Taxi a lo cubano

I like to ride my bicycle

Havana Carnival:
Aug 7-16, 2015
YOU JUST KNOW WHEN
IT'S FROM THE HEART

NOTHING COMPARES TO HAVANA

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EDITORIAL

Although there are few passenger railways in Havana, yet from the abundance of all kinds of public vehicles, it cannot be said that they are missed much, since, if it is desired to go to any particular spot, all that is necessary is to wait in front of your hotel or at the corner of the street, and inside of three minutes you will have your choice of perhaps a dozen vehicles that are constantly passing in every direction, and which, for twenty cents, will carry you to any part of the city.

Samuel Hazard
Cuba with Pen and Pencil, 1871

One hundred and fifty years later, things have not perhaps changed so much. This issue of What’s On Havana by LaHabana.com is focused on ways you may want to get around Havana. For better or worse, the city is still mercifully free of traffic jams and the congestion of other developing cities. While air conditioned taxis and rental cars may whisk you in more comfort, we suggest that you go a little more Cuban style. Pay your 10 Cuban pesos and step into another world of almendrones (a collective taxi), or join Conner Gorry and get on you bike. Make sure you check out our map of these taxi routes for how to get around.

A big thank you to the University of Nebraska’s Phyllis V. Larsen and students Ryan Lynn, John Dietrich, Brina Miller and Lynsey Erickson for sharing their impressions of Cuba with us. These four great articles were chosen from the best work of a University of Nebraska-Lincoln group that arrived in Havana for a three-week study-abroad experience in May 2015. We welcome other submissions going forward.

August in Havana can sometimes feel a little like a moth in the steam room. Even the ocean gets to a temperature where it doesn’t really cool you down. The only solution to this predicament is ice-cold beer! Havana does have three great festivals on this month, the Havana Carnival takes place on weekends from August 7-16, the Timbalaye Festival from August 21-31 and the Brutal Fest Summer Festival from August 14-23. Do check out our articles on each of these, since, while all three offer insights to Cuban culture, they may not necessarily all be for everyone!

The integration of Cuba Absolutely with LaHabana.com continues apace. Do check out LaHabana.com, which is now up and running with a great design team and lots of content.

Abrazos!

The LaHabana.com Team
There’s only one way to get around the big easy that is La Habana—in a vintage Chevy, known as an almendrón. At 50 cents a ride, you can’t go far wrong, or at least that’s the theory. It brings to mind the quip that when is a taxi not a taxi?

The time: nine o’clock on a Tuesday night. The place: a corner by a gas station in Havana, Cuba. The players: A handful of college students, elegantly dressed and waiting to hail a cab to a classy jazz club.

A sky-blue vintage Chevy pulls up and the students ask, in Spanish, if the driver can take them to an intersection about five straight miles down the road. He assents and they pile in and take off, the tropical early spring breeze blowing through the Chevy’s open windows.

Unexpectedly, the driver takes a right. Half a block down the road, he pulls a u-turn and keeps driving straight. The students raise their eyebrows to one another, knowing full well that there are no turns on the way to their intersection. The driver pulls into a parking lot outside of a poorly-lit hotel. The students are convinced that their lives will be over after two short decades at the hands of a Cuban taxi driver.

Instead, the driver asks for directions. The students are completely bewildered. Their destination is a well-known intersection in Havana. And the man supposedly drives the streets of Havana in his taxi for a living.
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After a few more stops and requests for directions, the taxi driver finally found the right intersection and the students pile out. Such is a night in Cuba riding around in an almendrón.

**Let me explain about these taxis.** When you see a vintage American car with a taxi sticker in the window, the first thing that comes to mind is probably not a tasty and nutrition nut. But for whatever reason, in Cuba those taxis are called máquinas, which means machines, or almendrones, which means almond.

Like almonds for a mid-afternoon snack, the almendrones are usually incredibly convenient. And luckily, unlike almonds, almendrones are cheap. They run all over Havana on different routes, which are indicated by different hand signals that might be mistaken for gang signs. If you don’t know the hand signals, the driver will just ask you where you’re trying to go and if it’s on his route, you jump in.

Depending on the destination, you pay 10 or 20 national pesos. Just for reference, there are 24 national pesos to one Cuban convertible peso (CUC). One CUC is approximately equivalent to one dollar.

So, for less than one dollar, you can more or less get all over Havana. Granted, you might have to walk a little bit once you hop out of the almendrón, but far worse disasters have occurred.
The cars are a vintage car collector’s Christmas morning—a stream of 50s-era American clunkers that, if properly restored, would probably sell for more than four years of tuition at an Ivy Leauge school. But note the above-mentioned “if restored.”

The interior of the cars is like a pathetic set of bumper cars at a state fair where all the carnies are probably escaped convicts. The floor is steel and the seats ripped leather. The cars were made before suspension was invented. The engine is being held together by duct tape and wishful thinking and probably runs on rum and government-rationed coffee. The drivers have to put the force of their whole body into shifting gears, and a stalled or broken-down almendrón is as common as a white girl in a Whole Foods. The breaks squeal louder than teens at a Justin Bieber concert and the cars slowly putter backwards when stopped at a light.

Once when riding in an almendrón, I saw spray painted on a wall “Vivan los almendrones.” Despite my experience with an incompetent almond driver, I wouldn’t trade those little suckers for anything. Long live the almond.
TRANSPORTATION IN HAVANA CAN BE A REAL TORTURE FOR COMMON MORTALS. IN THE MORNINGS, THE CITY’S MAIN THOROUGHFARES SHOW SIDEWALKS FILLED WITH PEOPLE. SOME ARE IMPATIENTLY WAITING FOR THE BUS WHILE OTHERS, PERHAPS MORE IMPATIENTLY STILL AND POSITIONED TWO OR THREE METERS FROM EACH OTHER, LIFT THEIR ARMS NOW AND THEN TRYING TO WAVE DOWN ONE OF THE MANY AMERICAN CLASSIC CARS THAT FUNCTION AS TAXIS, “ALMENDRONES,” IN HAVANA.

TRAVELING IN ONE OF THESE TAXIS REQUIRES SOME BASIC KNOWLEDGE. FOR INSTANCE, ALMENDRONES GO DOWN A FIXED ROUTE FOR A FIXED PRICE, USUALLY 10 CUBAN PESOS (APPROXIMATELY 50 CENTS), WHICH IS THE SAME WHETHER YOU RIDE FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER OF THEIR ITINERARY OR JUST A FEW BLOCKS. SOME LONGER ROUTES COST 20 PESOS (STILL LESS THAN ONE DOLLAR), LIKE GOING FROM VEDADO ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE AIRPORT.
Another important detail is that prospective passengers and drivers have established a system of non-verbal communication that, for those who are newcomers to a certain route or just new in town, may pretty well end up on the other side of the city. So, on my many journeys along Diez de Octubre Avenue, I have learned that when you hail a taxi, you have to watch carefully for the sign the driver will make: If his hand shoots up in the air and motions (with a hard-to-see finger) to the left, that means he’s heading for El Vedado; if he motions to the right, that means he’s headed for Havana. And that brings us yet to another detail that only habaneros know. While Havana, or La Habana, is the name of the entire city with its 14 districts, “la Habana” for the locals means Central Havana and Old Havana.

Most taxis are old American cars, although recently, some Soviet-era Ladas and Moskvitchs have joined the club. Some almendrones have been transformed in order to carry more passengers (owners have done away with the trunk and added seats, for instance). Needless to say, this contraption is not all too comfortable. And riding in the front seat, usually too narrow for three passengers, is misery, especially if you have to sit in the middle beside the gear-shifting driver. Also, be ready to have your clothes smelling of gasoline, petrol or whatnot when you get off.

Having said that, the almendrón taxi is an economical, safer, faster and less unpleasant way of getting around in Havana than a bus. They have become part of the scenery and I have yet to find a Cuban who doesn’t have a kind word for these relics of the past which are helping to solve the present-day problem of transportation in Havana.
I like to ride my bicycle
by Conner Gorry

If you’ve never had the opportunity to glide along a deserted big city street under a moon so full it makes even me want to lactate, there’s something of the magical hidden from you. Every city has a side that only night owls see, of course – anyone who has walked home from a bar or ballgame in the wee hours has experienced this frisson with a city’s secret side. It’s exciting and slightly illicit somehow. With the wind in your face and the caresses of night billowing your hair and clothes about the faster you pump the pedals only heightens the sensation. Whether I’m coasting down Paseo or along Avenida 31, dodging potholes in Playa, or startling stray cats from their dumpster diving, on my bike I feel free in a way approximated only by orgasm. In short, city cycling unshackles something in the spirit.

So it’s International Women’s Day (see note 1) and a full moon – two events which occasion a certain randiness and frisk in these parts. And I’m feeling particularly frisky these days thanks to my new love affair with a certain Francis.

Francis is my new bike.

My trusty steed...

Before I wax poetic on the new steed between my legs, let me take this opportunity to digress a bit with a few words about the personification of one’s transport.

I was once in love with a guy who drove a truck – lived with him for over four years actually – and it fell to this unlucky fella to teach me to drive (see note 2). During my schooling, he also taught me the importance of naming your vehicle. Your car (or truck or bike) has a personality, he explained. You need to communicate with one another and work together. A name facilitates this inorganic synergy between man, movement, and machine; completes the anthropomorphic picture so to speak. I took his point. The one and only car I owned (co-owned and only for three months), was a beat up Audi named Otto. My mom’s Subaru is Harriet the Chariot. My sister’s 1982 Peugeot is Bruce. Over the years, I’ve had the pleasure of knowing Rocinante, Mugsy, and Hoss – great cars all.

When I got my new bike, I knew I had to have a name. But after a month zipping across Puente Almendares, pedalling the pristine macadam bordering Parque Monte Barreto, and bracing my ass against potholes and train tracks, I still didn’t have a name. Clearly it was time for outside counsel.
I put it to my friend Lucia, she of the Bambi filets.

Her first question: male or female?

Ever-practical, Lucia cut to the obvious question I’d failed to ask. I had been so focused on a name that would translate equally well in English and Spanish, that I’d completely neglected to consider gender. Standing there in her bedroom it occurred to me that I didn’t want only linguistic inclusivity, choosing a name that would make sense in both my languages, I also wanted gender inclusivity.

“How about something gender neutral?” I wondered aloud.

“There aren’t many gender-neutral names!” Lucia’s 10-year old wunderkind piped up. After a few beats she asked: “How about Michel(le)?”

“Good one!” I said, knowing that girls of a certain age (even hyper talented Cuban ones) need encouragement and positive reinforcement. “But this bike doesn’t seem like a Michel(le).”

Wracking my brain for neutral names I’d come across in Cuba, I asked: “How about Francis?”

And a bike was born.

That was a long digression, I know, but I’m taking the Vin Scelsa defense here (see note 3).

I first cut my two-wheeled teeth in Manhattan (site of my one and only drunk “driving” accident, when I went down hard in a greasy Chinatown alley, erasing a patch of freckles the size of a one peso coin in the process), then in San Francisco, and now in Havana.

If you’ve never had the opportunity to glide along a deserted big city street under a moon so full it makes even me want to lactate, there’s something of the magical hidden from you. Every city has a side that only night owls see, of course – anyone who has walked home from a bar or ballgame in the wee hours has experienced this frisson with a city’s secret side. It’s exciting and slightly illicit somehow. With the wind in your face and the caresses of night billowing your hair and clothes about the faster you pump the pedals only heightens the sensation. Whether I’m coasting down Paseo or along Avenida 31, dodging potholes in Playa, or startling stray cats from their dumpster diving, on my bike I feel free in a way approximated only by orgasm. In short, city cycling unshackles something in the spirit.
Gliding through Havana’s landscape on a bike makes me look at things differently from when I’m walking (or driving, it goes without saying). I’m higher up for one. I see over hedges and into windows. I discover shortcuts and side streets I didn’t know existed. I note every parked car (my greatest – and most realistic fear – cycling in Havana is that I’ll get “doored”) and each driveway. In my experience, riding in a city requires a level of alertness not necessary while walking and opportunities for observation not possible while driving, which makes me keenly aware and appreciative of my surroundings while mounted.

I carefully consider other cyclists now and their habits, from the old dudes who poke along, pants rolled to the knee, to the shirtless young studs who ride as confidently as any Midtown bike messenger, cigarette dangling from their lips. The deplorable state of Havana’s street lighting is hammered home on these late night jaunts, as is the real possibility of encountering a drunk driver. And is there any city that smells like this one? Pedalling along, I get glancing whiffs of savory sea mixed with the off-putting tang of rotting garbage and wet earth if it has rained, dried leaves if it hasn’t.

By day, Francis takes me wherever I need and want to go: to check my PO box across town; to immigration; the grocery store; the theater; and my sister-in-law’s house. Errands that used to take an entire morning using public transportation are completed in an hour or two with Francis. Friends I put off visiting because they live far away now have me landing on their doorstep any day, any time. This in itself is liberating, not only for the time and money I save, but also for how refreshed I feel when I arrive – tired, sure, but refreshed like after a long swim or hot bath.

And oh, how the boys seem to like a girl on a bike. Perched on Francis, riding along 3ra Avenida or the Malecón, I bask in all the piropos trailing me as I pedal by: ‘¡Mami, llévame!’, ‘Qué rica estás, rubia’, ‘¡Ay! Si yo fuera tu silla, mi cielo’ make me smile. And the best part is that I can mutually admire these men of all type and stripe and then be safely, happily on my way.

This post is dedicated to Chris and Alexis M, and Julia F who made my partnership with Francis possible; and to Cornelius S who introduced me to the joys of cycling the big city.
Notes

1. Though largely ignored or unknown in the United States, International Women’s Day, observed each March 8th, is a huge deal in Cuba when every guy shows appreciation for the women in his life with flowers and shouts of ¡Felicidades! Even strangers proffer the celebratory phrase and many restaurants gift a single gladiola to all female patrons on March 8th. It’s one of the silver linings of machismo, I guess.

2. I’m fond of making rules for others to live by – have been ever since I declared several decades ago that white people should not have dreadlocks. More recently, I’ve decided that men – I don’t care if it’s your dad, brother or lover – should not teach women to drive. It just adds to the universe’s general conflict and woe.

3. Vin Scelsa has been making what’s known as freeform radio for some 40 years now. His show Idiot’s Delight helped shape the paradigm which holds that the DJ can play and importantly, talk about, whatever the hell he wants. As you might guess, Vin talks a lot on his show, often about stuff not at all music-related. And as he’s fond of pointing out: if you don’t like it, change the station. Precisely my philosophy at Here is Havana.
Bicitaxis

by Ana Lorena Gamboa Fernández

Cuba was something of a Johnny-come-lately to the world of Bicitaxis licensing them only in the early 1990s. Today, while not as ubiquitous as somewhere like Bangkok, they are common and add further color and life to the city. Just be warned that if you start a conversation with your driver, don’t expect to get out in a hurry—talk, talk, talk, talk...

According to Wikipedia, the cycle rickshaw is a small-scale, human-powered local means of transport known by a variety of names such as bike taxi, velotaxi, pedicab or bikecab (among other names) designed to carry passengers in addition to the driver. They are widely used in major cities around the world.

Cuba is no exception, and although “bicitaxis,” as they are called here, are relatively new to the Cuban landscape (they came into being over 15 years ago with the opening of self-employs) they show unique and highly distinctive features, which make them stand out from other vehicles of their kind.

For one thing, passengers and driver establish a relationship that goes beyond their specific roles and chitchat about practically anything and everything. The driver may comment on Pitbull’s or Shakira’s latest hit, the new Immigration Law or the newest paladar in Vedado or Miramar.

Another feature is the decoration of bicitaxis, with multicolored ribbons (usually made of plastic) dangling from the handlebars, bizarre paintings on the ceiling or rear of the bike taxi, flags from different countries, sayings…you name it.

Our bicitaxis are propelled by muscle power alone, unlike some countries where these vehicles are equipped with electric motors to help the drivers. Our bicitaxis may not have motors but they do have blaring speakers with music that ranges from the latest reggaeton, to salsa, to tearjerkers.

If you want to see Cuba from a different perspective, hire a bicitaxi. It’s an unpredictable and unforgettable experience.

Photos by Ana Lorena
“Guaguas” and other artefacts
by Victoria Alcalá

The self-proclaimed motto of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) is to “clean up, affix and bestow splendor” upon the Spanish language. With some reticence it has admitted into its dictionary, under “guagua,” the following definition: “Automotive vehicle providing city and inter-city transit on a fixed route.” It also specifies that its use is native to the Canary Islands and the West Indies. In Cuba, guagua is the autobús, colectivo or omnibus (buses) of other Latin American countries, although it has it has some slight differences.

On our Island, the guagua is a collective, one-piece vehicle, but when it is an articulated vehicle, in some parts of the outskirts of Havana, it becomes a “camel”, shades of an invention known as the “camello” that cropped up in the 1990s to deal with the overwhelming transportation shortages. This vehicle had different levels inside and was capable of absorbing a virtually infinite number of passengers. It can also be simply referred to as the “P” this from the letter and numbers on its sign, but since the days of the “camels,” the official name has been “metro-bus.” Another means of transportation that fulfills the Royal Academy definition would be “taxi-buses” which generally fall into the classification here of “guaguítas”—taking on the diminutive form of the word because they are smaller—along with other buses destined for other uses, picking up people waving at them on the street (obviously for a fare). No matter what their size, these came to be called “guaguítas” as a term of endearment in gratitude for their services.

Photos by Ana Lorena
Each of these vehicles possesses its own special features, codes and even distinctive charms.

Metro-buses only run along the main streets in the city. Because they are large, they carry more passengers than the one-piece guaguas and they have more or less regular schedules. I insist on the “more or less” because sometimes they suffer from mysterious and aggravating delays, all to be compensated by the arrival of two or three of them, one right after the other.

Anyone having the makings of a sociologist definitely has to experience a guagua or metrobus at seven o’clock in the morning or 5 o’clock in the afternoon. Thousands of workers and students use them to get from their homes to their jobs or schools and back. Each one of them tries to get on the first one that arrives. The lucky individual who boards after using all of his or her skills as a gymnast, contortionist and even boxer finds a multihued scene: the calm faces of those who managed to land a seat, the resignation of those standing who have something to grab onto and the agonized expressions of those who are barely balancing on one foot.
There are those who get upset at the least physical contact with others and some, almost always men, take advantage of the sardine-can circumstances to get closer than they should, thereby provoking various reactions. Some women just put up with it so as not to draw attention to themselves. Others try to move elsewhere and a good number insult their “oppressors” and are backed by other passengers.

You can hear just about everything on a Cuban bus: the plot of the latest soap opera, baseball scores, prices at the market, problems with the boss, disagreement with some government measure, the presumed infidelity of some friend, the unwanted pregnancy of a neighbor, fashions, the private lives of actors and singers, the next visit of the Pope or the potato shortage. It is an agora on wheels, and if you’re on a metro-bus, then you have the added bonus of a musical soundtrack for all tastes. The metro-bus is a great polyphonic experience but it isn’t always very harmonious. The bus driver has his own music blaring on the loudspeakers while passengers try to over-rule this with their own musical choices coming out of cell phones that seem to have lost their earphones. The result is that you can be listening simultaneously to a smooth bolero and a throbbing reggaeton, the last “timba” hit, the raucous voices of hard rock and the blithe joy of some pop singer. There may even be some fortunate soul sitting down, earphones in place and, by the expression on their face, listening to something like Mozart. This is a class on The Real Cuba—for just 40 cents Cuban currency, it’s a bona fide gift.

The non-articulated guaguas come in all varieties. For the same price as a metro-bus, their route is shorter, their schedule is highly unpredictable and they go in and out of neighborhoods. Less cosmopolitan, more casual, almost everybody knows everybody else and the driver is quite capable of waiting for a regular passenger running up, stopping at unofficial stops, going to a friend’s house for a glass of water, taking a message from one end of his route to the other, or stopping for a coffee from a street vendor along with several of his passengers. While waiting for the Number 15 every morning in order to get to work, I made friends who, twenty years later, are still my friends. We had so much time to discuss our respective lives waiting at the bus stop that even our children are now friends as well.

As for the taxi-buses, they are the midway solution between metro-buses and almendrones. For a 5- peso fare, no passengers are standing (theoretically) and almost all of the vehicles are air conditioned. Less numerous and more expensive (12.5 times as expensive as guaguas and metro-buses) they are an emergency, much appreciated measure. At some critical moment when you think you are going to sprout roots at the bus stop, one of those taxi-buses appear and, as if by magic, you imagine it to be a Rolls Royce.

Of course there are other transportation means: the collective almendrones which deserve an article all to themselves and the taxis in paid in CUC, which are from being within everybody’s price range. But if you want to know Cuba “from the inside,” there is no substitute for having the unique and unrepeatable experience of travelling by bus: Viva la guagua!
The Hershey Train: from legend to memory
by Ricardo Alberto Pérez

The only electric train in the country carries all types of passengers, from the regulars accustomed to glitches that prevent them from continuing their trip and the emergency repairs that allow for miraculous arrivals, to the first-time innocent tourists who will be running the same risks.

This picturesque means of travel carries groups of friends, couples, families, students, pets and the occasional farm animals. At night you can see the glowing electrical arches looking like some ghostly fires. And throughout the entire trip, you can smell the characteristic odor of something burning.

The train leaves Casablanca, the town sitting on the other shore of Havana Bay, and before it reaches Matanzas, it crosses the lovely Yumuri Valley near its final destination. Roughly halfway is Hershey, the sugar mill that gave its name to the train. Nowadays it no longer functions as such and the town is inhabited by simple folk. On either side of the train tracks you can see a scattering of tiny villages, modest homes and fields. There are some official stops and a few more that are improvised to satisfy the train engineer's needs or the requests of some passenger. The seats are on the uncomfortable side. But in the end, if you have enough patience and are in a good mood, the Hershey train is an interesting and fun way to get to Matanzas from Havana.
About thirty-five years have gone by since my first trip on the Hershey train between Casablanca and the environs of Puerto Escondido and many of the emotions I lived in the almost two-hour trip are still with me. Like many Cubans of my generation, I have kept those wagons that transported us and our dreams in a special place in my thoughts and my affections. Since that time, the trip has been repeated many times and it always possesses the enchantment of uncovering some brand new detail.

A Little History

I have always considered that chocolate holds a special place among the world’s magical things, with the chocolate industry being prevalent on five out of seven continents. But what is curious and unique is the story of a train whose beginnings and development are closely tied up with chocolate: the building of the mythical Hershey train, pride of the Island, was commissioned in 1916 by Milton S. Hershey.

That charismatic businessman from Pennsylvania whose fame comes from a successful brand of milk chocolate bearing his name, Hershey’s Chocolate, had bought a considerable piece of land in Cuba to grow sugar cane. He also built a sugar mill for the purpose of obtaining a superior product that would allow him to enhance the quality of his chocolate creations. Surrounding the mill, a solid structure was created that included a town called Hershey, just like the mill, and an electrical railway line that ensured the transportation of merchandise and also the movements of most of the employees who took part in the production process along with various other passengers.

Whenever we talk about this electric railway, the only one of its kind in Cuba, most people identify it with the stretch connecting the town of Casablanca on the far shore of Havana Bay to the city of Matanzas. However, we have to remember that from its beginnings the railroad included other lines and routes that were closely associated with business activities.

The Hershey train is connected to the great cultural and historical wealth generated in that community and its environs for almost a century. Cultural and sports activities flourished in a surprising way, transcending the limits of its space. Hershey was the last model town ever built, the replica of an existing town in Pennsylvania. Its life was quite unique and it piqued the interest of
many foreigners who have travelled on the train. Without the town, the story would be incomplete and an important chunk of our memory would be lost.

A story that is much less well known tells of how transportation professionals and officials have been able to keep this gem of a train in working order for decades. It is a tale of giants, especially after many of the original parts could no longer be acquired and what counted was the ingenious innovative skill of many technicians and workers.

Over time, the Hershey train has been an important source of inspiration for artists, both Cuban and foreign. Notable poets have unleashed their imaginations and written about places like La Colina de San Matías, for example. The train has also provided material for many chroniclers. In the last few decades, several photographers have taken it upon themselves to record the train in the panorama of Cuban photography. At the just concluded Twelfth Havana Biennale, French artist Daniel Buren painted the stripes that made it famous at the Hershey train station. This is proof of how, after providing useful service for almost a century, the train has come to symbolize spiritual values.
Many of us Habaneros treasure memories of the ferry taking us back and forth across Havana Bay, to and from the towns of Regla and Casablanca. For a lot of us, this was our first “voyage” by sea. The Casablanca route was taken out of service a few years ago and assimilated by the popular Lanchita de Regla.

Passengers might be unaware of the fact that sailing and rowboats were being used right from the nineteenth century to connect today’s Avenida del Puerto to Regla and Casablanca, thereby eliminating the need to make the long circuitous journey by land, both then and now. This is not the only such service in Cuba; there are over ten similar lines in Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos, Isla de la Juventud, Puerto Padre, Caimanera and other places, but the Havana ferry transports over 50% of the total passengers.

Proof of the usefulness of this service can be seen in the evolution of the vessels being used: from simple rowboats to the use of small launches, lanchitas in Spanish, to the BMP-150 ferries of today, characterized by their good maneuverability, capacity and power.

But the lanchita de Regla is no mere pleasure craft even though quite a few of us residents on “this side” of the Bay would like to consider it as such. Hundreds of people living in Regla and Casablanca use it on a daily basis to get to work and then to return home. In a matter of minutes they make a trip which would otherwise be a long bus ride taking many more minutes and certainly in conditions that don’t have a wonderful view tacked
On. The big problem is that when hurricane season starts or the “northerlies” start blowing in the high waves, ferry service is cancelled for obvious safety reasons.

On weekends the ferry has a whole different aspect. Passengers are less worried about whether they are going to reach work or school on time. They seem to enjoy looking at the waters (that with a determined process of cleaning up the Bay are starting to be more crystalline) and of the splendid view of Havana receding into the distance as the imposing Christ of Casablanca gets closer. Some decide to get off at Regla and take the return ferry back to the Avenida del Puerto and Old Havana, but others prefer to stretch out the trip by visiting the National Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Regla just a few meters from the dock. They may leave an offering to the so-called “Sailors’ Virgin” or explore the eclectic labyrinth of streets in the town that has managed to maintain an air of provincial charm despite being a part of greater Havana.

Crossing the waters of Havana Bay makes for a relaxing Sunday excursion with a romantic feeling.
After the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Cuba, transportation was mainly animal-powered, which led to a notably increase in the import of horses for such functions.

It is interesting to know that 1626 is the year in which coaches were first recorded transiting through the streets of Havana. Prior to this, the rich Creole would generally rely on getting around in litters or palanquins; these were enclosed box-like bodies carried on poles held parallel to the ground on the shoulders of black slaves. These mobile seats underwent transformations and finally they got two wheels in the rear and would be pulled by a horse.

It is said that the first luxury carriage, called carroza, was introduced in 1662 and subsequently the calesa, volanta, quitrin, carreta and carretón were developed along with other coaches and carriages destined to carry passengers. For the next two centuries, these means of transportation underwent modifications that improved them and made them more wide-spread. In 1842, people in Havana began to use them as cabs—horse-drawn vehicles resembling stagecoaches—and in 1859, mule-powered public vehicles contributed their slow pace to the streets of Havana.

In 1837, the first streetcar appeared: Cuba can be forever proud to have been the eighth country in
the world to establish that transportation service. During the Republic in the twentieth century, streetcars were the primary form of public transportation in Havana. Starting in 1901, this mode of transit had an enormous boom, right up to the mid-1940s, when streetcars experienced difficulties, mainly in terms of efficiency. April 29th of 1952 is recorded as the day the last electric streetcar travelled through the city thereby closing an important chapter in the history of our transit system. Nevertheless, the vestiges of streetcar routes can still be seen in some Havana streets, such as the rails embedded in the pavement in front of the San Carlos Seminary and along Cortina Street in La Vibora.

The first automobile, manufactured in La Parisiense, made its appearance in the capital in 1898. By 1920, a notable change in the pace of daily life started to demand faster transportation and so more and more automobiles were introduced. Over the years, Cubans became intensely enamored of cars and motor car racing, and they became able connoisseurs of anything relating to this subject.
Visitors to Cuba are fascinated by the amazing state of conservation of the old cars, which they call a “unique phenomenon,” not to be seen to this degree anywhere else in the world. Two aspects on this topic inevitably crop up: first, the preference Cubans have always had for American cars and, second, the never-ending inventiveness Cubans have been demonstrating in auto mechanics just to keep these living relics going over the years.

There are certain locations in Cuba that are known for the mode of transit that exists there. For example, Güines in the province of Mayabeque, some 30 kilometers south of Havana, is just one of these special places. People who visit this town are always surprised to see the enormous number of bicycles on the roads. For this reason, bicycles are considered to be an inseparable part of the history of the place.

Another example is the city of Bayamo in the province of Granma in the Eastern part of the country; it is famous for its horse-drawn carriages. They have become a sort of coat of arms or symbol for the city. In 1902, Bayamo received a Duquesa-type carriage from Paris and this is the one with which that city is particularly identified. Throughout the twentieth century, Bayamo’s carriages have been extremely useful and even more, they have inspired countless chronicles to be written about them and some talented musicians, poets and painters have immortalized them.

The 1990s forced Cubans to hone their creativity to an even superior degree, including in the realm of transportation. That was when we saw the camellos, bike taxis, coco-taxis and a veritable flood of Chinese bicycles starting to decorate the urban landscape.

Transportation in Havana today covers everything imaginable, from collective vehicles such as buses (called guaguas in Cuba), popular private taxis called almendrones that often come to the rescue, minivan taxis that follow set routes (taxis ruteros colectivos), bike taxis, State-owned taxis charging convertible Cuban pesos (CUCs) and even carriages like the ones we have in Bayamo that take you on a leisurely ride through Old Havana.
The daily schedule read “Ethnographic Cooking Class.” I anticipated our group’s arrival at a restaurant or culinary school with a large kitchen and an island countertop to gather around. In reality, I was about to experience a one-of-a-kind meal in the comfort of a stranger’s home.

It was our first time traveling to the other side of the bay. My study-abroad classmates loaded into máquinas or almendrones—the classic cars that serve as taxis. Dachelys, our guide for the day, explained we would be learning to cook, and having lunch, at her sister’s house.

“She’s an amazing cook, best one in the family,” Dachelys shared as the taxi driver drove through the dimly lit tunnel that took us to the rest of Havana. We arrived in the Micro X District of Alamar, Havana. Tall apartment buildings painted in pale blue, pink and yellow created a walkway that led to Barbara’s home. Barbara, Dachelys’ half-sister, greeted us with a smile. She was our host for this traditional Cuban meal.

In many places, consumers are accustomed to the convenience of prepackaged or processed foods. In Cuba every meal is made with fresh ingredients, typically purchased the day that the meal is prepared. This means that every meal is the result of hours of preparation—shopping, cleaning, cutting and cooking. Barbara had begun the process prior to our arrival. The menu consisted of salad, pork, congri and tostones. Rice and beans are common in Cuban meals but congri specifically refers to a dish of rice and beans cooked together.
the black beans, which for our purposes was six cups. After adding a pound of black beans mixed with bay leaves, some garlic, peppers, cumin and a “nose” of Heineken beer, Barbara set the pressure cooker aside for 30 minutes. Focus shifted to the pork. Using the edge of a knife, Barbara began to hit the thin pork steak to tenderize. The dark meat was then seasoned with lime juice, onions, salt and garlic, and left to marinate for 20 minutes.

At this point Barbara completed most of the work solo. Preparing the salad and tostones simultaneously, quickly got the whole group involved. The salad preparation required a steady hand to cut two tomatoes and three cucumbers in even slices. The tostones, a popular Cuban dish, required peeling and cutting green plantains. Barbara then demonstrated a special tool that smashed the plantains into a flatter shape. When it was time to fry, the group gathered in the kitchen. Not quite large enough for a group our size, we filed in and out watching Barbara juggle cooking the pork and plantains. The meat was fried in pork lard, two steaks at a time. The tostones were cooked in vegetable oil and each piece gets fried once before smashing and once after.

With the finishing touches, oil and vinegar dressing was poured over our salad and salt was sprinkled onto the now crunchy tostones. Barbara brought the congri and pork to the table and the meal was served. Conversation was at a halt, only as a compliment to the chef. Student Linsey Armstrong said, “I really appreciated the use of natural ingredients and basic amenities to prepare a well-balanced meal.” Once we all sampled the dishes, the conversation became as full as our plates. We discussed daily meals in Cuba as well as special occasion feasts; December 24 serves as the closest thing to a Cuban Thanksgiving. After clearing the table, Barbara surprised the group with flan. Dessert transitioned into espresso. As the conversation continued, the topics shifted. From Cuban-American relations to LGBT rights, we asked questions stemming from individual curiosity. Eventually, the tables turned and it was our time to answer questions.

We were reluctant to leave. Barbara no longer felt like a stranger. She was simply a friend who welcomed us over for a fantastic meal and good company, providing the group with a unique experience that felt more like an adventure than a lesson.

Although our cooking lesson was in Spanish, translation by Dachelys and Hope Bastian Martínez, our program’s resident director, made it easy to understand and take part in the conversation. The opportunity is there for other Havana visitors to explore as well. For information about a personalized, in-home cooking experience contact Martínez at Hmartinez@ciee.org.
International celebrities are worshipped for either their looks or their work. That is no different in Cuba, where much of the youth population had similar hairstyles, clothing and physical appearance to many celebrities. In the US, there is a certain image everyone wants to achieve through personal fitness. There are people who want to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger and others just want to be in good physical health. While I was studying in Cuba, I noticed it was a little different there. Despite their heavy diets of rice, beans and pork, most people are naturally thin since they walk almost everywhere.

I did quite a bit of walking myself and I noticed the brand new basketball courts in EL Vedado District of Havana, where my casa particular was located. There, on the backboards, was the logo of the NBA Cares Foundation. The foundation does some amazing things for the youth population in the States but I did not know that they were going international, especially in Cuba. This is aside from the NBA’s effort to spread the game along with a clinic they held in April with former stars like Steve Nash and Dikembe Mutombo.

Unlike most Latin American countries where soccer is the sport everyone plays, most of the time these courts were packed with nearly 50 people playing two to three pickup basketball games. This happened almost every night after dinner. These courts have also encouraged new activities such as morning yoga and Pilates for women in the neighborhood.

So how important is physical health to Cuban people? My observational research showed that there are few gyms with free weights and machines. “Some people go to the courts down the street or fields that are near here. Others prefer the home videos in the comfort of their homes. The majority of people just walk everywhere and we do not have the same processed food you have,” explained Delfín, my homestay host. This would explain why there is not an abundance of gyms in this part of the city. Instead, people enjoy using the machines in the local park that make use of the weight of your body.

Enjoying life and not the gym
by John Dietrich
Photo by Ana Lorena and Alex Mene
In El Vedado, there are baseball fields, concrete and grass soccer fields, outdoor gyms without free weights, basketball courts and a few gyms. After talking to and observing local residents in the area, I began noticing a trend on Calle 23, a heavily traveled street. Most of the younger population is very trendy with their clothing, hairstyles and fitness but as the ages progress higher and higher, the people appear less concerned with working out. Instead, they engage in simple exercise videos in their living room or the constant walking necessary in this city. Even taking a taxi often requires walking 10 blocks or so to get on the most affordable taxi route, followed by more walking to reach your destination.

Pepe, a young professional in Havana, explained that he does judo, some mild weight lifting, push-ups, sit-ups and other strength exercises. His friend Alejandro was a sprinter in school and enjoys running. They both explained that because they have easy access to fresh fruit, meat and filling foods such as rice and beans, they do not eat nearly as much as I do.

Then they flipped the question, asking me how a six-foot-three, 230-pound American, had gotten to be my size. Until then, I never really thought about how our school sports train athletes to be machines. The physical fitness image is burned into the minds of US youth from a very young age. Pepe and Alejandro explained that people are more confident with their ability of dancing or talking than their physical appearances like their U.S. friends, but there is a small minority who worship the gym. From my perspective, many people in Cuba do not have to feel self-conscious about their body, and overall wellness is more important than having biceps the size of a baseball. Cuba does not appear to have a stigma like we do about body image, and people are just happy to be alive. Cubans are clearly more worried about enjoying life than a gym.

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Objectification or celebration?
by Lynsey Erickson

Cat calls, piercing stares, hisses and unwanted caresses. These are a few of my first experiences stepping out on the streets of Havana, Cuba. I couldn't help but feel a slight sense of discomfort every time I knew I'd be taking packed public transportation or walking home from a bar at night. “Don’t worry about these men, their comments are complimentary and part of our culture,” I was told by an instructor. I wondered, is this attention towards women objectification or celebration? By the end of my trip, I was certain Cuba and the United States were more similar than different. Both societies are rooted in patriarchal traditions, with thriving feminism movements sure to make change for years to come.

Cuba is strongly macho, a very male dominant and arguably sexist culture. To be frank, you won't understand machismo until you experience it. What most Americans consider harassment, is simply part of life for women in Cuba. On the other hand, machismo means always being taken care of by your man. Whether that means protection, affection or money, men seek out relationships and aim to please women.

Cuba is also considered one of the most feminist Latin American countries, but don't call it that. The term feminist is a bad word in Cuba, but they promote the equality of sexes in more ways than one. The Revolution meant jobs and education for all, including women. They have reached an equal pay rate, something the United States cannot say.
be a #freethenipple campaign like in the US, simply because nudity is everywhere in Cuba. It’s common for Cubans to enjoy the privacy of their homes while in the buff. Stroll through Fábrica de Arte, a popular art gallery and nightclub in Havana, and you’ll see nude paintings and photos, all beautifully depicting women’s bodies.

“Men like to possess strong, beautiful women,” said Núñez. Observe a Cuban dance club and you’ll see this statement in full force. Confidence oozes out of every pore of a Cuban woman as she twists, turns, and shimmies till dawn in the center of the dance floor. Around her, men circle waiting for the opportunity to gently grab her hand and pull her into a sweaty salsa.

In the end, you may never find the answer to what a Cuban woman should be like. In fact, you are likely to find there isn’t just one type of Cuban woman. A mother, an entrepreneur, an artist, a lover. By embracing her body and taking command of her future, a Cuban woman doesn’t have to choose one box to check. She doesn’t have to pick between Bra-Burning Brittany or Sexy Salsa Sarah. She can be whatever she damn well pleases.

“There is no wage gap in state jobs, but in the private sector men have a better chance,” says Hope Bastian Martinez, an American who now lives in Cuba as a residence coordinator for study-abroad programs. Cuba’s emerging private sector mostly involves jobs like construction, taxi driving and restaurant management that woman usually do not do.

Women’s rights have progressed the most out of all gender issues according to Marta Núñez, a respected researcher of gender issues and one of the leaders of the feminist movement in Cuba.

“Many programs are supported socially and economically by the government, but the macho mind set is the hardest to change,” said Núñez.

Thanks to the Cuban government, women have free healthcare, including contraceptives and abortions, starting at age 16. This has led to a low birthrate and women working in the professional sector later into their lives than ever before.

“Professional women can’t find professional men because they’re all women,” laughs Núñez.

You’ll also find women celebrated in the brilliant and colorful art of Cuba. The female form is painted, printed and portrayed on the streets, in the movies and in art galleries around Cuba. Women dress in tight clothing that hugs every curve and accentuates each arch. There will never

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What makes owning a private business in Cuba so special? Well for starters, it wasn’t always allowed. Amidst the fall of the Soviet Union and the trade embargo imposed by the United States, Cuba faced a crippling financial crisis unlike any other. Drastic changes needed to be made to keep the country afloat during this “Special Period.” One of those changes involved giving the Cuban people the freedom to start and run their own businesses, and it’s a new freedom that many Cubans have taken advantage of. According to Professor Ángel Ramón Hernández Gómez, a marketing researcher at the University of Havana, there are now 500,000 Cubans working in the private sector.

“I think entrepreneurship is encouraged here,” Gómez said. “In my opinion, Cuba has the potential to eventually have big private businesses develop.”

Mirta López remembers the day the announcement was made.

“Since I was a child I’d dreamed of owning my own restaurant, but had no knowledge whatsoever on how to do it,” López said. However, when she learned that the law had changed, she jumped at the opportunity without hesitation. She knew that if she succeeded, she could provide a better life for her family while pursuing her passion. But getting the business license was the only easy part of the process.

“I didn’t have any money to actually get anything started, so I began selling coffee on the street and renting out rooms in my house to save up,” López said.

She also studied her craft and made big plans, though at first she could only afford to buy a single table. She found inspiration in a Brazilian soap opera, where a woman ran a restaurant from her house called “Paladar.” Since López's new restaurant was also connected to her house, she decided to include paladar with the name. This connection attracted Brazilian customers,
including some actors in town for a Havana film festival—all of whom loved her place. They even invited López to join them on set.

Praises spread mainly by word of mouth and López began handing out promotion cards. The restaurant began to prosper, being recognized as one of the best three restaurants in Havana by a Brazilian magazine and receiving a gold star on a Cuban tourism website. Aries Restaurant Paladar is located on Calle Universidad #456 entre J y K, in Havana's El Vedado district and opens daily from 12 noon to 12 midnight.

As the business grew, López finally began to bring her vision to life. The building had been built in 1925, and the University of Havana just across the street, in 1930. She wanted the food and decor to reflect this time period, so she made sure to do the proper research to achieve the look. Aries also features a wall of functioning antique clocks that López has purposely stopped, in order to remind her customers to slow down, relax and enjoy themselves and their meal. She is currently in the process of further decorating the place, adding pictures of the university from the 30s.

López didn’t stop at visual stimulation to enhance her customers’ experience. Angélica, a 96 year old recording artist, plays guitar and sings at the restaurant every day. López originally just hired her for one day, but Angelica liked it so much she wanted to work there permanently.

“She’s become like another family member,” said López. Family is an important aspect of the business. López’s daughter helps run Aries and her granddaughter often tags along as well.

López admits that trying to start a business with no knowledge or resources was a crazy idea, but she regrets nothing. She advises any other Cubans interested in starting a business to go for it.

“As long as you have a dream and work hard to achieve it, the rest will work itself out,” she said.

And López hasn’t stopped dreaming either. She is in the process of adding a dessert section to her restaurant. She wants to make gourmet style cupcakes inspired by Cuban flavors such as Cuba Libre and Mojito. She has enough resources right now to get that started, but wants someone to help her learn up-scale presentation techniques. She would also like to get better supplies and ingredients. The blockade makes it difficult and expensive to find those things since they are often imported through more than one country to get to Cuba.

López hopes the blockade will end soon so that more ingredients are available to her.

“I’d be able to get better ingredients and appliances if they didn’t cost so much”, she says.

Though López was one of the first to venture into this new section of Cuba’s economy, she is hardly the last. From modest stands set up at little marketplaces selling handmade goods to high-end restaurants and clubs along the Malecón, Cuban entrepreneurs are everywhere and thriving, providing new and exciting experiences for locals and tourists alike.

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VISUAL ARTS

Contaminación
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Edificio de Arte Cubano

Pintura is the Tomás Sánchez show including 12 never-before shown canvases, mainly in large formats, where he combines natural landscapes with garbage dumps. This is a significant direction taken by this Cuban painter who has not had a show in 30 years at Bellas Artes.

Tramas, by Gustavo Pérez Monzón who showed at the historic Volumen I which marked a milestone in Cuban art of the 1980s, reveals 76 impressive drawings and installations.

El mapa del silencio, a show by the former Carpintero Alexandre Arrechea was especially planned for being shown at Bellas Artes; it includes two large format watercolors, video-projection, a wall-hanging and a mural measuring 25 meters on the wall of the gallery. Curator Corina Matamoros tells us that it states what hasn’t yet been said, even though it is obvious.
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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edificio de Arte Universal, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes</td>
<td>Ruidos salvajes</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 16</td>
<td>Show with over 90 pieces (from 1960-2015) from the permanent collection of The Bronx Museum, which focus on identity, city life and community.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Los ardientes</td>
<td>THROUGH SEPTEMBER 6</td>
<td>Show featuring the works of Sergio Hernández, one of the most important visual artists in Mexico, revealing his mastery of painting and the graphic arts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales</td>
<td>Festival de Arte Naif</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 14</td>
<td>Naive Art Festival.</td>
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<td>Casa de México</td>
<td>Exposiciones del II Concurso Nacional de Colografía Belkis Ayón. Concurso Nacional de Colografía Belkis Ayón</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 23</td>
<td>Exhibition of the collagraphy competition with work by various artists such as Desbel Álvarez, Rafael Cáceres, Álex Cardenas, Irina Cepero, Reydel F. Diaz, Yeny Fernández, Hugo A. González, Mario S. González, Nazin Guerra, Yuliet Labrada Juan C. Lage, Vivian Lozano, Eidania F. Pérez, Alberto Quintana, Juan A. Ramos, Pablo Rosendo, Juan Salazar, Susana Soria, Javier Tamayo and Yilian M. Torres.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Con las mismas manos</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 23</td>
<td>Exhibition featuring the works of artists who, in the words of Aliosky García Sosa, “do not generally work in this technique, or who have just played around or experimented with it, in some cases as a sort of ‘one-night-stand’”: Diana Balboa, Janette Brossard, Tamara Campo, Eduardo Rubén García, Norberto Marrero, Ibrahim Miranda, Rafael Paneca, Julio Cesar Peña, Rubén Rodríguez and Alfredo Sosabravo.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marcando territorio</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 10</td>
<td>Female printmakers from Mexico. A small exhibition by the young Mexican printmakers Edith Chávez, María Luisa Estrada, Gabriela González and Melina Angélica Pérez.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factoría Habana</td>
<td>Entropía</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 23</td>
<td>René Francisco Rodríguez exhibits imaginative artefacts built from set squares, or triangles.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eridani</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 23</td>
<td>Osy Milián’s one-man show lets you interact with his pieces and those of the interdisciplinary group Triangle whose basic aim is to represent limitations and their expressive possibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galería Artis 718</td>
<td>El flash de mi mano</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 14</td>
<td>Show featuring the work of Jorge Dáger, who received the Grand Prize in the Post-it 2 Competition for his “rigorousness and contemporary attitude dealing with the portrait and his impeccable mastery and quality in drawing”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galería Collage Habana</td>
<td>Convergencia</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 21</td>
<td>One-man show by Niels Reyes, with work showing strange conceptual and emotional density.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galería El Reino de Este Mundo</td>
<td>Pintura fresca</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 28</td>
<td>Group show of works by various artists, including Yunier Hernández, Niels Reyes, Agustín Hernández Carlos, Frank Martínez, Roldán Lauzán, Darwin Estacio, Antoine Mena and Alex Hernández.</td>
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<td>Galería Habana</td>
<td>Salón Nacional de Paisaje</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 28</td>
<td>National Landscape Salon.</td>
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<td>Galería La Acacia</td>
<td>La espina del diablo</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 10</td>
<td>One-man show by Adonis Ferro, an artist marked by his strong Expressionist tendency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galería Servando</td>
<td>Contrarios complementarios</td>
<td>THROUGH AUGUST 14</td>
<td>II by Pedro de Oraá, one of Cuba’s contemporary masters of abstraction.</td>
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## Centros de Cultura

**Fototeca de Cuba**

- **THROUGH AUGUST 7**
  - **Siete miradas**, works by contemporary Cuban photographers Raúl Cañibano, Arien Chang, Eduardo García, Liudmila & Nelson, Carlos Otero, Leysis Quesada and Roberto Salas.
  
- **OPENS AUGUST 8**
  - **Subway’s Musicians** documents young photographer Juan Cruz-Rodríguez’s experience with street musicians in the New York City Subway.

### Centro Hispano-Americano de Cultura

- **Unaluz que se mueve.** Photographs of Alicia Alonso in her portrayals of Carmen and Giselle.

### Castillo de la Real Fuerza

- **La última frontera.** Placed on the railings of the old fortress, 50 large photographs discover the natural wonders hidden beneath the sea.

### Expocuba, Pabellón de la cultura

- **Miradas teveladoras.** An approach to different moments of the Cuban Revolution through the work carried out by a group of excellent photographers that captured those moments: Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (Korda), Raúl Corrales, Osvaldo and Roberto Salas, Liborio Noval, Ernesto Fernández, José Agraz, Perfecto Romero and Luis Pierce.
El Ballet Nacional de Cuba rinde tributo a Ernesto Lecuona
Teatro Martí
Aug 1, 8:30pm, Aug 2, 5pm
Dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the birth of Cuban composer and pianist Ernesto Lecuona. The program includes Tarde en la siesta (choreography by Alberto Méndez and music by Ernesto Lecuona), Cuba dentro de un piano (choreography by Eduardo Blanco and music by Manuel Saumell, Ignacio Cervantes, Ernesto Lecuona and Harold Gramatges), A la luz de tus canciones (choreography by Alicia Alonso and music by Ernesto Lecuona, Orlando de la Rosa and Adolfo Guzmán) and Impromptu Lecuona (choreography by Alicia Alonso and music by Ernesto Lecuona).

Taller coreográfico
Teatro Martí
Aug 8, 8:30pm, Aug 9, 5pm
Workshop with young choreographers and dancers from the Company.

Un beso de mi Habana
Centro de Danza de La Habana
Aug 22, 5pm
Show by the folklore company Raíces Profundas, with choreography by Emilio Hernández, artistic direction by Idolidia Ramos and general direction by Juan de Dios Ramos.
The contemporary fusion and electronic music scene has expanded recently as new bars and clubs have opened and party promoters have organized events in parks and public spaces. Good live music venues include Bertolt Brecht (Wed: Interactivo, Sunday: Déjá-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.

Descemer Bueno in Concert

August 22, 9pm
Salón Rosado de La Tropical

Descemer Bueno is one of the greats in today’s Cuban fusion music as well as one of the finest songwriters of his generation. His single, “Bailando,” sung by Enrique Iglesias featuring Cubans Gente D Zona and Descemer himself, won three Latin Grammys in its latest edition: Song of the Year, Best Urban Song and Best Urban Performance. So, don’t miss out on his performance of boleros, guarachas, son and trova sprinkled with jazz, hip-hop and r&b at perhaps Havana’s popular venue.
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<tr>
<td>Balneario Universitario El Coral</td>
<td>FRIDAYS &amp; SATURDAYS 1pm-1am</td>
<td>Electronic music with rapping, Dling, Vjing, Dj-producers, breakdancing and graffiti writing, among other urban art expressions.</td>
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<td>Café Concert El Sauce</td>
<td>SUNDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>La Máquina de la Melancolía, with Frank Delgado and Luis Alberto García</td>
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<td>Tercera y 8</td>
<td>MONDAYS 11 pm</td>
<td>Baby Lores</td>
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<td>Barbaram Pepito’s Bar</td>
<td>THURSDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>Los Francos</td>
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<td>Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional</td>
<td>WEDNESDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>Qva Libre</td>
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<td>Centro Cultural Bertolt Brecht</td>
<td>WEDNESDAYS 11 pm</td>
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<td>FRIDAYS 11 pm</td>
<td>Kelvis Ochoa</td>
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<td>Gato Tuerto</td>
<td>SATURDAYS 10 pm</td>
<td>Tenor Bernardo Lichilín and DJ Eddy Sánchez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piano bar Habaneciendo</td>
<td>SATURDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>DJs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salón Rosado de La Tropical</td>
<td>FRIDAYS 9 pm</td>
<td>Electronic music with Sarao,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submarino Amarillo</td>
<td>SATURDAYS 2 pm</td>
<td>Vieja Escuela, country, blues &amp; rock’n’roll</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresa y Chocolate</td>
<td>SAT &amp; SUN 10 pm</td>
<td>Electronic music</td>
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<td>SUNDAYS 7 pm</td>
<td>Aceituna sin Hueso</td>
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<td>Havana Hard Rock</td>
<td>EVERY OTHER FRIDAY</td>
<td>Soul Train, a show of soul music</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SAT &amp; SUN 10 pm</td>
<td>Cover rock bands</td>
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<td>Club Turf</td>
<td>AUGUST 15 10 pm</td>
<td>Djoy</td>
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<td>Le Select</td>
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<td>Diablo Tun Tun</td>
<td>FRIDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>Eddy Escobar</td>
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<td>SATURDAYS 11 pm</td>
<td>Gens</td>
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<td>Jardines del teatro Mella</td>
<td>AUGUST 13 5 pm</td>
<td>Rap group Conciencia</td>
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<td>AUGUST 8 5 pm</td>
<td>Dúo Jade</td>
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<td>AUGUST 20 5 pm</td>
<td>Kilao</td>
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<td>AUGUST 27 5 pm</td>
<td>Rap group Conciencia</td>
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### SALSA / TIMBA

#### Casa de la Música Habana

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mondays</td>
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<td>Havana Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesdays</td>
<td>11 pm</td>
<td>Havana Show</td>
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<tr>
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#### Piano Bar Tun Tun

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<th>Days</th>
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<tr>
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#### Salón Rojo del Hotel Capri

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<tr>
<td>Sundays</td>
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<td>Juan Guillermo</td>
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#### Piano Bar Habaneciendo

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<td>Osaín del Monte</td>
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<td>Cero Copia</td>
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#### Casa de la Música de Miramar

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<td>11 pm</td>
<td>Pedrito Calvo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>5 pm</td>
<td>Juan Guillermo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursdays</td>
<td>5 pm</td>
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#### Jardines del 1830

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<tr>
<td>Thursdays</td>
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#### Tercera y 8

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>11 pm</td>
<td>Alain Daniel</td>
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#### Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>11 pm</td>
<td>Manana Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fridays</td>
<td>11 pm</td>
<td>Caribe Girls</td>
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Photo by Alex Mene
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asociación Cubana de Derechos de Autor Musical</th>
<th>Jazz Café</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNEAC</strong></td>
<td><strong>WEDNESDAYS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUGUST 20</strong> 6 pm</td>
<td>Alexis Bosch (pianist) and Proyecto Jazz Cubano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUGUST 13</strong> 5 pm</td>
<td>Peña La Esquina del Jazz hosted by showman Bobby Carcassés.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sala El Ciervo Encantado</strong></td>
<td><strong>SATURDAYS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUGUST 26</strong> 8:30 pm</td>
<td>Yissy García (percussionist &amp; composer) and her group</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jardines del teatro Mella</strong></td>
<td><strong>11 pm</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUGUST 26</strong> 5 pm</td>
<td>Jazz Electro</td>
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</table>

**Zule Guerra (singer & composer) and Blues D’Havana**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asociación Yoruba de Cuba</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNEAC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATURDAYS 4 pm</td>
<td>AUGUST 26 9 pm En Clave de Rumba</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATURDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>El Jelengue de Areito 5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATURDAYS 9 pm</td>
<td>MONDAYS Son del Nene</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUESDAYS 9 pm</td>
<td>TUESDAYS Conjunto Chappottín</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRIDAYS 9:30 pm</td>
<td>WEDNESDAYS Trova</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATURDAYS 9 pm</td>
<td>THURSDAYS Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNDAYS 9 pm</td>
<td>FRIDAYS Rumberos de Cuba</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional</strong></td>
<td>SATURDAYS Explosión Sonera</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATURDAYS 5 pm</td>
<td>SUNDAYS Millo and his group Iyero Sun</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Café Concert El Sauce</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>TUESDAYS 9 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AUGUST 29 4 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Casa del Alba</strong></td>
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<td>AUGUST 7 8 pm</td>
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<td>AUGUST 14 4 pm</td>
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<td>AUGUST 21 6 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Casa de la Cultura Comunitaria Mirta Aguirre</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AUGUST 30 5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Casa de la Cultura de Plaza</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AUGUST 8 7 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Café Miramar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SATURDAYS 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Casa Memorial Salvador Allende</strong></td>
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<td>AUGUST 21 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Casa de la Música Habana</strong></td>
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<td>SUNDAYS 5 pm</td>
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<td>FRIDAYS 9:30 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Hurón Azul, UNEAC</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Pabellón Cuba</strong></td>
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<td>AUGUST 26 9 pm</td>
<td>En Clave de Rumba</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Jelengue de Areito 5 pm</td>
<td>Son del Nene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conjunto Chappottín</td>
<td>Trova</td>
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<td>Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez</td>
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<td>Explosión Sonera</td>
<td>Millo and his group Iyero Sun</td>
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<td>Raúl Torres</td>
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<td>Get-together La Juntamenta, with trovador Angel Quintero.</td>
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<td>AUGUST 13</td>
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Las mariposas saltan al vacío
Pequeño teatro de La Habana / Production: José Milián
Saturdays and Sundays, 8:30pm
Café teatro Bertolt Brecht

Play written and directed by José Milián, National Theatre Prize-winner in 2008, which deals with AIDS as a social phenomena. While they get ready for a performance, a group of HIV/AIDS patients who are locked up in a sanatorium, discuss about life, death and human relations.

Decamerón
Teatro El Público / Production: Carlos Díaz
Fridays & Saturdays 8:30pm; Sundays 5pm
Teatro Trianón

Several stories from Giovanni Boccaccio’s The Decameron are put onstage with more than a hint at Cuba today. Those who expect nudity galore from Carlos Díaz are in for a surprise.

Hamlet Interview
Ludi Teatro / Production: Miguel Abreu
Tuesdays-Thursdays, 7pm
Café teatro Bertolt Brecht

Free adaptation of Heiner Müller’s Hamlet Machine.

Ni un sí ni un no
Compañía teatral Hubert de Blanck / Production: Fabricio Hernández
Fridays & Saturdays 8:30pm; Sundays 5pm
Teatro Hubert de Blanck

Comedy by Abelardo Estorino, winner of the National Literature and Theatre Prize in 1992 and 2002, respectively, a true master of character study, efficient dialogue and of taking comedy into the realm of love and death.

Aladino
Anfiteatro de La Habana
August 25 & 26, 9pm

Premiere of Aladino, musical based on Casey Nicholaw’s Broadway hit, with music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Howard Ashman, Tim Rice and Chad Beguelin. The magical world of the One Thousand and One Nights enacted with the usual imagination, good taste and professionalism of Alfonso Menéndez and his company.
**La muchachita del mar**  
Grupo Retablos  
August 1-9, Fri, Sat & Sun, 3pm  
Teatro de Títeres El Arca  
Free adaptation of the fairy tale The Little Mermaid by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. Directed by Cristian Medina.

**La calle de los fantasmas**  
COMPANÍA EL ARCA  
AUGUST 15-30, FRI, SAT & SUN, 3PM  
TEATRO DE TÍTERES EL ARCA  
Ghost Street, emblematic play of Latin American puppet theater, by Javier Villafañe, adapted and directed by Miriam Sánchez.

**Shadow Theater**  
KAGE BOUSHI JAPANESE COMPANY, AUGUST 4 & 5, 5PM, SALA COVARRUBIAS, TEATRO NACIONAL ADMISSION FREE  
Performances of folk tales with human shadows, including a workshop in which both children and adults can participate in the plays creating shadows with their own bodies.

**En busca del barquito de papel**  
TEATRO DE BOLSILLO  
THROUGH AUGUST 16, SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS, 11AM TEATRO RAQUEL REVUELTA  

**Mundo mágico**  
SUNDAYS, 11AM  
BARBARAM PEPIITO’S BAR  
Magical World by Yobalis and their puppets.

**La feria de Pastosa**  
SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS, 10AM  
CALLE 1RA. ESQUINA A D, EL VEDADO  
Kids’party every Saturday and Sunday throughout August.
Feria de Arte en La Rampa
August
Pabellón Cuba
As is customary every summer since the year 2000, the Art at La Rampa Crafts Fair opens its door at the Pabellón Cuba, emblematic building of 1960s Cuban architecture, with an attractive offer that includes the sale of serigraphs, footwear, clothing, costume jewelry, fans, household goods, furniture, ornaments, and much more. Fashion shows, concerts and activities for the kiddies will also take place during the Fair.

XI Simposio Internacional de Hip Hop
August 14-15
La Madriguera
Dedicated to urban music, the organizers have announced performances by Brazilian rapper Dingo and the Colombian band Mano Armada, while from Cuba, the group Company Yoruba, Yimi Konclaze and Papa Flow, among others, will be performing. There will also be a graffiti exhibition and hip-hop related dance performances.

Cubadanza
August 3-14
Teatro Nacional de Cuba
The two-week long International Workshop on Cuban Modern Dance, Cubadanza, aimed at professional dancers and students, teaches different Cuban popular rhythms and dances from which Cuban modern dance draws on and shows how the pelvic region and the undulation of the torso, among other characteristics, are the fundamental basis of the Cuban technique of modern dance. According to the availability of the company for the period in which the workshop will take place, participants will be able to attend rehearsals and demonstrative classes with first dancers of Danza Contemporánea de Cuba.
Classes will be held Monday-Saturday on the first week and Monday-Friday the second week. The subjects that will be taught are Cuban Modern Dance Technique, Cuban Folklore, Traditional and Popular Dances, Barre Technique, Choreography Workshops and Methodology for Teaching Cuban Modern Dance.
When seeking relief from the summer heat in Havana, it has become a very welcome habit to be refreshed by the best of Cuba's humorists who make us both think and laugh. So, once again, the Aquelarre National Humor Festival takes place during the hottest month with refreshing performances by the best comedians in the country.

Organized by the Centro Promotor del Humor, the opening and closing ceremonies of Aquelarre 2015 will be held at the 8,000-seat Karl Marx Theater in Miramar. Year after year, tickets are often sold out days before the shows, so be prepared. If you cannot find a ticket, look for people selling an extra ticket or two for up to five times their value outside of the theater!

If you're in town and attend one of the shows, you'll soon realize, paradoxical as it may seem, that Cuban humor—cutting and thought provoking—is actually no laughing matter.

Festival Nacional del Humor Aquelarre

Sesiones para jóvenes
Wednesdays, 8pm-midnight
Fábrica de Arte Cubano
Dj's, films, music videos and live performances are some of the activities that Fábrica de Arte has organized for the summer months especially for 12 to 17 year olds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUG 2, 9 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO KARL MARX</td>
<td>Opening show with Kike Quiñones, Lázaro Hernández, Jorge Díaz, Pánfilo, Omar Franco, Proyecto Delta and Mustelier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 3, 7 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO RAQUEL REVUELTA</td>
<td>Estamos mejorando, con La Leña del Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 3, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO MELLA</td>
<td>Recitar es volver a fingir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 3, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>El Flaco y La Oveja, con Lazarito and La Oveja Negra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 4, 7:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO RAQUEL REVUELTA</td>
<td>Vida de perro, con Caricare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 4, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>Closing gala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 4, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO MELLA</td>
<td>Strike, con Omar Franco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 5, 6:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>SALA TEATRO ADOLFO LLAUERADÓ</td>
<td>El Flaco y La Oveja, with Lazarito and La Oveja Negra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 5, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>El Flaco y La Oveja, with Lazarito and La Oveja Negra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 5, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>Contentos empeñados, with the group Etcétera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 5, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>Contentos empeñados, with the group Etcétera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 5, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO RAQUEL REVUELTA</td>
<td>Humor a la carta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 6, 6:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>SALA TEATRO ADOLFO LLAUERADÓ</td>
<td>El Flaco y La Oveja, with Lazarito and La Oveja Negra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 6, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO RAQUEL REVUELTA</td>
<td>De cubano a cubano, with Jorge Díaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 6, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>Tres y tres más rieron, con the group Carcajadas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 7, 7:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CINE LA RAMPA</td>
<td>Proyecto Delta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 7, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO KARL MARX</td>
<td>Recordar es volver a fingir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 7, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>De cubano a cubano, with Jorge Díaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 7, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>SALA TEATRO ADOLFO LLAUERADÓ</td>
<td>Tres y tres más rieron, with the group Carcajadas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 7, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO MELLA</td>
<td>Humor con cierto aire, with Kike Quiñones and Aire de Concierto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 8, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>CENTRO CULTURAL BERTOLT BRECHT</td>
<td>Estamos mejorando, with La Leña del Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 8, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO RAQUEL REVUELTA</td>
<td>Tres que son Komotú, with Komotú, Esparadrapo and Fonoceniz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 8, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>SALA ADOLFO LLAUERADÓ</td>
<td>Tres y tres más rieron, with the group Carcajadas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 8, 8:30 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO MELLA</td>
<td>Directo a la cabeza, with Etcétera and Mustelier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 8, 9 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEATRO KARL MARX</td>
<td>Closing show with super comedians Osvaldo Doimeadios, Luis Silva y el grupo Pagola la Paga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Festival de Verano en Jibacoa**

**July 31-August 2**

Jibacoa Beach, Mayabeque province

The festival, which takes place by the sea, is very popular with the young generations of Cubans. For three days and three nights, there will be non-stop music and dance by the sea with Arnaldo y su Talismán, Ira Base, Papa Flow, Cuentas Claras, Ethian; DJs Xander Black, Ryan, Alejandro Núñez, D’Vazz Brother’s, Dennis Ever, Arquitecto vs. Grench, Diemen Druff, Yoeslan Pérez Martínez, Android, Rafael Arencibia Crespo, Iván Lejardi, Dark, Reitt, Ra, Eddy Gt, Obbi Daniels, Bjoyce y Richi Pellicer; Karamba, Nube Roja & Wena Onda; Isis Flores, David & Ernesto Blanco & Gitanos; Zeus, Darkness Fall and The Shepal, among many other musicians.

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**XXXVII Jornada de la Canción Política**

**August 1-4**

Guantánamo

The 38th Political Song Festival will include concerts by young singer-songwriters, trova get-togethers, visits to communities, exhibitions, talks, poetry recitals and meetings with guest musicians.
The 2015 Havana Carnival
by Ricardo Alberto Pérez

The 2015 carnival will open on August 7 with the traditional parade of colorful comparsas and floats down Malecón Avenue. More than 20 popular bands will perform from the floats during the festivity, including Pupy y los que son son, Elito Revé y su charangón, Anacaona, Bamboleo, Chranga Latina y Papúcho and Manana Club, as well as singers Haila and Tania Pantoja, just to name a few. Revelers will be able to dance the night away at the Tribuna Antiimperialista, while the esplanade on 1ra and D Streets has been chosen for alternative or fusion music.

Today, the Havana carnival provokes mixed feelings from Habaneros. On one hand, the complaints that locals voice are numerous: too much reggaeton, too much drinking and, of course, too high a possibility of rain. ‘I’m definitely going to avoid it this year,’ seems to be a recurrent sentiment. Yet, thousands of people still spend August weekends partying down the Malecón. It is true that in times gone by, the Havana carnival has been more glamorous—the election of a Carnival Queen until 1970 was a real highlight while the floats of the 1980s were simply spectacular—but the current state of the Havana carnival is a clear reflection of the evolving nature of the country. Indeed, with such a long and storied history, the Havana carnival highlights the changing demographic and political landscape of the island over the last five centuries. In what follows, Ricardo Alberto Pérez, a well-known Cuban writer and poet, explores the history and background of this erotic feast of the flesh.
The roots of the Havana carnival can be traced back to medieval Italy where the original carnival was probably tied to ancient Roman Bacchanalia or Greek Dionysia festivals. Held shortly before the onset of Lent in February when Catholics were forbidden to eat rich foods in preparation for Easter, the carnival became an integral part of the Christian calendar celebrated with parades and masquerade balls.

From Italy, where the carnival of Venice still holds a place of importance, the carnival tradition spread throughout Catholic Europe before leapfrogging across the Atlantic in the wake of Iberian explorers and colonizers. Within a century of Christopher Columbus' historic journey, carnivals were held in Cape Verde and the Canary Islands, as well as in South America and the Caribbean.

In colonial Havana, where carnival festivities date back to 1573, a mixture of social classes paraded down the streets in carriages, on horseback, and on foot dressed in elaborate masks and costumes. Fireworks, streamers, decorated floats, huge figures called muñecones, and the dancing men known as faroleros were all part of the carnival scenery.

The introduction of African slavery in Cuba added another dimension to the festival as new African musical instruments and dance forms were incorporated into the celebration. A seventeenth-century Italian visitor, Giovanni Francesco Giamelli Careri, remarked: “On Sunday, February 9, 1698 in Havana, before Easter, blacks and mulattos, in picturesque costumes, formed a congregation to revel in the carnival.”

The first Havana carnival of the twentieth century was held in 1902, the inaugural year of Cuba’s first president. During the era of Cuban republican history, the carnival flourished with new features including the election of a queen who reigned over the celebration with her ladies-in-waiting. A few years later, in 1908, two large groups of dancers, who in a uniform manner danced a rhythmic step in time with accompanying instruments, entered the carnival scene: Los Componedores de la Batea and El Alacrán. These groups, known as comparsas, were born in marginal neighborhoods in Havana and became emblematic expressions of both the Havana carnival and Cuban culture in general. Through their dance and choreographies, these comparsas told different stories, for example, a brawl between the women of a tenement house or a religious narrative from the Abakuá society. Successive decades witnessed the addition of other comparsas, including Las Boyeras, Los Guaracheros, Los Mambises, Los Marqueses de Atarés and La Sultana. The carnival ball was also born in this era. Held in designated neighborhoods and Spanish regional clubs, Habaneros hid their faces behind masks as an expression of unrestrained freedom.
The Cuban Revolution of 1959 once again altered the political landscape of Cuba and also had an effect on the Havana carnival. In 1970, the last carnival queen was elected in a televised national event that attracted millions of viewers. The ever popular carnival ball was also replaced by open air dances in large public spaces while the long-standing February festivities were moved to the summer months to coincide with the celebration of historic events. Although they are a far cry from the glorious days of their predecessors, floats, comparsas and muñecones still parade down the Malecón from La Punta to the Hotel Nacional every August to the delight of the thousands of revelers who gather on the streets to watch the parade.

The Havana carnival may not attract the hordes of tourists that its cousins in Venice and Rio de Janeiro do, but its history is rich and reflective of the abrupt changes that have rocked this island. Whether you interpret the carnival as a feast of the flesh or believe that it is used to reinforce a cultural and ethnological tradition, if you find yourself in Cuba in the summer, the Havana carnival is not to be missed.
At first, Cuban rumba smelled of solares, black people, sugar-cane syrup, wooden boxes and drums. Today, the aroma is different, but it maintains the mixed-race beat that defines us, the Caribbean sensuality that sets us apart and the irreverent party spirit that marked its birth over 200 years ago.

Rumba is one of the most authentic manifestations in Cuban culture. Widely popular and 100% Cuban, it was born as a process of hybridization of elements of different origins, in which the legacy of African cultures played a predominant role while it exhibited significant Spanish components. It emerged in Cuba in the late 19th century, and developed after the abolition of slavery.

More than a music and dance representation, rumba is a way of life, a philosophy that contains a mystique connected to religions and affiliations. It does not need specific instruments—the clapping of hands is enough to get a rumba going. For the people in the neighborhoods and in the streets, rumba is suited to their lives, to their emotions.

And this is what Timbalaye, a yoruba word that refers to feasible dreams and projects, is all about. The International Cuban Rumba Festival, created to...
delve into the heritage of rumba, includes seminars on rumba and the folklore of each province; song, dance and percussion lessons; presentation of the Timbalaye Scholarships on the research, interpretation, choreography and interaction of rumba with other arts; participation in typical folk traditions of each province; launching of the third edition of Revista Timbalaye; popular dances and artistic gals with Cuban and international ensembles.

The 7th International Rumba Festival, which will be hosted this year by the city of Cienfuegos, whose Historic Center is a World Heritage Site, will travel to eight different Cuban cities from August 21-31. The opening and closing ceremonies will take place in Havana and Santiago de Cuba, respectively.

Aug 21, Havana
Aug 22, Pinar del Río
Aug 23, Havana
Aug 24-25, Matanzas
Aug 26, Cienfuegos
Aug 27, Trinidad
Aug 28, Camagüey
Aug 29, Santiago de Cuba
Aug 30, Guantánamo
Aug 31, Santiago de Cuba
Brutal Fest Summer 2015 Cuba Festival

by John Walters

A festival that insists on letting the world know that Cuban music is not only salsa and reggaeton, but also has a heavy metal tradition with enthusiastic fans

Back in May 2008, an unprecedented event in the history of rock in Cuba took place: the Salón Rosado de La Tropical was taken over by a dozen national metal bands to promote the launching of the compilation “Not Salsa, Just Brutal Music,” by the French label Brutal Beatdown Records. The concert turned into a veritable fiesta and was forever dubbed “Brutal Fest.”

Brutal Fest takes place twice a year (originally it was done only in February, but because it has been so successful, it was done again in August) and is the most important international metal music festival in Cuba. It consists in a 10-day tour of Cuba with both Cuban and international bands. Seventy-five bands from France, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, the UK, Denmark, Finland, Costa Rica, Sweden, Canada, the US, Chile, Hungary... have been touring Cuba through Brutal Fest.

The festival will start off in the city of Holguín on the 14th and will travel to Bayamo, Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, Santa Clara, Havana and Pinar del Río, until August 23, which is very much appreciated by fans everywhere.

Since 2012, Tattoo's Party runs parallel to Brutal Fest and is held at Maxim Rock in Havana, headquarters of the Cuban Rock Agency and Brutal Fest. This tattoo convention and contest is organized by Brutal Beatdown Recs, Toy Store Producciones and the Cuban Rock Agency and has been gaining in popularity ever since.

Organized by the French Brutal Beatdown Record Label in association with the Agencia Cubana de Rock (Cuban Rock Agency) and the Instituto Cubano de la Música (Cuban Institute of Music), this year’s festival includes Cuban bands Switch, Tendencia, Mortuory, Adictox and Arrabio, just to name a few, plus Get the Shot from Canada; ValeTudo, Uberyou and The Strapones from Switzerland; Ratbomb from France and Joliette from México.
Preview of the Brutal Fest Summer 2015

Lineup:
- Get the Shot (Canada)
- Vale Tudo (Switzerland)
- Uberyou (Switzerland)
- The Strapones (Switzerland)
- Joliette (Mexico)
- Ratbomb (France)
- Switch (Cuba)
- Tendencia (Cuba)
- Mortuory (Cuba)
- Adictox (Cuba)
- Arrabio (Cuba)

Gigs:
- Fri, Aug 14: Holguín
- Sat, Aug 15: Bayamo
- Sun, Aug 16: Santiago de Cuba
- Tues, Aug 18: Camagüey
- Thurs, Aug 20: Santa Clara
- Fri, Aug 21: Havana
- Sat, Aug 22: Havana
- Sun, Aug 23: Pinar del Río

Fans will enjoy the most radical sounds of contemporary metal such as grindcore, death metal, hardcore and black metal. And like the name of the CD launched in 2008, this is Not Salsa, Just Brutal Music.

Brutal Beatdown Records: Booking & Production

First and only Production & Booking Agency to date dedicated to Cuban extreme music, Brutal Beatdown Records is a 100% independent label entirely managed from Havana, Cuba. Its main purpose is promoting Cuban extreme music and bringing extreme music to Cuba through record productions, concerts and the international extreme music festival, “Brutal Fest”.

The festival is organized by Brutal Beatdown Records with the collaboration of Cuban Rock Agency and is sponsored by Cuban Music Institute, French Embassy in Cuba, French Institute, Havana Club, Cuba Autrement and Los Portales.

Contact:

BRUTAL BEATDOWN RECORDS
9B, Allée des Narcisses
45770 – Saran – France

e-mail: brutalbeatdown@gmail.com
www.brutalbeatdown.com
www.facebook.com/brutal.beatdown.records
www.brutalfest.com
El Atelier
EXPERIMENTAL FUSION
Interesting décor, interesting menu.
Calle 5 e/ Paseo y 2, Vedado
(+53) 7-836-2025

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Justifiably famous. Follow in the footsteps of Queen of Spain
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CAFÉ
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Calle San Ignacio #364, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-831-2090

Cafe Laurent
SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN
Attractive penthouse restaurant with breezy terrace.
Calle M #257, e/19 y 21, Vedado
(+53) 7-831-2090

El Chanchullero
SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN
Fabulous value hole in the wall taps. Trendy.
Teniente Reg #457 bajos, Plaza del Cristo, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-872-8227

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Consistently good food, attentive service. Old school.
Calle 46 #505 esq. a 3ra, Miramar
(+53) 7-202-8337

Habana Mia 7
INTERNATIONAL GOURMET
Endless summer nights. Excellent food and service.
Paseo #7 altos e/ 1ra y 3ra, Vedado
(+53) 7-830-2267

Opera
INTERNATIONAL
Calle 5ta #204 e/ E y F, Vedado
(+53) 5-263-1632
(+53) 5-263-1632

Sancty
SUSHI/ORIENTAL
Authentic fisherman’s shack servicing world-class sushi.
Calle 240A #3023 esq. a 3ra C, Jaimanitas
(+53) 5-286-7039

Santy
SUSHI/ORIENTAL
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Calle 240A #3023 esq. a 3ra C, Jaimanitas
(+53) 5-263-1632
(+53) 5-263-1632

Starbien
SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN
Fabulous food and great service in the heart of Vedado.
Calle 29 #205 e/ B y C, Vedado
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SPANISH
Jordi’s place. Fabulous modern open-plan space.
Calle 9na #454 e/ E y F, Vedado
(+53) 7-832-0178

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SPANISH
Jordi’s place. Fabulous modern open-plan space.
Calle 9na #454 e/ E y F, Vedado
(+53) 7-832-0178

D. Eutimia
SPANISH/CUBAN
Absolutely charming. Excellent Cuban/creole food.
Callejón del Chorro #60C, Plaza de la Catedral, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7 861 1332

304 O’Reilly
INTERNATIONAL
O’Reilly #304 e/ Habana y Aguiar, La Habana Vieja
(+53) 5-264-4725

La California
CUBAN-CREOLE/INTERNATIONAL
Beautiful C19 colonial building. Great fresh pastas.
Calle Crespo #55 e/ San Lázaro y Refugio, Centro Habana
(+53) 7-863 7510

Il Divino
INTERNATIONAL
Set in huge gardens outside town. Great for the kids.
Calle Raquel, #50 e/ Esperanza y Lagunas, Centro Habana
(+53) 7-643-7734

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CAFÉ
Great sandwiches, salads & juices
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(+53) 7-831-2090

Café Laurent
SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN
Attractive penthouse restaurant with breezy terrace.
Calle M #257, e/19 y 21, Vedado
(+53) 7-831-2090
*La Guarida*

**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*

**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

*Nazdarovie*

**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

*Santy*

**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
### Casa Miglis

- **Style of food**: Swedish-Cuban fusion
- **Cost**: Expensive
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: 5
- **Ambience**: 5
- **Service**: 5
- **Value**: 5
- **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

**www.casamiglis.com**

### La California

- **Style of food**: Cuban-Creole/International
- **Cost**: Moderate
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: 5
- **Ambience**: 5
- **Service**: 5
- **Value**: 5
- **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

### Habana Mía 7

- **Style of food**: International gourmet
- **Cost**: Moderate
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: 5
- **Ambience**: 5
- **Service**: 5
- **Value**: 5
- **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**

### Iván Chef Justo

- **Style of food**: Spanish
- **Cost**: Expensive
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: 5
- **Ambience**: 5
- **Service**: 5
- **Value**: 5
- **Best for**: Spectacular innovative food. Light and airy place where it always seems to feel like Springtime.
- **Don't Miss**: The lightly spiced grilled mahi-mahi served with organic tomato relish. Try the suckling pig and stay for the cuatro leches.

**Aguacate #9, Esq. Chacón, Habana Vieja.**
(+53) 7-863-9697 / (+53) 5-343-8540

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**Contents**
**La Casa**

**TOP PICK**

- **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

---

**Otramanera**

**TOP PICK**

- **Style of food**: International
- **Cost**: Moderate
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: ★★★★★
- **Ambience**: ★★★★★
- **Service**: ★★★★★
- **Value**: ★★★★★
- **Best for**: Beautiful modern décor and good food.
- **Don’t miss**: Pork rack of ribs in honey. Sweet & sour sauce and grilled pineapple

Calle 35 #1810 e/ 20 y 41, Playa
(+53) 7-203-8315
otramaneralahabana@gmail.com
reservas@otramaneralahabana.com

---

**Opera**

**TOP PICK**

- **Style of food**: International
- **Cost**: Moderate
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: ★★★★★
- **Ambience**: ★★★★★
- **Service**: ★★★★★
- **Value**: ★★★★★
- **Best for**: Best for Homely & Intimate enviorment Quality food in a beautiful setting.
- **Don’t miss**: Fresh pasta, vegetarian dishes and quail.

Calle Sta e/ Paseo y 2, Vedado
(+53) 7-263-1632 / (+53) 8-31-2255

---

**Atelier**

**TOP PICK**

- **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 Sta e/ Paseo y 2, Vedado
(+53) 7-836-2025
atelierdedecuba@yahoo.es

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**Otramanera**

**TOP PICK**

- **Style of food**: International
- **Cost**: Moderate
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: ★★★★★
- **Ambience**: ★★★★★
- **Service**: ★★★★★
- **Value**: ★★★★★
- **Best for**: Beautiful modern décor and good food.
- **Don’t miss**: Pork rack of ribs in honey. Sweet & sour sauce and grilled pineapple

Calle 35 #1810 e/ 20 y 41, Playa
(+53) 7-203-8315
otramaneralahabana@gmail.com
reservas@otramaneralahabana.com

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**Opera**

**TOP PICK**

- **Style of food**: International
- **Cost**: Moderate
- **Type of place**: Private (Paladar)
- **Food**: ★★★★★
- **Ambience**: ★★★★★
- **Service**: ★★★★★
- **Value**: ★★★★★
- **Best for**: Best for Homely & Intimate enviorment Quality food in a beautiful setting.
- **Don’t miss**: Fresh pasta, vegetarian dishes and quail.

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

‘This remains the island’s best restaurant, combining a sophisticated and hip ambience with solid food preparation’
Cigar Aficionado ................................................................................................................................................

“The greatest and most magical is La Guarida, so magical that it is tempting to protect it by with holding its address...’
........................................................................................................................................................................
The Guardian

Havana’s legendary paladar just got better with the opening of a new cocktail terrace that offers fabulous views, a funky vibe and Havana’s best bartenders.

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

★ Best for Homely & Intimate environment
★ 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
NAZDAROVIE

Authentic Soviet restaurant overlooking the Malecón

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

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
NAZDAROVIE OFFERS YOU SPECIAL LUNCH MENUS DURING THE SUMMER SEASON!

Beginning on June 29, Nazdarovie, your Soviet cuisine restaurant in Havana, offers special lunch menus

*For only CUC 10, you can enjoy:*

One Nazdarovie Shot (frozen vodka with lemon and caviar)

Slavic soup of the day (Borsch / Salianka / Akroshka) with homemade black bread

One main Dish to choose:
* "Kotleta Kiev" (breaded chicken with butter inside) and mashed potatoes
* "Pollo Tabaka" (chicken Georgian style) with pieces of wild potatoes, homemade pickles and adzhika sauce
* "Shaslik" (Armenian style skewers) of meat (pork, chicken, turkey, beef or mutton) and vegetables, with segments of wild potatoes, homemade pickles and adzhika sauce
* "Pescado con crema rusa" (fresh Russian style fish with smetana cream, dill and fine herbs) served with mashed potatoes

Dessert: Blinchiki with cottage cheese, smetana and wild berry marmalade

Enjoy the taste of the food from the former republics of the Soviet Union and the best view of the Malecón in Havana...

For just CUC 10!
Havana’s best Bars & Clubs

Traditional Bars

El Floridita ★★★☆☆
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 ★★★★☆
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 ★★★★☆
Recently (beautifully) renovated. Full of history. Popular. Lacks a little ‘grime’.
Animas esq. a Zulueta, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-866-7157

Cervecería ★★★★☆
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 ★★★★☆
Fabulous rooftop setting, great service, cool vibe.
Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado
(+53) 7-832-2355

Espacios ★★★☆☆
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 ★★★★☆
A comfortable place to chat / hang out with your friends. Great service.
Calle 20 #503, e/ 5ta y 7ma.
(+53) 7-202-9188

Fabrítica de Arte ★★★★☆
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 ★★★☆☆
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

Bolabana ★★★☆☆
Packed night after night with a young dressed-up clientele wanting to party. Don’t go looking for Buena Vista Social Club!
Calle 39 esq. 50, Playa
(+53) 5-294-3572

Up & Down ★★★☆☆
From the team that brought you Sangri-La. Attracting a young party crowd, very popular. Take a coat.
Calle 3ra y B, Vedado
(+53) 7-830-1354

Sangri-La ★★★☆☆
For the cool kids. Basement bar/club which gets packed at weekends.
Ave. 21 e/ 36 y 42, Miramar
(+53) 7-264-8343

Other

Sarao’s Bar ★★★☆☆
Bohemian attracting a hip Cuban crowd. Excellent DJ’s keep the place jumping.
Calle 17 e/ E y F, Vedado, La Habana
(+53) 7-832-0433

El Gato Tuerto ★★★★☆
Late night place to hear fabulous bolero singers. Can get smoky.
Calle O e/ 17 y 19, Vedado
(+53) 7-833-2224

El Tocororo ★★★☆☆
Expat favorite hangout. Small indoor bar with live music and eclectic clientele.
Calle 18 e/ 3ra y 5ta, Miramar

Bertolt Brecht ★★★☆☆
Think MTV Unplugged. Hip, funky and unique with an artsy Cuban crowd.
Calle 13 e/ 1 y J, Vedado
(+53) 7-830-1354

Gay-friendly

Cabaret Las Vegas ★★★☆☆
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 ★★★☆☆
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 ★★★☆☆
A superb example of queer class meets camp, accompanied by a fantastic floor show.
San Juan de Dios, esq. a Aquacate, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-867-1676

Café Bar Madrigal ★★★☆☆
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

5

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 Interactivo playing on a Wednesday evening.

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

Espacios

5+

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

5+

TOP PICK

CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUB

Ambience

Popularity

Entertainment

Service & drinks

Best for Hanging out with the cool kids on the Havana Farándula 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

Bolabana

5

TOP PICK

CONTEMPORARY

Ambience

Popularity

Entertainment

Service & drinks

Best for Trendy new location near Salón Rosado de la Tropical

Don't Miss Hipsters meet the Havana Farándula

Calle 39 esq. 50, Playa
**Humboldt 52**

**GAY FRIENDLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambience</th>
<th>5 STAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popularity</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; drinks</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

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**Fábrica de Arte**

**CONTEMPORARY BAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambience</th>
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<tr>
<td>Popularity</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; drinks</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Best for:** X Alfonso’s superb new cultural center has something for everyone

**Don’t Miss:** Les meilleurs musiciens cubains

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

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**Fashion Bar Havana**

**GAY-FRIENDLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambience</th>
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<tr>
<td>Popularity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; drinks</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
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</table>

**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

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**TaBARish**

**CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; drinks</td>
<td>5 STAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue Name</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karl Marx Theatre</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basílica San Francisco de Asís</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Oficios y Amargura, Plaza de San Francisco de Asís, Habana Vieja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fábrica de Arte</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sala Covarrubias</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Paseo y 39, Plaza de la Revolución.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Jazz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue Name</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Café Jazz Miramar</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle 1ra esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz Café</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Oficios y Amargura, Plaza de San Francisco de Asís, Habana Vieja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privé Lounge</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Zorra y el Cuervo</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle 23 e/ N y O, Vedado (+53) 7-833-2402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Salsa/Timba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue Name</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Café Cantante Mí Habana</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa de la Música</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle 26 esq. a Ave. del Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado (+53) 7-881-1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa de la Música</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle 26 esq. a Ave. del Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado (+53) 7-881-1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salón Rosado de la Tropical</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle 26 esq. a Ave. del Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado (+53) 7-881-1808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Contemporary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue Name</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa de la Música</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Cangrejo</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Sauce</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teatro de Bellas Artes</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trova & traditional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue Name</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gato Tuerto</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legendarios de Guajirito</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salón 1930 ‘Compay Segundo’</td>
<td>★★★★☆</td>
<td>Calle Ira esq. a 10, Miramar (+53) 7-203-0801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Havana’s Best Hotels

Simply the best...

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

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

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

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

Boutique Hotels in Old Havana

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

Palacio del Marqués... ★★★★★
Cuban baroque meets modern minimalism.
Oficios #152 esq. a Amargura, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-867-1037

Hostal Valencia ★★★★★
Immensely charming, great value.
Obispo #253 esq. a Obrajes, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-860-2691

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

Business Hotels

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

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

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

H10 Habana Panorama ★★★★★
Ave. 3ra. y 70, Miramar
(+53) 7 204-0100

For a sense of history

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

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

Hotel Nacional ★★★★★
Eclectic art-deco architecture. Gorgeous gardens.
Calle 0 esq. a 21, Vedado
(+53) 7-835 3896

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

Economical/Budget Hotels

Bosque ★★★
On the banks of the Río Almendares.
Calle 28-A e/ 49-A y 49-B, Reparto Kohly, Playa
(+53) 7-204-9252

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

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

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

Hotel Nacional de Cuba

Hotel Nacional de Cuba ★★★
Eclectic art-deco architecture.
Gorgeous gardens.
Calle O esq. a 21, Vedado
(+53) 7-836-4072
Havana’s best private places to stay

Mid range - Casa Particular (B&B)

1932
Visually stunning, historically fascinating. Welcoming.
Campanario #63 e/ San Lázaro y Laguna, Centro Habana
(+53) 7-863-6203

Carlos in cuba
Gay Friendly BED and BREAKFAST in Havana
Calle 2 #505 e/ 23 y 24, Vedado
(+53) 7-833-1329
(+53) 5-295-4893
carouselcuba@yahoo.com
www.carlosincuba.com

Habana
Beautiful colonial townhouse with great location.
Calle Habana #209, e/ Empeñado, y Tejadillo, Habana Vieja.
(+53) 7-861-0253

Julio y Elsa
Cluttered bohemian feel. Hospitable.
Consulado #162 e/ Colón y Trocadero, Centro Habana
(+53) 7-861-8027

Up-scale B&Bs (Boutique hostals)

Cañaveral House
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

Vitrales
Hospitalable, attractive and reliable boutique B&B with 9 bedrooms.
Habana #106 e/ Cuarteles y Chacón, Habana Vieja
(+53) 7-866-2607

Artedel
Ydalgo Martínez Matos’s spacious and contemporary 3-bedroom penthouse is magnificent.
Calle I #260 e/ 15 y 17, Vedado
(+53) 5-830-8727

Hostal Guanabo
Beautiful 4 bedroom sea-front villa in sleepy Guanabo. Excellent food.
Calle 460 #1A04 e/ 1ra y 3ra, Guanabo
(+53) 7-799-0004

Apartment rentals

Bohemia Hostal
Gorgeous 1-bedroom apartment beautifully decorated apartment overlooking Plaza Vieja.
San Ignacio y Teniente Rey, Plaza Vieja Habana Vieja
(+53) 5-403-1568
(+53) 7-836-6567
www.havanabohemia.com

Casa Concordia
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

Tropicana Penthouse
A luxurious penthouse with huge roof terrace and breathtaking 360 degree views of Havana and the ocean.
Galano #60 Penthouse Apt.10 e/ San Lázaro y Trocadero
(+53) 5-254-5240
www.tropicanapenthouse.com

Suite Havana
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

Luxury Houses

Villasol
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

Casablanca
Elegant well-equipped villa formerly owned by Fulgencio Battista. Beautiful wild garden.
Morro-Cabaña Park. House #29
(+53) 5-294-5397
www.michaelandmarieelena.com

Michael and Maria Elena
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

Residencia Mariby
A sprawling vanilla-hued mansion with 6 rooms decorated with colonial-era lamps, tiles and Louis XV furniture.
Vedado.
(+53) 5-370-5559
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

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

Cañaveral House

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) 7-641-43-29 / (+53) 5-263-3302
http://www.larosadeortega.com

Rosa D’Ortega

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
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