

YOUR GUIDE TO ACTIVITIES AND EXCURSIONS IN HAVANA



**LOCALLY
SOURCED
CUBA TOURS**

Your Cuba tour specialists

DURING THE DAY

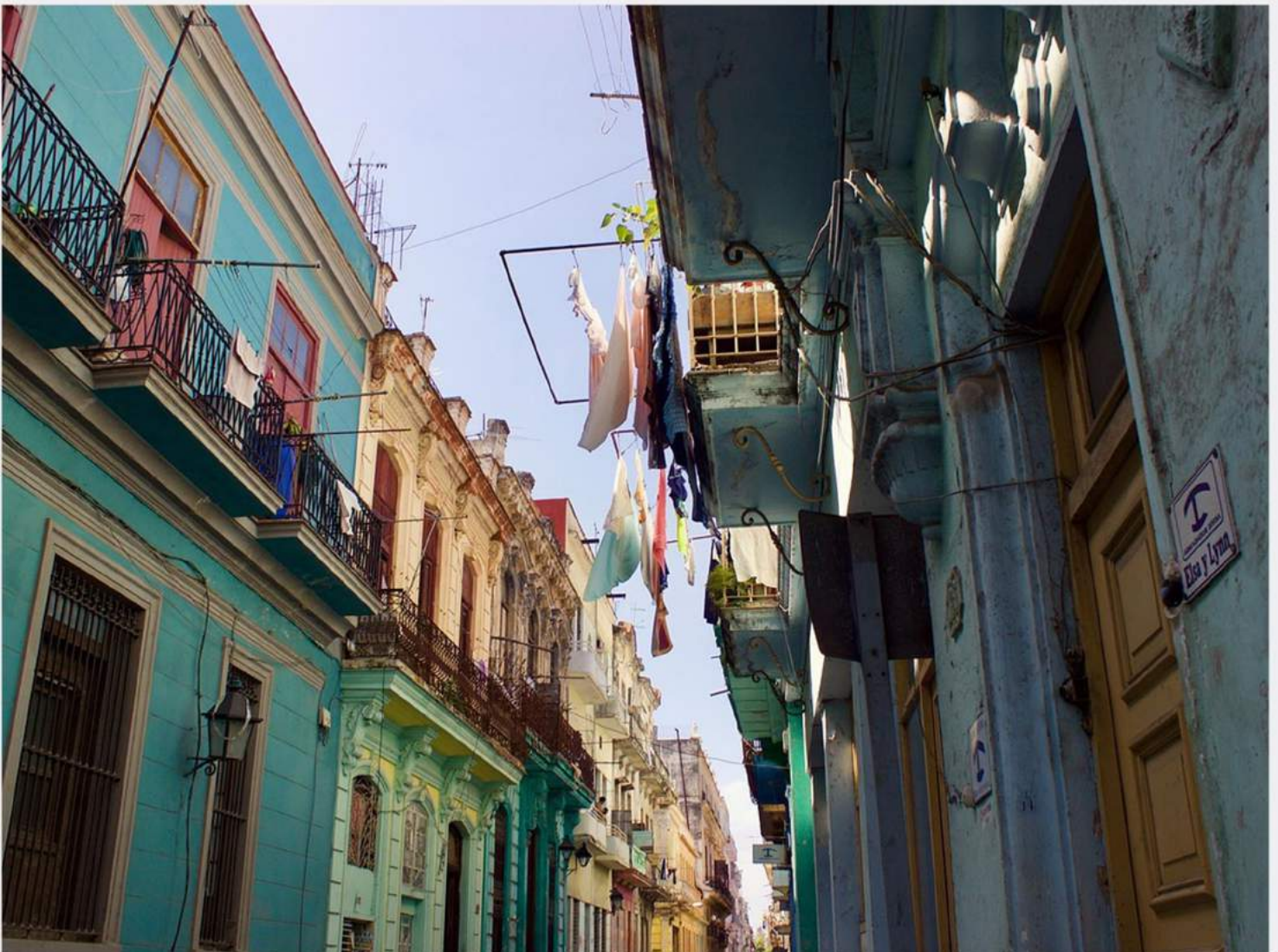
OLD HAVANA WALKING TOUR

The best way to see Havana Vieja (The Old Town) is on foot, and we'll spend the morning walking through this sumptuously beautiful district. Your guide will be with you every step of the way, perhaps encouraging you to keep moving when you inadvertently stop and stare at your surroundings every few minutes or so. Like much of the New World, Havana was once a walled fortress, although the growth of the city meant that it would soon need to sprawl beyond these original boundaries.

There's an abundance of cultural riches on offer, and you'll walk past the El Capitolio, the Museo de la Revolución, and the Gran Teatro Habana. This Old Havana Walking Tour also takes in some of the most stunning squares you will ever see – the Plaza de Armas, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza San Francisco de Asis and Plaza Vieja. There is much to see on the walking tour, and you'll think that the beauty of Havana has been squeezed into a relatively compact area.

There's a great deal of people watching to be done too, as you get to know the people who make up this vibrant city.

Length: 3 hours





CLASSIC CAR HAVANA TOUR

You are no doubt itching to take a ride in one of those classic cars that parade through the streets of the city. This iconic method of transportation is synonymous with Cuba, and it sure gives your legs a rest! You'll be whisked out of Old Havana and will clearly be able to see the contrast with the newer parts of central Havana and the faded grandeur of Miramar. We will also take you past the Colon Cemetery, and Revolution square and you can witness the hustle and bustle of Havana Vedado. At the end of your tour you will then be taken to the Hotel Nacional in Havana Vedado for a cocktail (or drink of your choice) and a wonderful view of the Malecon for sunset.

Length: 2 hours (including introductions and drink)

HAVANA RUM MUSEUM

If you think this museum looks palatial, you are correct since it's housed in a converted old palace. Naturally you will have the chance to learn about the rum making process and even do some tastings.

Length: 1 hour not including transport to and from the museum



EL FLORIDITA

Enjoy the perfect drinks break at El Floridita, one of Hemingway's favourite bars. There's even a life-sized statue of him at the bar. He enjoyed the daiquiris here, and you can do the same.

Length: 30 minutes



PARTAGAS CIGAR FACTORY

(NOT OPEN ON WEEKENDS OR OVER THE CHRISTMAS/ NEW YEAR PERIOD)

The casa matrice, or home factory, for the Partagas brand, here is where the mystique behind cigar making will be revealed. Even non-smokers will find this tour interesting as it allows you to gain a sense of why Cuban cigars are so well regarded throughout the world. One of the oldest in the country, Partagas has been producing cigars since 1845, although manufacture recently moved to a new factory – a word that doesn't do justice to the building or its interior.

Today, its 250 workers produce an incredible 20,000 cigars a day. As you are guided through the grand entrance foyer from the elegant colonnaded cream and white facade to the outer aisles of the so-called 'rolling floor', you will witness first hand the amount of effort, care and tradition that goes into making these Cuban treasures.

Length: 45 minutes not including transport to and from the factory



CALLEJON DE HAMEL

Welcome to the unforgettably psychedelic Callejon de Hamel. This small alleyway in the central city is where the Cuban artist fraternity congregates, and is a wonderful place to experience day-to-day Cuban life, albeit with an artistic twist. The art has quite literally spilled out of the studios and onto the street, with spectacular murals and junk sculpture adorning its buildings.

It all began in 1990 when self-taught local artist Salvador Gonzales began embellishing the street outside his apartment with surrealist and abstract artworks until it grew into a tourist attraction in its own right. The Callejon is open every day but visit from noon on a Sunday and you'll experience the added buzz of extraordinary street rumba too, with beats to get your foot tapping and heart thumping.

Length: 30 minutes – 1 hour not including transportation





LA FINCA VIGIA (NOT OPEN ON SUNDAYS) AND COJIMAR

La Finca Vigía is found in the outskirts of Havana. This sprawling estate was the Cuban home of Ernest Hemingway, where the great man lived and worked. La Finca Vigía is located in Cojimar (14 kilometres from Havana), where Hemingway was inspired to write *The Old Man and the Sea*. There's another unique statue of Hemingway here, and we'll also show you the restaurant Las Terrazas, the preferred Cojimar hangout of the author and the late Captain of his boat (Pilar); Gregorio Fuentes.

Length: 1 - 2 hours (including transportation)

GRAN TEATRO DE LA HABANA TOUR (NOT OPEN ON MONDAYS)

Take a tour of the Gran Teatro de la Habana. First opened in 1915, the theatre is home to Cuba's National Ballet Company and hosts many touring companies and festivals. The building itself is embellished with numerous statues and frescoes and the detail is incredible.

Length: 40 minutes not including transportation



PASEO DE MARTI

This elegant tree-lined boulevard was laid out back in 1772, and to live here was the ultimate status symbol. The mansions that line the street seem to either be restored or interestingly decrepit (or somewhere in-between). The Paseo leads to the impressive National Capitol Building (known as El Capitolio). It was Cuba's seat of government from 1929 until 1959, and plans are underway to return it to service as the home of Cuba's National Assembly.





RAFAEL TREJO BOXING GYM (NOT OPEN ON WEEKENDS OR IN JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST)

Boxing is one of Cuba's national sporting pleasures and this will become evident when we take you to see the Rafael Trejo boxing gym. World-class athletes might spar in the main ring while children refine their own moves alongside them under the watchful eyes of trainers. Please note that the boxing gym is closed on weekends and throughout June, July and August.

CLASSIC CAR RIDE TO EL MORRO FOR PHOTOS

Be escorted in a convertible classic car to the Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro, which is simply known as El Morro. Dating back to 1589, the fort was built to protect the fledgling city of Havana from the many pirates and hostile foreign forces that have targeted the city numerous times throughout its turbulent past. This is a fantastic place to take photos looking back at Havana and the Malecon.

On this excursion you will also visit the impressive El Cristo de La Habana (Havana's very own Jesus Christ statue that overlooks the city) and pass by La Cabana de Che Guevara.

Length: 1 - 2 hours including transfers



MOJITO MAKING CLASS ON THE ROOFTOP OF OLD HAVANA

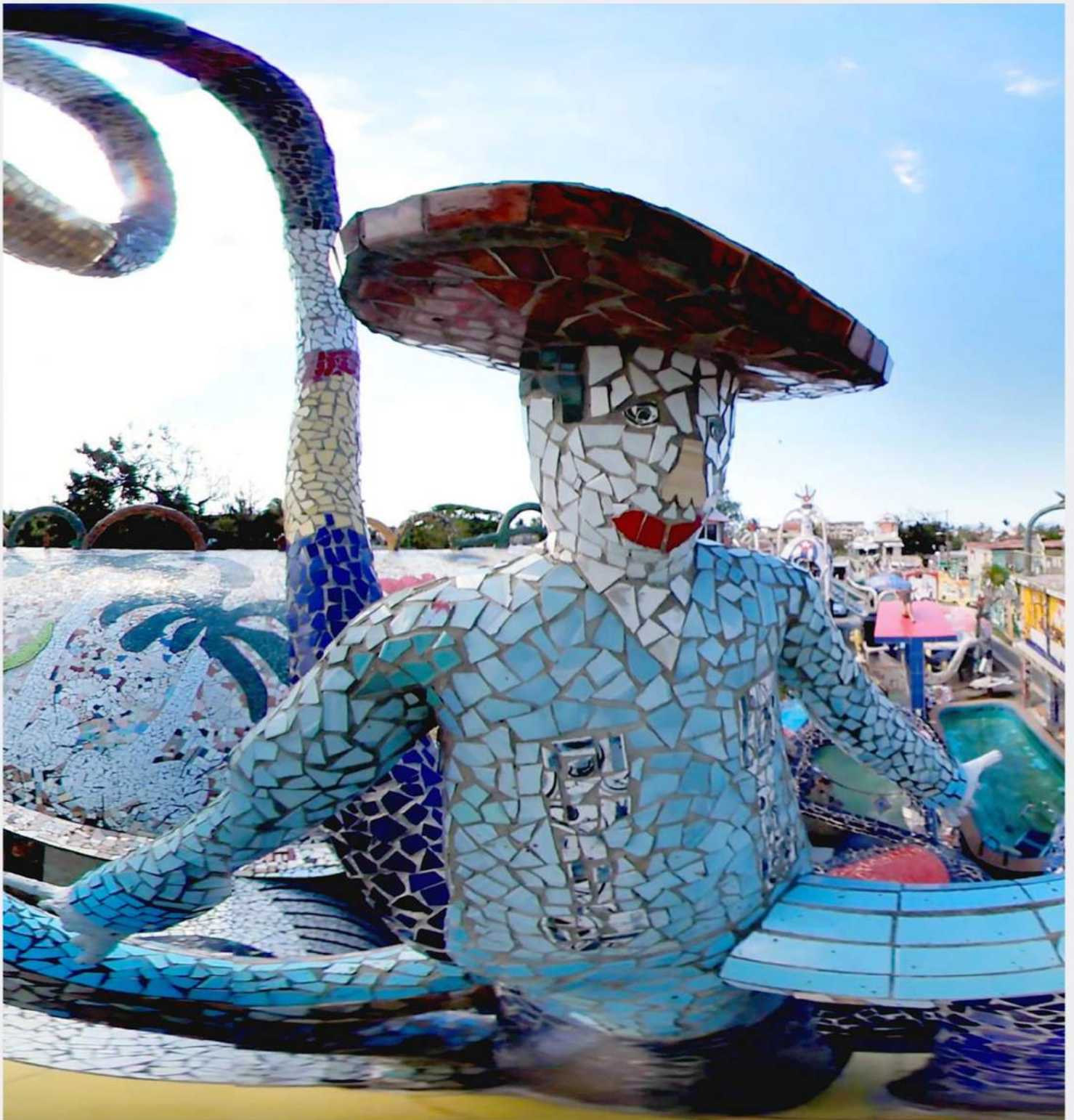
Here you'll get to learn a very handy skill. We'll take you to a rooftop bar in Havana's Old Town that makes a sublime mojito (or a non-alcoholic alternative). You'll be taught how to make a classic Cuban cocktail with an unbeatable view over the rooftops of the city.

Length: 30 minutes to 1 hour not including transportation



FUSTERLANDIA

Take a short detour to the fishing village of Jaimanitas, and this unassuming part of the city has been utterly transformed by the artist Jose Fuster. Fuster has made his entire home, and much of the surrounding neighbourhood, into an artwork using tiles in mosaic forms. This public art installation is lovingly known as Fusterlandia and has now spread to encompass more than 80 homes, all decorated with ornate murals and domes to reflect the personality of each of Fuster's neighbours. There could be no living space more personalised. In addition to the idiosyncratic homes, Fuster has also contributed a chess park with giant boards and tables, a theatre, and public swimming pools. Fuster's art has become a cherished part of Cuban culture and arguably joins the rank of other public artworks such as that of Gaudi in Barcelona or that of Brâncuși in the Romanian city of Targu Jiu - art that has come to almost define a particular part of a city.





MUSEO DEL CHOCOLATE

The Museo del Chocolate is aptly located on Calle Amargura (which translates as Bitterness Street), and is more of a cafe than a museum, serving up chocolate treats so delicious that you will be glad you're on a schedule, lest you spend the rest of your time in Cuba cramming these delicacies into your mouth

MUSEO NACIONAL DE BELLAS ARTES

This is where the cr me de la cr me of Cuban art is proudly displayed (and the museum exclusively displays Cuban art). Works are displayed in chronological order starting on the 3rd floor and are surprisingly varied. This ordering allows you to easily take in the development of Cuban art throughout the centuries. Amongst others, you will see the works of Guillermo Collazo, considered to be the first truly great Cuban artist. There is also Rafael Blanco, with his cartoon-like paintings and sketches; along with Ra l Mart nez, a master of 1960s Cuban pop art; and the Picasso-like Wifredo Lam.

Length: You could spend 1 hour – 3 hours here depending on your interest in the subject matter



MUSEUM OF THE REVOLUTION

This grand building, deliberately impressive in scope, was the Presidential Palace prior to the Cuban Revolution. After the government was overthrown in 1959, the building was home to the Government and the Council of Ministers until 1965, when it hosted Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. In 1974, it became a museum dedicated to the Cuban Revolution, and two years later, it witnessed the approval of the 1976 Constitution. It was awarded national monument status in 2010.

Length: You could spend 1 hour – 3 hours here depending on your interest in the subject matter

DANCE/ SALSA LESSON

Suitable for all levels, here is your chance to learn, enjoy, and improve your skills in traditional Cuban dances like Salsa, Danzon, Son, Cha Cha Cha, Rumba, Casino Rueda, and Folklore.

Hosted by experienced dance teachers, these lessons are a lot of fun and a great precursor to some fantastic and entertaining nights out in Cuba.

Length: 1 hour and 2 hour lessons available



ALMACENES DE SAN JOSÉ

Havana's largest arts and crafts market is the Almacenes de San José at the Port of Havana. Built in 1885, this mammoth and ornate warehouse now serves as a cultural centre with art exhibitions, theatrical performances and recreational activities. Its most significant contribution is undoubtedly the handicrafts on sale. Unlike other Latin American countries, Cuba does not have a strong tradition in producing handicrafts. It is therefore really surprising to see how Cuban artistic handicraft has developed over the past three decades.



FARM TO TABLE EXPERIENCE AT EL AJIACO CAFÉ

You will travel to Cojimar for an authentic Farm to Table Experience.

El Ajiaco Café is a Cuban specialty restaurant in the fishing village of Cojimar just east of Havana, offers instruction in Cuban cuisine. This includes:

- ★ Visit to a local herb grower (and their supplier, just 3 blocks from the restaurant) where you can learn about their production process and hand-select herbs to use in food preparation.
- ★ An introduction to Cuban cuisine and its origins, presentation delivered in the El Ajiaco patio (with a restaurant employee providing English translation if required).
- ★ Demonstration of how to prepare local dishes including ropa vieja (shredded beef), plus lobster & shrimp enchilado (in tomato sauce).
- ★ Instruction on preparation of the Cuban mojito at the bar, followed by making your own version of this, one of Cuba's 3 signature cocktails.
- ★ Your lunch includes bread service (accompanied by several of their own sauces), ajiaco (a typical Cuban root vegetable-based soup/stew), rice, salad, beans, yucca, sample the beef/lobster/shrimp dishes that you learned how to prepare in the kitchen, accompanied by a national brand beverage, your choice of several typical Cuban desserts, traditional coffee, and aged rum to finish of the meal.

Length: 3 Hours not including transfers



PRIVATE VINALES DAY TOUR

Approximately 2.5 hours from Havana, this day tour allows you to experience the dramatic beauty of the Pinar del Rio province and the rural town of Viñales. The landscape is dotted with mogotes - steep rounded hills that contrast the flat plains around them. A rich, fertile valley of the Pinar del Rio province is where you will find Viñales. This compact and authentic village is one of the most breathtaking spots in all of Cuba. In the heart of Cuba's prime tobacco growing region, Viñales is deceptively industrious, and many of Cuba's trademark cigars are made from tobacco that is grown here. Included on this day tour is the Los Jazmines look-out point, Mural de la Prehistoria, Underground caves, lunch at an organic farm and a visit to a tobacco farm.

Length: 9+ hours



LAS TERRAZAS DAY TOUR

Approximately 1.5 hours from Havana, this is your chance to explore the mountain community of Las Terrazas. This region was once lush, then had its natural resources exploited, before returning to its former pristine state as the result of a project spearheaded by Fidel Castro himself in the 1960s. It's now a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. You will have time today for a walk around the town to meet the friendly locals and for an optional swim in the pretty San Juan mountain stream. In Las Terrazas there are also art, woodwork and pottery studios that are open to the public. The entire town has become known as a type of artist's retreat. As part of the tour you will also explore the nearby community of Soroa, visiting the waterfall there and impressive Orchid garden. On the way back to Havana you will visit the public art installation lovingly known as Fusterlandia

Optional: For those feeling adventurous, the Canopy Tour (zip-line) in Las Terrazas is a unique adventure. The Canopy Tour is a nearly 2km aerial tour using steel cables to whiz above Las Terrazas' fascinating scenery. Here, you will find highly trained personnel and professional equipment. This activity is weather dependent and can be paid for locally.

Length: 7+ hours



COLON CEMETERY

You will see the name Colon a lot in Cuba, and it doesn't refer to the section of your digestive system. This is in fact the Spanish spelling of Columbus, as in Christopher Columbus, who "discovered" Cuba on behalf of the Spanish. There are an abundance of landmarks named after him throughout the country, and Havana's Colon Cemetery is perhaps the most prestigious.

It might not be representative of the cemeteries you're familiar with, and there's an emphasis on the ornate. Some of these mausoleums (and there are more than 500 of them) are more akin to sculpted works of art. These mausoleums are an indication of prestige and wealth, since there are more than 800,000 graves throughout the cemetery, holding more than one million people (some of them are family burials, in case you were wondering).

The cemetery offers a place of respite, a break from the hurly burly business of the vibrant city that surrounds it. You (along with the residents of Havana) might not actually be coming to the cemetery to visit the resting place of a loved one, but merely to take a moment for quiet contemplation.

You might also see a curious sight if you happen to spend time in the cemetery. Space long ago ran out at this prestigious final resting place, so the sense of finality was removed for more recent interments. Nowadays, new additions to the cemetery only remain on the grounds for three years. After that time, they are dug up and moved elsewhere, making room for others who also had final wishes to be buried in this remarkably lovely spot... if only for a while.

Length: 45 minutes for a guided tour



PLAYAS DEL ESTE

While the beaches of Cuba are a major drawcard for many visitors, the beaches around Havana don't receive a lot of attention. They are sorely underrated, and this is particularly true of Playas del Este, just 18 kilometres east of the capital. There is a small resort town here (Bacuranao) so all your dining and entertainment needs will be served in a manner that is more low-key than the more popular beachside resorts. Playas del Este has mercifully been spared the development and seemingly continuous urban renewal of many of Cuba's other beachside establishments, and it makes for a truly pleasurable day at the beach, all within a stone's throw of the heart of Havana. The white sand and gentle azure waters that you might equate with beaches in the Caribbean can be found here.

Length: Half or full day



IN THE EVENING

THE VIXEN AND CROW JAZZ CLUB

Take this opportunity to visit Havana's most famous jazz club (the memorably named The Vixen and the Crow), right on La Rampa. Entry is via a red English phone box, where the stairs then lead you down to a lively basement where freestyle jazz is played nightly.





LA TABERNA AND BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB MUSIC

In the evening you can choose to visit La Taberna in the heart of Havana's Old Town. La Taberna offers the best traditional Cuban music as popularized by the Buena Vista Social Club.

TROPICANA (DAILY)

The Tropicana Cabaret, Cuba's oldest and most prestigious cabaret, is set over lush tropical gardens in the Marianao neighborhood. Since 1939 this world-renowned singing and dancing spectacular has remained a 'must see' event for many a traveller to Cuba. Set under the open sky, Tropicana is a fantastic place to enjoy Cuban music and folklore, showcasing the colour, rhythm and passion of this vibrant Caribbean community



CASA DE LA MUSICA IN MIRAMAR

There are many places in Cuba called the "House of Music," all with their own idiosyncratic charms. The Miramar House of Music is one of the most lively, with an atmosphere that manages to be both vibrant and refined at the same time. This is the place to go in the capital when you are chasing that quintessentially Cuban salsa sound. As a bonus, the club is situated inside a renovated old Havana mansion that speaks of the glory of the past (with an eye firmly on the present).

FABRICA DE ARTE CUBANO

(THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY)

Fabrica de Arte Cubano (FAC) is a true gem, and one that has luckily not become a victim of its own popularity, although it's still exceedingly popular with visitors and locals alike, all coming to sample the venue's unique mixture of art and music.

It's a performance venue, an art gallery, a nightclub, with many hidden nooks and crannies where you can simply sit with a cold drink and watch the hip side of Havana come out to play. It's a sure fire bet for an all-inclusive night out, since there's so much to see and do. You really could spend your entire evening here and still not see all that that FAC has to offer.



CABARET PARISIEN (DAILY)

While in Havana you will need to see the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, which has become a tourist attraction in its own right. It's hard to miss it as it juts proudly out from a small hill overlooking the Malecón oceanfront esplanade. This elegant building recalls the glamour of yesteryear, and was the spot for the rich and famous of America to relax before the relationship between Cuba and the US soured (a situation that is now slowly being remedied). Stars from the golden age of Hollywood rubbed shoulders with organised crime figures and the privileged elite of Cuba. Even if you're not staying in the hotel, you should make the time to spend an evening here to take in the extravagant delights of the Parisien, one of the best-known cabaret shows in the country.

The performance is known as "Cubano, Cubano" and is an intoxicating combination of Latino, African, and Indo American cultures, all amplified to create an electrifying stage show that demonstrates the rich cultural heritage of modern Cuba, albeit in an enjoyably stylised way. Havana also offers the better-known Cabaret Tropicana, although Cabaret Parisien is more affordable, and takes place in the loveliest and most fascinating of venues.





JAZZ CAFE

The entertainment on offer at most shopping malls throughout the world is generally limited to multiplex cinemas and noisy amusement arcades, but this is not the case in Havana. The Jazz Cafe is in a fairly nondescript shopping mall that overlooks the Malecón, and is truly remarkable find. It's an upmarket supper club where you can be wined and dined, all while listening to some world class jazz. As the night progresses, the entertainment on offer becomes more varied, with jazz giving way to timba, and sometimes simply scintillating salsa (this is Cuba, after all).

CAFÉ TEATRO BERTOLT BRECHT IN MIRAMAR

The German playwright Bertolt Brecht was never a truly outspoken Marxist, but his work continues to have an impact - to the point that this delightful little theatre in the Cuban capital was named in his memory. The name is perhaps misleading, since Brecht's work is not performed, and the venue is indeed one of the hip and most energetic in the city. This is where the contemporary music stars of Cuba come to perform, and their audience come to cram into a small space to bounce around and scream appreciatively. It's almost ludicrously inexpensive (with entry only being around 2 CUC). Get here nice and early if you want to take a seat at one of the few tables. It's not important if you're not able to bag a seat, since everyone will be on their feet as soon as the music starts



KING BAR

There's no shortage of suitable spots in the city to dance the night away, but King Bar is... well... the King of them. It's located in a appropriately hip spot in Havana; Vedado, where locals generally prefer to unwind. The entrance might look unassuming, squashed between two large buildings, but once you're inside, your evening will get underway in the most fabulous way. There are a number of sensational cocktails on offer to lubricate your night (we suggest their famous Kingbed Beta) and the club is refreshingly spacious, so there will be plenty of room to dance.

CANNON SHOOTING CEREMONY (DAILY)

Havana is certainly now a city where you can party until the sun comes up if the need should grab you, although this was not always the case. Havana's ravishing Old Town was once the entirety of the city, surrounded by imposing, reinforced walls - the gates of which were closed at 9pm. Talk about a curfew!

San Carlos de la Cabaña is emblematic of Havana's turbulent and sometimes violent past. This austere fortress was constructed at the entrance of Havana's harbour in order to defend the fledgling settlement from pirate attacks, and a cannon was fired here each day at 4:30am and 9pm to signal the opening and closing of the city gates. They have fortunately dispensed with the morning cannon shot, but the 9pm cannon lives on, accompanied by a procession of uniformed guards.

The fortress is a magnificent, sprawling complex that was once under the command of Che Guevara and is well worth a visit for the 9pm firing of the cannon (although now you don't have to scuttle back to the walls of the city). Even if you're not directly at the site, you might still hear the boom of the gun. Please don't worry - the pirates are not back.



BASÍLICA MENOR DE SAN FRANCISCO (SATURDAY AND SUNDAY)

This imposing and beautiful basilica with fine acoustics hosts some of the most important classical music concerts in Havana. Set in the square of the same name, the church is the home of the Grammy-nominated Camerata Romeu, an all-female chamber ensemble, and many other excellent soloists, groups and choirs ask to be booked here. It is also the place where you might hear some of Cuba's best pianists such as Frank Fernandez playing Bach.



SALSA CLUB 1830 (FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY)

It would be faintly silly to not enjoy at least some of Havana's nightlife under the stars, and Club 1830 will not disappoint. Under the night sky, and with a refreshing breeze coming in from the ocean to cool you off after your inevitable dance sessions, the salsa club is located in a restored grand old Havana mansion with a beguiling outdoor garden facing the ocean. The club is generally packed with both locals and visitors - with the visitors trying to imitate the often-bemused locals in their seemingly professional dance moves. Don't be concerned if you have two left feet, since the locals are generally willing to show you a few basic dance moves.



GRAN TEATRO

(FRIDAY 8:30PM, SAT 8:30PM, SUNDAY 5:00PM)

This ravishingly sumptuous great theatre of Havana showcases a jaw-droppingly amazing selection of Cuban music and dance on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. While the selection is varied, the speciality of the house is in fact ballet, as it's the headquarters of the Cuban National Ballet. Check the program while you're in town and you'll be sure to find something that is going to whet your appetite. Spontaneity can be the keyword when visiting the Gran Teatro. Tickets are not particularly easy to purchase in advance and your best bet for securing a seat is to visit the theatre in the morning to get a ticket for the performance later that evening.



OLD HAVANA'S AMPHITHEATRE (SATURDAY AND SUNDAY)

If you're not concerned about your entertainment being lost in translation (or more accurately, lost due to no translation), then you simply must take in a show at the Old Havana Amphitheatre. The venue generally hosts mainstream musicals that began life on Broadway or London's West End, and the shows are performed in Spanish. Still, there might be a musical that you're already familiar with, and so you get to hear all of your favourite songs performed in Spanish... in Cuba, no less. Performances take place on Saturdays and Sundays at 9pm, and again, try to visit the theatre in the morning to purchase tickets for later that evening.



VIVA CUBA



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