

Havana Tips and Tricks:

Interesting Facts and Tips On Havana and Cuba

- With Trinidad Bonus Section

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About This Guide

This **sample guide** includes a list of tips, facts and tricks to help you better understand Cuban culture and daily life in Havana. The information presented in this guide was taken from the book [Real Havana: Explore Cuba Like A Local And Save Money](#). This book is available on [Amazon.com](#) and various other online book retailers, and offers a complete description of all the information presented below.

If you are planning to visit Cuba and want to truly experience the culture of the island, **you should consider purchasing the complete Real Havana guide**. You will be introduced to the *authentic* Cuba, which is usually hidden from the average foreigner. You will gain the knowledge and confidence to explore Cuba like a local, not just *another tourist*. Moreover, the guide is filled with hundreds of money saving tips and free entertainment options. Not only will you be immersed in the rich culture, but you will also save hundreds of dollars.

In the Complete Real Havana guide, you will learn about:

- Authentic Cuban cuisine and affordable Havana restaurants.
- Low-priced markets, shops and entertainment options.
- Maps of Havana and the suburbs – Get out of the city and EXPLORE!
- Instructions on using communal *taxis particulares* and all the major routes.
- Contact info and reviews of over 30 *casa particular* apartments in Vedado.
- Fascinating, offbeat places which are hidden from foreigners.
- Hundreds of tips on saving money while in Havana.
- How to avoid the most common tourist scams.

The Real Havana guide has all that information and much more. It has been described by industry professionals as being the #1 guide for travelers wanting to learn about the authentic Cuba. That's why it is a bestseller and has been a trusted resource to over 200 000 travellers since 2010.



We hope you enjoy this free, mini-guide about Cuba, and if you are interested in learning more about the complete Real Havana guide, check out the website www.BestCubaGuide.com for more info. On the website you will find hundreds of free services and tips on exploring Cuba. You can find and reserve your casa particular (room rental) in Cuba with absolutely no brokerage cost, and you can reserve all your taxis and tour guide services.

Tips on Using This Sample Guide

In order to view hundreds of photos and videos of Cuba, as well as listings and pictures of all the Casas Particulares (rental apartments) which are reviewed at the end of this guide, simply go to the website www.BestCubaGuide.com.

As a purchaser of this ebook, you now have a free, lifetime membership to this fantastic resource. It's packed with information on Havana and Cuba.

Any questions you may have can be posted in the [Forum](#), and will be answered quickly.

All the rental properties mentioned in this guide can be booked directly on the website, and you can also find dozens of great taxi deals and discounts. Check it out!

About Full Compass Guides

Full Compass Guides are aimed at travelers who want to understand local customs and culture so that they can experience destinations like a local. Unlike regular *tourist guides*, Full Compass guides are not a list of attractions popular with tourists, and boring restaurant and hotel reviews that are obsolete the moment they are published. With our guides, you get succinct, useful information about the culture, people and geography of your destination so you have the tools and the confidence to explore on your own, experience everything that your destination has to offer, and save money.

Our guides are written by experienced travelers who have intimate knowledge of both the location and the culture of the destination. They give you the exact information you need in order to make the most of your travel time.

With a Full Compass guide, you will be a knowledgeable explorer, rather than just another flash-happy tourist.

About the Author

This mini-guide was written by Mario Rizzi, an award winning Canadian author. He first visited Cuba in 2007 and fell in love with the island. Since then he has returned dozens of times and considers Havana to be his second home.

He has explored every corner of the island, from the major cities to rural communities, and has become intimately acquainted with Cuban culture and lifestyle. Some of his closest friends are Cuban, and they have played an important role in his understanding of the island and the development of his Cuban guide series.

Mario is an avid traveler and his most important goal is to familiarize himself with the culture of a country so that he can explore it like a local would, rather than as a tourist. It often takes a great deal of time and effort to develop this understanding and as such, thriftiness is an important consideration.

In this mini-guide, Mario provides some of the top tips and facts about Cuba. Complete information about all the topics in this mini guide are provided in the book Real Havana: Explore Cuba Like A Local And Save Money.

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General Cuba Facts

Education:

Interesting Fact: After graduation from university, most students are offered government jobs in their field of study. They are expected to work at these jobs for at least 2 years. This period is called *Servicio Social* (Social Service). After completing this time, they are free to change profession, work independently or go back to school.



Interesting Fact: Uniforms are a huge part of Cuban life. All students, from primary school up to high school, must wear specific uniforms each day. The following is a list of the uniform color combinations for each level of education.

- Elementary School: Red bottoms and white tops. Years 1-3 wear blue scarves. Years 4-6 wear red scarves.
- Secondary School: Years 7-9. Mustard yellow bottoms and white tops.

Students then have the option of attending either Pre-university or trade school

- Pre-university: Dark blue bottoms and light blue tops
- Trade school: Dark brown bottoms and light brown tops.

A university education is optional and there is no uniform requirement.

Religion:



Interesting Note: On occasion you will see men and women walking around Cuba wearing completely white clothing. Sometimes they are even holding a white sun umbrella or wearing a white head scarf. These are practitioners of the Santeria religion and they are wearing white as part of their initiation process of becoming Santeria priests or priestesses. They must wear white for one full year and limit their contact with people who have not been initiated into the religion.

Some Common Cuban Slang:

Almendron: old American car

Baro: money
Bici: bicycle
Bici-taxi: bicycle taxi
Bodega: state owned grocery store
Blumer: womens underpants
Bisnero: business man
Campesino: farmer
Camello: city bus
Carro: car
Carnet: Cuban identity card
Chancletas: flip-flops
Chao: goodbye
Chica: girl
Chopin: shopping
Cola : lineup or queue
Cuarto: a room in a hotel or house
Espejuelos: glasses
Fosforera: lighter
Frigi: refrigerator
Guayabera: official Cuban formal shirt
Jeva: woman
Jinetera: escort girl
Jinetero: male broker or vendor (gray market)
Máquina: old American car
Pinchar: to work
Pullover: T-shirt
Tenis: sneakers, sports shoes
Yuma: Foreigner

Home Ownership:

[Interesting Fact:](#) Home-ownership was a tenet of the revolution. When the Castro government came into power, all private homes were nationalized, and title was given over to the dwelling occupants. Overnight, renters became homeowners. Landlords ultimately lost dearly as almost all of their property was released to the tenants.

Property:

[Interesting Fact:](#) In the past, if a Cuban citizen was to leave the island and seek exile in a foreign country, such as the United States, he or she would forfeit all property owned in Cuba. This property, including the home and all its contents would be repossessed by the state and redistributed to needy families. This is no longer the case. Citizens are now permitted to retain all their belongings on the island even after they seek exile in a foreign country. They are also permitted to retain their Cuban citizenship and to freely re-enter the country.

Cuban Exiles:



Interesting Fact: Contrary to popular belief, attempting to leave the country in order to seek exile in a foreign nation is not considered a serious offense by Cuban law enforcement. The majority of Cubans who attempt to flee, and are unsuccessful in reaching their destination, are simply returned to Cuba where they are permitted to continue living their lives, without any incarceration or punishment. On the other hand, the brokers and speed boat operators who attempt to profit by trafficking exiles and smuggling Cubans to America are treated more severely. Their enterprise is seen as unscrupulous and dangerous to the lives of all boat occupants and punishments are harsh.

Regulations and Laws:



Interesting Fact: Inter-provincial migration within Cuba is strictly regulated. In order for citizens to move to another province they must have a good reason for doing so, such as for school, work or important family commitments. This law serves to prevent a population exodus from the poorer eastern provinces into the richer, western provinces. More specifically, it prevents a mass migration to the country's richest city, Havana. Many young men and women from the eastern provinces join the police force precisely for the opportunity to immigrate to Havana. There is very little desire from Havana locals (Habaneros) to become police, because there are so many other economic opportunities in the city.

Interesting Note: In Cuba, the tourist is king. In a dispute between a Cuban citizen and a foreigner, police will almost always take the side of the tourist. Although this gives foreigners a distinct upper hand in any argument, it is a privilege that should obviously not be abused. Common sense should always be exercised, and, generally, if something is illegal in your country of origin, it is fair to assume that the same act is illegal in Cuba. If you commit a serious crime, regardless of where you come from, you will be prosecuted.

Cuban Currency:

Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC)



Cuban Moneda Nacional Pesos (MN)



Interesting Fact: Cuba has 2 official currencies. The Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) is valued at par with the US dollar. It is used to purchase most capital goods and imported products. The Moneda Nacional (MN) is valued at 1/25th of the value of the CUC. Most state workers are paid in Moneda Nacional and use it for everyday purchases. Tourists can use **either** currency and will find that if they use the Moneda Nacional, they will be able to save a lot of money when purchasing everyday goods.

Interesting Fact: The Cuban government has recently decided that it will eliminate the dual currency system. They plan to eventually merge the CUC and the Moneda Nacional into a single common currency. A time-line for this unification has not yet been established. In preparation for this merger, many state stores (restaurants in particular) have begun accepting payment for their offerings in either currency. The exchange rate which many of these locations offer is usually 1 CUC = 23 MN. This is slightly inferior to the 1:24 rate charged at state-run exchange houses.

Currency Advice

Most tourist guides dismiss the importance of the Moneda Nacional currency and recommend that foreigners simply stick to using the CUC currency. If you are staying at an all inclusive resort or plan to spend all of your time in touristy areas, then this is fine. If, on the other hand, you are planning to explore the island or visit non-touristy areas, it will be much more economical to use the Moneda Nacional currency for most of your expenditures.

The CUC currency is used in tourist resorts, high end hotels, fancy restaurants and to rent apartments. Furthermore, it is used in large state-run supermarkets and stores and to take certain types of taxis. While in some situations, you must pay for your goods and services in CUC, there are many other instances where you can shop at locations which sell identical products, at a far lower price, in MN currency. This guide will tell you about many of these locations.

Note: Sometimes you will hear the word peso used. Locals use the term to refer to both CUC and MN. Any currency amount of 1 can be called a peso. If the currency is not specified, it is best to make certain before buying something. Just ask the vendor if he means 1 peso MN, or 1 peso CUC.

Exchanging Money

Unlike other currencies, there is no international exchange market for Cuban money. You will only be able to buy and sell Cuban pesos in Cuba. There are several ways to exchange your foreign currency.

CADECAs

In Cuba, you can change money in state-operated exchange houses called *CADECAs*. These locations are usually clearly indicated on street signs and can be found in all cities and towns and at most airports and hotels. The CADECAs located in cities usually offer better foreign exchange rates than those at hotels and airports. It is advisable to exchange just a bit of money at the airport, upon entering the country. This will give you some purchasing power until you can locate a CADECA offering better rates.

CADECA offices will exchange all types of foreign currency. The most common currencies exchanged are Euros, British Pounds and Canadian and American dollars. You cannot convert all currencies in Cuba. For example, Australian dollars are not accepted. To exchange some currencies, you might have to visit a main CADECA office rather than a satellite branch.

A full list of all the currencies which are accepted for conversion as well as their daily conversion rates can be seen at http://www.bc.gob.cu/English/exchange_rate.asp

Foreign currencies are all converted first to Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC). If you want Moneda Nacional, you can convert your CUC currency to MN on a 1:24 basis, as part of a separate transaction.

Contrary to some beliefs, tellers at CADECA offices are very honest when exchanging foreign currency. Scams at these locations are extremely rare. In order to exchange foreign currency you will be asked to provide a piece of ID, usually a passport, and your information will be entered into a computer. The clerk will count out your money, confirming the amount with you, and then give you a printed slip indicating how much Cuban currency you will receive back. The clerk will then count out the Cuban currency two times before passing it to you. You are free to take your time to recount the currency. Generally, clerks will refuse all tips so as to remain completely impartial in the transaction.

Note: It is best to convert your foreign currency to Cuban currency at several intervals throughout your trip rather than converting everything at once. If you find yourself with a lot of Cuban currency at the end of your trip and want to convert it back to your original foreign money there will be substantial foreign exchange charges. This might easily reduce the value of your currency by 5%. Furthermore, taking a large amount of Cuban currency out of the country is not permitted. A few dollars is fine, but if Cuban customs finds that you have many hundreds of dollars in CUC as you exit the country, it can be confiscated.

Banks

Another way to exchange foreign currency is to use a bank. There are several large bank brands operating in Cuba, and all are capable of exchanging foreign currency. Although banks might, on occasion, offer slightly better exchange rates than CADECAs, it should be noted that the lineups to get into a bank are often very long. In addition, while a bank can exchange your foreign currency into CUC, they are not permitted to exchange CUC into MN. The only place to do this is at a CADECA. Generally the best option is to avoid using banks unless you have no other choice.

Other Foreigners

One of the cheapest ways to convert currency is to exchange it privately with other foreigners. This strategy works best for the most popular currencies like Canadian dollars, Euros, and American dollars. The best location to meet foreigners looking to exchange currency is at an airport CADECA. You will usually encounter many foreigners who have just completed their trip in Cuba and are eager to sell their leftover CUC. Since CADECAs usually charge an exchange fee of at least 5%, you can offer a slightly lower rate and buy these CUC directly from the foreigners. You will both benefit by saving the standard exchange fees.

Electronic Banking

Credit Cards

Credit card usage in Cuba is very rare. The only places that are equipped with credit card processing equipment are large tourist resorts, and hotels in main cities. Restaurants and state stores almost never accept credit cards.

If you are planning on bringing and using a credit card, make absolutely sure that it has not been issued from an American banking institution. All American based credit cards will be refused because of the American embargo on trade with Cuba. Most other credit cards, especially those issued from European or Canadian banks can be used.

ATMs (cajeros automaticos) are rare. A few can be found in some hotels and very touristic areas in large cities, and at major airports. You should never depend on these machines. Breakdowns are frequent and withdrawal limits are low. In some cases, even if you are using a credit card issued from a non-American institution, you may still require the assistance of a bank teller in order to complete your transaction.

Personal checks, traveler's checks, and bank drafts are almost completely unheard of.

PayPal And Other Payment Transfer Services

It should be noted that due to the trade embargo, you will not be able to use any American based money transfer services while in Cuba. If these services are web based, such as PayPal, you will be able to access the websites; however the actual payment will be blocked. This applies even if you are paying for something which is completely unrelated to Cuba. Simply attempting to initiate a transfer via a computer based in Cuba may lead to the temporary suspension of your account. The American government enforces the trade embargo very vigilantly, especially when it comes to international money transfers.

Note: Despite the thawing of relations between the USA and Cuba and the resulting increase in American tourism to the island, as of early 2016 the trade embargo is still in place and financial transactions between the two countries are highly restricted. American based credit and debit cards will still not function in Cuba and the use of services like PayPal is not possible. American tourists are advised to bring enough cash to last the duration of their trip.

How Much Money to Bring

If you have prepaid your vacation and are staying at an all inclusive hotel, you will not need much money. You will mostly use cash to give tips or to buy small items and souvenirs. The only instance where you might need to spend more is if you decide to take a scenic excursion off the resort. That might cost the equivalent of a few hundred dollars, depending on the specifics of

the trip.

If you are not staying on a resort, your expenses will obviously be higher. Detailed budgeting information is provided in the [Real Havana Guidebook](#). In the most general sense, Cuban regulations state that foreigners must bring enough money into the country to reasonably last the duration of their stay on the island. This is highly subjective, but is usually understood to mean approximately the equivalent of \$100 USD per day. For the average visit, this will be more than adequate. After reading this guide you will see that you can easily live like royalty, while only spending a fraction of that amount.

Potable Water:

[Interesting Note:](#) There have, in the past, been a few, very limited, cholera outbreaks, usually affecting no more than half a dozen people, and always localized in the extremely poor outskirts of the far eastern provinces. These were proven to have been caused by poor sanitation within crowded living quarters rather than contaminated water sources. So, unless you anticipate sleeping on the floor of a crowded ghetto in a remote village located at the eastern tip of the island, you should have no worry at all about contracting cholera while in Cuba.

Restaurant Scams:



The Real Havana guide lists dozens of common scams which foreigners will encounter in Cuba. The following is a small sample of what to expect.

[Common Scam:](#) The menus at all state-run restaurants will either be priced in CUC or MN. Sometimes the *food* will be priced in MN while the *drinks* (especially the alcohol) will be priced in CUC. This is normal. But, **there will never be** one menu for tourists, priced in CUC, and another for locals, priced in MN. Furthermore, the menu will always be typed out, never handwritten.

[Note about scams:](#) Far and away, the most common small scams occur in restaurants and bars when tourists are distracted and not paying attention to the menu or bill. As long as you pay attention and realize that you can always demand to speak to the restaurant manager or boss if there is any major discrepancy, you will be fine. In Cuba, **the tourist is king**. The Cuban economy is completely reliant on tourism and the goal of all state-run companies is to encourage tourist enjoyment and repeat business. If you ever think you are being conned and feel you have no other alternatives, simply threaten to call the police or the authorities. This will usually put a quick halt to the scam. If the scammer ever threatens to call the police on you, for example, if you refuse to pay an obviously inflated restaurant bill, never have any fear. Even if the police were to come to investigate the situation (highly unlikely), they will always take the side of the tourist over the restaurant, simply to defuse the situation and end the conflict.

[Interesting Fact:](#) Most scams are perpetrated by individual, small time con artists. Their main

goal is to make a few dollars per day, as this would equate to a very high salary by Cuban standards. Larger crimes or robberies are very rare in Cuba.

Tipping:

Interesting Fact: Regardless of the type of restaurant, tipping is never obligatory or expected. This goes for any service in Cuba, whether it be for housekeeping at a hotel or a ride in a taxi. That being said, it is still common for foreigners to leave small tips when they receive good service. Leaving a 5% gratuity on a 10 CUC meal bill would be considered average. Handing the hotel bellhop a quarter for delivering your suitcase to your room is always well received.

Cuban Cuisine:



Interesting Fact: Even when the average Cuban goes to a restaurant to eat, simple Cuban cuisine is still the most popular item on the menu. This is not only because it is usually the cheapest item, but also because most Cubans have become very accustomed to eating the same meals on a daily basis. Some people, especially those from the older generation, would not consider a meal complete without a generous serving of rice and beans, or a small fillet of

Note: Some state cafeterias will advertise cheap hamburgers, sometimes for as low as 4 pesos. These are not quality burgers, as the meat is usually nothing more than a thin slice of breaded pork croquette. You are better off paying a few pesos more and ordering from an establishment where you can actually see the burgers being prepared and cooked as you wait.

Interesting Fact: Killing a cow is an actual offense and a relatively bad one, too. Even if the cause of death is accidental or of natural causes, it is the Ministry of The Interior's job to conduct a full investigation. Some Cubans joke that it is a greater criminal offense to kill a cow than it is to kill another Cuban.

Bodega 11-449

Pollo de Polaco 11.500.000
 Pollo de Oreta 11.500.000
 Huevo Liberado 11.500.000

Frijoles Pisos 11.500.000
 T. de carne 11.500.000
 A. de carne 11.500.000
 Cuchitos 11.500.000
 Caldillo de Gallina 11.500.000
 T. de carne 11.500.000
 Bacon de J. Anar 11.500.000

[Special Note:](#) The Libreta System - The tiny ration book has become a vital part of Cuba's culture since it was implemented in 1962. At first, it was a way for the Cuban government to show it's commitment to the populace, by ensuring that regardless of social or economic status, each Cuban citizen would receive a base amount of food; enough to ensure a dependable nutritional intake. During the special period, the *libreta* took on even more significance, as many Cubans, faced with dire economic conditions, came to rely on the free, staple foods provided by the ration book as their largest, if not sole, source of nourishment. During the deepest parts of the special period, the average Cuban's daily caloric intake dropped to an all time low and malnutrition was a serious problem. Nevertheless, the base food provided by the *libreta* system was enough to prevent starvation. Cubans can use their libretas to get monthly food rations from a network of state-run food depots called *bodegas*.

Alcohol Prices:



[Interesting Fact:](#) In Cuba, the cheapest rum sometimes costs less than bottled water. There are dozens of different varieties and brands.

Interesting Fact: In 1982 a can of beer cost 0.60 pesos (MN). That same can of beer now costs 18 pesos (MN).

Cuban Cigars:



Interesting Fact: While some of the most popular cigars sold in official tobacco shops can cost up to 20 CUC per unit, the run of the mill cigars, which are very popular with local Cubans, usually cost only 1 peso (MN) each. They are sold at almost all cafeterias and small state shops. The most popular brand name is *Reloba*. You can understand now how lucrative it can be to spend the effort to re-brand and repackage these cheap cigars, and then sell them to unknowing foreigners at a huge markup.

Shopping:

Interesting Fact: In many cases, you must check your handbags before entering stores in Cuba. This is an easy and safe process. There will always be a *guardabolsa* (bag watcher) stand located beside or inside state stores. Simply deposit your bags and a clerk will hand you a numbered stub as a claim slip. Sometimes you will be asked to leave your name or a piece of

ID. This is so you can retrieve your bag even if you lose your claim stub. This service is free, but a tiny tip (a peso or a few centavos) is always appreciated.

[Important Note:](#) Remember to bring your own plastic or reusable bags when shopping. Large state supermarkets and gas stations will usually provide you with a plastic bag after your purchase, but most other small stores will not. Sometimes there will be a bag seller in the front of small stores or markets selling plastic bags (*jabas*) for 1 peso (MN) each.

Waiting in Line:



[Important Facts:](#) The lineup in Cuba is called a "*la cola*." There is a lineup for almost everything in Cuba, so even if you don't remember all the rules, you will be educated in the process rather rapidly. Most importantly, some people receive special consideration and always have a guaranteed spot at the head of the line. These include women queuing up with small children, and visibly pregnant women.

Internet Usage:

Interesting Fact: Foreign expats living in Cuba are allowed to use the internet from their home. They pay a monthly fee of about 50 CUC for this option. They are not permitted to transmit the signal via WIFI. Sharing this internet line with Cuban citizens is not permitted, but this rule is often broken without consequence.

Cuban Phone Calls:



Interesting Fact: Due to the high cost of cell phone rates, Cubans have developed an innovative way to communicate. Rather than using cell phones like regular phones, most Cubans simply use them as pagers. For example, a Cuban might use their home phone to call a friend's cell phone. Instead of answering the cell phone, the friend will dismiss the call and then find a cheap public phone to call back from. This way, the cell phone is never charged because the call is never initialized.

Foreign Car Rentals:



VERY IMPORTANT: It cannot be stressed enough - Be extremely careful when driving in Cuba! If you get into an accident in Cuba, even a minor one, you will be forced to remain on the island until an accident investigation is completed. This can sometimes take months. This is one of the main reasons foreigners are discouraged from renting vehicles in Cuba. There are dozens of stories of tourists who rented cars, had minor accidents and were then forced to stay in Cuba while a police or court-ordered investigation was conducted. This process is part of Cuban law and it cannot be modified or changed, even with the intervention of foreign embassies.

Furthermore, it should be noted that if you are involved in a serious traffic accident in Cuba, which results in bodily injury or death, there is a good chance that you will face some jail time. The concept of a “no fault” vehicle crash is not practiced in Cuba, and the excuse of a collision being “accidental” will not be accepted. Drive at your own risk.

Medical Emergencies:

Special Note: If you go to a local hospital and anticipate paying in cash for your treatment, always withhold your payment until you have received treatment and then, only pay the actual doctor, and not other members of the hospital staff. Doctors and trained medical personnel are

usually very professional, but the same cannot always be said for the orderlies, technicians and reception staff. If anybody asks you for an upfront payment just to see the doctor, it is likely that they are trying to scam you. You should immediately demand to speak to the hospital administrator.

Donations:

Special Note: Although all donations are welcome, you should be aware that donations of soap, shampoo, toothpaste and toilet paper are among the most common. Most locals, especially those working with tourists, have more than enough of these items. Furthermore, Cubans can purchase them very inexpensively themselves.

Transportation

Public Transportation:



Interesting Fact: During the 1990's Cuba suffered a transportation crisis. There was a great need for public transportation, but the government had little money to spend on purchasing buses. The Cuban government solved the problem by constructing rudimentary buses out of old machinery. Fundamentally, they used large tractor rigs to pull around passenger carts. These transports were called *Guaguas* because of the chugging sound they made. These are still used on a limited basis in some of the eastern provinces, but they are mostly obsolete, having been replaced by modern buses. Smaller, antique buses, dating from the 1950's are still

common on the road in most cities during off peak hours. Many Cubans still use the word *Guagua* when referring to any bus.

Old Cars:

Interesting Fact: Any motorized vehicle, no matter the age or type, is considered a prized possession in Cuba. Old vehicles from the 1960's are commonly listed for sale for tens of thousands of dollars. The reason these vehicles are worth so much is because of the income potential they can provide as taxis. While the average state job might pay no more than \$30 per month, a taxi driver can potentially make \$30 per day, if he owns and operates his own vehicle. This would equate to about \$10 000 per year, an almost unheard of sum of wealth in Cuba. All cars are cherished and rigorously cared for, passed down from one generation to another, usually sustaining the livelihood of several families.

Private Taxis (Taxis Particulares):



Important Note: In Cuba, the word *particular* usually refers to something which is private or independent. A *taxi particular* or a *uso particular* bus, simply means a private or independently owned bus or taxi. It is simply a way to distinguish these vehicles from the typical, state-owned buses or taxis. Taxis Particulares are considered communal taxis and sometimes also called

colectivos. They drive along a fixed route, picking up and dropping off passengers, almost like a bus. They are very cheap to use, but you must learn the taxi routes first. The process of using one of these taxis and the details of the major routes is explained in the Real Havana Guide.

Interesting Fact: A child can ride in a taxi particular for free, as long as they are seated on an adult's lap. Furthermore, for safety reasons, children must always ride in the back seat of a taxi particular, whether they are accompanied by an adult or not.

State Taxis:



Interesting Fact: In the city of Havana, state-operated taxis are commonly referred to by locals as *Cinco Cinco* taxis, which means “five five” taxis. They are given this name because the telephone number to reserve a taxi in Havana is 855 5555. As a tourist I would not recommend reserving a state taxi ahead of time, considering it is so easy to find one in almost any location.

Bikes in Havana:



[Important Note:](#) If you plan on using a bike in Cuba, always remember to bring a good lock with you, since bike locks are almost impossible to find in Cuba and theft is high. Even if you have a good lock, the best way to be absolutely sure that your bike will be safe is to park it in secure facility, called a *Parqueo*. Throughout Havana, wherever there is a parking lot, you will notice attendants, dressed in state-issued, red and white uniforms, keeping watch over the cars, motorcycles and bikes. For a nominal sum (half a peso (MN) per hour) the attendant will guard your bike. The small cost is well worth the peace of mind.

Going To The Havana Beaches (Playas del Este)



[Important Note:](#) If you are leaving the beach late at night (after 10pm) it can be more difficult to find a taxi particular going to Havana. In peak beach season, it's usually not a problem, but in the low season, it can sometimes take a few tries before you snag a ride. In the worst case scenario, you might have to pay the driver a bit extra (a few CUC) to sway his decision in your favor.



Special Note: Some guides mention that the Hershey Train is an excellent way to get from Havana to the Playas del Este. This is misleading. If you simply want to experience a train ride in Cuba, this can be a fun outing, but if your intentions are to go to the beach easily and cheaply, this will not be the best choice of route. As mentioned, a taxi particular will take you from Havana to Guanabo beach in about 30 minutes and cost you 50 pesos (MN) (about 2 CUC). The Hershey train will cost you slightly less (1.40CUC), but you will have to take a ferry to Casablanca, and then take the train, and hope that both of these services are operational. Forgetting about all the other common delays, the train ride from Havana to Guanabo usually takes over 45 minutes, and the actual train stop is located in an empty field, several kilometers outside of Guanabo. It can easily take you an additional hour to walk all the way to the beach. If you want an adventure, it can be a fun trip. If you just want to get to the beach, it's a hassle, and it can take more than 2 hours, on a good day.

Accommodations

Hotels:

[Important Note:](#) Contrary to common misconceptions, Cuban citizens *are* allowed to stay at all hotels on the island, provided they have a valid reservation and have paid the nightly fare. The hotel fare for a Cuban is exactly the same as that for a foreigner.

Casas Particulares:



[Interesting Fact:](#) Throughout Cuba there is a highly developed private house and room rental network. These accommodations are called *Casas Particulares* (private homes). They offer some of the highest quality and lowest priced accommodations on the island. Moreover, since you will be staying inside an independently-owned dwelling with a Cuban landlord, you will have an opportunity to learn about the culture up close, from the vantage point of a regular citizen. Most casas particulares have a white and blue sign posted outside, indicating that they are registered with the government and have a license to legally rent to foreigners.

[Interesting Fact:](#) It is usually best to negotiate prices and book your stay directly with the casa owner, rather than through a reservations broker. The broker will always charge a fee of 5 CUC per night to make a reservation, and this will inevitably be incorporated into your casa bill via a higher nightly room price. If you have a basic knowledge of Spanish you will be able to locate your own casa in most major Cuban cities simply by searching online Cuban classified pages such as Revolico.com.

[Interesting Fact:](#) Some casa particulars in Havana offer free internet to their guests. This is usually the case when the landlords are expats from foreign countries and have special internet services installed for their personal use. Some of these casas particulares are mentioned in the Real Havana guide.

Casa Particular Apartments in Havana:

The guide [Real Havana: Explore Cuba Like A Local And Save Money](#) has detailed reviews of over 30 apartments which can be rented in Havana, most costing only about \$20 per night. If you are going to Cuba and want to live like a local, you should definitely check out the complete guide and reserve one of these apartments.

In order to view hundreds of photos of Cuba, as well as listings and pictures of all the *Casas Particulares*, simply go to the website www.BestCubaGuide.com. As a purchaser of the complete Real Havana guide, you now have a free, lifetime membership to this fantastic resource.

Need help making travel arrangements? Got more questions?

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If you require additional information or assistance in making travel arrangements, either before or during your travels in Cuba, you can post a question on the Real Havana Travel Forum, located at www.BestCubaGuide.com/Cuba-and-Havana-Forum/

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Top Ten Cuba Tip List!

- 1) Always negotiate prices. As a foreigner in a relatively poor city, most of the local merchants will see you as a cash machine. If you are taking a taxi, buying a bike, browsing souvenirs or renting a casa particular; whenever you request a price for a product or service, vendors will immediately throw out a high number. Do not feel shy about making a low counter offer. You can sometimes save 50% or more. Most importantly, don't worry about walking away from a vendor if the asking price for something is too high. This tactic will almost certainly sway the seller to become more reasonable, as most vendors hate losing sales.
- 2) In conjunction with tip #1: If you act like a tourist, you will be treated like a tourist. If you walk down a busy tourist street wearing a novelty panama hat and Che Guevara t-shirt, speaking English loudly and carrying a large SLR camera, every *jinetero* in Havana will approach you to strike-up a conversation. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but you will be hounded by money-seekers constantly. Regardless of your color, nationality or language, you are far more likely to blend in as a local if you simply dress modestly, similarly to how you would dress on a daily basis in your home country.
- 3) Be safe. The best way to do this is to exercise caution and common sense. A general rule is that if you would not do something in your own country, then you should not risk doing it in Cuba either. For foreigners, the risk of running into trouble increases dramatically when heavy drinking is involved. Moderation and good judgment will help you avoid most hassles and ensure a problem free trip.
- 4) Use Moneda Nacional. Most Cubans receive their salary in Moneda Nacional and this is the most common currency used. There is no reason that you cannot use it as well. For some goods and services you will have no choice but to use CUC. This is especially the case in a large city like Havana. But this should be the exception and not the rule. If you make an effort to only buy things which are priced in MN you will save a lot of money. Furthermore, you will immerse yourself in the Cuban lifestyle, since you will be visiting the same stores and shops as locals.
- 5) Treat yourself to a good, sit down meal every day. While you can survive well in Havana by simply eating street food, it is a good idea to have something slightly more fulfilling at least once per day. A full meal at a restaurant only costs about 4 CUC, and the generous serving of healthy food will give you the energy that you need to explore every inch Havana. Despite being delicious, most street food in Cuba is simply filled with empty carbohydrates and provides little nutrition.
- 6) Appreciate the culture. Cuba is really different from a lot of other places in the world. You will especially notice this if you are from a modern, western country. In Cuba, people have different attitudes towards money, family, community and entertainment. Observing the locals and making a few friends will really help you to understand the Cuban way of life.

7) Keep an open mind and let go of any pre-conceived notions about Cuba or Havana. Contrary to some claims, everything is not all about politics. The average Cuban is well-informed of the broad themes affecting their country and the world. At the same time, they are probably far less concerned with these matters than you would think. While the most vocal members of society will immediately share their opinions, that does not mean that they speak for everybody. If you talk to a variety of regular people, you are sure to gain a clearer perspective.

8) Explore everything. Most guidebooks provide lists of hundreds of different tourist attractions to visit. While these places can help you learn history and facts, they give you almost no insight into daily life. The best way to discover Cuba is to leave your map at home and simply get lost as you wander around. Cuban culture is very open, and you are almost guaranteed to meet people and see fascinating things as you walk around. In Havana, this is especially true. If a door is unlocked, you should consider that an invitation to enter.

9) Don't get bogged down by small problems. In Cuba, inconveniences are normal. Buses will break down, reservations will be changed, lines will be long. The sun will burn you. The weather will make you sweat and the mosquitoes will make you itch. In Havana particularly, you might even get scammed out of a few dollars, despite your best efforts to avoid it. Don't take these problems personally; they happen to foreigners and locals alike. Don't allow them to sour your trip, or your image of the country.

10) Enjoy the cheap entertainment. There are a lots of fun things to do in Havana, and most of them are either completely free, or cost just a nominal price. If the average local, earning just \$30 per month, can find ways to have fun, then you can surely keep yourself entertained on a tight budget. Don't always expect to go someplace specific and engage in a particular activity for amusement. In Cuba, the greatest pleasures come from relaxing and interacting with interesting people. Consider this an opportunity to slow down your life and enjoy the moment, rather than simply jumping from one plan to another.

Taking a Trip From Havana to Trinidad

Trinidad is a small town, located on the south coast of Cuba, near the midpoint of the island. It is one of the oldest towns in Cuba, with a history dating back more than 500 years. The town is very well preserved, with mostly original architecture, tight, winding streets, paved with cobblestones, and a picturesque surrounding of hills, valleys, farms and even a nearby beach. It is one of the most popular excursion destinations for tourists visiting Havana.

State organized bus tours, usually lasting a day or two are offered by many Cuban tour operators and can be purchased in most hotel lobbies. Official excursion prices range from about 200 CUC to over 400 CUC per person, depending on the duration and itinerary of the trip. With a little bit of planning, you can organize your own Trinidad excursion for considerably less. If you are eager to view a charming, old world town that has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1988, then Trinidad is the place to go.

Getting From Havana to Trinidad

Taking the Bus

Despite being 365 kilometers (225 miles) away from Havana, it is relatively easy to get to Trinidad, even for a novice traveler. You can easily take the Viazul bus service, which operates daily routes from Havana to Trinidad. If you book ahead of time, you will have no problem getting a seat. The Viazul bus terminal in Havana is located at the corner of Avenida 26 and Avenida Zoologico, in the Nuevo Vedado neighborhood. You can book your tickets directly at the terminal, and it is advised to book at least a few days before traveling. An even better option is to book and pay for your tickets online, at www.Viazul.com. On the day of travel, you simply arrive at the bus terminal 30 minutes before your departure time to check your bags (if you are traveling with luggage) and you will soon be seated in a modern, air conditioned bus, making your way towards your destination. The bus ride costs 25 CUC per person and the trip takes about 6 hours. The bus makes stops at most major towns along the way to drop off and take on new passengers. This is the main reason for the extended trip duration. Once in Trinidad, the bus terminal is just beside the town center, within easy walking distance to most popular locations.

Hire a Taxi

Hiring a taxi to get you from Havana to Trinidad is more expensive than taking the bus, but the advantage is that you can set your own departure schedule and your travel time is reduced significantly, with most taxis making the direct trip in 4 hours or less. Your taxi options are varied and depend on what kind of trip you want to experience and how many other passengers you are traveling with. Taxis always charge by the carload, so it is more affordable to share the ride with

other tourists and split the fare accordingly. A yellow, air conditioned, modern taxi car will usually make the trip from Havana to Trinidad for about 160 CUC. This is the most convenient option for most people. Shared between 4 passengers, this would only be marginally more expensive than the Viazul. There are also old American car taxis which do the trip for roughly the same price. The disadvantage with these vehicles is that they are not air conditioned, and the windows are usually rolled all the way down for the duration of the trip, for ventilation. For a long distance trip like this, it can become unpleasant. Furthermore, as these vehicles are old, there is an increased risk of breakdown on the highway. If you are traveling as a larger group, you can also consider hiring a minibus to take your group to Trinidad. An air conditioned minibus can usually seat 10 to 14 passengers and the trip price ranges from 220 CUC to 300 CUC total.

Finding A Taxi

It is likely that any taxi you see in Havana would be willing to quote you a price to drive to Trinidad. If you are looking for a better deal, a good place to search is near the Viazul terminal in Havana (corner of Avenida 26 and Avenida Zoologico, in the Nuevo Vedado neighborhood). There are usually dozens of taxis waiting outside the bus station anxious for long distance fares. If you are traveling alone, these drivers will even help to find other tourists to share the ride and the cost.

If you are planning your trip to Trinidad ahead of time, you can book your taxi online, at www.BestCubaGuide.com/Taxis. The website offers some of the lowest prices available with many different vehicle and trip options. A modern, air conditioned taxi, from Havana to Trinidad, with up to 4 passengers, is only 160 CUC, with door to door pickup and drop-off. In low season the price is even lower.

Exploring the Town of Trinidad

[illegible]

The Trinidad town center is commonly referred to as the Old Town. It is very easy to identify and most foreigners who visit Trinidad spend most of their time in this area. The streets are paved in uneven cobblestones. The houses and buildings are almost all hundreds of years old. This was the first part of the town which was constructed when the area was originally settled, over 500 years ago. It has been well preserved and over the years many of the buildings have been carefully restored. There are strict preservation laws enacted by the Cuban government to ensure that any renovations to the buildings within this area maintain the architectural integrity of the original structures. Effectively,

the Old Town is a giant museum, and this is what makes it such a strong tourist draw. The Old Town is also gated off to vehicle traffic. Only walking and biking is permitted.

The streets in the Old Town are tight and winding, to a foreigner it can seem chaotic. Despite the small overall area of this neighborhood (less than 500 meters in diameter) it is very easy to become disoriented and lost. This plan was by design, in order to confuse and impede pirates, which regularly invaded the town throughout the 17th century.

The Old Town is built on a gently sloping hill. At the center of town, located near the top of the hill, is the Plaza Mayor, the central town square. The plaza is surrounded by dozens of historically significant buildings, most of which have been converted to museums. If you enjoy history, you will find this an ideal location to explore. In front of the plaza is the imposing Church of the Holy Trinity (Iglesia Parroquial de la Santísima Trinidad). To the right of the church (one block north of the plaza) is the Church and Convent of Saint Francis (Iglesia y Convento de San Francisco). This church, with its tall, brightly painted bell tower is one of Trinidad's most recognizable landmarks, prominently featured on advertisements and postcards, as well as on Cuba's 25 cent CUC coin. Also in the area you will see several outdoor street fairs where local sellers have set up stalls selling crafts, linens, souvenirs and clothes.

Eastern Trinidad

Walking south-east, out of the gated Old Town, you will soon be entering a decidedly poorer area. Although the streets are still paved with cobblestones, you will notice cars driving over them and a lot fewer tourists. Most of the houses in this area maintain the same architecture as those in the Old Town, but lack restoration.

This neighborhood of eastern Trinidad is a great area to explore if you want to get away from the tourist crowds and see how the locals live. The most prominent attraction in the area is the Iglesia de Santa Ana, facing a large square (Plaza Santa Ana). The church is in ruins, but there is a small museum and restaurant/bar nearby. The square has historical significance, as the former location of a large Spanish prison.

The streets in eastern Trinidad all gently slope away from the Old Town and towards the ocean, which, on a clear day, can be seen in the distance. The small port town of Casilda, located about 4 kilometers south of Trinidad, connected by a small highway, can also be seen.

New Town

If you are entering Trinidad by taxi or bus, then the first neighborhood that you will likely pass through is the New Town. As the name suggests, this area is composed of mostly newer buildings, which are not as architecturally ornate as anything in the rest of the city. If you do not have a fixed destination in mind when arriving in Trinidad, it is common for taxi drivers to drop you off at the Parque Central Cespedes. This is a small plaza, located in front of the Iberostar Grand Hotel Trinidad,

(one of the most prominent hotels in the city). This area is generally considered as the border between the New Town and the beginning of the Old Town.

While there is not much of historic importance located in the newer part of town, it can be a good place to explore and people watch, as this is where the vast majority of locals live and spend their days. Street food vendors and small paladares also line the main streets in this area and prices for food and drinks are a fraction of what you will pay in the Old Town. If only for that, it is well worth spending some time in this neighborhood.

Note: Trinidad's street hustlers (jineteros) are notorious for their brazenness, persistence and organization. The situation is far worse here than anywhere else in Cuba, including Havana. It is highly advisable to be suspicious of anybody you meet on the street offering you assistance or advice relating to bars, restaurants, entertainment options or casas particulares. They almost certainly have an angle where they will be able to scam a bit of money out of you by the end of the day. Although these scams are generally harmless and petty, they can be tedious, time consuming and off-putting. One of the most common scams occurs when tourists have just arrived in the town and are searching for their pre-booked accommodations. Hustlers wait at the Viazul terminal and greet unsuspecting tourists, as they exit the bus. They explain, usually in well spoken English, that they were sent by the casa owner to escort the tourist directly to their casa. Inevitably, if you follow one of these hustlers, you will arrive at an entirely different casa than that which you booked, and the hustler will always make a healthy commission from your misfortune. The hustlers are so well versed in their trade that they sometimes even scam Cuban taxi drivers who might get lost in Trinidad's winding streets, convincing the drivers to drop off tourists at the wrong casas. Always confirm that the casa you are staying in, is in fact the actual casa that you made reservations for. And, if you meet somebody at the bus station who claims to be sent from your casa landlord, never tell them your name and casa details first. If they were genuinely sent from the landlord to escort you to the casa, make them confirm your details first.

Casas Particulares in Trinidad

As Trinidad is a very popular tourist destination, and has been for many years, there is an abundance of good casas particulares throughout the town. In the historic center of Trinidad many of the rental units are located inside historic mansions. These mansions retain most of their old world architectural details, including stone columns, vaulted ceilings, wooden beams and moldings, and expansive inner courtyards allowing natural light and fresh cross breezes to flow. In these mansions, while you have a private room with its own locking door, you will often share the common areas of the house with the landlords and other guests.

Outside of the town center, the rental properties tend to be newer. These casas are often independent rooms or apartments, where you receive the key to the front door and can come and go in complete privacy.

Regardless of the age of the casa particular, they almost always have air conditioned bedrooms with modern, en-suite bathrooms. Furthermore, most casas have rooftop terraces which offer picturesque

views of the city and surrounding mountains.

There are enough casas in Trinidad that a reservation is usually not necessary. You can simply arrive in the town, walk around for a few minutes and locate a suitable place to stay. The rental properties are all clearly marked with signs above their doors. Even if one landlord does not have vacancy, they will quickly call up friends and find a nearby place for you to stay.

If you want to book accommodations ahead of time, you can search online. There is also a good selection of rental properties on the website www.BestCubaGuide.com

Note: You might arrive in Trinidad and wonder why there are so many elegant mansions in such a small town, located rather far from Havana. While the abundance of tourism is currently driving the Trinidad economy, there are also some very important historical factors for the high relative wealth in the region. As one of the earliest settlements in Cuba, and surrounded by fertile farmland, Trinidad was the nexus for the island's early sugar industry. Years later, pottery and clay tile manufacturing boosted economic activity. And in present day, tobacco processing is a major industry throughout the area.

Getting Around

Trinidad is a rather small town, less than 2.5 kms (1.5 miles) wide. The easiest way to get around the main areas is on foot. Within the historic center, no cars are permitted, so walking is the norm. Bikes are also used, but given that the streets are paved in rounded cobblestones, biking can be challenging (most casas particulares can arrange bike rentals at a cost of about 3 to 5 CUC per day). Even walking on the cobblestones can get tiring, and as such, many streets have a narrow cement sidewalk along the side, which, despite being crowded, is often the best option.

In the newer parts of town, the streets are asphalt and accommodate bikes and cars. Bicycle taxis are abundant and can take you from one end of town to the other for about 3 CUC.

If you have a bike, you can easily use it to get to visit some of the interesting locations outside of the main town (these are listed on the following pages). Yellow taxis are also plentiful and are the quickest way to visit places on the outskirts of town. There are also some communal taxis which operate routes to the local attractions. While these are cheaper than yellow taxis, they can be difficult to locate. Lastly, there are tour buses which have regular routes from Trinidad to the surroundings. Mostly these are reserved for foreigners who have booked excursion packages. Sometimes there are extra seats available at affordable fares. You can visit one of the many tourist information offices located throughout Trinidad or ask your casa landlord for help in making the reservations.

There is also a restored steam train which operates in the area. This will be discussed in the following section.

Interesting Places to Visit and Things to do in the Surround Areas

Casilda - This is a small port town located about 5 minutes driving distance south of Trinidad. You can easily get there by taxi, bike or walking. The town overlooks the Bay of Casilda, which is a popular area for snorkeling and a good place to find an outfitter, if you want to go sport fishing. The town itself is modest, although there are a few rental properties and a couple of restaurants. Casilda is a good place to stay if you want to experience Trinidad from a less touristy perspective, while also being closer to the ocean.

Playa Ancon - On the other side of the Bay of Casilda is the lovely Playa Ancon beach. The beach is located on a long archipelago that shields the bay. The road leading to the beach, from Casilda, sweeps around the bay. All told, Playa Ancon is about 10 minutes driving distance from Trinidad. You would be able to bike there in about 30 minutes. The beach is sandy, wide, and about 8 kms (5 miles) long. There are three large resort hotels along the beach, located at about the midpoint of the archipelago. But on either side of those hotels, there are vast expanses of relatively secluded beach, offering tranquility and seclusion. It is very easy to find a hidden, private area on Playa Ancon, and you could easily spend a day in the sun, sand and surf without seeing another person.

Valle de los Ingenios - East of Trinidad you will find the sprawling Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills). Originally, this area was the epicenter of Cuba's sugar-trade economy. Currently, the lush valley is spotted with the ruins of dozens of sugar mills, abandoned sugar warehouses and historic colonial manors and slave dwellings. The best way to see the valley is with a horseback riding tour which your casa landlord will be able to organize. Prices are approximately 20 CUC for 5 to 6 hour tour, covering most important sightseeing locations.

El Mirador Restaurant - About 5 kms (3 miles) east of Trinidad, along the Circuito Sur highway, is the El Mirador restaurant / bar. The establishment is perched on a hill and offers 360 degree views of the Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills). Drinks are cheap and food is moderately prices, but it is completely free to simply walk up the long flight of stairs to the restaurant and enjoy the views of the valley from the open terrace. It will definitely give you some perspective on the grandiosity of the area and the importance that sugar production once had for Cuba's economy.

Antique Train - A fun way to experience the valley is to take a ride on the antique steam train. The train departs from Trinidad and slowly makes its way through the valley, going through several tunnels and over a few iron bridges, eventually stopping at the famous Manaca Iznaga estate and the hacienda Guachinango, which will be discussed in the next section. Although a ride on this antique engine is enjoyable, the train is highly unreliable. The train has scheduled departures every day, leaving Trinidad at 9:30am and returning at 2pm. This changes often, due to breakdowns and weather events. Round trip tickets costs 10 CUC and can be purchased directly at the train station in Trinidad, located at the intersection of Calle Antonio Guterres and General Lino Perez, in the western end of the town.

Manaca Iznaga Estate - Continuing east, along the Ciruito Sur highway a further 10 kms from the El Mirador lookout, you will find the Manaca Iznaga estate. The 18th century plantation was owned by Pedro Iznaga, one of the richest men in Cuba who made his fortune mostly in slave trafficking. The estate is well preserved and one of the most popular sightseeing destinations in the area. The main draw is the Iznaga Tower, which is 45 meters tall. It was used to oversee the slaves in the plantation and as a symbol of the Iznaga family's power and wealth. Originally the tower had a large bell at the

top. This bell is now on display at the base of the tower. The cost to walk up to the top of the tower is 1 CUC. The colonial Iznaga estate house faces the tower and has been converted into a restaurant. Also on the estate grounds are some slave dwellings in original condition. Most of the small houses beside the estate were former slave dwellings which have since been renovated and are currently occupied by town locals. The antique steam train has a stop just beside the estate.

Hacienda Guachinango - This is a well preserved plantation ranch-house which currently operates as a restaurant. It is located in the valley, about 2 kms away from the Manaca Iznaga estate. It is surrounded by lush farmland and there is a small river (Río Ay) that winds through the surrounding fields. The antique steam train stops directly in front of the house every morning. You can easily walk to the Manaca Iznaga estate, along the train track, in about 30 minutes.

Topes de Collantes - About 5 kms northwest of Trinidad, connected by the Circuito Sur highway, is the massive Topes de Collantes natural reserve park which encompasses the Escambray Mountain range. Within the park, the main attractions are caves, waterfalls, clear blue lakes and rivers and there is ample opportunity for hiking and to see indigenous plants and wildlife. Given the unpredictable weather in the mountains and the steep sloping roads, special vehicles are required to drive to the highest attractions in the park. Certain taxi drivers will offer to make the trip for an additional fee, but breakdowns are common. It is best to visit with an organized excursion. Accommodations within the reserve are also available, at a reasonable cost.

Trinidad Nightlife

Casa de la Musica - An outdoor music and dance venue, located on a steep, sloping street, just off the Plaza Mayor in the Old Town. Drinks are cheap and the music plays day and night. There are tables and chairs scattered around, and many people simply sit on the steps leading up the hill. The atmosphere is very relaxed and offers a good chance to meet up with locals and practice your dance steps. There is no entrance fee. Just walk around and enjoy yourself.

Casa de la Trova - Located one block east of the Plaza Mayor, this indoor music and dance hall hosts nightly shows with popular Cuban musical groups. There is a large outdoor terrace, usually filled with locals and tourists. The entrance fee is 1 CUC for foreigners.

Disco Ayala - Located about 6 blocks northeast of the Plaza Mayor, on a small hill, beside the Hotel Las Cuevas, just on the outskirts of town. Disco Ayala is a large nightclub built inside a natural cave. Enjoy salsa and reggaeton as you dance the night away in this cavernous setting. The entrance fee is 3 CUC and includes 1 drink.

Casa Particular Guide

The following is a list of some of the best and cheapest *casas particulares* in Havana. These are independent, privately owned apartments and rooms which can be rented throughout Cuba. Over the last decade, they have become very popular accommodation options for foreigners and tourists visiting the island. Not only are *casas particulares* cheaper than staying at state run hotels, but they also offer the opportunity to easily interact with Cuban hosts, while still maintaining privacy and independence.

All rental properties in Cuba undergo strict government inspections and meet high quality standards. Safety and comfort are the main priority. *Casas* usually have air conditioning in each bedroom. Bathrooms are mostly renovated and modern.

All the *casas particulares* listed in this mini guide are located within the Vedado neighborhood of Havana. This is a fantastic neighborhood for foreigners because the apartments are well maintained and despite being close to the Havana action, Vedado is much less touristy than other neighborhoods. By renting one of the *casas particulares* presented in this guide, you will have the opportunity of experiencing Havana life from a local perspective, avoid tourist traps, and save a lot of money by not renting a room at an overpriced, state-run hotel.

Additional photos for all of the *casas particulares* mentioned in this guide, as well as guest comments, reviews and new additions can be found on the website www.BestCubaGuide.com.

General Casa Particular Notes

In almost all circumstances, Cuban citizens are allowed to accompany foreigners into casas particulares. Since the casa is rented by the night, and not by the person, no supplemental fees are required. The casa owner might require that Cuban guests sign a guest-book before being allowed entrance. In some cases, the guest will be asked to show identification. This is standard protocol and is done as a precaution, to reduce the risk of theft from the casa and for the foreigner's protection. If you rent a completely independent casa then this will not be an issue, as you will have your own front door key and can enter and leave in complete privacy, with whomever you want.

Most casas also offer low-priced dining options. Prepared breakfasts can often be had for about 4 to 5 CUC. Lunch and dinner prices are usually higher and vary according to the meal selected.

Upon arrival at a casa particular, the owners will ask for your visa. Your name and the details of your stay will be recorded in a registration book. Your signature will also be required. The house owner will take this information to be processed at a local immigration office and your visa should be returned within 24 hours.

If you are staying at a casa particular for an extended period of time, it is always advisable to pay in installments (for example, 4 nights at a time). This will ensure that if there are ever any problems with the casa, you can easily cut your stay short and find other accommodations.

You are never required to pay for your casa particular stay immediately upon arrival. Take a look around the casa and make sure you are satisfied with the condition of the unit. If you have not exchanged your foreign currency into Cuban currency, and it is already late in the evening, don't worry. You can relax for the night and just pay the next day, when you have had a chance to use a money exchange service.

For foreigners, all casa particular stays are priced in CUC currency. For those who are unfamiliar, CUC is the name of the Cuban "convertible peso" currency which is used on the island. The CUC currency is pegged to the US dollar at a 1 for 1 rate. For the purposes of foreigners renting apartments, you must always pay in CUC. There are certain casas particulares which accept payment in Moneda Nacional (the other Cuban currency), however, these are reserved for Cuban citizens only.

As a foreigner, these will not be available to you.

Almost all tourist casas particulares are indicated with a blue and white casa particular sign which is posted on the front of the apartment or house. If you ever find yourself in Cuba, searching for a last minute casa particular, simply look for this sign and enquire with the landlord if there is vacancy.



Interesting Fact: It is usually best to negotiate prices and book your stay directly with the casa owner, rather than through a reservations broker. The broker will always charge a fee of 5 CUC per night to make a reservation, and this will inevitably be incorporated into your casa bill via a higher nightly room price. If you have a basic knowledge of Spanish you will be able to locate your own casa in most major Cuban cities simply by searching online Cuban classified pages. [Or, just go the this website and book your casa, commission free.](#)

Types of Casas Particulares

There are 3 main types of casa particulares in Cuba: Private rooms, Independent rooms, and Independent apartments. They all have subtle differences and each will be described in detail in their respective sections.

In a general sense, private room casas are ones where you are simply renting a room in a house with a Cuban family. Your room is private, but everything outside your room (living room, dining room, kitchen) is shared.

Independent room casas are slightly different in that the rooms are generally removed from the main house, thus they offer a bit more privacy. Independent rooms are not full apartments since they don't offer their own kitchens or living rooms. You can think of them as room-sized studio apartments. The main door to these rooms usually leads directly outside or into a courtyard.

Independent apartments are the most private accommodation options. They are large, complete apartments which have multiple rooms. Usually these apartments are slightly more expensive than the other casa particolare options, but are great for people who need lots of space because they are traveling with friends or those who want complete privacy.

The Casa Particular Guide

The following is a list of some of the best and cheapest casas particulares in Havana. They are all located within the Vedado neighborhood. All prices are in CUC per night. There are no supplementary costs for having extra guests stay in the room. As mentioned before, all rental properties in Cuba undergo strict government inspections and meet high quality standards. I have personally stayed at all the properties in this list and I can confirm that they are all fantastic locations, certain to further your experience in Havana by allowing you to live like a local and save money.

All rental properties in this list are part of the Real Havana network. Special, low rates have been negotiated with the landlords. There are no middleman commissions to pay at these casas. This will potentially save you hundreds of dollars in brokerage fees.

Many more casa listings, as well as photos for all the casas listed in this guide, can be found on the website www.BestCubaGuide.com. You will also find casas particulares for the neighborhoods of Centro Havana and Old Havana, as well as the cities of Vinales and Trinidad.

You can use this website to reserve the casas particulares directly, online, at no additional cost.

If you are contacting the casas particulares by phone, be sure to mention that you saw their listing in the Real Havana guide, in order to get the special low pricing.

Additionally, a “Map-View” of all the casas particulares can be seen at the [following link](#).

Private Rooms

The following accommodations are for private rooms within a shared, enclosed house. The guests have the use of some common areas, such as the living room, balcony/terrace and kitchen facilities, and have exclusive private use of their own room, which has a lock on the door. In many cases, the guest will also be given a key to the main entrance of the house so he or she can enter and exit at will, without having to disturb the house owner. Some houses rent a single room, while others rent two or more. These can be rented out all together, for people traveling in groups, or separately, for single travelers and couples. All rooms have a window and air conditioner. Most rooms also have a private fridge, an en-suite bathroom and offer either a private or shared telephone line. In all cases, Cuban guests are permitted to enter, free of charge. Sometimes they are asked to sign a guestbook to ensure the safety of both the landlord and the tenant. Specific details for each casa are provided below.

1) [Casa Tomasa:](#)

Two private rooms for rent, each with fridge and air conditioner. Very modern and spacious rooms (200 sq.ft) located inside a restored mansion, offering a host of modern amenities. Each room has an en-suite bathroom which is immense, spanning almost 100 sq.ft with white marble and tile work. The house has a huge, sun-filled terrace in front, located just in front of a large park and only 50 feet away from La Rampa. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

2) [Casa Pastorita:](#)

Pastorita is a charming, older woman who lives with her nephew in this very large and sunny second floor apartment. She rents a single room which is spacious and has its own private bathroom adjacent to the room. The selling point of this apartment is the huge, sunlit balcony. Furthermore, there is an immense terrace on the roof spanning over 1500 sq.ft which is reserved for guest use. Sit back and enjoy some beers and cigars as you overlook Vedado. Friends and guests are very welcome. Pastorita offers you the keys to the apartment and you can come and go as you wish throughout the day and night. You can also use the kitchen. For all intents and purposes, you will experience complete independence in this room. Landlord asks 25 CUC per night, or 30 CUC with a large breakfast included. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

3) [Casa Carlos and Julio:](#)

Three large rooms available. In addition to their private quarters, guests have access to a front room, filled with plants and artwork, and a well-equipped kitchen. This apartment is located on the second floor of a mansion and the owners live on the third floor. The owners are always available to offer advice or tips on exploring the city, but mostly you will have complete privacy. All rooms have en-suite bathrooms which are huge and modern. Plants fill the apartment and give a natural warmth and charm. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

4) [Casa Nancy and Enrique:](#)

A huge, double-size room is offered at the back of the main living area of this classically decorated, modern apartment. There is a queen bed and a second, single bed, can also be placed in the room, making it ideal for guests traveling with children. The room also has a private bathroom and a private dining area adjacent to the bedroom. A partition separates the guest area from the rest of the apartment. Enrique gives his guests the front door key so they can enter and leave as they please. Although the room is within the main apartment, it offers a lot of privacy.

Guests can also use the main kitchen and living quarters. Nancy and Enrique respect guest privacy, but are always available to give tips and advice when requested. Landlord asks 30CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

5) [Casa Cecilia:](#)

One very large room for rent, with a massive en-suite bathroom, in an old mansion. Not as luxurious as some of the other rooms on this list, but the advantage is that this room is very large (over 250 sq.ft) and the price is a bit cheaper than some of the other options. Cecilia lives in a separate part of the mansion and gives her guests complete independence and privacy. Keys are provided so guests can come and go as they wish. A massive living room and dining room (over 300 sq.ft) are also reserved exclusively for guest use. Cecilia is rarely home so, most of the time, guests will have the whole house to themselves. There is no private fridge in the bedroom; guests can share a common fridge with Cecilia. The apartment is located just a few minutes away from the corner of Ave. de Los Presidentes and La Rampa, one of the most popular spots for young people to gather for dancing, drinking and socializing. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

6) [Casa Leo and Ivelis:](#)

This casa offers two large, first floor rooms within a huge, modernly decorated mansion. Although the casa is located on Calle 23, very close to all the action, the rooms are situated at the back of the house and are very quiet. The rooms are about 200 sq.ft each and there is also a large, en-suite bathroom which measures over 100 sq.ft. The rooms can be rented together or separately. Guests also have access to a private living area measuring over 300 sq.ft and a shared entertainment room with a large, flat panel television and sound system. In addition, there is a terrace in the front of the mansion. The landlord, Ivelis, is an English professor in Havana who is always available to answer questions or give advice about the city. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

7) [Casa Alexander and Margarita - Private Rooms:](#)

Be a guest in this massive colonial mansion! There are two very large (over 250 sq.ft), second floor rooms to rent, each with its own bathroom and fridge. The rooms can be rented together or separately. The mansion has been completely restored and is filled with artwork. Floors are covered in perfectly preserved, marble tiles. No expense was spared in the restoration of this historic house. There is a large terrace which is reserved exclusively for guests, as well as a private living

room area. Alexander lives on the far side of the mansion, so he offers a lot of privacy to the guests, but is always available to answer questions or give advice. The house is located in a quiet area, very close to downtown Vedado and it is on the sunny side of the street, so the rooms will always feel bright and airy. Guests receive the keys upon their arrival and can come and go as they please. Alexander also has access to a vehicle and can offer city tours, taxi services and economical transportation to the countryside or other Cuban provinces. Some English is spoken. Landlord ask 40 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

8) [Casa Luis:](#)

A second floor room in a large, modernly decorated apartment. The room is rented with the keys, so guests can come and go in complete independence. There is a large terrace in the front of the apartment, adjacent to the guest room. Inside the room, there is a private fridge and kitchen area. The bedroom also has an en-suite bathroom. In total, the room measures about 150 sq.ft and offers everything to make your stay in Havana comfortable. The landlord, Luis, is always available to give tips or to answer questions, but guests have complete privacy within their own quarters. The room is located near the corner of Calle G (Ave. de Los Presidentes), very close to 23. Some English is spoken. Landlord ask 30 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

9) [Casa Maribel:](#)

Two large, first floor rooms for rent within a restored colonial mansion. Both rooms are about 150 sq.ft and are equipped with televisions, air conditioners and fridges. Guests have the use of a small outdoor terrace at the rear of the building and a large yard and terrace in the front. Maribel is a charming older woman who respects the privacy of her guests but is always available to answer questions or give advice. The rooms in this house are modern and fully equipped, and are priced very affordably, as the landlord prefers to have them rented as much as possible. Make your reservation in advance, to ensure that these rooms are available. Landlord asks only 25 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

10) [Casa Azul:](#)

Two, large rooms for rent on the second floor of this mansion. The rooms are well equipped and modern. Each room has a queen bed with the option of adding a single bed for extra guests or children. Rooms also have private, en-suite bathrooms. Guests can use the dining area and the sunny terrace. The landlord lives in a separate part of the house and gives his guests complete privacy. The

rooms can be rented together or separately. This apartment is very close to 23rd street, but it is extremely quiet. It is just one block away from one of the largest farmers markets in Vedado. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night, per room. Prices are negotiable for stays longer than 1 week. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

11) [Casa Gladys:](#)

Three rooms are for rent in this massive, 2000 sq.ft, sun filled, second floor, penthouse apartment. This modernly furnished and completely renovated apartment offers a luxurious atmosphere in Vedado. The rooms can be rented separately, or the whole apartment can be rented together. Each room offers its own large and modern bathroom. A laundry machine is also available for guest use. The main living area has a gorgeous corner balcony which overlooks the intersection of Calle D and 17. Gladys is an active, middle aged woman who lives alone in the apartment and never interferes with the guests. She is almost never home, so you will basically have complete independence. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

12) [Casa Yamila:](#)

Two very large, second floor rooms for rent (200 sq.ft each), with en-suite bathrooms and shared phone. A kitchen area is currently being installed in one room and should be ready shortly. Located on a quiet street in a modern building, very close to all the action of downtown Vedado. Guests are given the keys so they can come and go as they wish. There is a large living room (250 sq.ft) located at the front of the apartment which is also for guest use. The owner, Yamila, lives in a separate area at the back of the apartment, which is closed off from the rest of the living area. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

Independent Rooms

These casas particulares are rooms which are private and completely independent, with very limited interaction between the guests and the landlord. They are not simply rooms for rent in a house - they have **their own exterior door** and guests are given the keys, so they can come and go in complete privacy. These *Independent Rooms* offer a bit more privacy than the *Private Rooms*, listed above. Cuban guests are always permitted to enter, free of charge.

1) [Casa Miriam:](#)

Two large, independent, first floor rooms for rent. Each room spans about 200 sq.ft and is modernly decorated with ample sunlight. Both rooms have a queen bed as well as a single bed. This makes it great for families traveling together, or if you plan on having guests. Each room has its own independent entrance and renters are provided all the keys, so they can enter and leave as needed, in complete privacy. The rooms can be rented together or separately. Meals are available and guests also have access to the shared kitchen area. Each room also has access to a large, private terrace and yard. A carport is also available for guest use. Miriam lives with her husband in an isolated part of the house. Landlord asks 30 CUC per room, per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

2) [Casa El Bosquecito - Private Room:](#)

A large, private, first floor room, nestled within the grounds of a restored, colonial house. The room is completely independent, with its own door to the outside which opens onto a large terrace, surrounded by a lush garden. The room has a large queen bed as well as a smaller double bed. Children are always welcome. All keys are provided so the guests can come and go as they please. This is a great, economical room which is guaranteed to please guests looking for privacy while still having the option to interact with a local Cuban host. The landlord, named Pello, is an older man who passes his day tending his garden and loves telling stories and sharing jokes with the guests. The room can also be rented along with an adjoining, large, private apartment (Casa El Bosquecito Private Apartment), to form a massive 2 bedroom, 4 bed house, with kitchen, living room, terrace and 2 bathrooms. Landlord asks 25 CUC per night, for the private room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

3) [Casa Vivian and Luis - Private Room:](#)

This is a completely private room with it's own private bathroom, fridge and television. The independent entrance to the room is located within a safe, inner courtyard, but you get the key to the front gate too, so you can enter and leave as you want. The room is about 150 sq.ft and is located very close to the Vedado action, but on a quiet and safe street. This room is located on the same premises as the Casa Vivian y Luis [Private Apartment](#). If needed, the two units can be rented together to form a very large and completely private house, with a total of 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. Some English and French is spoken. Landlord asks 25 CUC per night, for the private room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

4) [Casa Emma:](#)

The owner rents two separate and completely private rooms, located at the back of the main house. Each room is accessible by its own private front door, opening up to a large, outside courtyard, well removed from the street and enclosed within the grounds of the main house. In order to get to the courtyard and rooms, you must enter through the main house and walk through the center hallway. Although the rooms are completely private, and you are provided your own keys, you must ring the doorbell of the main house and walk through the hallway in order to get to the rooms. The owner, Emma, prefers this setup for her own safety, as she is a single woman. If you are a woman traveling alone, this casa would be ideal, because it is extremely safe while still offering complete privacy. You have use of the shared phone located in the main living area of the house. One of the private rooms is large (about 200 sq.ft) and includes a queen bed as well as a double bed located on a mezzanine. The other room is just fractionally smaller and has no mezzanine area. Both rooms are completely modernized with new bathrooms and flat screen televisions. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

Independent Apartments

The following listings are for completely private and independent apartments which can be rented in the Vedado area. These are whole apartments, which usually have a bedroom, a private living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and balcony or terrace. All apartments include an air conditioner and a fridge. Most also included a kitchen and a private or shared telephone line. In all cases, Cuban guests are permitted to enter, free of charge. Sometimes they are asked to sign a guestbook to ensure the safety of both the landlord and the tenant. Details are listed in the write-ups provided below.

1) [Casa Vivian and Luis - Independent Apartment:](#)

Offering a completely independent, first floor apartment, with one bedroom, a small yard, driveway, terrace, kitchen, bathroom, and living area. You get the key and free use of the whole apartment. Located on an extremely quiet street within walking distance to everything. You also have a private phone in the apartment. If you need two rooms, this apartment can be rented together with *Casa Vivian and Luis Private Room*, giving you access to another separate bedroom with its own private bathroom. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, for the main apartment. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

2) [Casa Irina:](#)

A huge, private apartment (1000 sq.ft) located in an art-deco style apartment building. The modern, two bedroom apartment is located on the 4th floor (penthouse) with beautiful views of Vedado from every room. Both bedrooms are large, and have their own private balconies. The apartment is completely independent. Bedrooms can be rented together, or separately. You get your own keys to the front door and you can come and go as you please. The owner, Irina, lives in another apartment in the building and she is very helpful if you need anything, but she gives her guests complete independence. The apartment is located on the 4th floor, and it is a walk up (no elevator). It's not a difficult walk, but if you don't like stairs, then it might be an issue. Some English and Russian is spoken. Landlord asks 35 CUC per room, per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

3) [Casa Silvia:](#)

Completely private, one bedroom, first floor apartment, perfect for guests seeking complete independence. You have your own yard, terrace, living room, kitchen, bathroom and large bedroom. You are given the keys and you can enter and exit as you wish. The street is quiet and the large terrace in front is completely enclosed with ornate, wrought iron grills. This apartment is perfect for families with young children as they will be able to play safely on the terrace or in the yard area. An extra twin sized bed can also be added in the bedroom, for free. While the apartment itself does not offer luxury, it is perfectly clean and remarkably large (over 600 sq.ft). The owner lives in a separate apartment at the back of the building. Note: The hot water tends to run out by late evening and the bathroom is not modern, although perfectly functional. Overall, when considering the price, size, privacy, location, comfort, and large terrace, I believe this to be one of the hidden gems of Vedado's casa particular market. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

4) [Casa Gustavo:](#)

A completely independent, second floor, one bedroom apartment, just steps to the University of Havana, and directly adjacent to the Biology Department. The apartment is about 400 sq.ft, offering a large living room with a kitchen, and an equally large bedroom, with en-suite bathroom. You are given the keys to the apartment and can come and go in complete privacy. It is located about 2 minutes walking distance to the Habana Libre hotel, which offers internet access and WIFI. In terms of privacy and location, this apartment has it all. Despite being close to all the action, this sunny and airy apartment is surprising quiet. There is a private phone in the apartment, as well as a television and modern air conditioner. As an added bonus, there is a small cafe on the ground floor of the building, serving

wonderful sandwiches during the day. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

5) [Casa Enrique:](#)

A completely independent, 1 bedroom, second floor apartment with an immense, private balcony. The apartment has a large, open living room, an equally large dining room, and a bedroom at the back with a modern en-suite bathroom. The apartment also has a well equipped kitchen. A television and shared phone is provided. The total area of the apartment is about 700 sq.ft, and the balcony is 150 sq.ft. Guests are given the keys and can come and go as they wish. The landlord, Enrique, lives in an adjacent apartment and gives his guests complete privacy. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 40 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

6) [Casa Boris And Nora:](#)

A completely private apartment located on the second floor of a renovated mansion. The apartment has a massive private terrace, spanning over 1000 sq.ft, overlooking the Vedado neighborhood. The apartment itself consists of a large bedroom with a large, en-suite bathroom, as well as a living room (total size 400 sq.ft.) There is also a kitchen, located beside the apartment, which opens out onto the terrace. Despite being a completely independent apartment, the landlord, Nora, prefers not to give out the keys to the main front gate of the house. She will open the door for you each time you enter the mansion, even if it is late at night. She has no problem doing it. There is a shared phone line in the unit. If needed, there is also another private bedroom (150 sq.ft) located on the second floor which can be rented in conjunction with the main apartment. Also note that there is a small cafe operating throughout the day at the house's main entrance, so cheap food is always available and during the day you can use the cafe area to walk in and out of the property without having to ring the doorbell. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

7) [Casa Mara:](#)

A completely independent, second floor apartment, in the heart of Vedado. You have your own front door, with your own set of keys. A spiral staircase leads you to a large and elegantly decorated, one bedroom apartment, located within easy walking distance to all the Vedado attractions. The apartment is new and extremely clean. It spans a total of approximately 300 sq.ft. There is a lot of competition to rent this apartment, so guests should make reservations well in advance of their trip. Some English and French is spoken. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

8) [Casa Ivelis:](#)

A massive, third floor (penthouse) apartment overlooking the whole Vedado neighborhood, with a large front balcony facing south and windows in every room of the house. The apartment has over 1200 sq.ft of living area. It is completely independent and private. The landlord lives on the other side of town and has almost no interaction with the guests. There are two bedrooms to rent in this apartment. If you are renting only one bedroom, Ivelis will not rent out the other room to a different guest. This ensures that you always have complete privacy, regardless if you take both rooms or only one. If you rent just one room, you will have complete use of the whole apartment for the duration of your stay. The apartment has a well equipped kitchen, a large bathroom and a smaller powder room. The living room is equipped with a private phone, television, modern sofas, and a piano. Privacy, luxury and elegance, this apartment has it all. Landlord asks 40 CUC per room, or 60 CUC for both rooms, per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

9) [Casa Maximo:](#)

Two large, completely independent, ground floor apartments. The first apartment has a massive, enclosed, private living area with tons of natural light and several modern rocking chairs and benches. At the back, there is a large bedroom, a good sized bathroom and a kitchen area. The second apartment is located within the main house and includes a large private lounge space (150 sq.ft) plus a completely independent bedroom with en-suite bathroom. You can rent the rooms separately or rent both units together. The major selling point for this casa is the huge, semi-enclosed, atrium living space which gives you all the privacy and independence of a living room, while still providing the sunlight and fresh air of an outdoor terrace. The landlord, Maximo, also has a modern car and offers city tours, taxi services, and economical transportation to the countryside or other Cuban provinces. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night, per room. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

10) [Casa Alexander y Margarita - Independent Apartment:](#)

A completely private and independent, two storey apartment, located in a majestic and breathtaking mansion. This apartment used to be the coach house where the chauffeur of the mansion lived. It has been completely renovated and modernized. On the first floor there is a large living area with a fridge, sofas and dining table. Upstairs there is a modern bedroom with en-suite bathroom. The entire apartment is about 350 sq.ft and is completely independent from the main mansion. The guests get their own keys and can come and go in total privacy. There is also a

large driveway which the guests can use as an outdoor space or to park a vehicle. The landlord, Alexander, also has access to a vehicle and can offer city tours, taxi services and economical transportation to the countryside or other Cuban provinces. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

11) [Casa El Bosquecito - Independent Apartment:](#)

A charming, 1 bedroom, independent, first floor apartment which has a large living room, kitchen and bedroom, as well as a gated yard and terrace. The bedroom has a queen bed and a double bed. Total apartment size is about 400 sq.ft, not including the private outdoor space. The casa has a yard which is surrounded by shrubs and small trees - it is a quiet and safe location, just minutes to all the action. The landlord, named Pello, is an older man who passes his day tending to the garden and loves telling stories and sharing jokes with the guests. All keys are provided so the guests can come and go as they please. This is a great economical casa which is guaranteed to please guests looking for privacy and independence, while still having the option to interact with a local Cuban host. The apartment can also be rented with a second, independent bedroom, which is about 150 sq.ft. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night for the apartment. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

12) [Casa Tania Mendez Calas:](#)

A large, 1 bedroom apartment, located on the second floor of a modern building. Very close to the action, yet still located on a very quiet street. The bedroom has 2 queen beds, so it is a great option for couples traveling with children. The apartment has a full living room, kitchen and large, glass-enclosed balcony. The bedroom has an en-suite bathroom. In total, the living area is about 500 sq.ft. The apartment is completely independent. Guests have all the keys and can come and go as they wish. The landlord, Tania, lives just down the street and is always available to answer questions or give advice. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 35 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

13) [Casa Liuba y Alejandro:](#)

This is a very large apartment located on the second floor of a huge, colonial mansion. The apartment is very quiet and faces one of the largest parks in Havana. It has two huge bedrooms, measuring over 300 sq.ft each, each with their own private terraces. The total apartment size is well over 1000 sq.ft. There is an independent entrance located on the side of the mansion, so guests can come and go in complete privacy. The total terrace space is about 800 sq.ft. This is definitely one of the largest casas particulares in Vedado. The rooms in the apartment can be

rented separately or together. Landlord speaks some English and French. Landlord asks 35 CUC per room, per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

14) [Casa Elvira:](#)

A second floor apartment, located on a quiet street, only 5 minutes walking to all the action of La Rampa. The apartment consists of a large bedroom with a queen sized bed, as well as a smaller bed for children or guests. There is also an en-suite bathroom. Guests are given their own set of keys. The total size is about 200 sq.ft. From the apartment steps you have a great view of the Plaza de la Revolución. The landlord speaks English and a bit of French. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night, and longer term stays can be negotiated. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

15) [Casa Julio Cesar:](#)

Totally independent apartment on the third floor of a huge mansion. The apartment has 2 bedrooms which can be rented together or separately. Total apartment size is about 800 sq.ft. It includes a long terrace, a large open concept living room and dining room and a well equipped, modern kitchen. Rooms are large and have air conditioning, televisions and a fridge. Located on a quiet street with little traffic or noise, but only one block to La Rampa. A very modern looking apartment for a fantastic price. Some English and French is spoken. Landlord asks only 35 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

16) [Casa Estela Navarro:](#)

This apartment is located on the second floor of a restored colonial mansion. It has its own entrance and is completely independent from the main house. The guests receive the keys and they can come and go in complete privacy. The apartment is about 350 sq.ft and includes a large bedroom with a television and fridge. There is a living room/dining room and a small kitchen. The apartment has its own phone line. The best part about this casa is the massive terrace overlooking Ave. Paseo, with a view of the Plaza de la Revolución. The terrace measures over 1000 sq.ft. There is also an outdoor laundry area beside the terrace. This casa really has it all. The landlord speaks some English, French, Italian and Russian. Landlord asks 40 CUC per night, but the price is negotiable for stays over 1 week. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

17) [Casa Myrna:](#)

An apartment of about 400 sq.ft, with one large closed bedroom, as well as a living area, bathroom and kitchen. In the front, there is a private terrace and a gated yard

area. For all practical purposes, this unit is completely independent and guests are provide the keys so that they can enter and exit at will. The landlord, Myrna, lives in a completely separate part of the house, located at the rear of the building. Due to the layout of the unit, the guests share a common front door with the landlord. This apartment is new on the rental market and offers a degree of elegance and charm which is rare in Havana. The location is central while still being very private and quiet. Landlord asks only 30 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

18) [Casa Mary and Armando:](#)

Very well located, second floor apartment with living room, kitchen, bar, one bedroom and en-suite bathroom. This place is modernly decorated and very private. There is also a large terrace on the first floor. The apartment is located on the second floor of the main house and has its own independent staircase. It is rented with the keys, so you can come and go in complete privacy. Armando also has a fantastic, old American car that he uses for giving city tours. This can be arranged separately if desired. The apartment is very quiet and located just a few blocks from the Habana Libre hotel. Some English is spoken. Landlord asks 30 CUC per night. [Click here for pictures, or to book this casa online.](#)

Closing Notes: If you ever find yourself in Havana without a casa reservation, I suggest calling any of the casas particulares on this list. The landlords will always help you to find accommodations, even if they themselves do not have a vacancy.

As mentioned before, to view photos of all the casas particulares presented in this guide and to quickly and easily book all your reservations, simply check out the website www.BestCubaGuide.com

Also, on this website, make sure to check out the forum, where you will find lots more information, money saving tips and deals, and answers to all your Cuba and Havana travel questions. Have a wonderful trip!

Get The Complete Contact Information For All The Casas Particulares In This Guide And Learn More About Exploring Cuba Like A Local and Saving Money in Havana

Do you want to visit Havana and fall into a tourist trap? Cubans will automatically treat you like a tourist who is there simply to drink rum, dance salsa, and spend money. Most foreigners pay the equivalent of \$10 for a simple taxi ride. Typical apartment rentals can cost over \$50 per night, and hotels can cost triple that.

Or, do you want to see the real Cuba? Explore the rich culture. Be transported back to a simpler time. Experience the romance and the beauty with the same carefree joy as the locals. See everything you want to see and go everywhere you want to go. Get that same taxi ride for less than 50 cents! Stay in a modern, independent, casa particular apartment for only \$25 per night.

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In the Complete Real Havana guide, you will learn about:

- Authentic Cuban cuisine and affordable Havana restaurants.
- Low-priced markets, shops and entertainment options.
- Maps of Havana and the suburbs – Get out of the city and EXPLORE!
- Instructions on using communal *taxis particulares* and all the major routes.
- Contact info and reviews of over 30 *casa particular* apartments in Vedado.
- Fascinating, offbeat places which are hidden from foreigners.
- Hundreds of tips on saving money while in Havana.
- How to avoid the most common tourist scams.

The Real Havana guide is a full length, 235 page ebook (65 000 words), with full color maps, and tons of information to help you on your next trip to Cuba. The guide is designed to show you how to live like a Cuban. You will quickly gain the knowledge to assimilate yourself into the culture and immerse yourself in a truly different travel experience.

The information in the Real Havana guide was accumulated over years of travel throughout the island. From the largest city (Havana) to the smallest farm communities. Now it is available to you, in a succinct, easy to understand travel book. It's a road-map to exploring the real Cuba.

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This book will pay for itself within 10 minutes of landing in Cuba. You will have an authentic Cuban vacation... and save thousands of dollars too.

Thank You!

We hope that you have enjoyed this sample of the Real Havana Guidebook.

This sample provided a great general overview of Cuba and Havana (with a bonus Trinidad section). But there is much more to discover.

For all the information about visiting Cuba and discovering everything the island, and Havana has to offer, please purchase the complete [Real Havana Guidebook](#).

But, if you want, you can still use the [BestCubaGuide.com](#) website for free, and book all your taxis and casa particular accommodations, without brokerage fees or additional costs. The [website](#) also has tons of free information, and if you should still have questions, just post them on our [forum](#), for a quick answer.

Enjoy Cuba and Havana!