

On the Road





Havana

📍 / POP 2,130,431

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Doña Eutimia (p104)
- ➔ Café Laurent (p109)
- ➔ San Cristóbal (p108)
- ➔ Paladar Los Mercaderes (p106)
- ➔ Espacios (p131)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hotel Los Frailes (p97)
- ➔ Hotel Iberostar Parque Central (p101)
- ➔ Hostal Peregrino Consulado (p99)
- ➔ Casa 1932 (p99)
- ➔ Hostal Conde de Villanueva (p97)

Why Go?

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine you are there. Waves crashing against a mildewed sea wall; a young couple cavorting in a dark, dilapidated alley; guitars and voices harmonizing over a syncopated drum rhythm; sunlight slanting across rotten peeling paintwork; a handsome youth in a *guayabera* shirt leaning against a Lada; the smell of diesel fumes and cheap aftershave; tourists with Hemingway beards; Che Guevara on a billboard, a banknote, a key-ring, a t-shirt...

No one could have invented Havana. It's too audacious, too contradictory, and – despite 50 years of withering neglect – too damned beautiful. How it does it, is anyone's guess. Maybe it's the swashbuckling history, the survivalist spirit, or the indefatigable salsa energy that ricochets off walls and emanates most emphatically from the people. Don't come here looking for answers. Just arrive with an open mind and prepare yourself for a long, slow seduction.

When to Go

- ➔ February is peak season meaning there's extra life in the city and plenty of extracurricular activities, including a cigar festival and an international book fair.
- ➔ Havana's summer heat can be stifling. To avoid it, come in October, a wonderfully quiet month when there's still plenty to do – such as enjoy the annual Festival Internacional de Ballet.
- ➔ Busier (for a reason) is December, when people line up for the Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, Cuba's premiere movie shindig.
- ➔ August is hot, but fun, if you time your visit to coincide with Havana's ostentatious Carnaval.