberto Carcassés and Interactivo
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SALSA / TIMBA

Casa de la Música Habana

WEDNESDAY	11 pm NG La Banda
THURSDAY	11 pm Charanga Latina
FRIDAYS	11 pm Paulo FG y su Élite
SATURDAYS	11 pm Simonet y su Trabuco
SUNDAYS	11 pm El Noro y 1ra Clase

Piano Bar Tun Tun

WEDNESDAYS	11 pm To Mezclao
THURSDAYS	11 pm NG La Banda
SATURDAYS	5 pm Manana Club

Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional

MONDAYS	11 pm Manana Club
FRIDAYS	5 pm Charanga Latina 11 pm Caribe Girls

Tercera y 8

WEDNESDAYS 11 pm	Alain Daniel
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Casa de la Música de Miramar

MONDAYS	11 pm Sur Caribe
TUESDAYS	5 pm Wil Campa y la Gran Unión 11 pm Pedrito Calvo y La Justicia
WEDNESDAYS	5 pm Juan Guillermo 11 pm Adalberto Alvarez y su Son
THURSDAYS	5 pm Manolito Simonet 11 pm J.G y su Grupo
FRIDAYS	5 pm El Niño y La Verdad 11 pm NG La Banda
SATURDAYS	5 pm Tumbao Habana 11 pm Wil Campa y la Gran Unión
SUNDAYS	5 pm Chispa y sus Cómplices 11 pm Azúcar Negra

Jardines del 1830

FRIDAYS 10 pm	Azúcar Negra
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Café Jazz Miramar

Shows: 11 pm - 2am

This new jazz club has quickly established itself as one of the very best places to hear some of Cuba's best musicians jamming. Forget about smoke filled lounges, this is clean, bright—take the fags outside. While it is difficult to get the exact schedule and in any case expect a high level of improvisation when it is good it is very good. A full house is something of a mixed house since on occasion you will feel like holding up your own silence please sign! Nonetheless it gets the thumbs up from us.



Jazz Café

Shows: 10:30pm - 2am

Mellow, sophisticated and freezing due to extreme air conditioning, the Jazz Café is not only an excellent place to hear some of Cuba's top jazz musicians, but the open-plan design also provides for a good bar atmosphere if you want to chat. Less intimate than La Zorra y el Cuervo - located opposite Melia Cohiba Hotel.



La Zorra y el Cuervo

Shows: 10:30pm - 2am

The 'Fox & Crow' offers an intimate environment in this basement venue notably marked by a red English telephone box at its entrance. Top jazz players perform here on a nightly basis. Dark, cramped, low ceilings and an absolute firetrap this has much more atmosphere of the gritty kind than the Jazz Café, which seems too pretty and sterile by comparison.

Asociación Cubana de Derechos de Autor Musical

NOV 20 6 pm	Alexis Bosch (pianist) and Proyecto Jazz Cubano.
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Jardines del teatro Mella

NOV 21 6 pm	Bellita Expósito (pianist & composer) and Jazz Tumbatá
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NOV 22 6 pm	Mezcla
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Café Miramar

SATURDAYS 10 pm	Roberto Carcassés (pianist & composer) and his trio
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UNEAC

NOV 13 2 pm	Peña La Esquina del Jazz hosted by showman Bobby Carcassés.
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Centro Hispano Americano de Cultura

NOV 8 6 pm	Yadasni Portillo (pianist)
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MUSIC BOLERO, FOLKLORE, SON & TROVA

Asociación Yoruba de Cuba

SATURDAYS 4 pm	Los Ibellis (Folkloric group)
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Café cantante, Teatro Nacional

SATURDAYS 5 pm	Arturo Hotman
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Café Concert El Sauce

TUESDAYS 8 pm	Plus Trova with Charly Salgado and guests.
FRIDAYS 11 pm	Frank Delgado

Casa de África

NOV 1 4 pm	Síntesis
NOV 8 3 pm	Obiní Batá

Casa del Alba

NOV 7 4 pm	Trovador Eduardo Sosa & guest group DCoraSon
NOV 27 3 pm	Peña El Canto de Todos, with Vicente Feliú

Casa de la Cultura Comunitaria Mirta Aguirre

NOV 30 5 pm	Get-together with trovador Ireno García.
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Casa de la Cultura de Plaza

NOV 8 7 pm	Peña with Marta Campos.
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Centro Cultural Habaneciendo

SUNDAYS 3 pm	Filin with Fausto Durán and guests
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Casa Memorial Salvador Allende

NOV 28 5 pm	Peña La Juntamenta, with trovador Ángel Quintero.
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Casa de la Música Habana

SUNDAYS 5 pm	Yoruba Andabo
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Casa Simón Bolívar

NOV 9 6 pm	Waldo Mendoza
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Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Jr.

NOV 20 4:30 pm	Marta Campos
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El Jelengue de Areíto

MONDAYS 5 pm	Son del Nene
TUESDAYS 5 pm	Septeto Típico de Sones
WEDNESDAYS 5 pm	Trovando, a meeting with good trova.
THURSDAYS 5 pm	Conjunto de Arsenio Rodríguez
FRIDAYS 5 pm	Rumberos de Cuba
SUNDAYS 5 pm	Timbalaye

Hotel Telégrafo

FRIDAYS 9:30 pm	Ivette Cepeda.
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Hurón Azul, UNEAC

SATURDAYS 9 pm	Bolero Night
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Pabellón Cuba

FRIDAYS 4 pm	Peña Tres Tazas with trovador Silvio Alejandro
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Piano Bar Tun Tun (Casa de la Música de Miramar)

THURSDAYS 5 pm	Peña with trovador Ray Fernández
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Jardines del teatro Mella

NOV 8 6 pm	Dúo Jade
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Instituto de Periodismo José Martí (21 y G)

NOV 7 7 pm	Trova with Vicente Feliú
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CLASSICAL MUSIC



Photo by Ivan Soca

Basílica Menor de San Francisco de Asís

NOV 1 11 am	Concert with the duo Netzaj, made up by Fadey Sanjudo (trumpet) and Paula Suárez (piano), with Abraham Castillo (bassoon) and Susana Venereo (horn).
NOV 8 6 pm	The Orquesta de Cámara de La Habana and the dúo Contraste, conducted by Daiana García, will play works by Leo Brouwer, Eduardo Martín, Carlo Domeniconi, José Victor Gaviñondo and Aldo López-Gavilán.
NOV 15-22 6 pm	Havana Contemporary Music Festival
NOV 24 6 pm	Opening concert of the Italian Culture Week.
NOV 27 6 pm	Performance by pianist Frank Fernández and flutist Niurka González.

Casa del ALBA Cultural

NOV 9 5 pm	En Confluencia, conducted by guitarists Eduardo and Galy Martín.
NOV 16 5 pm	Tarde de Concierto, conducted by soprano Lucy Provedo.
NOV 21 5 pm	De Nuestra América, conducted by pianist Alicia Perea.
NOV 30 5 pm	Concert by guitarist Rosa Matos.

Centro Hispano Americano de Cultura

▶ NOV 1 5 pm	Concert by the National Chorus of Cuba conducted by Digna Guerra.
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Biblioteca Nacional José Martí

▶ SATURDAYS 5 pm	Concerts with vocalists and musicals, and chamber ensembles.
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Teatro Martí

▶ NOV 29 8:30 pm	¡Hola Claudio! (first part parte), tribute to Maestro Claudio Abbado.
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Oratorio San Felipe Neri

▶ NOV 1 4 pm	Saxophonist César López, accompanied by a chamber orchestra conducted by José Antonio Méndez Padrón, will play Cuban music for saxophone and strings.
▶ NOV 8 4 pm	The chamber chorus Vocal Leo, directed by Corina Campos; the chorus Corávila, pianists Jorge Luis Pacheco Campos, Vilma Garriga and Yaliev Álvarez, and soprano Alioska Jiménez, with the art direction of Daniel Noriega, will perform 20th-century music from the United States.

Sala Covarrubias, Teatro Nacional

▶ SUNDAYS 11 pm	Concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra.
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Sala Gonzalo Roig. Palacio del Teatro Lírico Nacional

▶ NOV 30 5 pm	Cuerda Dominical, with guitarist Luis Manuel Molina
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Iglesia de Paula

▶ NOV 8 6 pm	Lecture on organ music in the former province of Las Villas, prior to 1900, by Angélica María Solernau, director of the Ars Nova Esnemble, illustrated by organist Moisés Santiesteban.
▶ NOV 8 7 pm	Organ music concert <i>La música para arpa, tecla y vihuela en tiempos de Carlos V</i> by the Ars Longa Early Music Ensemble.
▶ NOV 15 7 pm	Concert <i>Fides, Spes, Caritas</i> by organist Moisés Santiesteban playing works by Georg Bohm, Johann Sebastian & Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, and Johannes Brahms.
▶ NOV 22 7 pm	Concert on 17th- and 18th-century organ music in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, England and the Netherlands, with Gabriela Mulén and David Pérez.
▶ NOV 27 7 pm	The Italian musicologist Giorgio Monari will lecture on “The Italian Style in the new World” followed by a concert of the same name by the Ars Longa Early Music Ensemble.
▶ NOV 29 7 pm	Concert <i>Un músico bohemio en la corte de Dresde</i> by the Ars Longa Early Music Ensemble.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

XXVII Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de La Habana

November 15-23, 2014



When the echoes of the Leo Brouwer Festival of Chamber Music can still be heard, the Havana Festival of Contemporary Music is just around the corner. This is a healthy attempt to familiarize audiences—who sometimes seem to be tied to the sounds of Romanticism—with the latest production in contemporary concert music. Several venues will host the concerts, lectures, recitals, master classes and workshops during this 27th festival: Basílica Menor del Convento de San Francisco de Asís, Sala Ignacio Cervantes, Sala Ernesto Lecuona of the National Lyrical Theater, Casa de las Américas, Casa del Alba Cultural, Instituto Superior de Arte, Sala Covarrubias del Teatro Nacional.

This year's festival will be dedicated to composer Harold Gramatges on the fifth anniversary of his death, to Juan Blanco and Carlos Fariñas on their 95th and 80th birthdays, respectively, and to composer Héctor Angulo for 60 years of artistic life, to the English composer Benjamin Britten on the centennial of his birth, among other tributes.

The organizing committee, chaired by maestro Guido López-Gavilán, has already confirmed the participation of guitarists Ana María Rosado (Puerto Rico), Efrén Gorrostieta (Mexico), Manuel Lezcano (Cuba-US) and Ricardo Cuadros Pradilla (Colombia); flutists Antipe da Stella (Switzerland) and Tommaso Benciolini (Italy), violist Emanuel

Olivieri (Puerto Rico); pianists Adriano Ambrosini (Italy), Josep-María Balanyà (Spain) and Mariana Alandia (Bolivia); groups Nuevo Ensemble de Segovia, conducted by Flores Chaviano (Spain); American Composers Forum [Patrick Castillo: composer] and Lakeside Chamber Players [Janet Harris: bassoonist and conductor] (United States); and composers Amparo Fabra and Anna Bofill (Spain) and conductor Germán Cáceres (El Salvador).

In addition, the most outstanding Cuban soloists, chamber orchestras and instrumental ensembles will play works of renowned Cuban composers, such as Harold Gramatges, Carlos Fariñas, Leo Brouwer, Alfredo Diez Nieto, Juan Blanco, Guido López-Gavilán, Roberto Valera, Jorge Garcíaporrúa, Héctor Angulo, Juan Piñera, Efraín Amador, Jorge López Marín, José María Vitier, Magalys Ruiz, Luis Manuel Molina, José Loyola, Conrado Monier and Eduardo Martín, as well as pieces by . Pieces by young Cuban composers, such as Víctor García Pelegrín Macías, Javier Iba Rodríguez, Maureen Reyes, Víctor Gavilondo, Wilma Alba Cal, Joe Ott, Waldo Lavaut, Sergio Morales, Arannys Mariño and Ailem Carvajal.

Basílica Menor del Convento de San Francisco de Asís

NOV 15 6 pm	Opening ceremony, Concert by Yanner Rascón (piano), Alberto Rosas (flute), Alba Lidia Shand (piano), Anolan González (viola), Carlos Ernesto Varona (guitar), Ensemble de Viento Nueva Camerata, Schola Cantorum Coralina, Trío Amanecer, Sorimé Vega (flute), string orchestra Solistas de La Habana.
NOV 18 6 pm	Efrén Gorrostieta (guitar-Mexico), Abel Figueredo (piano), Carlos Ernesto Varona (guitar), Arístides Porto (clarinet), Maité Aboy (piano), Anyelin Díaz Oviedo (soprano), Gabriela Mulens (piano), Lucelsy Fernández (soprano), Roselsys Fernández (piano), Maylin Sevilla (violoncello), Roberto Bello López (piano), Carlos Ernesto Varona (guitar), Luis Ángel Chouza (guitar) and Coro Polifónico de La Habana (conducted by Carmen Collado).
NOV 21 1 pm	Mariana Alandía Navajas (piano-Bolivia) and Nuevo Ensemble de Segovia (conducted by Flores Chaviano)
NOV 21 6 pm	Rosario Franco (piano), Dúo Promúsica, Alejandro Calzadilla (clarinet), Janet Harris (bassoon-US) and Orquesta de Improvisación del ISA (conducted by Josep Maria Balanyá)
NOV 22 6 pm	Dúo Promúsica, Tommaso Benciolini (flute-Italy), Adriano Ambrosini (piano-Italy), Coro Entrevozes (conducted by Digna Guerra)

Sala Covarrubias, Teatro Nacional

NOV 16 11 pm	National Symphony Orchestra with guest soloists baritone Eleomar Cuello and guest conductors José Antonio Méndez and Roberto Valera.
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Sala Ignacio Cervantes

NOV 16 6 pm	Emanuel Olivieri (viola-Puerto Rico), Antipe D'Stella (flute-Switzerland), Brenda Lorenzo (piano), Anolan González (viola), Gretchen Labrada (viola), Osvaldo Enríquez (viola), Galy Martín (guitar) and Música Eterna Chamber orchestra (conducted by Guido L. Gavilán)
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Sala Rubén Martínez Villena, UNEAC

NOV 17 4 pm	Mabel González (guitar), Luis Manuel Molina (guitar), Manuel Alejandro Vivar Alonso (marimba), Osmani Hernández (bassoon), Trío de Cañas Móviles and Quinteto Ventus Habana (conducted by Marius Díaz).
NOV 17 6 pm	Mirtha Batista (harp), Joe Ott Pons (guitar), Eilyn Marquetti (percussion), Ensemble de Viento Nueva Camerata (conducted by Haskell Armenteros)

Sala Gonzalo Roig del Palacio del Teatro Lírico Nacional de Cuba

NOV 18 4 pm	Dúo D'accord, Marisel González Valdés (trombone), Nailín Rodríguez Duvergel (piano), Ivette Betancourt (soprano), Claudia Santana (piano), Keren Yamilé García (violin), Víctor García Pelegrín (piano), José Víctor Gavilondo (piano) and Dúo A Piacere.
NOV 20 4 pm	Evelio Tiele (violin), Axel Rodríguez (flute), Teresa Manzanares (piano), Lissette Carrillo (soprano), Víctor García Pelegrín (piano), Alejandro Zúñiga (baritone), Ernesto Chioldes, (tenor), Javier Iha (piano), Ivette Betancourt (soprano), Niurka González (flute), Efraín Amador (lute), Eduardo Corcho Torres and Trío Amanecer
NOV 21 4 pm	Quinteto de viento Assai, Maray Viyella Clausell (clarinet), Quinteto Ventus Habana, Claudia Mora (clarinet), Waldo Lavaut (piano), Grupo Flautas Cardinales and Cuarteto de cuerdas Amadeo Roldán
NOV 22 4 pm	Maite Fernández (soprano), Marita Rodríguez (pianist), Maylin Sevilla (violoncello), Lisbet Sevilla (viola), Anabel Estévez (violin), Lilian Llanes (violin), Dianys Cata (clarinet), Lauren Ríos (oboe), Karla López (flute), Lisbet Sevilla (violin & viola) and chamber chorus Exaudi (conducted by María Felicia Pérez).

Sala Manuel Galich, Casa de las Américas

NOV 19
4 pm

Electro-Acoustic Music Concert.

Sala Che Guevara, Casa de las Américas

NOV 19
6 pm

Guitar concert with Ricardo Cuadros Pradilla (guitar-Colombia), Ana María Rosado (guitar-Puerto Rico), Eduardo Martín (guitar), Susana Frade (guitar), Zuleida Suárez (guitar), Dúo Con-Trastes.

Instituto Superior de Arte

NOV 21
1 pm

Nuevo Ensemble de Segovia (conducted by Flores Chaviano)





El tío Vania

Argos Teatro / Directed by Carlos Celdrán
Fri & Sat, 8pm; Sun, 5pm, Argos Teatro

With the classic of universal theater, *Uncle Vanya*, by Anton Chekhov, Carlos Celdrán aims to dissect today's Cuban ordinary man, who bears a burden of conflicts, contradictions, anguish, frustrations, lost ideals and disagreements.



Fresa y chocolate

Mefisto Teatro
Nov 7 & 8, 8:30pm; Nov 9, 5pm
Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht

Based on the short story *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* de Senel Paz, the play, like the story and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's famous film, is a hymn to acceptance and friendship among persons of different ideologies and sexual preferences.



Rascacielos

Teatro El Público / Directed by Jazz Vilá
Tues, Wed & Thurs, 6pm
Sala Adolfo Llauradó

Rascacielos (Skyscraper), aimed at young audiences, continues playing to packed houses. According to Vilá, coauthor of the play along with Marcos Díaz, "each of the characters is a skyscraper because a person's limit is their thoughts. There are 11 million skyscrapers in Cuba who grow infinitely." Under this premise, "four couples linked by the fate of an artist reveal the essence of their emotions," hidden or explicit violence, the complexities of relationships between people of different ages or sexual preferences, of living together, the lack of communication and intimacy.



Que el diablo te acompañe

Teatro Pálpito / Directed by Ariel Boza
Tues-Thurs, 6pm
Sala teatro El Sótano

Based on the famous literary myth of Don Juan, this pleasant comedy by Cuban playwright Abelardo Estorino delves into a recurring theme on the Cuban stage and society—machismo, and reflects on defects like slander and prejudices that weigh down the fulfillment of man.



Antigonón, un contingente épico

Teatro El Público / Directed by Carlos Díaz
Fri & Sat, 8:30pm; Sun, 5pm, Teatro Trianón

Antigonón, un contingente épico, Carlos Diaz and his troupe, Teatro el Publico's most recent performance involves a trip back to the classics, guided and partnered by Rogelio Orizondo who wrote *Antigonón, un contingente épico* especially for them. Carlos is the most well-known and brilliant Cuban theatre director with a reputation for directing plays with abundant nudity, transvestites and subtle winks at the Cuban national reality. *Antigonón* does not disappoint—go see it for yourself!



The Phantom of the Opera

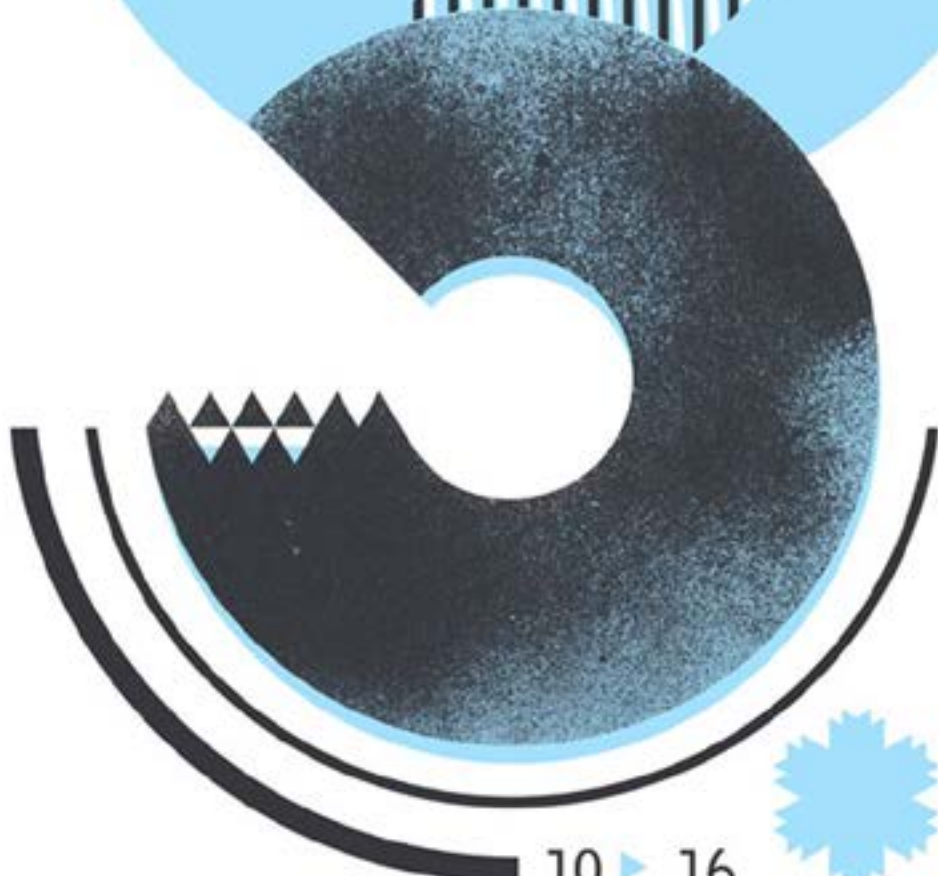
Sat & Sun, 9pm, Anfiteatro de La Habana Vieja

Alfonso Menéndez celebrates his 30th anniversary in show business with *The Phantom of the Opera*, the famous musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Menéndez is responsible for the script, Spanish version and production of the musical. The main roles will be interpreted by Maylú Hernández/Marla Pileta as Christine; José Luis Pérez/Andrés Sánchez as The Phantom; and Rigoberto López/Rogelio Rivas as Raoul, who will be accompanied by a cast of young singers, many of whom are newcomers to the stage. Also participating in the production are the Ballet de la Televisión Cubana and the Ballet de Bertha Casañas.

Jornadas de teatro cubano / noruego en La Habana

ESPACIOS

IBSEN



10 ▶ 16
NOV. 2014





El gato de Lilo

El Arca, Viernes, sábados y domingos, 3pm

Teatro de títeres El Arca

The shadow play *El gato de Lilo* is a free version of Puss in Boots, the popular tale published in 1697 in a collection of eight fairy tales by Charles Perrault called *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*. This was the play with which El Arca Puppet Theater first opened four years ago



Siempre Havana

Circo Nacional de Cuba

Sat & Sun, 4pm & 7pm

Carpa Trompoloco

Brand new circus show for the autumn with exciting acts combined with the vernacular humor that the first circuses in Cuba were based on. The kids will love the clowns, the trained animals, the fire-eaters, as well as other highly skilled acts, such as aerial silk, tumbling and trampoline, juggling, acrobatics, and much more.



La Colmenita
Photo by Alex Mene

EVENTS IN HAVANA



Baila en Cuba

November 23-28, 2014, Havana

This World Meeting of Dancers and Dance Academies will pay tribute this year to Beny Moré and Van Van with the special performances of Van Van, Adalberto Álvarez y su Son, Manolito Simonet y su Trabuco, Maykel Blanco y Salsa Mayor, Havana D' Primera and Elito Revé y su Charangón..

It also offers the chance to get acquainted with salsa through classes and lectures, short courses and choreography workshops conducted by professional dancers and teachers from Cuban art schools. The evenings will be devoted to dance concerts with some of Cuba's best popular music orchestras and performances by guest dance academies.

Workshops will be held in the mornings, salsa and casino lessons in the afternoons and live concerts in the evenings.



© Adam Bernstein - Will Magid gives it his all at Jazz Plaza 2012

Jo Jazz

November 19-22, 2014, Havana

Although some people still see it as a mere preamble to the International Jazz Plaza Festival, Jo Jazz has been gaining in popularity from that distant day in 1998 when the first festival was held on the initiative of the famous musician Chucho Valdés and other enthusiasts.

The ever-increasing numbers of Jo Jazz fans are getting ready to enjoy this competition for young Cuban and international jazz musicians and composers from 16 to 30 years of age. Prize-winners have included musicians who today are popular not only in Cuba but abroad, such as Yasek Manzano, Michel Herrera, Yissy Garcia and Harold López-Nussa.

Besides the competition, the event will include workshops organized by experts on the subject, concerts and jam sessions in various places in Havana. However, one of the most exciting thing for jazz lovers seems to be to predict, in situ, the birth of future Cuban jazz stars.

EVENTS IN HAVANA



The Lucas Music Video Awards

Nov 25 & 29, 2014, 8:30pm

Teatro Karl Marx

Lucas, the Cuban TV show dedicated entirely to national music videos, will have been on the air for 17 years in 2014. Passionately championed by some and flatly rejected by others, almost no one remains indifferent to the show, let alone the annual live television coverage of the awards ceremony in which the winners of the best videos in different categories are announced.

Founded in 1997 by the director and member of a once popular comedy group, Orlando Cruzata, the purpose of Lucas was to sponsor and promote the fledgling Cuban production of music videos. Exhibiting a tight balance between the purely commercial intent of some videos and the proximity to video art of others, between the promotion of Cuban musicians and the promotion of video makers, between the so-called “highbrow” and what is considered “popular,” between those who exalt music videos and those who brand it as banal, the show and its crew have undoubtedly (virtually single handedly) raised the profile of the Cuban nationally produced music video.

The presentation of the music videos nominated for a Lucas Prize will take place on November 25, while the awards ceremony will be held on the 29th. Out of over 330 music videos submitted this year, the ones that have been nominated in several categories are Brujas (Sexto Sentido); Se bota a matar (Buena Fe); Alcé mi voz (Ivette Cepeda) and the internationally popular Bailando (Descemer Bueno, Gente de Zona and Enrique Iglesias). Strong candidates for the People’s Choice include Los Ángeles, SMS, Descemer Bueno-Gente de Zona-Enrique Iglesias, Mayco D’Alma, Yuly y Havana C, Leoni Torres, Chacal y Yakarta, Qva Libre and Buena Fe.

AROUND CUBA



Festival Patria Grande

Nov 14-18

Havana, Cienfuegos and Villa Clara

This first Latin American rock festival to be held in Cuba will foster the meeting of rock musicians and fans in concerts in which heavy metal, contemporary fusion and alternative rock will play the leading role. Participating Latin American bands were selected out of 50 different groups. No Te Va Gustar, popularly shortened to NTVG, from Uruguay was selected as the festival's principal band while Puya from Puerto Rico is the special guest. Horacio González, director of the National Library of Argentina, will bring the exhibition Spinetta, los libros de la buena memoria as a tribute to Luis Alberto Spinetta (1950-2012), considered the father of Argentine rock.

Tribuna Antimperialista, Havana

NOV 14	Opening concert with the performance of all guest bands
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Casa de la Música de Miramar, Havana

NOV 15	Puya (Puerto Rico)
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teatro Terry, Cienfuegos

NOV 15	Ra la Culebra (Colombia), Curva Sur (Venezuela) and La Milixia (Costa Rica)
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Loma del Capiro, Santa Clara

NOV 15	Ra la Culebra (Colombia), Curva Sur (Venezuela), La Milixia (Costa Rica) and No Te Va Gustar (Uruguay)
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Maxim Rock, Havana

NOV 18	Closing concert
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The Marabana Marathon: Run, Charlie, Run

Nov 16, 2014, Start 8am Capitolio

It is dark outside, 5:30am. Wishful thinking that I could simply sleep in and let the Havana marathon wait another year. I have, after, all been signed in various times over the years and never quite made it. Unfortunately, I have a pick-up arranged and the phone wakes me from my slumber to let me know that the car is waiting outside—around the corner, to be precise. We pick up a couple more people (Elena, Rob). I only ever see them drinking so how serious can this be after all?

The start of the race (is a marathon really a race for a middle-aged plodder?) is at the Capitolio. It is an impressive building that gives some legitimacy to the typical Cuban casualness outside. Numbers are pinned onto shirts. The more enthusiastic push forward to get in the front of the pack. I am in no rush: my training schedule fell off a cliff some months ago, replaced by an acceleration of drinking and late nights. Even my associates are now looking professional, limbering up, stretching, rubbing oils and potions, drinking energy drinks. I guess that a pre-race cigarette would not be de rigueur.

We are into the countdown: 10, 9, 8... and the race begins. As I say to my kids, 'Hup 2, 3, 4'. It is a gentle start down the wide Prado Avenue (hints of Barcelona's Prado but only the faintest hint) down onto the Malecón. There is sufficient space now to accelerate past people. We rush past a family

with two six-year-olds in tow, cruise past the man with one leg on crutches and then are locked into a bitter battle to get past some members of the female Cuban walking team. Onwards along the gorgeous ocean boulevard. There is a loud cheer for an Italian's call of nature into the sea and another one for the same Cuban walking team—"Oye, linda, ¿qué vas a hacer más tarde?"—from the Cuban lads.

Stepping up the pace now, the fading colonial facades rush by. Well, crawl by would be a better description. The first water break, cheap plastic bags of water and squash, the 5 km mark. So far, so good. Bystanders start asking for the squash bags. This must be the only marathon in the world where the runners give refreshments to the spectators. The sun is starting to come up; it is going to be a long morning.

At the end of the Malecón, we go around the 1830 Restaurant and I see my running partner, Michaela, accelerate away into the blue yonder. We tack back into the city and up one of the few (and pretty moderate) climbs up 10th Street heading to the Charles Chaplin cinema. Around me are a motley collection of runners. It is difficult not to be depressed with my own running abilities when I am running alongside people who seem more like they are running for a bus than finely honed athletes. It is Cuba, so perhaps I should not be too surprised that running gear is a little basic.

At the 10 km mark, a flush of satisfaction rushes through me as many people wrap up their participation with a 20-meter sprint. I am in for the long haul(ish). We are running down 26th Avenue. This is a much less attractive part of the city. Vedado into Nuevo Vedado past the seriously downbeat city zoo. Little old ladies shout out for agua/jugo. Bags go flying in their direction—I don't look. I am still annoyed that the guy with holes in his shoes who keeps stopping, always manages to get back ahead of me. He looks like he might be a rubbish collector on a regular round.

Down to the Ciudad Deportiva (a sports complex with a large indoor stadium which hosts volleyball, basketball, boxing events, etc.) situated alongside a busy roundabout. The traffic has not really been stopped as much as temporarily paused as we go by. It makes me feel guilty as the line of cars waits for us to struggle across. And around the associated sports fields of the sports complex. This now feels like the back of beyond. A distinct lack of glamour. I am cheered up though as I pass a friend who justifies his crawl by a requirement to keep his girlfriend company who is walking now. The 15 km mark goes by; I wonder how far it is that we really have to go. I am committed to a half marathon, which means there can't be so much more left. I still haven't collapsed and that must be a good sign although my shirt has come off much to the outrage of Cuban officials. We are coming up a slow climb to Plaza de la Revolución—that great barren expanse in the heart of the city that hosts the annual Labour Day parade into which a million people regularly pack. Not now, I am with a steady stream of runners, nothing more.

And now it is the home stretch through the rundown commercial district of Central Havana. Past the downbeat Carlos III shopping mall and back towards the Capitolio, which is present in the distance. A somewhat surprising burst of speed now has me passing people left and right. The other runners appear a little bemused now by the charging, puffing elephant roaring up behind them into the final 2 kilometres. This is feeling better.

Shirt back on to cross the finish line, down to the last 100 meters and ultimate triumph is mine as I thunder past Michaela, my original running partner. She is devastated. A forlorn scream of "No!" is left behind as the finish line approaches. I guess that I was her one-legged guy. After all, if the middle-aged fat bloke beats me, what is left?

I look anxiously for my kids to cheer me onto the line. Nothing. Still, 2 hrs and 12 minutes have passed and I have finished for the day. Funnelled into a cold building, we are awarded gold medals and a little gift bag. Out into the bright sunshine to see the finish of the marathon proper. These guys are serious runners who have been around the course twice in only a few minutes more than it took me to go around once. And the tall lithe Cuban runner crosses the finish line easily with a bounce in his step. Other runners start round for their second lap—I do not envy them. Traffic has now resumed and a second lap looks like a lesson in masochism as the sun beats down.

I have a few missed calls from my wife—I guess she was not so convinced I would finish and was waiting to rescue me on a breakdown call. I am out of here, straight to my physio to inspect the damage.



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Hotel Nacional:

Encapsulating a nation's history

by Jill Worrall



A sea breeze can rouse the palms that stud the Hotel Nacional gardens in Havana to only a desultory rustle. It's a steamy evening. Even the waiters, with crisp white shirts and bowties are betraying a hint of sweat-beaded foreheads—but then they are constantly on the run, trays laden with drinks and the inevitable cigars. In the corner of the terrace a quartet of singers is harmoniously enticing hotel guests to salsa. The three girls are in little black dresses (and in Cuba, little really does mean the bare minimum of skirt), black stilettos and black homburgs.

Tonight probably rates as just an ordinary evening at the Hotel Nacional. The world's tallest man has just crossed the Moorish style lobby with its black and white flagstone floor. He is stooped and walking as if it is painful to do so; Turk Sultan Kosen parts a sea of rubber-neckers pointing their mobile phone cameras at him, dazzling him with flashes from their digitals. No one says hello to him.

The Hotel Nacional's terrace is u-shaped, the open-ended side facing the Caribbean. It's normally a place of subdued light but there's a film crew here setting up blindingly white lights around the round pool and fountain in the garden.

Nestled photogenically beside it on a park bench is—I'm told by a passing waiter—one of Cuba's most famous leading men. Appropriately perhaps, he is

draped around a suitably decorative leading lady. A small band of Cuban musicians strolls past—disconcertingly, they strum, blow and croon but there is no sound. They mime for take one, take two...

The Hotel Nacional is probably Cuba's most famous hotel so film crews barely raise a flutter of interest among the staff and Cuban clientele. What does stop almost everyone in their tracks is the arrival of a young lady in a tiny red lycra dress that appears to have been spray painted onto her body. There is, as my grandmother would have noted, no room for a hankie.

She struts past on heels that would give orthopaedic surgeons an attack of the vapours. All around the terrace, drinks hang suspended between lips and tables. Even the waiters forget where they were going. The temperature on the terrace seems to increase perceptibly... and then she is gone.

She's lost in the melee in the lobby of tall Turks, dishevelled Canadian tourists and businessmen trying to find wifi coverage on their laptops. In other hotels this might have gone down as a memorable night but for the Hotel Nacional it is nothing. It was built in 1930—eight storeys of Art Deco, Spanish Moorish, neo-classical luxury on a spot where, hundreds of years earlier, the Spanish colonists had defended their territory from passing pirates and British invaders.



The two were not mutually exclusive as Cuban waters had been frequented in the 17th century by buccaneers—pirates given a doubtful form of legitimacy by the English government as a cheap way to protect its interests on the high seas.

Among them were Sir Frances Drake and the notorious Henry Morgan. The cannons from this era of raid and invasion are still in situ in the grounds and have Unesco protection.

For the next three decades after its opening, the Nacional was the playground of the rich, famous and infamous. This was the era when Cuba was regarded as America's rather risqué, on-the-edge playground. Havana was the place for casinos, raunchy cabarets and beautiful call girls and the Hotel Nacional was a one-stop shop for all three.

But the hotel has always been much more than a landmark with a colourful past. During the 1930s, senior army officers holed up in the hotel during a revolt against the then-ruler of Cuba. Among those bombarding the hotel was Fulgencio Batista, who became president himself in 1940 and then again in the 1950s, when he staged a coup with the backing of the US and began an era of violent oppressive dictatorship.

It was during the Batista era that the Mafia began to frequent the Hotel Nacional. In 1946 the hotel was closed to the regular guests to provide privacy for the US's most powerful and notorious gangsters including Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano and their families.

In an attempt to provide a patina of respectability to the gathering, it was disguised as a Frank Sinatra concert. Lanksy even managed to persuade the hotel's owners at the time to give him part ownership. He also had the lease on the casino which, rumour has it, at one point had a turnover larger than the biggest casinos in Las Vegas.

By the end of the 1950s the Hotel Nacional's guest list had included Edward VIII, Errol Flynn, Rita Hayworth, Fred Astaire, the Duke of Windsor, Ernest Hemingway, John Wayne, Walt Disney and Winston Churchill.

Among the less well publicised guests during the 50s was a young Cuban called Fidel Castro, who formed a revolutionary cell in the hotel. By 1959 he and his fellow revolutionaries, including the legendary Che Guevara (who later used to watch chess matches in the hotel), had overthrown Batista and were running the country.

Fidel closed the casino down in 1960. The hotel was restored and reopened to the public in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which took with it one of Cuba's main income streams.

Since then, the guest list has grown to include Arnold Schwarzenegger, Robert de Niro Mohammad Ali, Hugo Chavez, Kevin Costner, Jimmy Carter and Kate Moss. Photographs of the notables line the walls of the corridors leading to the basement restaurant where a chef was flat-out making pancakes for a group of American college students—something of an anachronism given most Americans are banned from visiting Cuba.

It was President JF Kennedy who imposed an embargo on Cuba in 1961 after the Bay of Pigs fiasco and it has been in place ever since, preventing not only trade between the two, but also tourism. There are only a few exceptions, for some students and academics etc.

The ludicrousness of this ban can't fail to hit one after just a few days in Cuba. Life in the bubble of the Hotel Nacional is far removed from that of most Cubans, who face shortages of just about everything (there is still rationing of essentials such as cooking oil, rice and soap to ensure the poorest in society don't miss out), horse-drawn transport is still widespread and many rural houses still have dirt floors.

How Cuba today could be regarded as any kind of threat to the most powerful nation on earth is beyond belief. I suspect that one of the real reasons it has continued for so long is that previous American administrations couldn't bear the thought that so many Cubans still hold on to their revolutionary ideals and haven't rushed pell-mell into the embrace of capitalism.

Fidel remains a thorn in their sides—even though he is now largely a figurehead—and Che's mantra of *Hasta La Victoria Siempre* (Onwards to Victory) is still emblazoned on house walls all over Cuba.

Things might be about to change however. There are signs that President Obama may be considering relaxing travel restrictions on American citizens wanting to visit Cuba. When this happens—watch out, a longer pancake queue at the Hotel Nacional will be the least of the changes.

If all that comes to pass, no doubt the Nacional will be in line for another spruce up. At present, Cuba's straitened financial situation has meant the hotel has not been scrubbed clean of its past. The lobby looks little changed, the bar where jazz musicians play before dinner still has its mirrored wall and curved sweep of polished wood. Even the bathroom fittings look original (the creaking plumbing they are attached to almost certainly is).

If change comes to the Nacional I won't go back—better to remember it when the ghosts of the gangsters, the glamorous show girls and political intrigue still seem to waft along its corridors.

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Havana's Botanical Gardens: Escape from the city

by Victoria Alcalá

The Botanical Gardens are something of a trek, located out by Parque Lenin. This should not put you off, though, since this is a gorgeous place with lots to see. Perhaps it does not reach the level of Kew Gardens in London and the expanse is huge and run-down in part but by the same token, this offers tranquility, and is a great place to take the family and explore. The greenhouses are a real highlight, housing everything from arid cacti to tropical celebrations. The Japanese garden is both beautiful and the place where you can get the best value lunches in Havana. Bear in mind that in the summer this becomes a cauldron of heat...

A visitor to Havana soon discovers that the city is fun-loving and lively. However, not everyone is aware of the fact that a few kilometers from the city center there are “dead spots” where one can relax from car, bus and truck horns that seem to go off for any reason; the endless chatter; and the music that seems to follow passersby from street to street and house to house.

One of these refuges of silence is the Jardín Botánico Nacional (JBN), or National Botanical Garden, (Carretera El Rocío, km 3 ½, Calabazar), very close to Parque Lenin and just across the road from EXPOCUBA, the country's largest exhibition center.

The garden began to be built in 1968, and although it was officially inaugurated in January 1989, it opened to the public on March 24, 1984 thanks to the direct participation of workers, students and professors of the University of Havana, and students of technical institutes, who worked intensively for many months. Following a master





phytogeographic zone contains tropical trees from Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, Australia and Oceania. One of the most important attractions in the JBN is the Palmetum, a collection of palm trees covering an area of 50 hectares where 158 species in 55 genera of palm grow. Another significant collection is the Archaic Forest with plants that have survived to this day from the era of dinosaurs, such as coniferous trees, or prior to that, such as magnolias.

Located in the phytogeographic area of Southeast Asia is the Japanese Garden that covers an area of five hectares. The garden, which was a gift from the Japanese Government to the Cuban people, received a 20-million-yen contribution from the Japan World Exposition Commemorative Association, and was the work of the famous Japanese landscape architect Yoshikuni Araki (1921–1997). Conceived as a “kaiyū-shiki-teien,” or promenade or stroll garden, it has the typical elements of Japanese landscape gardens—beaches of stones (which were brought from Pinar del Río and Sancti Spiritus provinces and Santa María and

plan rigorously established on scientific bases, they planted trees and grass, and developed the phytogeographic zones and special collections in the approximately 600 hectares that are home to about 4,000 identified species, and almost 150,000 specimens.

Inherited from the former Botanical Garden of Havana, which used to be located in the grounds of the Quinta de los Molinos, the Garden's Herbarium is a collection of nearly 200,000 specimens of plants and fungi from Cuba, and some collections from Mexico, French Guyana, Ecuador, Spain, Germany, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Venezuela, Virgin Islands and Florida, USA. The Herbarium, as well as the Scientific Collection of living plants, are extremely valuable to a specialized audience and are available to scientists, students and researchers.

Plants are organized into two main collections: the indoor collections with over 600 species, 250 genders and 90 families, and the field collections in which plants are divided into two main areas, the Cuban phytogeographic zone and the international phytogeographic zone.

The indoor collections are housed in three pavilions that are each nine meters tall. The first pavilion, known as the Crystal House, contains plants from tropical and subtropical arid regions, including the very popular cactuses. The second greenhouse exhibits plants from tropical rainforests in an environment of high humidity and 50% light. And the third pavilion is dedicated to the lush vegetation from the mountain tropical rainforests, as well as a number of plants of economic interest, such as cocoa, coffee, black pepper and vanilla, in an environment of high humidity and 25% light. Outside the greenhouses, there is a beautiful collection of ornamental aquatic and terrestrial plants.

The Cuban phytogeographic zone contains a representation of the vegetation that can be found on the island with approximately 3,500 species of plants native to Cuba, while the international



Santa Cruz del Norte beaches); water in the form of a cascade and a lake, the latter with multicolored carps; gravel walks; a simplified replica of a traditional Buddhist pagoda; and a stone lantern, which is meant to symbolize the illumination of one's path through life.

In keeping with the technique of “shakkei,” or borrowed scenery, the garden takes advantage of views outside the garden, in this case the nearby hills known as Tetas de Managua as visual axis to the contemplation of the garden. In addition, by means of the “mie-gakure” technique, the visitor can see the whole landscape from any point in the garden.

As well as plants from Southeast Asia, specimens of *Pino Macho* were used in lieu of Japanese pines that do not grow in tropical climates, and *Cassia nodosa*, whose pale pink flowers suggest cherry blossoms. Bamboo and a combination of evergreens and deciduous trees were used, allowing a sort of carpet of ferns and mosses to develop. The Japanese Garden is an invitation to tranquility and inspiration while enjoying its natural beauties.

Although there are several Cuban Creole and international menu restaurants in the Botanical Garden, many people prefer to eat at El Bambú,

the popular eco-restaurant next to the Japanese Garden. The all-you-can-eat lunch buffet serves soups and salads, root vegetables, beans, rice, mushrooms, leafy vegetables, eggplant caviar, plus hibiscus and other flowers and plants that one would never consider edible, pastas, delicious toppings, sauces and condiments, most of which are grown in surrounding areas within the Botanical Garden, all cooked on a wood-fuelled fire or solar cookers. Of course, there's no shortage of fresh fruit and juices, teas, desserts and delicate flavored ice cream sweetened with honey, with no milk or cream.

Very near the exit of the Botanical Garden, a small shop sells ornamental plants grown in the Garden's nurseries and laboratories. The best way to enjoy the Garden is through the guided train tour that takes around two hours and explores the entire grounds of the Jardín Botánico Nacional with a 30-minute stop at the Japanese Garden.

This is a place that nature lovers will thoroughly enjoy, thanks to the park's abundance of endemic plant species and foreign flora from all around the globe, and beautifully preserved Cuban species.

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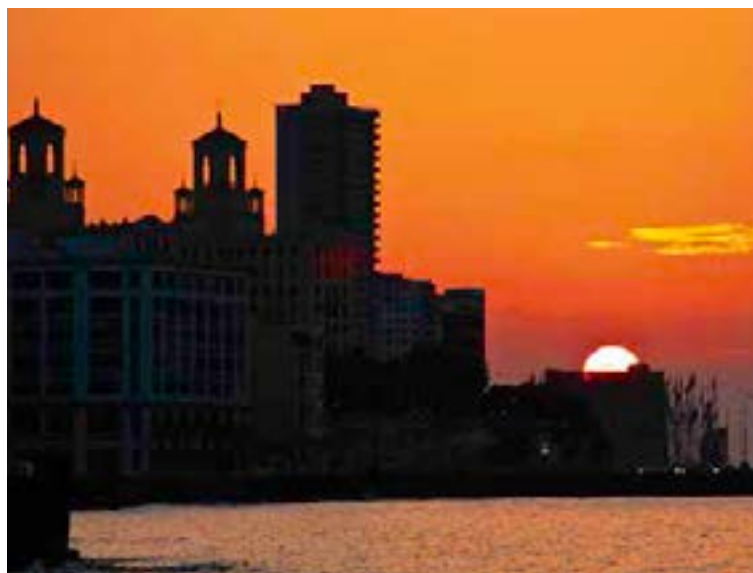
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Cuba Education Tours sends regular Americans to Cuba on affordable and legal people-to-people cultural encounters. Our tours rank tops in scope of activities, amenities, costs and traveler satisfaction. And in wall-to-wall fun!

What's the difference between Cuba Education Tours and the really expensive island trips offered by U.S. tour operators?

All U.S. tour operators use the same island services as we do. They have to. All travel services in Cuba are government owned. We all

offer the same quality hotels, restaurants, guides, site visits, and transportation. Our U.S. competitors pay the same costs we do. Yet they charge you \$1000s more. That's not fair.

Here's the difference.

For 16 years we've worked to promote understanding and friendship between North Americans and Cubans. We are motivated by principles of social justice and solidarity – not profits. With us, people come first.

Check us out CubaEducationTours.com

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Rated A+ by the Better Business Bureau. Member of the Cuban Ministry of Tourism. BC Consumer Protection Insurance Fund 34338.



Center for Cuban Studies

Imagine Cuba

let us make it real for you

- ▶ **CUBA ENGAGES ALL OF YOUR SENSES.** With us, you'll see the art, the architecture, the beauty of the land. Hear rhythms that keep your body moving. Taste the flavors of Spain, Africa, the Caribbean. Smell the food, the flowers, the sea. Best of all, the people will touch you with their warmth.
- ▶ **ON ONE OF OUR CUSTOM TOURS,** you can focus on the arts, architecture, economics, politics, health care, education, the environment, or organic farming. You'll learn from leading experts in each field. You'll spend hours in artists' studios, in people's homes and with them at work and at play – in Havana, Pinar del Rio, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Camaguey, Matanzas, Santiago de Cuba and other destinations.
- ▶ **WE'VE BEEN DOING LEGAL TRIPS TO CUBA LONGER THAN ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION IN THE U.S.** For 40 years we've kept the doors open between our two countries and we've explored every corner of Cuba on our trips, building relations with individuals and institutions through all of the ups and downs of U.S. travel to Cuba. Our access to Cuba's movers and shakers is unique.

Our itineraries vary with every trip. We also do custom trips in collaboration with schools and universities, arts organizations and affinity groups, many of whom use these trips as fundraisers for their organizations.

UPCOMING 2014 trips

AFRICAN ROOTS OF CUBAN CULTURE

WITH THE MONTCLAIR NJ ART MUSEUM

JULY 26-AUGUST 2 *Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Havana*

JULY 26-AUGUST 6 *Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Havana, Santiago de Cuba*

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

JUNE 28-JULY 6 *Havana, Matanzas, Trinidad, Cienfuegos*

AUGUST 23-31 *Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Havana, Matanzas*

THE ARTS AND HISTORY WITH OBSIDIAN ARTS

JULY 7-17 *Havana, Matanzas, Santiago de Cuba*

CUBAN ART SPACE 15TH ANNIVERSARY ART TRIP

MAY 24-JUNE 6 *Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Santa Clara, Cayo Santa Maria, Camaguey, Santiago de Cuba, Holguin*

LIMITED TO 20 PERSONS

CUBA UPDATE

APRIL 12-19 *Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad*

JUNE 14-21 *Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad*

JULY 25-AUGUST 1 *Havana, other cities TBD*

OCTOBER 25-NOVEMBER 1 *Havana plus day trips outside*

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP with Joe Guerrero

MAY 23-JUNE 2 *Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Santa Clara, Remedios, Pinar del Rio*

Now is the time to explore what is unique about Cuba

It won't last forever, but 50 years of a U.S. embargo has kept Cuba remarkably CUBAN. Traveling with the Center is the best way to see Cuba NOW.

For information or to join one of our tours: www.cubaupdate.org traveltocubanow@gmail.com 212.242.0559

CENTER FOR CUBAN STUDIES AND THE CUBAN ART SPACE

231 West 29th Street, 401, New York NY 10001 HOURS Monday-Friday 11-7 Saturday 12-6, and by appointment



Nov 27 - Rememberance for the eight medical students executed in 1871

November 27 marks a dark event in Cuban history. Back in 1871, in colonial Cuba, six first-year medicine students were falsely accused of having desecrated the tomb of a Spanish journalist and subsequently were unjustly charged and convicted of a crime they never committed.



On November 24, seeing that their Anatomy professor was late to class, the eight students decided to visit the nearby Espada Cemetery. There, they walked down its streets, picked a flower in front of the offices and rode on the wagon in which they took corpses to their anatomy class—innocent pranks of these boys whose ages ranged from 16 to 21. The vexed Spanish guard on duty that day decided to make a false denunciation saying that the boys had scratched the glass on the tomb of Spanish journalist Gonzalo Castañón. They and the rest of their class (although the latter were never even near the cemetery) were arrested and processed.

Barely three days later, on November 27, at 1:00 pm, the Council signed the sentence which stated the names of the students who were to die, and around 4:00 pm, they entered the chapel, each holding a crucifix in their tied hands. They were taken to the esplanade at La Punta where the execution would take place. On their knees and with their backs to their executioners, the innocent students were executed in pairs by firing squad. To add insult to injury, the bodies were taken to a place outside the city walls and thrown in a common grave. Their families were not allowed to claim their dead

and give them a Christian burial, and their death certificates were never recorded in any church.

The other students of their class also received unjust punishments: 11 were sentenced to six years in prison, 20 to four years, and four to six months, plus their possessions were all subject to civil liability as determined by law.

This fateful event, which took place three years after the beginning of the Ten Years War for independence, was actually an exemplary lesson by Spain in face of the strength the rebels had obtained during those years. The Spanish Crown wanted to make clear how far an agonizing system was prepared to go to retain its power. Both the crime as well as the subsequent proceedings only contributed to reinforce the spirit of independence among the Cuban people.

This is why every year, medicine students and youth in general gather at the steps of the University of Havana and march down to the memorial that surrounds the wall where the eight medicine students were executed in 1871.

[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)



Havana's best places to eat

La Guarida

El Atelier CA★5

EXPERIMENTAL FUSION

Beautiful décor, interesting menu.

Calle 5 e/ Paseo y 2, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-836-2025

La California CA★5

CUBAN-CREOLE/INTERNATIONAL

Beautiful C19 colonial building. Great fresh pastas.

Calle Crespo #55 e/ San Lázaro y Refugio, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-863 7510

Le Chansonnier CA★4+

CONTEMPORARY FUSION

Stylish & contemporary with good food. Expensive.

Calle J #257 e/ Línea y 15, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-832-1576

Il Divino CA★4+

INTERNATIONAL

Set in huge gardens outside town. Great for the kids.

Calle Raquel, #50 e/ Esperanza y Lindero, Arroyo Naranjo
☎(+53) 7-643-7734

La Guarida CA★5+

INTERNATIONAL

Justifiably famous. Follow in the footsteps of Queen of Spain

Concordia #418 e/ Gervasio y Escobar, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-866-9047

Nautilus CA★5

FRENCH/MEDITERRANEAN

Imaginative, tasty and innovative menu.

Calle 84 #1116 e/ 11 y 13, Playa.
☎(+53) 5-237-3894

Río Mar CA★5

INTERNATIONAL

Contemporary décor. Wonderful sea-view.

Ave. 3raA y Final #11, La Puntilla, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-209-4838

Bella Ciao CA★4+

HOMELY ITALIAN

Great service, good prices. A real home from home.

Calle 19 y 72, Playa
☎(+53) 7-206-1406

La Casa CA★5

CONTEMPORARY FUSION

VIP service. The Robaina family place. Thurs Sushi night.

Calle 30 #865 e/ 26 y 41, Nuevo Vedado
☎(+53) 7-881-7000

Cocina Lilliam CA★4+

INTERNATIONAL

Beautiful garden setting, quite posh.

Calle 48 #1311, e/ 13 y 15, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-209-6514

D. Eutimia CA★5+

CUBAN/CREOLE

Absolutely charming. Great food.

Callejón del Chorro #60C, Plaza de la Catedral, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7 8611332

Habana Mia 7 CA★5

INTERNATIONAL GOURMET

Endless summer nights. Excellent food and service.

Paseo #7 altos e/ 1ra y 3ra. Vedado
☎(+53) 7-830-2287

Nazdarovie CA★5+

SOVIET

Fascinating Soviet decor. Beautiful view, great food.

Malecon #25, 3rd floor e Prado y Carcel, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-860-2947

San Cristóbal CA★5+

CUBAN/CREOLE

Deservedly popular. Consistently great food. Kitsch décor.

San Rafael #469 e/ Lealtad y Campanario, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-860-9109

Café Bohemia CA★5

CAFÉ

Bohemian feel. Great sandwiches, salads & juices

Calle San Ignacio #364, Habana Vieja

Casa Miglis CA★5

SWEDISH-CUBAN FUSION

Oasis of good food & taste in Centro Habana

Lealtad #120 e/ Ánimas y Lagunas, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-864-1486

El Cocinero CA★5

INTERNATIONAL

Industrial chic alfresco rooftop with a buzzing atmosphere

Calle 26, e/ 11 y 13, Vedado.
☎(+53) 7-832-2355

Esperanza CA★4+

CUBAN FUSION

Intimate, idiosyncratic & charming (not cheap).

Calle 16 #105 e/ 1ra y 3ra, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-202-4361

Iván Chef CA★5

SPANISH

Brilliantly creative and rich food.

Aguacate #9, esq. a Chacón, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-863-9697

Opera CA★5

INTERNATIONAL

Homely & intimate environment. Quality food in a beautiful setting.

Calle 5ta #204 e/ E y F, Vedado
☎(+53) 5-263-1632
(+53) 8-31-2255

Santy CA★5+

SUSHI/ORIENTAL

Authentic fisherman's shack servicing world-class sushi.

Calle 240A #3023 esq. a 3ra C, Jaimanitas
☎(+53) 5-286-7039

Café Laurent CA★4+

SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN

Beautiful penthouse restaurant with lovely terrace.

Calle M #257, e/ 19 y 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-831-2090

Chanchullero CA★5

SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN

Fabulous value hole in the wall tapas. Trendy.

Teniente Rey #457 bajos, Plaza del Cristo, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-872-8227

Corte Príncipe CA★5+

ITALIAN

Sergio's place. Simple décor, spectacular food.

Calle 9na esq. a 74, Miramar
☎(+53) 5-255-9091

La Fontana CA★4+

INTERNATIONAL

Consistently good food, attentive service. Old school.

Calle 46 #305 esq. a 3ra, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-202-8337

El Litoral CA★5+

INTERNATIONAL

Watch the world go by at the Malecón's best restaurant.

Malecón #161 e/ K y L, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-830-2201

Piccolo CA★4+

ITALIAN

Kitsch pizza place with animals. Great after the beach.

Calle 5ta A #50206 e/ 502 y 504, Guanabo, Habana del Este
☎(+53) 7-796-4300

Starbien CA★5+

SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN

Fabulous food and great service in the heart of Vedado.

Calle 29 #205 e/ B y C, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-830-0711

La Guarida

www.laguarida.com

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Contemporary fusion

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Authentic, charming and intimate atmosphere in Cuba's best known restaurant. Great food, professional. Classy.

Don't Miss Uma Thurman, Beyoncé or the Queen of Spain if they happen to be dining next to you.

Concordia #418 e/ Gervasio y Escobar, Centro Habana.

☎ (+53) 7-866-9047

El Litoral

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food International

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Quality décor, good service and great food. Best new place recently opened.

Don't Miss Drinking a cocktail at sunset watching the world go by on the Malecón

Malecón #161 e/ K y L, Vedado.

☎ (+53) 7-830-2201

Santy

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Sushi

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Fabulous sushi, wonderful ambience overlooking fishing boats heading out to sea. World class.

Don't miss Getting a reservation here.

Calle 240A #3023 esq. 3raC, Jaimanitas

☎ (+53) 5-286-7039

Opera

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food International

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Best for Homely & Intimate environment Quality food in a beautiful setting.

Don't miss Fresh pasta, vegetarian dishes and quail.

Calle 5ta #204 e/ E y F, Vedado

☎ (+53) 5-263-1632 / (+53) 8-31-2255

La California

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Cuban-Creole/International

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Beautiful C19 colonial building. Popular place with quality food and great service. Love the fresh pastas.

Don't Miss The interesting history of the neighbourhood, where Chano Pozo (legendary Afro-Cuban jazz percussionist) hung out.

Calle Crespo #55 e/ San Lázaro y Refugio, Centro Habana

☎ (+53) 7-863-7510

Casa Miglis

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



www.casamiglis.com

Style of food Swedish-Cuban fusion

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for The beautifully designed interior, warm ambience and Miglis's personality create the feeling of an oasis in Central Havana.

Don't Miss Chatting with Mr Miglis. The Skaargan prawns, beef Chilli and lingonberries.

Lealtad #120 e/ Ánimas y Lagunas, Centro Habana

☎ (+53) 7-864-1486

Habana Mía 7

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



Style of food International gourmet

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Stylish and fresh décor give a Mediterranean feel for long endless summer nights. Excellent food and service.

Don't miss Watching the world go by on the lovely terrace overlooking the ocean.

Paseo #7 altos e/ 1ra y 3ra, Vedado

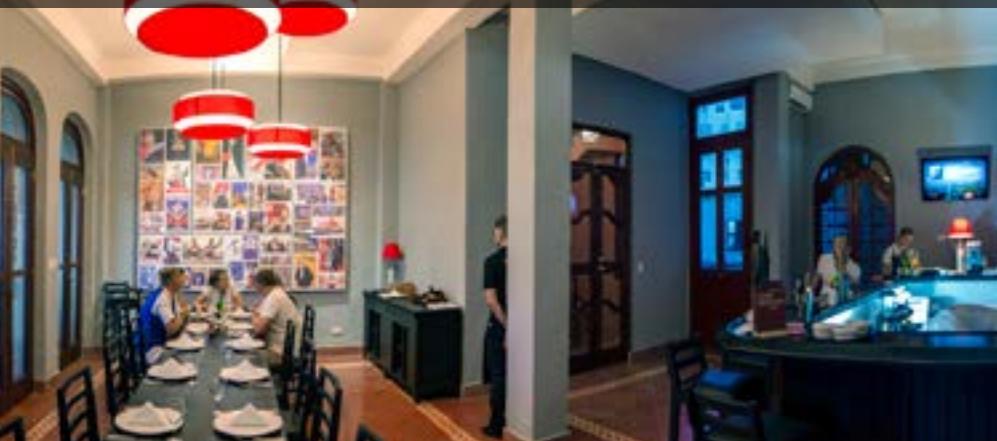
☎ (+53) 7-830-2287

www.habanamia7.com

Nazdarovie

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Soviet

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Getting a flavor of Cuban-Soviet history along with babuska's traditional dishes in a classy locale.

Don't miss Vodka sundowners on the gorgeous terrace overlooking the malecon.

Malecon #25 3rd floor e/ Prado y Carcel, Centro Habana

☎ (+53) 7-860-2947

contents



Style of food Experimental fusion

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Value ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Interesting menu, beautiful building with great décor and service.

Don't miss Dinner on the breezy terrace during summer.

Calle 5ta e/ Paseo y 2, Vedado

☎ (+53) 7-836-2025

atelierdedecuba@yahoo.es

Café Bohemia



Style of food Café

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★

Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Bohemian feel. Great sandwiches, salads & juices

Don't miss Thursday night happy hour (7-9pm)

Ground floor of the Palacio de la Casa del Conde de Lombillo, Calle San Ignacio #364, (Next to Factoría Plaza Vieja)

bohemia.plazavieja@gmail.com

Corte del Príncipe



Style of food Italian

Cost Expensive

Type of place Paladar (private)

Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Spectacular homemade Italian pastas. Cozy atmosphere, excellent service.

Worst for Getting a reservation. Not cheap (although its worth it)

9na esq. 74, Playa

☎ 5-255-9091

La Casa



Style of food International/sushi

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★

Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Value ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Warm hospitality and openness from the four generations of the Robaina family. Quality food.

Don't miss Thursday night sushi night. The Piña Colada.

Calle 30 #865 e/ 26 y 41, Nuevo Vedado.

☎ (+53) 7-881-7000

alerobaina@restaurantelacasacuba.com

OPERA

RESTAURANTE

OPERA

- ★ *Best for Homely & Intimate enviroment*
- ★ *Quality food in a beautiful setting*
- ★ *Don't miss: Fresh pasta, vegetarian dishes and quail*

Dinner: 8:00 PM - 12:00 AM

Lunch by reservation only

Closed on Tuesday

Address: Calle 5ta No. 204 e/ E y F. Vedado

Tel: 831 2255 Cel: 52631632

opera.cuba@gmail.com



NAZDAROVIE



Authentic Soviet
restaurant overlooking
the Malecón



Pelmeni, goluptsi,
solianka, borscht, blini,
stroganoff and vareiniki

Staffed by the Soviet women who stayed
in Cuba & their sons & daughters



★ Authentic Soviet style

★ Beautiful sea view

★ Superb Soviet food

Malecón #25, 3rd floor
e/ Prado y Cárcel, Centro Habana

(+53) 7-860-2947

www.nazdarovie-havana.com



HM

Come find us on
Avenida Paseo opposite
the Meliá Cohiba Hotel

Imaginative dishes including
the best cuts of South American
beef and fresh seafood

BAR
RESTAURANTE

★ International gourmet food

★ Beautiful décor

★ Tasteful live music

Paseo #7 altos e/ 1ra y 3ra,
Vedado

(+53) 7-830-2287

www.habanamia7.com

La California



★For Quality Food, impeccable service & an intimate ambience ★Superb Cuban-Creole/International menu★

Dine in a beautifully restored 19th-century colonial building just one block away from the emblematic Malecón drive and seawall. La California is located on the place where legendary Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo used to hang out.

La California now offers a tour of Havana in a Classic Vintage Car plus lunch or dinner. Your chauffeur will pick you up from your hotel or private accommodation and show you around the historical sights of this incredible city for one hour before heading to La California.

The offer includes:

Welcoming cocktail

Bread + surprise extra

Chef's salad California style or Pumpkin Cream topped with parmesan

Curry Chicken with apples / traditional Ropa Vieja (shredded meat) / Grilled Fish with fine herbs / Cuban Lamb in red wine & mint tea / Grilled Lobster with sweet potato in caramel & cider (at your choice)

Moros y Cristianos (rice and beans) or vegetables

Traditional Cuban dessert (flan, sweet potato and rice puddings)

Domestic non-alcoholic beverage (water, soda, juice or beer)

Price: CUC 38 per person

For reservations, call
(+53) 7-863-7510



TABARISH

Executive Menu

Every day from 12:00 m to 3:00pm

All for 9.90

MAKAROF

Borsh soup or Salianka
Pelmieni
Blinchiki
Liquid or cocktail

KALASHNIKOF

Borsh soup or Salianka
Galubzy
Blinchiki
Liquid or cocktail

KATIUSHKA

Borsh soup or Salianka
Katlieta
Blinchiki
Liquid or cocktail

PUSHKA

Montaditos varios
Carne rusa
Day dessert
Liquid or cocktail

JACK - 40

Montaditos varios
Callos a la madrileña
Day dessert
Liquid or cocktail

SPUTNIK

Montaditos varios
Bistec a lo pobre
Day dessert
Liquid or cocktail

Havana's best Bars & Clubs

Traditional Bars

El Floridita CA★4+

Hemingway's daiquiri bar. Touristy but always full of life. Great cocktails.

Obispo #557 esq. a Monserrate, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-867-1299

Factoría Plaza Vieja CA★5

Microbrewery. Serves ice chilled bong of light locally brewed beer.

San Ignacio esq. a Muralla, Plaza Vieja, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-866-4453

Sloppy Joe's Bar CA★4+

Recently (beautifully) renovated. Full of history. Popular. Lacks a little 'grime'.

Ánimas esq. a Zulueta, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-866-7157

Cervecería CA★5+

ANTIGUO ALMACÉN DE LA MADERA Y EL TABACO

Microbrewery located overlooking the restored docks. Simply brilliant.

Avenida del Puerto y San Ignacio, La Habana Vieja

Contemporary Bars

El Cocinero CA★5+

Fabulous rooftop setting, great service, cool vibe.

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-832-2355

Espacios CA★5-

Laid back contemporary bar with a real buzz in the back beer-garden.

Calle 10 #510, e/ 5ta y 31, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-836-3031

TaBARish CA★5

A comfortable place to chat / hang out with your friends. Great service.

Calle 20 #503, e/ 5ta y 7ma.

☎(+53) 7-202-9188

Fábrica de Arte CA★5+

X Alfonso's new cultural center. Great concerts, funky young scene.

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)

☎(+53) 5-329-6325
www.facebook.com/fabrica.deartecubano

Contemporary bars/clubs

Don Cangrejo CA★4+

Love it/hate it—this is the oldest Friday night party place and is still going strong. Outdoor by the sea.

Ave. 1ra e/ 16 & 18, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-204-3837

Kpricho CA★4

Über modern and stylish indoor bar/club. Miami style crowd and attitude.

Calle 94 #110 e/ 1ra y 3ra, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-206-4167

Up & Down CA★5

From the team that brought you Sangri-La. Attracting a young party crowd, very popular. Take a coat.

Calle 3ra y B, Vedado

Sangri-La CA★5

For the cool kids. Basement bar/club which gets packed at weekends.

Ave. 21 e/ 36 y 42, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-264-8343

Other

Meliá Sports Bar CA★4

Big-screen sports-bar in modern outdoor terrace. Good for sports and live music.

Meliá Habana Hotel
Ave. 3ra e/ 76 y 80, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-204-8500

El Gato Tuerto CA★4+

Late night place to hear fabulous bolero singers. Can get smoky.

Calle O e/ 17 y 19, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-833-2224

El Tocatoro CA★4+

Expat favorite hangout. Small indoor bar with live music and eclectic clientele.

Calle 18 e/ 3ra y 5ta, Miramar

Bertolt Brecht CA★5

Think MTV Unplugged. Hip, funky and unique with an artsy Cuban crowd.

Calle 13 e/ I y J, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-830-1354

Gay-friendly

Cabaret Las Vegas CA★4

Can get dark and smoky but great drag show (11pm) from Divino—one of Cuba's most accomplished drag acts.

Infanta #104 e/ 25 y 27, Vedado.

☎(+53) 7-870-7939

Humboldt 52 CA★5

One of the hottest venues for gay nightlife in Havana at present.

Humboldt #52 e/ Infanta y Hospital, Centro Habana.

☎(+53) 5-330-2989

Fashion Bar Havana CA★5

A superb example of queer class meets camp, accompanied by a fantastic floor show.

San Juan de Dios, esq. a Aguacate, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-867-1676

Café Bar Madrigal CA★4

Pop décor, fancy cocktails, and the staff's supercilious attitude, this is a gathering spot for all types of folks.

Calle 17 #809 e/ 2 y 4, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-831-2433

Bertolt Brecht

CA★5 CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUBS

Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★

Best for Hanging out with hip & funky Cubans who like their live music.

Don't Miss Interactive playing on a Wednesday evening.

Calle 13 e/ I y J, Vedado
☎ (+53) 7-830-1354

Espacios

CA★5- CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY BAR

Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★★

Best for Laid back lounge atmosphere in the garden area which often has live music. Good turnover of people.

Don't Miss Ray Fernandez, Tony Avila, Yasek Mazano playing live sets in the garden.

Calle 10 #510 e/ 5ta y 31, Miramar
☎ (+53) 7-202-2921

Sangri-La

CA★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUB

Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★★

Best for Hanging out with the cool kids on the Havana Farundula in the most popular bar/club.

Don't Miss The best gin and tonic in Havana.

Ave. 21 e/ 36 y 42, Miramar
☎ (+53) 5-264-8343

Don Cangrejo

CA★4+ CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY

Ambience	★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★

Best for Love it/hate it – come for the Friday night party

Don't Miss Looking for de see

Ave. 1ra e/ 16 y 18, Miramar
☎ (+53) 7-204-3837

Humboldt 52

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



GAY FRIENDLY



Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★
 Popularity ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Entertainment ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Service & drinks ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Hot staff, comfortable setting, and welcoming vibe at Havana's first full-time, openly-gay bar

Don't Miss The disco ball, a talented opera duo performing Wednesdays and karaoke and drag performances other days of the week

Humboldt #52 e/ Infanta y Hospital, Centro Habana.

☎ (+53) 5-330-2989

Fábrica de Arte

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



CONTEMPORARY BAR



Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Popularity ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Entertainment ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Service & drinks ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for X Alfonso's superb new cultural center has something for everyone

Don't Miss Ne pas manquer Les meilleurs musiciens cubains

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)

Fashion Bar Havana

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



GAY-FRIENDLY



Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★
 Popularity ★ ★ ★ ★
 Entertainment ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Service & drinks ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for A superb example of queer class meets camp, accompanied by a fantastic floor show.

Don't Miss The staff performing after 11pm

San Juan de Dios, esq. a Aguacate, Habana Vieja

☎ (+53) 7-867-1676

TaBARish

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUB



Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Popularity ★ ★ ★ ★
 Entertainment ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Service & drinks ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for A comfortable place to chat / hang out with your friends. Great service.

Don't Miss The homemade Russian soup - just like Matushka makes it.

Calle 20 #503, e/ 5ta y 7ma.

☎ (+53) 7-202-9188



Havana's best live music venues

Concert venues

Karl Marx Theatre

CA★4+

World class musicians perform prestigious concerts in Cuba's best equipped venue.

Calle 1ra esq. a 10, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-203-0801

Basílica San Francisco de Asís

CA★5

A truly beautiful church, which regularly hosts fabulous classical music concerts.

Oficios y Amargura, Plaza de San Francisco de Asís, Habana Vieja

Fábrica de Arte

CA★5

X Alfonso's new cultural center. Great concerts inside (small and funky) and outside (large and popular!).

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)

Sala Covarrubias

CA★5

TEATRO NACIONAL

Recently renovated, one of Cuba's most prestigious venues for a multitude of events.

Paseo y 39, Plaza de la Revolución.

Jazz

Café Jazz Miramar

CA★4+

Clean, modern and atmospheric. Where Cuba's best musicians jam and improvise.

Cine Teatro Miramar
10:30pm - 2am
Ave. 5ta esq. a 94, Miramar

Jazz Café

CA★4

A staple of Havana's jazz scene, the best jazz players perform here. Somewhat cold atmosphere-wise.

Galerías de Paseo
Ave. 1ra e/ Paseo y A, Vedado

Privé Lounge

CA★5+

Small and intimate lounge club with great acoustics and beautiful decor. Jazz groups play Sunday night.

Calle 88A #306 e/ 3ra y 3raA, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-209-2719

La Zorra y el Cuervo

CA★5

Intimate and atmospheric, this basement jazz club, which you enter through a red telephone box, is Cuba's most famous.

Calle 23 e/ N y O, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-2402

Salsa/Timba

Café Cantante Mi Habana

CA★4

Attracts the best Cuban musicians. Recently renovated with an excellent new sound system.

Ave. Paseo esq. a 39, Plaza de la Revolución
☎(+53) 7-878-4273

Casa de la Música

CA★4

CENTRO HABANA

A little rough around the edges but spacious. For better or worse, this is ground zero for the best in Cuban salsa.

Galiano e/ Neptuno y Concordia, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-860-8296/4165

Casa de la Música

CA★4

MIRAMAR

Smaller and more up-market than its newer twin in Centro Habana. An institution in the Havana salsa scene.

Calle 20 esq. a 35, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-204-0447

Salón Rosado de la Tropical

CA★5

The legendary beer garden where Arsenio tore it up. Look for a salsa/timba gig on a Sat night and a Sun matinee.

Ave. 41 esq. a 46, Playa
Times: varies wildly
☎(+53) 7-203-5322

Contemporary

Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht

CA★5

Think MTV Unplugged when musicians play. Hip, funky and unique with an artsy Cuban crowd.

Calle 13 e/ I y J, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-830-1354

Don Cangrejo

CA★4+

Love it/hate it—this is the oldest Friday night party place and is still going strong. Outdoor by the sea.

Ave. 1ra e/ 16 y 18, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-204-3837

El Sauce

CA★5-

Great outdoor concert venue to hear the best in contemporary & Nueva Trova live in concert.

Ave. 9na #12015 e/ 120 y 130, Playa
☎(+53) 7-204-6428

Teatro de Bellas Artes

CA★4+

Small intimate venue inside Cuba's most prestigious arts museum. Modern.

Trocadero e/ Zulueta y Monserrate, Habana Vieja.

Trova & traditional

Barbaram Pepito's Bar

CA★4+

Some of the best Cuban Nueva Trova musicians perform in this small and intimate environment.

Calle 26 esq. a Ave. del Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado
☎(+53) 7-881-1808

Gato Tuerto

CA★4+

Late night place to hear fabulous bolero singers. Can get smoky.

Calle O entre 17 y 19, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-2224

Legendarios de Guajirito

CA★5

See Buena Vista Social Club musicians still performing nightly from 9pm. Touristy but fabulous.

Zulueta #660 e/ Apodaca y Gloria, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-861-7761

Salón 1930 'Compay Segundo'

CA★4+

Buena Vista Social Club style set in the grand Hotel Nacional.

Hotel Nacional
Calle O esq. a 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-835-3896

Havana's Best Hotels



Hotel Nacional de Cuba

Simply the best...

Iberostar Parque Central CA★5+
Luxury hotel overlooking Parque Central
Neptuno e/ Prado y Zulueta, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-6627

Santa Isabel CA★5+
Luxurious historic mansion facing Plaza de Armas
Narciso López, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-8201

Saratoga CA★5+
Stunning view from roof-top pool. Beautiful décor.
Paseo del Prado #603 esq. a Dragones, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-8201

Terral CA★5
Wonderful ocean front location. Newly renovated.
Malecón esq. a Ledtad, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-862-8061

Boutique Hotels in Old Havana

Florida CA★5
Beautifully restored colonial house.
Obispo #252, esq. a Cuba, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-862-4127

Palacio del Marqués... CA★5
Cuban baroque meets modern minimalist
Oficios #152 esq. a Amargura, Habana Vieja

Hostal Valencia CA★5+
Immensely charming, great value.
Oficios #53 esq. a Obrapia, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-867-1037

Conde de Villanueva CA★5
Delightfully small and intimate. For cigar lovers.
Mercaderes #202, esq. a Lamparilla
☎(+53) 7-862-9293

Business Hotels

Meliá Cohíba CA★5
Oasis of polished marble and professional calm.
Ave Paseo e/ 1ra y 3ra, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-3636

Meliá Habana CA★5
Attractive design & extensive facilities.
Ave. 3ra y 70, Miramar
☎(+53) 5-204-8500

Occidental Miramar CA★4+
Good value, large spacious modern rooms.
Ave. 5ta. e/ 70 y 72, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-204-3583

H10 Habana Panorama CA★4+
Cascades of glass. Good wi-fi. Modern.
Ave. 3ra. y 70, Miramar
☎(+53) 7 204-0100

For a sense of history

Ambos Mundos CA★4
A must for Hemingway aficionados
Calle Obispo #153 esq. a Mercaderes, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-9529

Mercure Sevilla CA★4
Stunning views from the roof garden restaurant.
Trocaadero #55 entre Prado y Zulueta, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-8560

Hotel Nacional CA★5
Eclectic art-deco architecture. Gorgeous gardens.
Calle O esq. a 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-835 3896

Riviera CA★3
Spectacular views over wave-lashed Malecón
Paseo y Malecón, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-836-4051

Economical/Budget Hotels

Bosque CA★3
On the banks of the Río Almendares.
Calle 28-A e/ 49-A y 49-B, Reparto Kohly, Playa
☎(+53) 7-204-9232

Deauville CA★3
Lack of pretension, great location.
Galiano e/ Sán Lázaro y Malecón, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-866-8812

Saint John's CA★3
Lively disco, tiny quirky pool. Popular.
Calle O e/ 23 y 25, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-3740

Vedado CA★3
Good budget option with a bit of a buzz
Calle O e/ 23 y 25, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-836-4072



For Help reserving any Private Accommodation (Casas Particulares) in Cuba please contact
CubanCasas@gmail.com

Mid range - Casa Particular (B&B)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>1932 CA★4
Visually stunning, historically fascinating. Welcoming.
Campanario #63 e/ San Lázaro y Laguna, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-863-6203</p> | <p>Carlos in cuba CA★5
Gay Friendly BED and BREAKFAST in Havana
Calle 2 #505 e/ 23 y 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-1329
(+53) 5-295-4893
carlosincuba@yahoo.com
www.carlosincuba.com</p> | <p>Habana CA★5
Beautiful colonial townhouse with great location.
Calle Habana #209, e/ Empedrado, y Tejadillo, Habana Vieja.
☎(+53) 7-861-0253</p> | <p>Julio y Elsa CA★5
Cluttered bohemian feel. Hospitable.
Consulado #162 e/ Colón y Trocadero, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-861-8027</p> |
|--|---|---|---|

Up-scale B&Bs (Boutique hostals)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Cañaveral House CA★5
But undoubtedly the most beautiful about private homes in Cuba
39A street, #4402, between 44 y 46, Playa, La Habana Cuba
☎(+53) 295-5700
http://www.cubaguesthouse.com/canaveral.home.html?lang=en</p> | <p>Vitrales CA★5
Hospitable, attractive and reliable boutique B&B with 9 bedrooms.
Habana #106 e/ Cuarteles y Chacón, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-866-2607</p> | <p>Artedel CA★5+
Ydalgo Martínez Matos's spacious and contemporary 3-bedroom penthouse is magnificent.
Calle I #260 e/ 15 y 17, Vedado
☎(+53) 5-830-8727</p> | <p>Hostal Guanabo CA★5
Beautiful 4 bedroom sea-front villa in sleepy Guanabo. Excellent food.
Calle 480 #1A04 e/ 1ra y 3ra, Guanabo
☎(+53) 7-799-0004</p> |
|---|---|---|--|

Apartment rentals

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Bohemia Hostel CA★5+
Gorgeous 1-bedroom apartment beautifully decorated apartment overlooking Plaza Vieja.
San Ignacio #364 e/ Muralla y Teniente Rey, Plaza Vieja Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 5- 403-1568
(+53) 7-836-6567
www.havanabohemia.com</p> | <p>Casa Concordia CA★5+
Beautifully designed and spacious 3 bedroom apartment. Spanish colonial interiors with cheerful, arty accents.
Concordia #151 apto. 8 esq. a San Nicolás, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 5-254-5240
www.casaconcordia.net</p> | <p>Habana Vista CA★5
Two-storey penthouse b&b with private pool
Calle 13 # 51 esq. a N, Vedado
☎(+53) 5-388-7866</p> | <p>Suite Havana CA★5
Elegant 2-bedroom apartment in restored colonial building. Quality loft style décor.
Lamparilla #62 altos e/ Mercaderes y San Ignacio, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 5-829-6524</p> |
|--|---|---|---|

Luxury Houses

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Villasol CA★5
Rent Room elegant and well-equipped. Beautiful wild garden and great pool.
Calle 17 #1101 e/ 14 y 16, Vedado
☎(+34) 677525361
(+53) 7-832-1927
(+53) 5-360-0456</p> | <p>Casablanca CA★5
Elegant well-equipped villa formerly owned by Fulgencio Batista. Beautiful wild garden.
Morro-Cabaña Park. House #29
☎(+53) 5-294-5397
www.havanacasablanca.com</p> | <p>Michael and María Elena CA★5
This leafy oasis in western Havana has an attractive mosaic tiled pool and three modern bedrooms.
Calle 66 #4507 e/ 45 y Final, Playa
☎(+53) 7-209-0084</p> | <p>Residencia Mariby CA★5
A sprawling vanilla-hued mansion with 6 rooms decorated with colonial-era lamps, tiles and Louis XV furniture
Vedado.
☎(+53) 5-370-5559</p> |
|---|---|--|--|

Artedel Luxury

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



3 BEDROOM PENTHOUSE

Facilities ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Rooms ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Stylish and contemporary furniture along with a beautiful 360-degree view over Havana

Don't Miss Ydalgo – an impeccable host, discreet or gregarious, as you prefer

Calle I #260, e/ 15 and 17, Vedado

☎ (+53) 7-830-8727

Bohemia Hostal

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



GORGEOUS 1 BEDROOM APARTMENT

Facilities ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Rooms ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Independent beautifully decorated apartment overlooking Plaza Vieja.

Don't Miss Spending time in Havana's most atmospheric Plaza.

San Ignacio #364 e/ Muralla y Teniente Rey, Plaza Vieja, Habana Vieja

bohemia.plazavieja@gmail.com

☎ (+53) 5 4031 568: (53) 7 8366 567

www.havanabohemia.com

Cañaveral House

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



Facilities ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Rooms ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Large elegant villa away from downtown Havana. Great for families or groups of friends.

Don't Miss Basking in the sun as you stretch out on the lawn of the beautifully kept garden.

39A street, #4402, between 44 y 46, Playa, La Habana Cuba

☎ (+53) 295-5700

<http://www.cubaguesthouse.com/canaveral.home.html?lang=en>

Rosa D'Ortega

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



BOUTIQUE VILLA

Facilities ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Rooms ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
 Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Large elegant villa away from the bustle of downtown Havana. Gracious hosts, beautiful rooms.

Don't Miss Exploring the off-the-beaten track neighbourhood.

Patrocinio #252 esq. a Juan Bruno Zayas, 10 de Octubre

☎ (+53) 7-641-43-29 / (+53) 5-263-3302

<http://www.larosadeortega.com>

THANK YOU

cuba ABSOLUTELY

Wishes to thank all of the following entities for their support and involvement with What's On Havana.



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