



Havana

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ESB Professional/Shutterstock.com

From a fusion of Chinese-Cuban cultures at Barrio Chino, to visual arts of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, to an awe-inspiring view at The Melia Cohiba high-rise and incredibly romantic cruise docking Sierra Maestra Terminal, Havana is topping charts just like its musical namesake (oh na-na). As you enjoy a paladar meal or two and rest against some cool, artsy wall, perhaps blue or yellow or pink, you'll be sure to have left your heart in Havana by the time you head back to East Atlanta (na-na-na).

NOTE: This Guide has been limited to 20 points of interest per section. For the full guide, please visit [ArrivalGuides.com](https://www.arrivalguides.com)



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Hyunwon Jang/Unsplash.com

QUIZ

*What Type of Traveller
Are You Based on
Your Travel IQ?*

TAKE THE QUIZ

Top 5



Old Town (Habana Vieja)
Havana's vibrant Old Town is where the Cuban capital of today took root in t...



Plaza de la Revolución
The expansive Plaza de la Revolución (formerly Plaza Cívica) is an important...



El Bosque (The Forest)
Havana's favorite green expanse - el Bosque - is frequented by locals seekin...



Malecón
Havana's waterfront boulevard - Malecón - is its most poetic stretch, a soci...



Fábrica de Arte Cubano
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THE CITY



Eva Blue/Unsplash.com

Effort is underway to preserve the wonderfully eclectic buildings of the Cuban capital, whose old town has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site but as of today, crumbling facades continue to define the urban landscape of the town center - the decadent charm of city streets to outsiders being of little consolation to locals who deal with the very real consequences of this rather sad state of affairs.

Beyond Habana Vieja lie some fascinating attractions and emerging suburbs worth exploring on foot or by bike, from plush Miramar to the nightlife hub of La Rampa, residential Vedado sprinkled generously with eateries and bars, African heritage-defined Cayo Hueso and the beach community of Guanabo.

With economic restrictions slightly loosening, Havana sees individual entrepreneurs make timid first steps in running private businesses, breathing fresh air into Havana's dining, art and design scenes.

DO & SEE



Avatar_023/Shutterstock.com

There is plenty to do and see in fast-evolving Havana, with modern hot-spots for art, culture and culinary effort emerging at an ever-increasing rate. Beyond the staples of Habana Vieja and the Malecón lie Havana's attractive newer districts, and unmissable attractions like the eccentric "Fusterlandia" or the original former home of celebrated novelist Ernest Hemingway.

Old Town (Habana Vieja)



Havana's vibrant Old Town is where the Cuban capital of today took root in the mid-16th century. UNESCO World Heritage Site status has brought about comprehensive restoration work to many of the city's crumbling architectural treasures, built in styles as wide-ranging as Cuban baroque and art nouveau (Plaza Vieja at the heart of Old Havana is where the eclecticism is most evident and best admired from a sidewalk cafe). The Old Town's two main pedestrian thoroughfares - Obispo and Mercaderes - are lined with government-run shops and attractive paladars.

Photo: Rafal Cichawa/Shutterstock.com

Plaza de la Revolución



The expansive Plaza de la Revolución (formerly Plaza Cívica) is an important landmark where some of Cuba's most significant political rallies took place. Part of 'new Havana', this square is the modernist home of the Cuban government (Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba), but is most known for its murals of iconic figures like Che Guevara and revolutionary Camilo Cienfuegos, as well as the city's tallest monument dedicated to José Martí, an independence activist and Cuban National Hero (take the elevator up for spectacular views).

Photo: Gustavo Ordoqui/Shutterstock.com
Address: Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana

El Bosque (The Forest)



Havana's favorite green expanse - el Bosque - is frequented by locals seeking natural respite in the shade of century-old trees with veil-like canopy reaching all the way to the ground, which gives the area a primeval forest appearance. The Almendares Park, just to the north along Almendares River, offers family-friendly activities such as mini golf and bike paths.

Photo: Anton_Ivanov/Shutterstock.com
Address: El Bosque de La Habana, La Habana

Malecón



Havana's waterfront boulevard - Malecón - is its most poetic stretch, a social hang out hub evocative of a welcoming Cuban living room (hence it being known to some as 'the world's longest sofa'). Waves crashing against Malecón's seawall can make quite the splash, at times virtually flooding parts of the boulevard, which hardly deters daily strollers from taking in its sublime sunset charm.

Photo: corlaffra/Shutterstock.com
Address: Avenida de Maceo, La Habana

Fábrica de Arte Cubano



Perhaps the trendiest address in Havana, the FAC is an expansive, multi-purpose venue housed inside a refurbished oil processing plant. It boasts a fairly dense cultural program which includes art exhibitions, shows and concerts, and is currently the hippest nightlife hot spot of the Cuban capital. The on-site restaurant, Tierra, is wildly popular (reservations advised) and serves fine dishes of international origin.

Photo: Yoeztudioz/Wikimedia Commons (image cropped)
Address: Calle 26 entre 11 y 13, Vedado, Havana
Phone: +53 7 8382260
Internet: www.fac.cu

Fusterlandia



The whimsical sculptures, mosaics and all manner of street art creations by artist José Fuster in Jaimanitas make for an entertaining excursion

from Havana proper. The artist's own home is the centerpiece, decorated in his characteristically surreal style from top to bottom. The so-called "Fusterlandia" is now about two decades in the making, and continues to grow to-date.

Photo: Steve Rushing/Flickr (image cropped)

Address: Calle 226 & Av 3, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 2712932

Colonial Forts



Havana's colonial forts, namely the photogenic El Morro defined by its lighthouse and the expansive La Cabaña, are part of Havana's Historic

Military Park and belong to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Old Havana.

Photo: Diego Cervo/Shutterstock.com

Museum of the Revolution



Housed inside the former Presidential Palace and decorated by the world-famous Tiffany's, the Museo de la Revolución tells the -

admittedly partial - story of the Cuban revolution, with explanations provided in both English and Spanish. Bullet holes remaining after a failed assassination attempt of the palace's last resident, former president

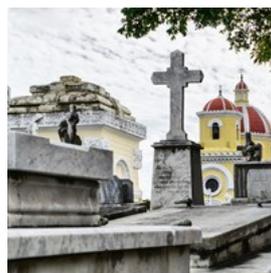
Fulgencio Batista, are still clearly visible in the hall area.

Photo: KKulikov/Shutterstock.com

Address: Avenida Bélgica, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8601524

Colon Cemetery



A cemetery of historical importance and essentially an open-air museum of Cuba's past, Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón is the final resting

place of many prominent Cuban figures and notable families (pick up a map at the entrance to guide you along). The cemetery's best-known resident, the Milagrosa, gathers thousands of pilgrims annually for the miraculous events surrounding her past exhumation, and is believed by Catholics to have supernatural wish-granting powers.

Photo: Mastaco/Shutterstock.com

The National Museum of Fine Arts



The Palacio de Bellas Artes contains the world's largest collection of Cuban art, with works dating mainly to the period from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Right nearby is the museum's

extension, Palacio del Centro Asturiano, containing works by international artists (including big names like de Ribera and Velázquez) with works spanning a much longer time period.

Photo: Diego Grandi/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle Trocadero, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8632657

Hemingway's Villa (Finca Vigia)



Ernest Hemingway donated his former home of two decades to "the people of Cuba" after moving away, and it remains largely undisturbed since the 1960s. Although one cannot technically come into the house, there are plenty of spots to peek in through the windows, as well as explore the premises containing a tiny cemetery of Hemingway's pet dogs and his fabled boat Pilar, docked in what once was a tennis court.

Photo: DACPhoto/Shutterstock.com

Address: Vigia & Singer, San Francisco de Paula

Public Transport: Metro bus P-7

More Info: If taking a taxi from Havana, avoid the meter and agree on the price beforehand.

Callejon de Hamel (Hamel Street)



Hamel Street in Havana is spattered with art: colourful paintings adorn building walls, sculptures and other forms of creative expression by

different artists decorate the street, while locals spread good vibes by playing music and (occasionally) dancing.

Photo: JVV Photography/Shutterstock.com

Address: Hamel Street, Havana

DINING



Pixabay

Gone are the days when one would struggle to find a place to eat – today's Havana has no shortage of paladares (privately owned restaurants), many serving up the New Cuban cuisine pioneered by internationally trained chefs bringing expertise back to Cuba, and engaging with traditional flavors by introducing an exciting modern twist to old familiar favorites. Some local staples worth having are the ropa vieja (literally "old clothes"), a shredded beef dish, plantain and malanga chips or fritters, the ubiquitous side of black beans and rice, and the coveted Cuban specialty – the much sought-after lobster.

Otramanera



For arguably the finest dining in Havana, call ahead to Otramanera in plush Miramar. They serve refined Mediterranean with an

emphasis on Spanish, featuring Andalusian gazpacho, Cuban mojama (cured tuna loin), as well as meat and seafood mains, including lobster.

Photo: AnggunFaith/Shutterstock.com

Address: 1810 Avenida 35, La Habana

Opening hours: Tue-Sun kitchen 12:30-15:00 & 19:00-23:00

Phone: +53 7 2038315

Internet: <http://otramaneralahabana.com>

TocaMadera



If TocaMadera's menu can't excite you, few things can: from tantalizing pequeños of tamales, empanadas and taquitos, to the raw bar

featuring several exciting varieties of ceviche and appetizing mains (try the hot stone with a choice of tofu, chicken, grass-fed beef or Japanese wagyu, plus scrumptious sides). The cuisine is curated by chef Suárez, a pioneer of the Cuban New Food scene that aims to incorporate local tradition into cutting-edge culinary endeavor.

Photo: wavebreakmedia/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle 38 e/1ra y 3ra, Miramar, Playa, La Habana

Opening hours: Tue-Sat 12.00-16.00 & 19.00-24.00, Sun 12.00-17.00

Phone: +53 5 2812144

Internet: www.tocamadera.com

Nazdarovie



An entertaining culinary embassy of the Cuban-friendly Soviets invites for a shot of vodka and a bite of pielmieni (dumplings) or some

sophisticated caviar-topped blini in a thematic environment packed to the rafters with USSR memorabilia.

Photo: Chubykin Arkady/Shutterstock.com

Address: 25 Malecón, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8602947

Internet: <http://nazdarovie-havana.com>

La Guarida



Glamorized by the provocative 1993 drama "Strawberry and Chocolate," La Guardia stands strong as one the capital's best dining

establishments and a prominent player on the New Cuban Food scene. Book in advance for a rare treat.

Photo: K.Decha/Shutterstock.com

Address: 418 Concordia, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8669047

Internet: www.laguarida.com

Doña Eutimia



A reliable option for traditional Cuban, Doña Eutimia cooks up recipes passed down through generations, with staples like ropa vieja (pulled

beef) and malanga (taro fritters), with a side of obligatory rice and beans.

Photo: NonSense/Shutterstock.com

Address: 60-C, Callejon del Chorro, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8013332

Internet: <http://donaeutimia.restaurantwebexperts.com>

Trattoria Sesquinas



This excellent trattoria serves everyone's favorite Italian in the heart of old Havana, spoiling patrons with bulging calzones, cheese-drowned pizzas

and pasta with an extensive selection of sauces – all at very reasonable prices.

Photo: bruce mars/Pexels.com

Address: 104 Cuarteles, Habana Vieja

Phone: +53 7 8606295

Espacios



Despite its notable artistic inclination (the villa where the restaurant is housed is also a showroom for artwork), Espacios feels casually relaxed and completely unpretentious. It's both a restaurant and bar, with a selection of international dishes and frequent live music nights hosted in the courtyard, featuring traditional local performers.

Photo: Nemanja Novakovic/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle 10, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 2022921

La Fontana



One of Havana's best-established restaurants, La Fontana sits at the heart of Playa, and continues to entice locals for soon-to-be 3 decades. The breezy outdoor terrace is a favorite, including for evening drinks to live music, and some attractive menu items include lobster ceviche, wood oven-cooked meats and multiple fish specialties.

Photo: Shestakoff/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle 46 & Ave. 3ra A, 305, Miramar, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 2028337

Internet: www.lafontanahavana.info

Habana 61



For a modern take on traditional Cuban try the semi-formal Habana 61 in the old town area. The menu lists the usual suspects of ropa vieja, malanga fritters, octopus and lobster - in several incarnations.

Photo: Davide Cantelli/Unsplash

Address: Calle Habana 61, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8619433

Internet: www.paladarhabana61.com

CAFES



Viktor Birkus/Shutterstock.com

Havana's leisurely pace is best embraced from an outdoor terrace of the city's many cafes. Old classics mingle with hip new openings, leaving up to one's taste to pick a favorite. A good place to start is the Plaza del Cristo, where some of the trendier establishments are now concentrated - many double as bars featuring live music come sundown.

Belview Artcafe



This artsy space rightfully enjoys its special status on the Havana cafe scene. The interior is thought out to the T, with artwork and smart decor

elements put in place by the owning couple. The menu doesn't let down either, with its selection of scrumptious international savory and sweet specialties.

Photo: Flamingo Images/Shutterstock.com
Address: Calle 6 & 19, 412, Vedado, La Habana
Phone: +53 7 8325429

El Café



Old Havana's El Café does everything right, from all-day breakfasts to sandwiches (pulled pork with yucca, greens and orange marmalade sauce caught our fancy), coffee specialties, and even drinks with a Cuban rum kick for early pre-party gatherings.

Photo: Lisa Holmen Photography/Shutterstock.com
Address: 358 La Amargura, La Habana
Phone: +53 7 8613817
Internet: <http://elcafe.restaurantwebexperts.com>

Helad'oro



The beloved ice cream shop now serves around 30 different flavors of the favorite summer treat, all made in-house. Go for the local gusto and try the mojito, guanabana, guava or mamey varieties.

Photo: Fancycrave/Unspalsh
Address: Aguiar, La Habana
Phone: +53 5 3059131

Café Fortuna Joe



Quirks galore at Fortuna Joe, a cafe of curiosities where guests are welcome to interact with the "exhibits" by getting comfy in a cushion-padded bath tub or on a (permanently) docked boat out on the terrace. Although food and drink aren't the main pull, they just so happen to be quite decent - breakfasts are especially popular.

Photo: Dragana Djorovic/Shutterstock.com
Address: Calle 24 & Ave. 1ra, La Habana
More Info: Another location at Av 3 and Calle 28.

Cafe Bohemia



Hidden in plain sight steps away from the heart of Old Havana (Plaza Vieja), this pleasant cafe — the namesake of a reputable Cuban cultural periodical — serves scrumptious Italian specialties and great coffee.

Photo: Kati Finell/Shutterstock.com
Address: San Ignacio, La Habana
Phone: +53 7 8603722
Internet: www.havanabohemia.com

Esto no es un Café



Specials take the cake at this unusual establishment that refuses to admit its cafe status, with dishes named after and inspired by prominent artists like Pollock (chicken with chocolate and mint flavour) and Duchamp (pork loin in artisan marinade). The owner recommends the house take on traditional Cuban

ropa vieja, dedicated to Wifredo Lam.

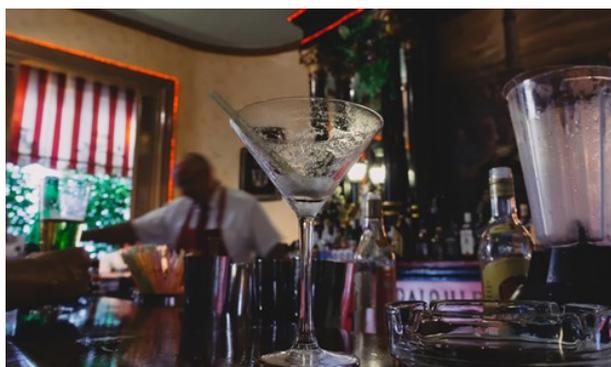
Photo: mavo/Shutterstock.com

Address: Callejon del Chorro, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8625109

Internet: www.estonoesuncafe.com

BARS & NIGHTLIFE



Dmitry Polonskiy/Shutterstock.com

Rum flows freely into the glasses of nighttime revelers, who tend to head straight for one of Havana's three major hot spots: the Malecón, La Rampa (or Avenida 23), and the Avenida De Los Presidentes. There are plenty of establishments to suit all tastes, from outdoor salsa dance parties (Jardines de la Tropical are as de rigueur as ever) to live music concerts (anything from Afro-Cuban to jazz) and fiery cabaret shows.

Fábrica de Arte Cubano



Perhaps the trendiest address in Havana, the FAC is an expansive, multi-purpose venue housed inside a refurbished oil processing plant. It boasts a fairly dense cultural program which includes art exhibitions, shows and concerts, and is currently the hippest nightlife hot spot of the Cuban capital. The on-site restaurant, Tierra, is wildly popular (reservations advised) and serves fine dishes of international origin.

Photo: Yoeztudioz/Wikimedia Commons (image cropped)

Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht



Virtually every night of the week sees live music played on the venue's stage, while Wednesdays are reserved primarily for Afro-cuban jazz. Café

Teatro Bertolt Brecht hosts local acts and is a haunt known to and well-visited by the artistic elites (see them mingle at the on-site cafe open to all).

Photo: Roxana Gonzalez/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle 13 & I, Vedado, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8329359

El Surtidor @ Gran Hotel Manzana Kempinski



Perhaps the most lustrous hangout for drinks in Havana, the rooftop bar of Gran Hotel Manzana Kempinski boasts views of the city's many major attractions, which can be seen from both the bar and crystal-blue waters of its open-air infinity pool.

Photo: Dasha Petrenko/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle San Rafael, Havana

Opening hours: Mon-Sun 11:00 - 23:00

Phone: +53 7 8699100

Internet: www.kempinski.com/en/havana/gran-hotel-kempinski-la-habana/dining/el-surtidor-pool-terrace-and-bar

La Bodeguita del Medio



Although Havana's iconic bar might have lost some of its former lustre over the years, it remains a must-do for many visiting the Cuban capital, not

least for its iconic status and ever-flowing mojitos.

Photo: Lena Wurm/Shutterstock.com
Address: Empedrado, La Habana
Phone: +53 7 8671374
Internet: <http://labodeguitarestaurant.restaurantwebx.com>

Dance & Cabaret Shows



There is no shortage of thematic dance entertainment in Havana, ranging from folk dance and music performances of the PG-14 variety to

feisty cabaret shows and the more familiar flamenco (held at Meson de la Flota). Some venues worth considering include Centro Cultural El Gran Palenque, Palacio de la Artesania, the ARTex Patio and Cabaret Parisien.

Photo: Angel L/Shutterstock.com

El Chanchullero



Bargain drinks and scrumptious tapas in a dive bar environment are what El Chanchullero's patrons keep coming back for, with a lucky few

outsiders who got word of the unpretentious haunt. Come for value for money and relaxed vibes over tourist attraction.

Photo: oneinchpunch/Shutterstock.com
Address: Bernaza & El Cristo, 457, La Habana
Phone: +53 5 2760938
Internet: www.el-chanchullero.com

El Dandy



"Hipster" doesn't sound like a tired cliché when applied to El Dandy in Havana's Plaza del Cristo, a fun establishment with a touch of bohemian chic.

The eclectic interior, cocktails and breakfast menu are some of El Dandy's strong suits.

Photo: Roman Voloshyn/Shutterstock.com
Address: Teniente Rey, La Habana
Phone: +53 7 8676463
Internet: www.bareldandy.com

La Zorra y El Cuervo Jazz Club



Enter through a faux British phone booth and take in one of Havana's most beloved music genres - jazz - in the intimate basement of La

Zorra y El Cuervo Jazz Club, which habitually gathers a line outside.

Photo: sirtravelalot/Shutterstock.com
Address: Between N & O, Avenida 23, La Habana
Phone: +53 7 662402

SHOPPING



Stephan Schlachter/Shutterstock.com

As strict government control over economic activity eases, the Cuban capital sees a timid rise of private businesses producing and selling their own goods. Although such outlets are still few and far between (and many prefer to stay hidden, only made known by word of mouth), there are several reliable locations across Havana stocking high-quality, locally made souvenirs. The main Cuban exports are cigars and rum, both available in unlimited supply, which still isn't the case for daily use items foreign visitors are often accustomed to. Remember to pack all your essentials and bring them along from home, leaving only souvenir shopping to be done here, in Havana.

Almacenes San Jose Handicraft Market



This huge indoor market is the number one shopping stop for visiting pleasure cruisers, and an instant favorite for anyone looking for the largest possible selection of Cuban souvenirs, all under one roof. The market was temporarily closed following a fire, but is re-opened as of mid-2018, with only a section remaining closed for business.

Photo: Kamira/Shutterstock.com

Address: Ave. del Puerto, La Habana

Antique Book Market



It's worth stopping by Plaza de Armas on your tour of Habana Vieja regardless, but literary enthusiasts are in for an added bonus of being able to shop around at the capital's well-established antique book market if they come any day between 9am and 6pm. There are some print souvenirs to be had as well.

Photo: Maridav/Shutterstock.com

Address: Plaza de Armas, La Habana

Opening hours: Daily 9:00-18:00

Clandestina



The pioneer of independent Cuban design labels, Clandestina specializes in up- and recycled clothing bearing memorable slogans of the owning designer's creation. They also ship worldwide, a service to-date unmatched by local competitors.

Photo: Juri Pozzi/Shutterstock.com

Address: 403, Villegas, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8600997

Internet: <https://clandestina.co>

Piscolabis



This artisan bazaar stocks a wide variety of decor items, jewelry, clothing and Cuban souvenirs produced and designed by local creators (many of the pieces are up-cycled). There is an on-site cafe that's essentially one with the store, so feel free

to browse with a drink in hand.

Photo: Photographee.eu/Shutterstock.com

Address: San Ignacio, La Habana

Phone: +53 5 8433219

Internet: <http://piscolabishabana.com>

Alma



Alma stocks one of Havana's finest selections of Cuban souvenirs, from traditional straw hats with a bit of a twist to clothing, ceramics, jewelry, artwork, and many other unique, hand-made items procured locally. Feel free to get inspired by their Instagram.

Photo: gg-foto/Shutterstock.com

Address: Calle 18 #314, between 3ra & 5ta, La Habana

Phone: +53 55355828

Internet: <http://www.almacubashop.com>

La Casa del Habano



There are multiple cigar stores across Havana, its most reputable one, La Casa del Habano, also boasting several locations throughout the city. Most locations have an on-site lounge where cigars can be sampled, sometimes accompanied by Cuba's fabled spirit - rum. "Habanos" are Cuba's official brand, operating several other varieties under different names. To ensure you're getting the finest quality, shop at authorized locations only.

Photo: marcin jucha/Shutterstock.com

Address: Av 5 & Calle 16, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 214 4737

Internet: <http://lacasadelhabano.com>

Habana 1791



The artisan perfumery sources its own raw materials and produces perfumes on-site, making the atmosphere reminiscent more of an old-time chemist's shop rather than a perfume boutique, which adds all the more charm.

Photo: Bazalieiev Ievgen/Shutterstock.com

Address: 156 Mercaderes, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8613525

Memorias Librería



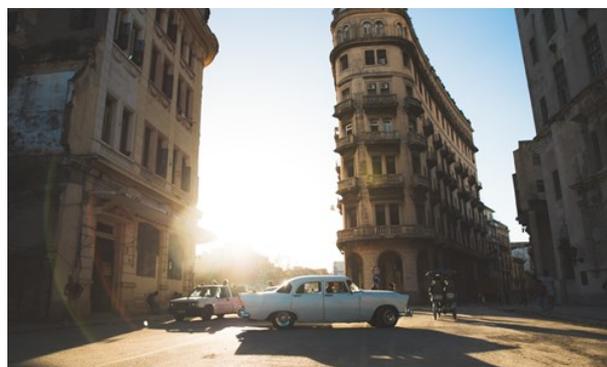
This one is for those of us who enjoy a deep dive into books and all manner of related paraphernalia and antiques, not limited to books only. Many of the items on sale date back decades, and are one-of-a-kind.

Photo: Roman Kraft/Unsplash.com

Address: 57 Animas, La Habana

Phone: +53 7 8623153

TOURIST INFORMATION



Linhao Zhang/Shutterstock.com

Passport / Visa



Travelers visiting Cuba are required to hold a valid passport valid for at least 2 months following their travel date, medical insurance, and proof of

return tickets. Proof of sufficient funds to support the stay is also required (50 dollars/day).

Visa-free entry for a period upwards of 28 days is granted to citizens of Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Malaysia, Montenegro, Serbia, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, Belarus, Mongolia, Russia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Barbados, Dominica and Namibia (Kazakhstan and Kenya are scheduled to soon complete the list).

The remaining majority of international visitors will need to obtain a Tourist Card, Tarjeta del Turista, that grants permission to stay in Cuba for 30 days and can be extended once for a further 30. The card can be obtained via the airline, travel agent or a Cuban mission abroad.

Citizens of the following countries are not eligible for a Tourist Card and will need to apply for a visa: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Yemen. Admission is refused entirely to Kosovo nationals.

Special regulations apply to citizens of the USA, who (as of 2018) will need to qualify for one of 12 visitor categories in order to be granted an entry visa. The easiest way to enter Cuba for

USA citizens under these regulations is to join an excursion organized by a tour operator (these are also available on board cruise ships), that falls into the "people-to-people exchange program" category of the 12 officially approved. Another, slightly more complicated route, is to obtain a license issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Please see link below for further details pertaining to US visitors.

Special regulations apply to Cuban-born foreign citizens, who will need to make visa arrangements for a Cuban visa in advance (via a Cuban Embassy), unless they hold a valid Cuban passport.

Photo: TukTuk Design/Shutterstock.com

Internet: https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/cuba_faqs_new.pdf

Best Time to Visit



The best time to visit Cuba is probably the dry season, which runs November through April. Cuban tropical climate means that temperatures

remain high for the majority of the year, although they can drop significantly between October and March (pack a jacket if you're planning to travel during the period). It's good to have a light water-proof coat when travelling during the rainy season, which falls on the summer months of June through September. Risk of hurricanes is higher from August to October.

Photo: VectorA/Shutterstock.com

Currency Restrictions



There are two currencies in simultaneous circulation: the Cuban Peso (CUP, or MN - moneda nacional), used exclusively by Cubans,

and the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), used by foreigners. All purchases and transactions by temporary visitors are made in the latter (CUC). Convertible pesos (CUC) are tied to the US Dollar, which means that 1 CUC = 1 USD (the exact amount you receive may vary depending on added commission).

Note that payment card usage remains very limited, so prepare cash to last for your entire stay on the island. Avoid bringing in US Dollars, as exchanging these into CUC incurs an additional commission of 10%, and bring money in Euros, Sterling, Canadian Dollars, Japanese Yen, Mexican Pesos, or Swiss Franks instead. To exchange money, refer to the nearest CADECA (official exchange office), rates are fixed and do not vary by individual location. Money can also be exchanged at hotels and cruise terminals, but rates are likely to be less favorable than those offered by CADECAs.

Note that the export of CUC is prohibited, no matter the amount.

Photo: Sereda Serhii/Shutterstock.com

Travel Advice



Internet connection may be difficult to come by in Cuba, but ways of accessing the Internet do exist. In order to get connected, you will need

to purchase an Internet card from an ETECSA office and locate an ETECSA WiFi hot-spot or a designated Navigation Room. Card sales are limited to 3 per person regardless of time value, so if you know you'll be needing connection a lot, purchase ones with the highest allowance available (5 hours at the time of writing). ETECSA cards are also sold at hotels and some shops, and some hotels offer Internet access via ETECSA to guests as well. Some international mobile operators offer 3G connection in Cuba, always inquire with your provider as this isn't guaranteed.

Cuban merchandise can be taken out of the country, provided it is for personal use only (as opposed to re-sale). This includes all products made in Cuba, including rum and cigars. Prices for these are normally very similar in downtown Havana and duty-free shops at the airport and cruise terminals. The Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) is forbidden for export, so make sure to spend or exchange every last one prior to departure.

Cash is used for most transactions in Cuba, and very few places accept card payments. For those that do, there is still risk of your card being declined, especially if it's issued in the USA.

Photo: ClkerFreeVectorImages/Shutterstock.com

José Martí International Airport



There are several options for reaching the city if you have no tour shuttle transfer pre-arranged. These include renting a car (arrivals areas of terminals 2, 3 & 5; booking in advance is recommended) or taking a taxi (taxi ranks are

located just outside the terminals, always agree on the price in advance). Public buses do run between the airport and Havana, but tickets can only be purchased in Cuban Pesos (moneda nacional), which makes them difficult to use for foreign visitors.

The average travel time from José Martí International Airport to downtown Havana is 30 minutes, while Varadero can be reached within 2 hours.

Make sure all necessary formalities are in order prior to travel. Medical insurance and proof of financial resources, a passport valid at least 2 months following the date of arrival (more in some cases), as well as appropriate visa documentation and/or Cuban Tourist Card, are all required for everyone entering Cuba.

Photo: Juan Garces

Internet: <http://havana.airportcuba.net>

Public Transport



There is a hop-on/hop-off bus that operates in Havana, which can be a good compromise between private taxis and public buses. It's mostly geared at tourists, and stops at most major landmarks in Havana.

Although private transportation is recommended, there are several ways of getting around like a local, although some knowledge of Havana goes a long way with those.

One option is flagging down "taxi colectivos," classic old cars that circulate around Havana, marked with a "taxi" sign in the front. They run

primarily between the university and Parque Central, and can be stopped nearly anywhere along the way. Although payment is normally made in the local currency, foreign visitors can also pay with CUC (CUC 1 is usually enough to cover one-way fare for two). Flag down a passing "colectivo" and name your destination (a major landmark) to the driver, who will indicate whether or not it's on his route. "Taxi colectivos" are not to be confused with regular private taxis, which charge much more for the rides and deliver you to the desired address.

Public buses are another option - these have fixed routes, designated stops and most often a line of people waiting for one. The fare can be paid in CUC (5 centavos). Exit through the back and keep an eye on your belongings.

If you're in the mood for something different, you might want to consider a tour of Old Havana by horse-drawn carriage. These are, of course, more of an entertainment option than efficient means of getting around.

Photo: Pierre-Luc Auclair

Medical



If you take certain medications on a regular basis, it is highly recommended that you bring those along from home in ample supply.

There are a few pharmacies in Havana that accept CUC, but the assortment of medicines at those may leave some to be desired.

SERVIMED Pharmacies accept CUC; some locations are at:

Cira Garcia Central Clinic
Corner of calle 20 & 13, 4101, Miramar, Playa,
Havana (Tel. +53 7204 2880 / www.cirag.cu)

Manuel Fajardo Surjical Hospital
Corner of calle Zapata & D, Vedado, Plaza de la
Revolución, Havana (Tel. +53 7838 2466)

Medical help is generally of high quality and readily available in case of emergency. Since health insurance is an obligatory requirement for anyone entering Cuba, all fees and expenses are also accounted for in most cases.

Photo: Gemma Garner

Post



For important and/or time sensitive mail, it is recommended to use private providers like DHL. Cuban postage services are notoriously

unreliable when sending mail overseas, reports indicating that while some items arrive abroad within weeks, many others never reach their final destination or take many months to arrive. Letters can be mailed at post offices as well as at many hotels via the reception desk.

The Old Town post office is located at the corner of Obispo and Lamparilla, not far from the Sierra Maestra Ferry Terminal.

Photo: Andy Fuchs

Taxi



There are both private and government-run taxis available for hire in Havana. The difference in price is marginal between the two, and fares need to

be agreed on in advance in both cases, even if the car is outfitted with a meter. The yellow and black Ladas tend to be cheaper, and therefore better fit for long-distance travel.

A cheaper and significantly more cheerful way of getting around are the so-called three-seater coco taxis (those of yellow color transport tourists). A similar, but slower option are the two-seater bici-taxis, which are essentially a passenger bike. Note that the safety of using either of the two options has been called into question, even though most rides go incident-free.

Photo: Taxi

Telephone



Your mobile operator may or may not support roaming in Cuba, so inquire with your provider in advance.

ETECSA cards used for

Internet connection also work as phone cards, and can be used to make international calls. Calls can be made from blue phone booths, ETECSA offices, and some hotels.

To call abroad from Cuba, dial 119 (the international access code) followed by destination country code and phone number.

A 0 sometimes precedes Cuban phone numbers

when calls are made between different provinces. To call landline numbers, dial the provincial code first, followed by the number. From landline to cell phone, dial 0 followed by the number.

To call mobile numbers from a mobile phone within Cuba, dial the number only, which usually starts with 5.

Photo: Jardson Almeida

Electricity



110 or 220 V (the latter supported by some hotels), 60 Hz - international visitors might require a voltage converter. The standard

plug type is a US-style two- or three-pin, but some hotels also have European-style plugs.

Photo: Stirling Tschan

Population

2.125 million (2015)

Currency

There are two currencies in simultaneous circulation: the Cuban Peso (CUP, or MN - moneda nacional), used exclusively by Cubans, and the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), used by foreigners.

CUC 1 = USD 1

Emergency numbers

Police Department: 106

Fire Department: 105

Tourist information

There are several government-run agencies providing visitor information; Infotur is the one best-represented.

Calle Obispo No. 524

+53 78663333

www.cubatransel.cu/en/useful-information/tourist-information-centers-in-cuba