

# ttc

*Travel Trade Caribbean*



**ITB**  
BERLIN

## Cuba, a destination for German tourism

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bearing the mark of a German scientist





"Drink Responsibly"

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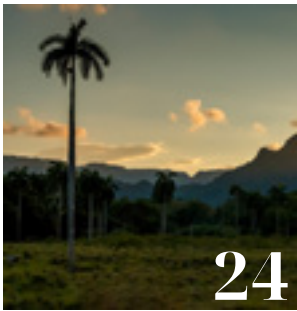
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## EDITORIAL NOTE

ITB Berlin is one of the most eagerly awaited events of the year, both for tourism professionals and for those who wish to have up-to-date information on the world's most attractive destinations. Tens of thousands of visitors, exhibitors and media representatives gather every year in the German capital. For the past two decades, TTC has also joined this event to share relevant information on the development of the sector in Cuba, the Caribbean and Latin America.

From our platforms, we follow the event's networking sessions and work meetings, whether in virtual, face-to-face or hybrid format.

Press reports note the wide range of exhibitors set to gather in the 27 halls of the exhibition grounds to showcase the most innovative and advanced offers in the leisure industry and its value chain. The media also point out that ITB Berlin provides an exclusive business environment for luxury travel suppliers and clients, with a comprehensive program that opens up opportunities to exchange views on the latest developments in tourism and to participate in exclusive events.

Representatives from more than 30 countries will also come together from March 5-7 at the largest platform created to date to generate innovative travel technology solutions with the new theme "Take Travel Technology to the next Level. Together." At the same time, the promotion of social equality and ecological responsibility in tourism is the theme at the Responsible Tourism segment and the ITB Berlin Convention.

In the midst of all this news, TTC offers its pages.

We wish you every success,

Alfredo Rodríguez  
**Director General**



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# A destination for German tourism

## Interview with Orlando Ramos Blanco, director of the Cuban Tourism Office in Berlin

BY DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

According to specialized travel sites, German tourists' preferred vacation activities include visiting monuments and castles, tasting and buying regional products, riding bicycles and enjoying the sea. That said, Cuba appears an ideal destination for them, and judging by the statistics, there is hope. At the end of 2023, Germans ranked sixth among international visitors to the island, with the figure rising from 58,715 in 2022, to 69,475 German tourists last year.

"That trend of gradual and progressive recovery is also appreciable so far this 2024, in a period in which Germany has ranked fifth," Orlando Ramos Blanco, director of the Cuban Tourism Office in Berlin, told TTC. He also noted the

challenge of achieving an increase of about 26% compared to 2023 in the current year. "Of particular importance is the increase in the number of seats on Condor's direct flights, starting with the introduction of the Airbus A330neo."

With that objective in mind, a Cuban delegation headed by María del Carmen Orellana Alvarado, first deputy minister of Tourism, is set to attend ITB Berlin 2024. The delegation will also include representatives of national receptive operators, specialized travel agencies and the Cubanacán, Grupo Gaviota, Gran Caribe, Islazul and Campismo hotel chains; as well as international chains including Meliá, Iberostar, Muthus, Blue Diamond, Barceló, ROC, Kempinski, Archipelago, ATG and Valentín.

"This large and varied group will make it possible, first and foremost, to make visible the level of recovery, operability, vitality and validity of Cuban tourism in the largest forum of the global tourism industry. ITB Berlin 2024 will be the ideal framework to promote the benefits, richness, diversity and novelties of the island's tourism product; with emphasis on combined programs, national circuits and the offers in other modalities such as nautical and historical-patrimonial, cultural, nature and MICE tourism."

More than 180 travel destinations and the presence of tourism professionals, most of them top-level executives with purchasing power and decision-making capacity, will gather in the German capital between March 5 and 7.

"Undoubtedly, the main event to promote in this edition will be FITCuba 2024, the most important meeting of Cuban tourism, which will take place in Jardines del Rey from May 2 to 5 and will be dedicated to Latin America and the Caribbean," Ramos Blanco added.

ITB Berlin will also see the Caribbean island's tourism industry promote recently opened or remodeled facilities—Hotel Grand Aston Varadero, Hotel Innside Catedral and Hotel Sevilla in Havana; Vila Galé Cayo Paredón, Meliá Trinidad Península in Trinidad and Sol Turquesa Beach in Holguín—and the new destinations of Cayo Paredón and Cayo Cruz, north of Ciego de Ávila and Camagüey, as well as the consolidation of Varadero and Jardines del Rey as leading Cuban tourist resorts.

"Given its international recognition, prestige among professionals in the sector, scope and the results of negotiations, the participation and visibility of the Cuba destination in this event are of great importance," the director of the Berlin Tourism Office stressed.

At present, German travelers arrive in Cuba mainly aboard direct flights operated by Condor Flugdienst GmbH airline from Frankfurt airport to Varadero, Havana and Holguín. "The rest use regular lines with the inconvenience of having to make stopovers in some of the main European capital cities." In that sense, "ITB Berlin 2024 is also an exceptional opportunity to hold meetings with the main executives of German airlines, which will make it possible to strengthen commercial relations and evaluate conditions for increasing the frequency of flights to the destination's main tourist resorts."

**ITB Berlin 2024 will be the ideal framework to promote the benefits, richness, diversity and novelties of the island's tourism product; with emphasis on combined programs, national circuits and the offers in other modalities such as nautical and historical-patrimonial, cultural, nature and MICE tourism**





# International travelers reward Cuba as a destination



Cuba and its attributes are back in the news this 2024. The OTM Mumbai Travel Trade Show became a new setting to promote the Caribbean archipelago, where it was recognized as the “Most Promising New Destination,” an award received on behalf of Cuba by the country’s Councilor for Tourism in the region, Elizabeth Cristina Vela.

Recognizing the values of the Caribbean destination and its potential to attract a significant number of visitors and offer a high-quality tourism experience, the award highlights, among other attractions, Cuba’s favorable climate, beaches, colonial architecture, unique history and culture, as well as the potential for growth and development in the sector.

Cuba was also recognized as part of Tripadvisor’s Travelers’ Choice Awards

BY YOANNA CERVERA  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Best of the Best, which ratified the island as the top cultural destination in the world, the second most popular destination in the Caribbean, and number 18 among the top food destinations.

The awards are indicative of excellence in the travel sector, taking into consideration that the Travelers’ Choice Awards include the hotels, restaurants and offers that have received the greatest number of positive community comments on the Tripadvisor site over a period of 12 months, and less than 1% of the site’s 8 million listings are awarded Best of the Best.

German travelers also left their impressions after visiting the Caribbean island. The Memories Jibacoa and Meliá Las Antillas hotels are currently

recognized by the HolidayCheck Award 2024, the main German-language travel booking and reviews site. Only ten facilities from each world region achieve this distinction each year, which confirms the excellent positioning of both facilities in the 19th edition of the contest and an achievement among those of its kind for this segment of the European market. This positive record was echoed by the prestigious National Geographic magazine, which named Cuba as the top cultural destination to visit in the Americas this year. Havana is highlighted as a melting pot of cultures, with a variety of African, Caribbean and Spanish influences. The publication notes, “Meandering through its colorful, colonial-era streets is the best way to get a taste of the city’s long and chequered history.”

Likewise, travelers are invited to spend a couple of days exploring the wonder city by slipping through colonial doorways into art deco bars, tasting the typical daiquiri or cruising the streets in an iconic vintage car. “But Cuba’s capital is only the beginning of the story: head west to the lush Viñales Valley, where limestone karsts rise out of the earth like sleeping giants, before exploring the eerie swamps of the Zapata Peninsula and the city of Cienfuegos, which is filled with Gallic charm and an insatiable Caribbean energy,” the text continues.

The fact is that Cuba’s rich history and tradition, diverse landscapes and unique cultural heritage make it an attractive destination for travelers. These values go hand in hand with the country’s efforts to improve its infrastructure and tourism services, which will not go unnoticed by those who venture to this Caribbean destination and will ensure the arrival of more visitors.





# PAMAS S.A. GERMAN PIONEER AT THE MARIEL SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT ZONE

BY MARICELA RECASÉNS  
PHOTOS MARICELA RECASÉNS

**M**aking contact with the Apels, a family of German businessmen who have been present in the Cuban market for more than 30 years, is very easy, you just have to set your mind to it. Father and son have the stamp of persistence, crucial when navigating the ups and downs of this Caribbean land.

Although it might not be the best time to invest in Cuba, Claus Apel and his son Frank Peter go against the wind. The economic crisis, sparked by the tightening of U.S. sanctions and a pandemic tourism freeze, has led to a sharp drop in hard currency income. However, since the 1970s, the dream of the father of the Apel family has been to create a company using German technology in Cuba in order to contribute to the island's development.

"Hoses are needed everywhere, whether in thermoelectric plants, in the nickel industry, in water management or the operation of excavators and cranes," Claus Apel told TTC after the ribbon cutting ceremony marking the inauguration of PASI Mariel Service, S.A. (PAMAS, S.A.) company, which opened its doors in the Mariel Special Development Zone in mid-2023.

"We can import, sell directly to the end customer and the customs duties and taxes are extremely low," he added. "We are here to offer local customers not only sales, but also services."

Another of the Germans running the factory, Dieter Kalwayt, as stubborn as his partners, says he is very confident of success with the opening of the company and notes that a group of professionals and technicians were trained in Europe in the repair of industrial pumps and valves, as well as the installation of hoses of all diameters. "We are happy, and not only me, but the shareholders as well, just ask the Hansa Flex people," he suggested.

Authorized to operate for a period of 30 years with one hundred percent German



CLAUS APEL  
General Manager of CONIMPEST

capital, PAMAS S.A. will use modern technologies for the development of its productions and for this purpose partners with Hansa Flex, market leader in Europe as a system provider for fluid technology in industry.

"We want to support Cuba's economic development with our technologies, hopefully we can have many similar points," Thomas Hamel, president of Hansa Flex, stresses. "Difficulties exist everywhere. We have a friendly bond with the Apel family and of course, we are also willing to help them to solve the difficulties that arise. And we are also very optimistic and very hopeful about positive development in Cuba."



Inauguration of the company PAMAS S.A., Pasi Mariel Service.

"PAMAS is Cuba's gateway to Germany, through a business-level organization with management systems of high standards that benefit the Zone," Ana Teresa Igarza, general director of the Mariel Special Development Zone Office, commented exclusively to TTC. "A facility that will guarantee the substitution of imports and give us the possibility of continuing to expand our business with Berlin," the director of the most important enclave in the economic development of the Cuban archipelago stressed.

Located west of Havana, the Mariel Special Development Zone has become an industrial, logistics and services platform with committed capital from 21 countries.

**PAMAS is Cuba's gateway to Germany, through a business level organization with management systems of high standards that benefit the Zone**





## Varadero will host the 69th meeting of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Americas



on this beautiful island to reflect on the development of tourism in the region."

According to the UN Tourism representative, Latin America is the planet's sustainability reserve and undoubtedly a promising territory for world tourism.

"In Cuba we are going to ratify what sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism means," he added.

Santos explained that the Caribbean archipelago is a tourist destination of the highest level, "with unique natural beauties, an incredible sea, magnificent people, cultural richness and happiness that are also incredible."

The Seminar: Empowering Touristic Development through Innovation in Community-based Tourism aims to address the challenges, strategies and best practices to promote the development of community-based tourism by empowering and investing in local communities, as well as boosting innovation in their tourism products.

**Santos explained that the Caribbean archipelago is a tourist destination of the highest level, "with unique natural beauties, an incredible sea, magnificent people**

**C**uba will host the 69th Meeting of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Americas (CAM) and the Seminar: Empowering Touristic Development through Innovation in Community-based Tourism, running April 29-30, 2024, in Varadero.

In Madrid, TTC spoke with Gustavo Santos, Regional Director for the Americas of the World Tourism Organization, who noted that this is "a wonderful opportunity for the 27 countries of the area to meet



## Adventure tourism in western Cuba

**T**he Cubanacán hotel group is committed to the development of adventure tourism in Cuba's western region. In addition to their natural attractions, Las Terrazas, Soroa and Viñales make up a tourist corridor that offers comfortable hotel facilities for a memorable stay.

Travelers can begin enjoying this experience in the Las Terrazas community, only 60 km from Havana. This complex is located within the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve, an ideal site for excursions in various modalities, such as trekking, hiking, mountain climbing, bird watching or enjoying a boat ride around the Rancho Curujey reservoir. For visitors wishing to challenge themselves and experience an unforgettable adventure, the Canopy Tour is a top choice, followed by a swim in the natural pools of the San Juan River.

Las Terrazas is home to one of the most picturesque hotels on the island, La Moka, a 4-star facility with all the amenities to enjoy a healthy environment, surrounded by nature.

A few kilometers away is Soroa, another privileged natural environment, with an orchid garden that treasures vast varieties of this flower and a beautiful waterfall. This area is also ideal for bird watching. Another must-visit is the Castillo de las

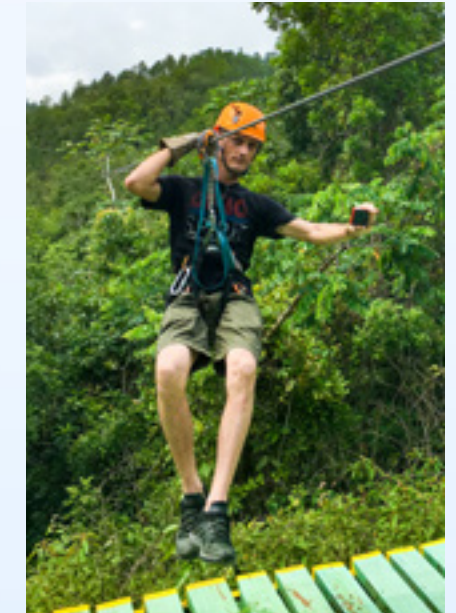
Nubes (Castle in the Clouds), which is part of the 3-star La Villa Soroa accommodation. From its terrace, an impressive view of the region's landscape awaits guests.

Here, vacationers also choose to go on bicycle tours, hike along trails, go horseback riding and get to know the community projects of local artists and entrepreneurs.

This tourist corridor ends in Viñales, a site distinguished by the high level of diversity and endemism of its flora and fauna.

Adventure tourism finds a whole host of experiences in Viñales. A staff of professionals accompanies those who dare climb its famous mogotes (limestone mounds). As in nearby destinations, visitors can enjoy the landscape, while also organizing visits to tobacco plantations and agro-ecological farms, bathing in natural pools and visiting other iconic places in this valley inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

Hoteles Cubanacán manages three distinct accommodation facilities in this region: La Ermita, Los Jazmines and Rancho San Vicente. In addition, the Hotel E Central is an excellent option for a stay in this charming town, located in the very center of Viñales and offering personalized attention and excellent comfort in keeping with its 4-star category.



*With more than 36 years of experience, Hoteles Cubanacán invites you to embark on an adventure!*





# The 2024 tourism outlook for the world and Cuba



BY DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

UN Tourism predicts that international tourism is on track to reach pre-pandemic levels in 2024. According to the first issue of this year's UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 2023 saw international tourism reach 88% of pre-2019 levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international tourist arrivals.

Pent-up demand, increased air connectivity and a further recovery of Asian markets and destinations are set to sustain a full recovery in the next eleven months.

The data shows that several destinations, both large and established as well as small and emerging, saw double-digit growth in

arrivals last year. Four subregions exceeded 2019 levels: Southern Mediterranean Europe, the Caribbean, Central America and North Africa. The Middle East is the only region that surpassed pre-pandemic levels with arrivals jumping 2.2%.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili noted that the data "underscores tourism's resilience and rapid recovery (...). The rebound is already having a significant impact on economies, jobs, growth and opportunities for communities everywhere. These numbers also recall the critical task of progressing sustainability and inclusion in tourism development."

## CUBA ON THE WORLD STAGE

Preliminary estimates of the UNWTO Barometer indicate that international tourism receipts reached \$1.4 trillion and export revenues from tourism (including passenger transport) \$1.6

trillion, backed by the United States alone. The study specifies that the growth in tourists from that country, supported by the dollar, "will continue to benefit destinations in the Americas and beyond."

Although Cuba registered growth, the island limited by the extraterritorial laws of the U.S. government did not see the same accelerated pace as that of its Caribbean neighbors, which even reached record figures.



"Cuba's recovery is slow, as it faces unequal challenges such as the U.S. blockade and the absurd inclusion on the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, which has had serious consequences," Cuban Prime Minister, Manuel Marrero Cruz, recently stressed in a meeting with tourism professionals at the Cuban Embassy in France.

However, even with a scenario similar to that of 2023, sector authorities on the island foresee an increase in the number of arrivals to exceed three million by the end of December. "We expect to grow another 27 percent over the previous year," Cuban Minister of Tourism, Juan Carlos García Granda, told Prensa Latina.

One of the variables taken into account by the minister was the result of negotiations at FITUR, the Madrid International Tourism Trade Fair, held at the end of January. This important event for the leisure industry was attended by a large Cuban delegation,

## The Cuban Ministry of Tourism continues to attend important travel industry events around the world

including representatives of national and international hotel chains, travel agencies and the group of companies that provide non-hotel services in the archipelago.

As part of its marketing strategy, the Cuban Ministry of Tourism continues to attend important travel industry events around the world, including in India and Turkey, emerging markets in which Cuba seeks to insert itself more effectively to attract more travelers. According to data from the UN Tourism study, the Middle East, together with the United States and the Americas, will continue to be another of the strong markets driving tourism flows and spending worldwide.





# Key technology trends for the MICE INDUSTRY IN 2024

BY JOSÉ ENRIQUE SALGADO FEBLES,  
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PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

MICE comprises 8-9% of total tourism activity, demonstrating its profitability and growth.

But this trend does not ensure a steady flow of visitors and tourists for all destinations,

brands or companies in the tourism sector in general, and MICE in particular. Competition is increasing and the scenario is becoming increasingly globalized, with new technologies playing a fundamental role.

Various stakeholders are involved in Meeting tourism, in addition to and combined with the usual ones (agencies, hotels and carriers).

The training and capacity for interaction, coordination and integration of these four stakeholders and others in the tourism value chain is essential to successfully attract, organize and develop different MICE events.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS (KSF) IN MICE TOURISM

There are seven key factors or aspects for success and improving international positioning in the MICE meetings segment.

Today, destinations and the various entities involved in meetings tourism are facing a hyper-connected traveler for whom the ease of Internet access at the destination, the meeting or accommodation venue, and access to new technologies are more important when deciding where to travel to or organize an event, ensuring they can use

their devices as they usually do in their place of origin.

The task of improving the MICE customer experience before, during and after their “meeting” must be the ultimate goal of all innovation initiatives involving the participants in this value chain, in order to meet the expectations of people who are increasingly accustomed to using these technologies in their daily lives. In fact, attracting participants in the business tourism value chain of the future will require a high degree of adaptation in the face of changing scenarios and new, “more technological” user profiles.

## Let’s take a look at some of the technologies to consider:

1. Promotion and marketing of tourism development at the destination, supported by policies, authorities and the community.
2. Relationships with the scientific, professional and business community, religious and cultural institutions at the local and national level that also connect them internationally are key to identifying opportunities and attracting and hosting international meetings and events, as well as national events that in turn attract the foreign tourists or exhibitors. Relationships or membership in organizations such as ICCA are of great importance.
3. International air connectivity and adequate domestic transportation infrastructure.
4. Specialized infrastructure for the hosting of modern MICE activities, adapted to the new audiovisual and ICT technical developments.
5. Hotel infrastructure and tourist attractions, as well as the adequate facilitation of

access to this offer through travel agencies both within and beyond the destination.

6. Training of all personnel, both that of PCOs and those involved across the segment’s value chain, to enhance services for Meeting tourists.
7. Proper design and organization

The pandemic has left us with the usual “hybrid” events, where in-person speakers and attendees converge and coexist with a number of virtual speakers and attendees. It is necessary to plan with this in mind, and to assimilate cloud-based event management systems that allow organizers to coordinate and control all aspects of the event from anywhere in the world and access attendee information in real time.

Finally, once the events, trade shows, conventions and incentive meetings are over, we are left with a huge amount of operational data and more potential customer contacts for further marketing actions, but also the space for data analysis opens up.

Big Data techniques and Artificial Intelligence enable real-time data collection and analysis during MICE events. Organizers can obtain valuable information about the participation of tourists and attendees, their preferences, the most visited stands, the most popular exhibitors, the “bleisure” attractions with greater demand and other aspects. With this data, organizers can make informed decisions for future actions, design better meetings and events and enhance the attractiveness of the destination for more efficient future MICE events.

Meetings, incentives, congresses and exhibitions tourism, generally known as MICE, has recovered from practically zero following the pandemic years. This type of tourism, considered the thirteenth most important economic activity in the sector worldwide, with a revenue of 2.5 trillion dollars, employs close to 2.5 million people, according to a report by Entorno Turístico.

The number of international association congresses doubled in the last seven years, despite the pandemic, from just over 12,000 in 2016 to about 24,000, according to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), marking the growth trend of the last five decades. In Latin America,

Meeting Tourism Stakeholders	Event generators	Organizations, associations, foundations, professional bodies, universities, and public and private companies that require the organization and hosting of any type of meeting or professional event.
	Professional operators	Specialized travel agencies with departments dedicated to the organization of events and meetings, both domestically and abroad. With a specialized professional conference organizer (PCO) service.
	Destination convention bureau or dept.	Organizations whose main objective is to attract business and events tourism to the region, city or country, created by governments and with the participation of chambers of commerce, ministries and other public-private entities. These can be independent or inserted in destination management organizations or local governments. They provide updated and objective information on the infrastructure and services that the destination offers for MICE tourism.
	Fairgrounds, convention centers and halls	These are the sites where MICE events take place. The data shows that convention centers are the favorite venues for large events, but convention hotels rank second and come first for incentive travel.

Key Success Factors in Meetings Tourism	1	Mktg and Promotion of the MICE Destination
	2	Partnerships with associations and event and incentive generators
	3	Air connectivity and transportation
	4	Adequate infrastructure for MICE tourism
	5	Hotel infrastructure and tourist attractions
	6	Training and specialization of personnel
	7	Adequate design and organization of MICE activities





# Eastern Cuba

## Cultural heritage and potential for tourism development

**T**he challenge of Cuba's tourism development and the need for new approaches that promote more comprehensive use of the island's potential demonstrate the need for a strategy that places value in the eastern region of Cuba, from which a series of tourism products can be developed that diversify the offers for visitors to the island.

Geographically, this is indissoluble and interconnected region which offers a broad repertoire of cultural heritage. It is possible to enjoy sites and routes encompassing exponents of the indigenous culture and the arrival of Western culture; the foundation processes of the first towns and cities of Cuba, including the permanent evolution of the intangible heritage associated with national history and culture; as well as the link with the expressions of contemporary culture that identify several highly interesting communities.

This cultural potential combines with a geography where nature is expressed in multiple ways; the coastline runs along much of its perimeter, with beaches and beautiful coastal landscapes, ready for the enjoyment of sun and beach tourism. As a contrast, the region also boasts the largest mountain massif in Cuba: the Sierra Maestra; one of the most majestic natural sceneries, where environments such as the Pico Turquino, Desembarco del Granma, Santo Domingo-la Sierrita and Marea del Portillo parks are found, which together make up a great ecotourism destination. The mountain range was declared a National Park in 1980

BY AR. OMAR LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA CITY CONSERVATOR  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE  
CONSERVATOR OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA

and has interesting natural features such as Pico Turquino, the highest point on the island standing at 1,974 meters above sea level; and the Gran Piedra, a 70,000 ton rock located 1,225 meters above sea level. This is the third largest rock in the world, registered in the Guinness records. The variety of fauna and flora also stands out, with specimens such as the woodpecker, thrush and hummingbird, as well as endemic ferns and flowers. This was also a prominent scene of the revolutionary struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The heights of Sagua-Baracoa, the Cuchillas del Toa biosphere reserve and the Sierra Cristal range are part of the great natural scenery. This region is also home to the longest river in the Cuban archipelago: the Cauto; and the widest: the Toa, among others.

The eastern region is administratively composed of five provinces: Las Tunas, Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, home to important patrimonial cities with historical, cultural, urban and architectural wealth. Several make up the group of the first Cuban towns: Baracoa, San Salvador

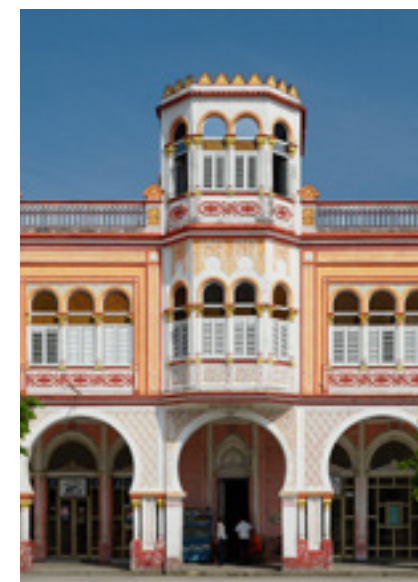


Hill of the Cross. Holguín

de Bayamo and Santiago de Cuba. They are recognized as National Monuments. Given their patrimonial values, we can add Holguín, Gibara, Manzanillo, Las Tunas and Puerto Padre to this list. These urban centers are attractions offering the opportunity to learn more about Cuba and especially its traditions as linked to the rest of the Caribbean. In this great natural scenery and from these heritage cities, a set of strategic interrelationships is feasible, to add attributes to the tourist routes that we propose as alternatives to traditional products. We refer to interprovincial routes including:

The route through Cuba's first villas, or towns, which interconnects three of the first seven that were founded: the first, Baracoa; the second, San Salvador de Bayamo; and the last, Santiago de Cuba, capital of the island from 1515 to 1607. These attractive cities treasure the oldest vestiges of the time of the conquest and colonization, such as the Cruz de la Parra in Baracoa, the Puerto del Rey and the Casa del Adelantado Diego Velázquez in Santiago de Cuba.

The Coffee Route, with exponents in the provinces of Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba, with a patrimony



Manzanillo



The El Cobre Sanctuary





San Pedro de la Roca Castle



Office of the Conservator  
of Santiago de Cuba  
[penelope@occ.co.cu](mailto:penelope@occ.co.cu)

declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000.

Our Lady of Charity route, representing a pilgrimage from the site where Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, Cuba's patron saint, was found in the 17th century in Nipe Bay, in Holguín province, to the town of El Cobre, in Santiago de Cuba province, where her sanctuary is located, in the

middle of a cultural landscape associated with mining, slavery and religion.

The paths of Cuban traditional music, based on the status of creative musical city that Santiago de Cuba holds, as the cradle of Cuban music and a melting pot for several of its famous rhythms, linked to the contributions of Baracoa, Guantánamo, Manzanillo, Holguín and Las Tunas.

Martí's route, which serves as an encounter with the last days of Cuban National Hero José Martí after his disembarkation in April 1895 by Playitas de Cajobabo-Guantánamo-until his death in combat in Dos Ríos.

The extraordinary revolutionary and literary work of José Martí, in particular his campaign diary, serve as a guide for a demonstrative tour of the eastern region's fauna and flora, accompanied by innumerable historical passages linked to the hero.

It is impractical to attempt to diversify offers and destinations, rather the most important thing is a comprehensive vision combining values and potential to ensure variety, inspiration and a fresh tourist proposal in a region that has three World Heritage Sites; a place on the Tangible Cultural Heritage list; more than 100 National Monuments; a creative music city; features in several of inscriptions on the List of Cultural Heritage of the Nation, such as Santiago's carnival; and on the Intangible Cultural Heritage list, such as the knowledge of its rum masters and the bolero genre.

This vision seeking to enhance the heritage values of the eastern region is an opportunity for the territory that would bring many benefits for its development, especially considering that it boasts international airports, cruise bases, an improvable but usable road network, adequate alternative accommodation and the active personnel to undertake such an endeavor. This is a sustainable tourism option based on the use of technology, innovation and science to offer efficient and attractive products.



La Isabelica museum.

# GRAN CARIBE HOTELES

Havana and the famous beach resort of Varadero are among the favorite Cuban tourist destinations for travelers from all over the world. Every year, they receive groups of friends, families and couples who enjoy unforgettable vacations and quality time.

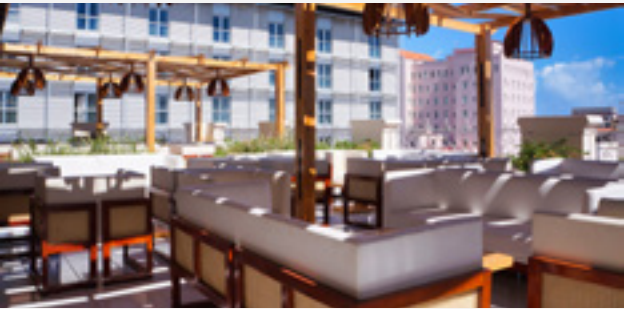
The Gran Caribe Hotel Group offers attractive accommodation options in both destinations

## HOTEL NACIONAL DE CUBA



Aflagship of the Cuban hotel and tourism industry. With a privileged geographical location, in the heart of Vedado, and situated on a hill a few meters from Havana's Malecon, the hotel offers wonderful sea views. The magnificent building dating from the 1930s in an eclectic Spanish style is inscribed in the UNESCO World Memory Register, is a National Monument and won the 2023 Travel and Luxury Awards. This 5-star facility is ideal for business trips and events, as well as for family, couples or friends' vacations.

## HOTEL PLAZA



This 4-star emblematic building of eclectic style is recognized as one of the oldest hotels in Cuba. Its cozy atmosphere combines with its wonderful geographical location, inviting travelers to visit Old Havana. Recommended for all those who like comfortable, well-located facilities that are rich in history.

## HOTEL VILLA CUBA



A 4-star all-inclusive hotel. Located on the beachfront, close to the Varadero Golf Club and a few minutes from the center of town.

## HOTEL VILLA CUBA



This all-inclusive 4-star hotel is located in the best beach area, just a few minutes from downtown Varadero

All the latest news regarding the facilities belonging to the Gran Caribe Hotel Group can be found on social media



Book online for the best price on the Gran Caribe Hotel Group website  
[www.grancaribehotels.com](http://www.grancaribehotels.com)



# Jardines del Rey

## THE FITCUBA 2024 EXCLUSIVE DESTINATION

PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Central eastern Cuba is home to one of the most important tourist resorts in the Caribbean country. The group of keys, islands and islets that received the name Jardines del Rey (King's Gardens) between 1513 and 1514 in honor of the then Spanish monarch Ferdinand the Catholic, offers travelers an excellent tropical climate, beaches and nautical attractions in an environment of total tranquility and relaxation.

With shallow waters, the archipelago has the resources to maintain a balance with the natural environment and offers an enormous potential for ecotourism, with beautiful seabeds, peculiar bird species, unique natural formations and a whole natural universe of color, ideal for snorkeling or diving, as reflected in several official surveys undertaken by the Gaviota Tourism Group on visitors who repeat their stay in the keys.

Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo are natural scenarios for the practice of aquatic sports, with beaches defended by coral reefs and abundant forest vegetation that shelters diverse fauna, among which pink flamingos reign. Pilar Beach, which owes its name to an evocation of writer Ernest Hemingway, offers turquoise tones and the largest sand dune



### Offers travelers an excellent tropical climate, beaches and nautical attractions in an environment of total tranquility and relaxation

in the Caribbean, making it one of the major attractions of Cayo Guillermo.

Meanwhile, Cayo Paredón, one of the most recently established tourist resorts in Cuba, stands out for its coral beaches, lagoons and large mangrove areas, which make it an ideal place for fly-fishing and bird watching.

Fifteen hotels and more than 8,000 rooms in operation are spread among these keys distinguished by their beauty and comfort, excellent services and cultural proposals.

Linked to the mainland by a road over the sea that descends from Turiguanó Island, in the north of the province of Ciego de Ávila, the strip also has a dolphinarium, tourist plazas and a well-equipped marina for a variety of nautical excursions.

The extra-hotel infrastructure of services offers vacationers all the necessary transportation facilities for excursions and tours.

Travel agencies and transportation companies offer a variety of options

for trips to the cities of Ciego de Ávila, Camagüey and the picturesque town of Jaronú.

As in previous years, the leading event for Cuban tourism professionals will gather representatives of airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, hoteliers, carriers, suppliers, specialized press and related

businesspeople in Jardines del Rey from May 2 to 5.

Described by experts as the most important professional event of the national tourism industry, the 42nd edition of FITCuba is set to focus on nautical and extra-hotel products and will be another opportunity to showcase Cuba as a unique destination.



**The 42nd edition of FITCuba is set to focus on nautical and extra-hotel products**



# Colorful Curaçao

## An island of more than sun and beaches



BY MARINA MENÉNDEZ  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

**T**he orange gabled roofs, seen from the sky, are a glimpse of the colorfulness awaiting travelers' eyes on setting foot in Willemstad, the capital of Curaçao. The exquisite colonial buildings evoke the architecture of Amsterdam, but the explosion of colors is much more dazzling on this island.

The cheerful bright blue, green, red and yellow façades are far removed from Curaçao's dark past as a major market of the Atlantic slave trade. A legacy of those times is the 18th century drum, music genre and dance form known as tambú, dubbed the Curaçao blues, through which slaves expressed their sorrows.

The indigenous inhabitants of the island were also enslaved following colonization by Spain, and taken to the island baptized with the demonym of the Crown: La Española (Hispaniola).

Today, however, all this is a past evident only in the historical and cultural richness that can be seen in the museums and even in the streets, representing one of the island's attractions.

This can be seen in the beautiful and picturesque murals that adorn the façades in the neighborhood of Otrobanda, as pronounced in Papiamentu (the Portuguese-based creole language), on the other side of the famous Queen Emma Bridge. The local street art has turned this district into an open-air art gallery.

Although the island still belongs to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which has ruled it since the Dutch West India Company seized it from Madrid, today it is an autonomous territory and one can appreciate a national identity with its own characteristics, born from the melting pot of races and nations that have left their mark.

**This destination is considered one of the four in Latin America set to see tourism recover to pre-COVID-19 levels**

The legacy of the children of Africa, with their ancestral strength and character, blends perfectly with the fine manners of Europe. The island has also seen the influx of its South American neighbors, which is logical, given Venezuela's shores are so close that at one time Curaçao was considered to be under the jurisdiction of Caracas.

This mix gave rise to cheerful and polite citizens who welcome tourists and happily offer their surprising array of local dishes, such as Papaya Stobá (papaya stew): a combination of the fruit with beef and pork tail.

Known as "the last letter" of the acronym ABC —Aruba, Bonaire and

Curaçao, which identifies the former Netherlands Antilles— this destination is considered one of the four in Latin America set to see tourism recover to pre-COVID-19 levels, according to UN experts.

Among its neighbors, Curaçao has not received the most visitors in recent months. However, the arrival of

more than half a million vacationers in 2023 is a record heralding sustained tourism growth.

Much like its sister nations in the Lesser Antilles, the greatest beauty lies in the island's abundant and sunny beaches. However, there is much to be discovered in its history, culture and its people.







# Uranga's Colecciones

## An oasis of traditions in the heart of Havana

f i x v Follow us



BY RACHELL COWAN CANINO  
PHOTOS ABEL ROJAS BARALLOBRE

Maylet Uranga has two prized possessions in life: her daughters and her books. However, having founded the local development project Café Literario Uranga's Colecciones a little more than a year ago, now occupies a third place, where all her passions converge.

The house, located in Havana's emblematic Callejón de Espada, is a meeting place for reading and the community. It is also a corner dedicated to the rescue of Cuban traditions through gastronomy and cocktails, where the list of specialties includes tentempié coffee, as described by José Martí in his campaign diary, and the canchánchara of the mambises (independence fighters).

This aperitif consists of cloth-filtered coffee poured over a piece of homemade cheese. The hot beverage combined with the melted cheese was the sustenance of Martí, Cuba's National Hero, during the final days of his life as a combatant of the Liberation Army. To all this is added the patrimonial value of the building, as historians note that this space on Callejón de Espada, marked with the number 14, belonged to the Bishop of Havana, Juan José Díaz de Espada y Landa, at the beginning of the 19th century.

Later, in the 20th century, the second floor was used for housing while the first floor was used for commercial purposes. Over time, its original function was abandoned and the site gradually deteriorated. A restoration project for the building was undertaken by specialists from the Directorate of Heritage Architecture of the Office of the Havana City Historian in the late 1990s.

From then on, it became the headquarters of the Italian "Dante Alighieri" society and its halls hosted the institution's educational and cultural activities. Later, it served as the bookstore of the Office of the Havana City Historian's publishing house Ediciones Boloña. Today, it is the elegant Uranga's Colecciones because "reading with coffee is also part of our culture," as noted by its manager Maylet Uranga.

The site is also a meeting place for different Cuban associations: cigar collectors, Cuban women of wine and cigars, literary movements, audiovisual producers and visual artists, among others, who enjoy this space where art and gastronomy go hand in hand.

Every corner of the house can be described with two essential words: traditions and Cubaness. "Whoever arrives at Uranga's knows that they are in the house of Bishop de Espada and will find art, culture and everything that makes us Cubans. Whoever arrives also knows that they are at the headquarters of the Asociación Vitofílica de Cuba (Cigar Band

Collectors Association)." Maylet is the first woman to lead this group.

The recommendation for visitors would be to grab a book by Havana City Historian Eusebio Leal, a traditional Cuban coffee, canchánchara or chocolate from the east of the country, as the perfect combination to enjoy the wonders of Uranga's Colecciones and its specialized service, including gastronomic excellence and heritage conservation.







# Alejandro de Humboldt National Park

A paradise bearing the mark of a German scientist

BY YOANNA CERVERA  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Alexander von Humboldt can be considered the second discoverer of the Caribbean archipelago of Cuba. His legacy in the country contributed to the understanding of nature and society in the 19th century.

The German geographer, astronomer, humanist, naturalist and explorer earned that title in a stay of just four months. Humboldt arrived on the island for the first time on December 19, 1800 and would remain there until March 15, 1801.

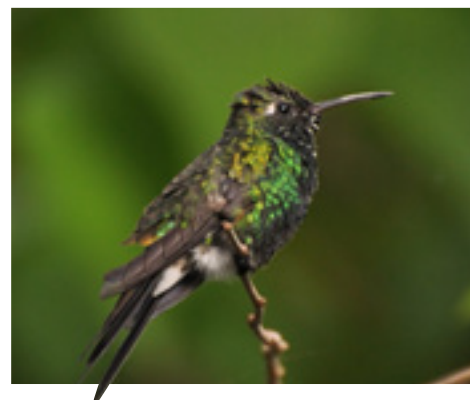
The prominent German scientist made important contributions to Cuban science. He toured Havana and its surroundings, and conducted research that expanded the existing knowledge on flora, fauna, geography, topography, climate, soils, sugar cane cultivation and sugar production. All his notes on the then Spanish colony are collected in his Political Essay on the Island of Cuba, published in 1827.

Humboldt also wrote a thesis on the formation of the Antilles and the constitution of Cuban geology, and devised a map with

exact measurements of the latitude of several ports and cities, including Havana.

An important area in the east of the country was named in his honor. The Alejandro de Humboldt National Park spreads across the provinces of Holguín and Guantánamo, and is one of the most critical places for the conservation of the country's endemic flora and fauna. The area's significance stems from its high level of biodiversity. According to several sources, it is home to around 2% of the world's flora species, including approximately 900 endemic species, of which 343 are exclusive to the mountainous region.

With an area of 70,680 hectares, the park was declared a World Heritage Site in 2001. It offers a wide variety of trails, spectacular views, refreshing waters, landscapes full of endemic vegetation, fruit crops and even the opportunity to see exotic animals in their natural environment. This biodiverse site invites visitors to enjoy an unquestionably spectacular encounter with nature, something not to be missed on any trip to Cuba.



## Islazul in 2024



Colina Hotel



Villa Bacuranao



Vueltabajo Hotel

### Among the novelties presented by the Islazul Hotel Group are the Colina and Vueltabajo city hotels and the Villa Bacuranao beach destination

According to Yuliet Pino Batista, vice president of the Islazul Hotel Group, the Colina and Villa Bacuranao hotels are two of the group's Havana facilities that will begin to be marketed in March, following an investment process to improve both. Meanwhile, Hotel Vueltabajo, located in the western province of Pinar del Río, was recently upgraded to a four-star facility. Its privileged location in the center of the city makes it accessible to the main tourist attractions of the region.

These hotels were presented at FITUR as part of the initiative to promote the destination

of Havana, which stands out for its architecture, gastronomy, culture and diverse heritage. Old Havana, along with its system of fortifications, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. Hotel Colina stands out in the city, given its short distance from these marvelous sites, of interest to its guests.

Likewise, Cuba's beaches are always one of the major attractions for those who visit the country, given their blue seas and white sands that extend beyond the world-famous Varadero beach. That is why the seaside destination of Villa Bacuranao is presented as an option in this modality, which can be

combined with visits to heritage sites in Havana due to its proximity.

Hotel Vueltabajo, a beautiful city building, is located in a province that is characterized by its striking natural landscapes, above all its vegetation and rivers, with the most popular spots found in the Viñales Valley, including its impressive mural, also declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999. The province's caves, cays, tobacco plantations and national parks, among other sites, are also extremely attractive. This is a magnificent option for those who, without leaving the city environment, wish to discover Cuba's impressive natural wealth.

These three facilities belonging to the Islazul Hotel Group enrich the offers of this destination within the framework of the CUBA ÚNICA (Unique Cuba) promotional campaign. The Islazul Hotel Group is also committed to the main value for which visitors remember this Caribbean nation: their experiences interacting with its people.



# Air connections



## **New Avianca route starting this March**

Avianca announced a new route connecting Bogota and Montreal, starting March 31. This new connection underscores the airline's commitment to expanding its international network, particularly in Canada.

The service will operate four times a week using A320 aircraft, each with a capacity for 180 passengers. This translates into a total of 1,200 seats available weekly on this route.

The airline has also filed a request with the Colombian Civil Aviation Authority (Aerocivil) to reestablish regional connections, including flights to Cuba.

The Bogota-Havana route operated until March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, resulting

in the subsequent border closures, according to the site AviacionLine.

In addition to the reconnection with Havana, Avianca will expand its local and regional flights, extending to routes such as Costa Rica.

## **Copa Airlines announces three new destinations**

Copa Airlines announced the start of operations in June to three new destinations: Tulum in Mexico, Florianópolis in Brazil and Raleigh-Durham in North Carolina, the United States.

With the addition of these routes, Copa Airlines expands its network to 85 destinations.



## **Spanish firm Enjoy Travel Group to operate a direct Madrid-Havana flight**

The Spanish accessible tourism firm Enjoy Travel Group (ETG) announced that it will begin operating a direct flight from Madrid to Havana in June.

ETG Vice President of Marketing and Sales, Luis Jiménez, told Prensa Latina that operations will begin Madrid on June 29 and run to September 7. Travel will be on Plus Ultra aircraft, a 288-seat Airbus A330-200, with 24 seats in business class.



## **Delta proposes daily flight between Atlanta and Puerto Plata**

Delta Airlines is expanding its schedule for the northern winter season with new routes to the Dominican Republic, Barbados and Mexico and additional flights to Curaçao. The airline is boosting its travel to Latin America and the Caribbean from its hubs in Atlanta, New York JFK and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

As of November 23, the airline will have a new daily service between Atlanta and Puerto Plata, representing its fourth destination in the Dominican Republic and complementing Santo Domingo, Punta Cana and Santiago de los Caballeros.



# Cruises



## Mexican Caribbean, the preferred destination for cruise ships

A total of 3,122 cruise ships are expected to arrive in Mexican ports this 2024, representing an increase of 8% compared to 2023 and 5.8% more arrivals than in 2019.

The port of Cozumel is expected to maintain its leading position in cruise passenger arrivals nationwide and in the Gulf-Caribbean region, with a 38.4% share of the total market, according to the Mexican Secretary of Tourism.

According to the estimates, 9,334,000 cruise passengers are expected to arrive throughout the country, which would represent an increase of 2.4% over 2023.



## Costa Cruises launches a campaign based on emotions

Costa Cruises is launching a new international advertising campaign that seeks to connect emotionally with cruisers and convey the unique experiences aboard its ships. Under the concept "Live Your Wonder," the brand aims to offer indescribable moments awakening unique emotions that leave travelers speechless.

The creative strategy, curated by the Herezie company, is based on the idea that the best way to convey these experiences is through the emotions they evoke in guests. Costa Cruises has observed the behavior of its clients and developed the new campaign in response to their needs and desires.



## Norwegian Cruise Line announces new Caribbean cruises

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the innovator in global cruise travel with a 57-year history of breaking boundaries, unveiled new itineraries in the Eastern and Western Caribbean.

As a result of guest demand for warm-weather destinations this fall, the company will open sales for new seven-day roundtrip cruises to the Western Caribbean from the Big Easy starting on October 20, 2024, aboard Norwegian Getaway, as well as voyages to the Eastern Caribbean from Port Canaveral, Florida, beginning October 30, 2024 on Norwegian Epic.



## Royal Caribbean's Rhapsody of the Seas returns to Latin America

Rhapsody of the Seas, the Royal Caribbean International ship that has charmed travelers around the world, returned to Latin America last December and will remain in the area until April. Vacationers will be able to visit destinations such as Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, from Colón in Panama, and Cartagena in Colombia.

During the December 2023 through April 2024 season, as with all of the cruise line's vacation options, shore excursions and Private Journeys will be available to discover each destination. In addition, this itinerary will feature some themed departures. One such option will focus on meeting people under the Singles and Friends concept.





# ttc

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