

# ttc

*Travel Trade Caribbean*



## VARADERO

ON THE HORIZON  
FOR THE UPCOMING  
SEASON

**08** | Tropicana: The cathedral of rhythm  
85 years under the stars

**12** | Cuba: A nautical paradise  
in the Caribbean

**26** | New pathways to sustainable  
tourism for 2025-2030





*El Ron de Cuba*

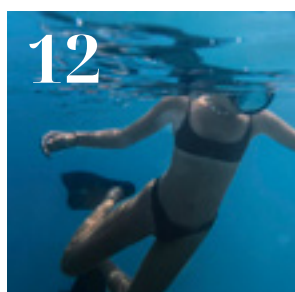


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## EDITORIAL NOTE

The World Travel Market (WTM) London, an ideal fair to catch up on the latest news and trends in the travel industry, is underway.

Recent editions have only confirmed the importance of this event, as the number of exhibitors grows and established destinations such as the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal increase their presence, attracting a greater number of visitors and buyers.

Emerging issues such as sustainability, technology, travel personalization and key trends in the leisure industry find a space at WTM, with presentations and expert discussions. At the same time, the show is an ideal venue for innovation and networking, with numerous meetings and conferences facilitating the creation of new businesses and alliances.

The 2024 edition includes several new features to make it an even more relevant and worthwhile event. The first hour of each day will be dedicated to informal meetings, allowing all attendees to exchange without prior arrangement. An exclusive lunch will be introduced for influencers, where they will be able to connect with peers and exhibitors to explore potential collaborations. A networking session will be available to relax and feel part of the industry. Meanwhile, the conference program foresees a special focus on technologies that are making a new imprint on the travel industry.

For Cuba in particular, the WTM is a platform to showcase its tourist destinations to an increasingly wider international audience; it allows companies to establish contacts with tour operators, airlines and other tourism sectors in the UK and facilitates commercial agreements; while it is also an opportunity to update the market on what's new in Cuban tourism and the upcoming seasons.

According to the WTM Global Travel Report 2023, significant growth in Cuban tourism is expected in the next decade, which underscores the importance of participating in this event.

TTC will stay in the loop.

All the best,

**Alfredo Rodríguez**  
General Manager



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TEXT DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

# Varadero on the horizon for the upcoming season

**M**ore than 20 kilometers of warm beaches and crystal-clear sea might be enough to make you want to visit, or return to, Varadero. But beyond the strip of fine white sand, it is also home to the largest hotel complex in the Cuban archipelago, marinas, a dolphinarium, restaurants, a convention center and other recreational facilities, natural landscapes, a picturesque town and its people, who are the life and soul of the most important beach resort in the country.

This is the impression that thousands of visitors take away with them, who choose the Hicacos Peninsula every year to enjoy their vacations in the Caribbean.

Margarita Askolskaya and her parents arrived there from Moscow for the second time this October. "My mother always searches the internet for the best hotels in the places we travel to. Last year she chose this one, the Meliá Varadero, which we liked very much;

the people are very friendly, the food is good, the entertainment is great."

According to statistics, the Russian market is the second largest source of visitors to Cuba. In the last two years, the presence of tourists from that country at this beach destination has been remarkable. Young people, families with children and also senior citizens can be found everywhere.

"My parents are celebrating 50 years of marriage and they wanted to come back to this hotel in Varadero, our facility in Cuba. They don't speak Spanish and it's very important to them that people here understand Russian. It's fantastic! My friend is also arriving today," the young woman from Moscow tells us excitedly as she leads us to the breakfast buffet to introduce her parents and take a photo.

Meliá runs 11 hotels in Varadero. This one, managed by Marco Mazzuccelli, is positioned in the top ten of the resort and of the chain itself, even in the midst

of a constructive renovation project. "In the last two years of this process we have grown, both economically and in occupancy and quality. By 2026, we will have completed the total remodeling of the facilities," the Italian-born manager explains, who offers statistics to demonstrate the significant growth. By 2025, the chain predicts a further increase, "especially in January and March, between 3.5 and 5% compared to the beginning of 2024."

"The success of a hotel lies in diversifying the product so that it is guaranteed to receive guests from anywhere in the world. Fortunately, we are one of the most diversified in terms of markets. There are months when the Canadian market is the biggest, but we do not depend on it alone. Today it is the fourth largest. Russia, Germany and Cuba occupy the top positions," the manager notes. There is no doubt regarding this diversity, as Chinese



tourists arrive every week to Cuba on a direct flight from Beijing, and can be seen in the lobby waiting with their suitcases before being placed in one of the hotel's 490 rooms.

Meanwhile, Nicholas agrees to talk to the press. He is Canadian and met his partner here, he says. "Here I have found a very familiar atmosphere. I really like the food, the elegance of the hotel. I have had spinal surgery and the staff have helped me a lot with very special treatment. My partner is Russian; we have also traveled to Cancun and in the Dominican Republic. Varadero is very safe for Canadians, even the hotels that are closer to the downtown, which is not the case in Mexico and the Dominican Republic."

Carlos E. Chávez, assistant manager of the facility, attributes the level of customer satisfaction to what he considers a strength: "Twenty percent of the workers are founding staff; those who join us have learned from them and from Meliá's know-how as a management chain."

Like this, 51 other hotels will receive the thousands of visitors that arrive to this peninsula during the high season. Among them, the Royalton Hicacos, of the Blue Diamond chain, another all-inclusive which has been operating for 22 years. Jaime Capó Palacios, its general director, notes with satisfaction that the hotel maintains a high occupancy rate, "even in low season, this October closes with 75%. For November, December and January we expect 85%, which is the norm."

"Blue Diamond is seeking markets everywhere, which is what the country needs to bring in hard currency," he adds, which explains the steady growth of the chain in Cuba and the Caribbean. Experts assure that it is ranked number one in the region.

"We have incorporated many small hotels in Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, Viñales, Holguín and Havana," Capó Palacios explains. "We want clients to receive everything Cuba has to offer: the best beaches in the Caribbean, with no gulfweed, always clean; but also the culture, the safety, the people, the fact

that it is a country worth visiting and enjoying, especially for those who come from Europe, who are not only looking for sun and beaches."

In one of the hotel's exterior corridors, James Coyle and his wife Sheila shared their special preference for Cuba and especially for Varadero. Since 2007, they have flown over North America from Canada to reach the island on 30 occasions; 26 of which they have stayed here. "We love Cuba for its weather and, above all, its safety. We have many Cuban friends," he says.

Many guests return to this hotel. "Every week, we have a dinner for repeat guests attended by between 30 and 40 people, that is to say, we have between 6-7% repeat guests every week," Capó Palacios stresses, while announcing a further 12 rooms will be added to the 84 rooms that have already been completely remodeled in the upcoming high season.

"We take care of the Russian market because it is helping to keep the hotels full," he adds and then refers to the 600 meters

## According to statistics, the Russian market is the second largest source of visitors to Cuba

of beach available for guests and the advantage of administering a joint venture to ensure supplies: "It is bringing in goods, be it meat, dry groceries, beverages. Here, too, local suppliers provide us with fruits, vegetables, pork, beef."

Not far from there, the Iberostar Selection and the Blau, both managed by chains that originate in Mallorca, are also committed to offering quality service in Varadero.

"We understand that it is a different hotel because of the amount of products we have, you have seen how it is cared for, the number of varied services; guests see it that way," says Fernando Ortega, Iberostar's top executive in this property, while guiding a tour that begins in the lobby and ends at the edge of the beach.

### Royalton Hicacos, Varadero.



## Just when the daylight is about to fade, a catamaran arrives through the channel of Varadero's Marina Marlin

Dozens of tourists enjoy Cuban music, drink rum and tropical-colored cocktails, smoke cigars, splash in the swimming pool and sunbathe under the Caribbean sun, which is less harsh during the tenth month of the year. Others, in spite of the waves that the wind stirs up, swim in the sea. There are children and teenagers everywhere, their words are heard in English, Russian or Portuguese. "The forecast is to maintain last year's occupancy rate. From December to March it ranges from around 90-95%," Ortega adds.

The Blau also shares good news on keeping its doors open after 19 years of operations. Its 395 rooms are available and many of its leisure areas have been remodeled or "rejuvenated," as Laura Tandrón, its deputy general manager, notes on referring to the tennis court, the shooting range, the changing room bathrooms, the gardens and also the energy logistics in 30 rooms.

"More than 47% of our customers come from Canada, 35% from Russia and Germany. We are in working to diversify toward the southern market," she explains, while pointing out that the hotel has maintained a linear occupancy rate of 70% from January to October, with an average length of stay of seven days, combined with the chain's other property in Cuba, the Blau Arenal in Havana.

Just when the daylight is about to fade, a catamaran arrives through the channel of Varadero's Marina Marlin. Among the 80 people who begin to disembark are Olga and Rodrigo, two Argentines with very different views of their experience in Cuba. This is Rodrigo's second time in the country; he also visited in 2019, but he does not feel as relaxed this time given the current situation. "I like the island, the



**Muthu Playa Varadero, Varadero.**

sea and the sand, the people, but there is more scarcity compared to what I saw before the pandemic."

Olga, who arrived on a Copa flight from Buenos Aires, was certain that her intention on coming to Cuba, "was not to get to know a certain place, but a history. I am happy to have been able to come. I was aware of the situation, but I am fascinated, happy to be here. I find it very welcoming, with very friendly people. I do see scarcities, but I understand why. I recognize and I see all the effort made by the Cuban people to carry on and to bear the situation, which is inhumane from every point of view. I think what they have achieved is very commendable."

Ana Ruiz also agrees to speak to us. She chose the destination through a travel agency in the city of San Julián, where she lives, in the Mexican state of Jalisco. "They have treated us very well since we arrived. We have toured the

town of Varadero. I was very attracted to Cuba because of its culture, its islands, its people. And yes, I have fulfilled my expectations. I am going to recommend my friends choose Cuba because it is a very beautiful place, it is accessible for us, very economical and with a very easy air connection; there are many flights from Mexico."

For those who opt to enjoy Varadero this winter, the international chains Roc, Muthu, Valentin, ATG and Archipelago are another option. Through the Juan Gualberto Gómez International Airport, just 25 minutes from the beach, flights arrive from Canada, Germany, the United States, Russia and Portugal, and soon also from Poland. Havana, the capital of the country and the largest international air terminal in the archipelago, is only 130 kilometers away and the trip to Cuba's largest beach resort also merits a photograph for the travel album.



# MUCH BETTER.

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CAYO COCO  
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TRINIDAD  
HOLGUÍN  
SANTIAGO DE CUBA

MELIÁ HOTELS  
INTERNATIONAL  
CUBA

PARADISUS  
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BY MELIÁ

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BY MELIÁ

AFFILIATED  
BY MELIÁ



# TROPICANA

## The cathedral of rhythm

### *85 years under the stars*

TEXT DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS RAÚL ABREU / TTC ARCHIVE

**T**he last night of 2024 will mark the 85th anniversary of Cuba's most famous cabaret: Tropicana. Notable changes to its current show "Oh, La Habana," including music, choreography, costumes, audio technology and lighting, will bring even more glamour to this spectacle that has gained applause from audiences gathered under the stars since 1995.

The musical that combines cha-cha-cha, mambo, rumba, guaracha and other rhythms that showcase Cuban culture through modern and contemporary dance includes arrangements by musicians Samuel Formell (opening theme) and Alexander Abreu ("La Guarapachanga") played by a stunning live band. The first new scenes of the show will be presented to mark the 505th anniversary of the founding of the Cuban capital, on November 16, with preparations underway to make this another of the countless hits of this cabaret.

"On December 31, we are going to throw a huge party with both national and international

guest artists," reveals Joaquín Yuenking Mock, the proud director of this venue belonging to the Palmares Extrahotel Enterprise that has defended the roots of Cuban music and dance for over eight decades. "The splendor of the vegetation combines with the culture and that is a real strength of this huge production," he adds.

"The live music, the sensuality, the elegance, the creole. This is what we defend and we will continue to do so.

**"THE SPLENDOR OF THE VEGETATION  
COMBINES WITH THE CULTURE AND  
THAT IS A REAL STRENGTH OF THIS  
HUGE PRODUCTION"**



The Cuban identity that makes it universal is what distinguishes us,” Artistic Director Armando Pérez Sánchez stresses. Alongside his twin brother Alberto, he has dedicated the past five decades of his life to Tropicana, first as part of the dance corps, then as a lead dancer, assistant director and teacher, until becoming responsible for every last details of the artistic process.

Talking to them offers an insight into the history of this cultural center. “Here things happened which didn’t in other cabarets of the time, such as the Montmartre or the Sans Souci: here black people were hired. From the very first years, Rita Montaner, Bola de Nieve, Chano Pozo – a percussionist and showman who traveled to New York to join Dizzy Gillespie and whose ‘Manteca’ was a foundational tune of Afro-Latin jazz –, Sergio Horta, Alfredo Brito, Tomás Morales, Roderico Neyra, – they called him ‘The Wizard,’ creator of the famous Mulatas de Fuego band – all worked here. Elena Burque, Vilma Valle, Lina Ramírez, Celia Cruz, Celeste Mendoza, all of them started out in show business at Tropicana. African roots were always celebrated and we always touched the essence of Cuban identity,” the artistic director explains.



More than 150 people, including performers, technicians and assistants, now follow his instructions at every rehearsal and on each night. But Armando cannot forget all the great figures that preceded him, from the founders to those who trained him to take over as director: maestros Santiago Alfonso and Joaquín M. Condall.

To maintain the style and rigor that distinguish Tropicana’s performances, since 1995 the institution has had a school that trains its dancers. “It is an intense 10-month course for young people of working age, totally free but with

a lot of discipline. At auditions we choose twenty female dancers, an equal number of male dancers – sometimes more – and twenty extras. We teach classical dance, contemporary dance, modern dance, folkloric dance, popular dance, international ballroom dance, composition and physical training. Also make-up, musical and show business skills.”

However, the emblematic cabaret of Havana nights is much more than this. The food, with Creole dishes and a very professional service, adds another distinctive touch to the place. Awards from the Varadero Gourmet International Festival and the Excelencias group confirm as much.

**More than 150 people, including performers, technicians and assistants, now follow his instructions at every rehearsal and on each night**





"By the year 2025, we intend to organize the First International Vintage Car Event. We're also the venue for events that have already earned our loyalty, such as Cubadisco, the Excelencias Gourmet International Gastronomic Seminar and Amigos de Partagás," Yuenking Mock comments while providing other data that demonstrate Tropicana's preference among the nightlife options for visitors to Cuba.

**Beyond the movement, the music and the lights, Tropicana dazzles in every aspect due to its elegance and distinction**

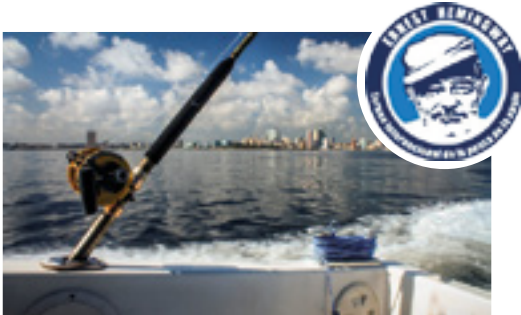


"In the first half of the year, we saw 5% growth in tourists compared to the previous year. The show is performed from Wednesday to Sunday but we have other products such as the "Discofiesta" on Fridays at the Glass Arches lounge; "The Decade" on Saturdays and Sundays at the "El Rodney" restaurant; and that day we also welcome the Antique Car Club and children, alternately, in the mornings."

Beyond the movement, the music and the lights, Tropicana dazzles in every aspect due to its elegance and distinction. Among the greenery, the mirrors and the masks and the whitest sculpture created by visual artist Rita Longa, the venue continues to encourage its guests to dance where "sadness is not invited," as Armando notes, with the wish that this paradise will be eternal and remembered.



# EVENTS 2024



**Ernest Hemingway International  
Billfishing Tournament, 72nd edition,  
Havana** Sports Event  
MAY 27 - JUNE 1, 2024



**Varadero Gourmet International  
Festival, 14th edition, Matanzas**  
Tourism/Educational Event  
SEPTEMBER 11 - 13, 2024



**Cuban Rum  
Varadero, Matanzas**  
Tourism Event  
SEPTEMBER 18 - 20, 2024



**"Asia - La Habana," Havana**  
Tourism Event  
OCTOBER 7 - 11, 2024



**Experiences and Traditions  
Jardines del Rey**  
Tourism Event  
OCTOBER 23 - 25, 2024



**Cuba Golf Grand Tournament,  
Varadero 14th edition, Matanzas**  
Sports event  
OCTOBER 24 - 26, 2024



**Jardines del Rey International Big  
Game Trolling Fishing Tournament  
Ciego de Ávila**  
Sports event  
OCTOBER 24 - 29, 2024



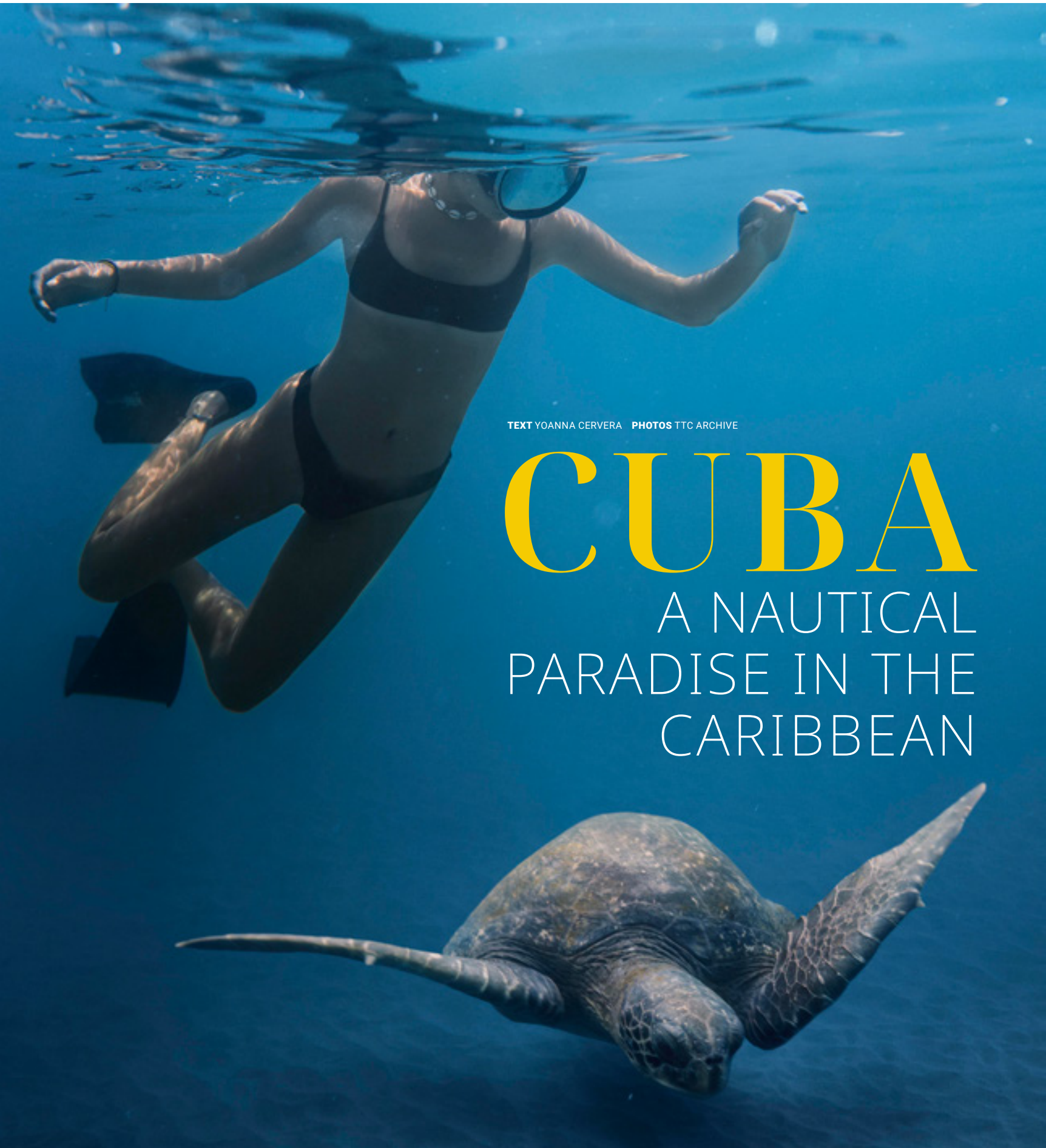
**FOTOSUB International Underwater  
Photography Event, Cayo Largo**  
Sports Event  
OCTOBER 28 - 31, 2024



**"Amigos de Partagás" Gathering  
37th edition, Havana**  
Tourism Event  
NOVEMBER 18 - 23, 2024







TEXT YOANNA CERVERA PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

# CUBA

A NAUTICAL  
PARADISE IN THE  
CARIBBEAN





**Hemingway Marina in Havana.**

Cuba, with its privileged location in the heart of the Caribbean, stands out as a nautical destination in the region. More than 5,700 kilometers of coastline, white-sand beaches and crystal-clear waters offer a perfect scenario for sea lovers. The archipelago boasts rich marine biodiversity, impressive coral reefs and an average temperature of 25°C that favors the practice of nautical activities throughout the year. Hence the design of various options for those who visit the island with this in mind.

The Marinas Marlin enterprise, with a presence in several strategic points of the country, is synonymous with excellence in this type of services. From the Hemingway Marina in Havana to the Marlin Marinas in Cayo Guillermo or Santiago de Cuba, this company offers a wide range of activities. Visitors can enjoy sea excursions, sport fishing, diving and snorkeling in some of the Caribbean's richest marine ecosystems. Likewise, Marlin S.A. organizes international events such as the Ernest

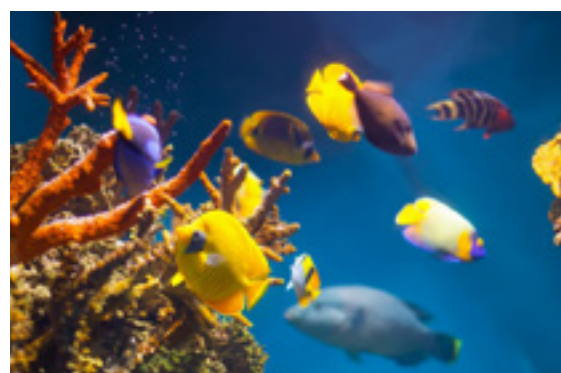
Hemingway Billfishing Tournament, which attracts anglers from all over the world, or the Jardines del Rey Big Game Trolling Tournament. Both include in their catalog boat rental services, catamaran rides and visits to nearby keys, for a complete and varied experience.

Marina Gaviota, which is part of the Gaviota S.A. Tourism Group, has facilities in several locations in Cuba. Varadero is home to the largest tourist port in Cuba and the Caribbean, with space for more than 1,300 berths for boats of all sizes. In addition, in Cayo Santa María, the Gaviota Las Brujas Marina facilitates sport fishing, diving and catamaran rides in the region's crystal-clear waters and coral reefs. In Cayo Coco, one of Cuba's most pristine marine ecosystems, sea lovers also have access to all the above-mentioned options. Modern facilities for the maintenance and repair of boats ensure a comfortable and safe experience for sailors.

Meanwhile, the Cubanacán Hotel Group complements the nautical offer in Cuba's coasts with options that combine

quality lodging and aquatic activities. In destinations such as the Zapata Peninsula, guests can enjoy diving in unique cave systems, speedboat and catamaran excursions and thematic visits to the Taino Village. In addition, Cubanacán offers certified diving programs and snorkeling excursions in various regions of the country.

The unique combination of natural beauty, quality infrastructure and a wide range of activities is available to cater to the most varied tastes in Cuba, a true nautical paradise.





# New report on the integration of biodiversity in tourism



TEXT TTC STAFF  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

**A** UN Tourism report released in May this year reveals that while 95% of national policies recognize nature as a primary tourism asset, detailed plans for sustainable management practices are often lacking.

Entitled "Integration of Biodiversity in National Tourism Policies," the

**This publication not only highlights the interdependence of biodiversity and tourism but also underscores the essential role of well-integrated policies play in ensuring a sustainable future for everyone**

report addresses the complex relationship between the tourism sector and biodiversity, which encompasses the diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. The study assesses how 80 national tourism policies incorporate biodiversity values and aims to improve understanding of references to biodiversity in these policies.

The report is made up of four detailed subsections that examine the integration of biodiversity within policy narratives, policy statements, strategic programs and the commitments to monitoring this field.

A UN Tourism press release highlights that by providing information

on the breadth and depth of current integration efforts, the report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, stakeholders and the global community seeking to take further steps toward a sustainable future.

According to UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili: "As custodians of the Earth's natural resources, it is crucial that we foster a harmonious relationship between tourism and the environment. This publication not only highlights the interdependence of biodiversity and tourism but also underscores the essential role of well-integrated policies play in ensuring a sustainable future for everyone."

This new report comes as a part of the commitments set out at the UN Biodiversity Conference COP-15, held in Montreal in December 2022, where the historic Biodiversity Plan was adopted. The report also complements the recently launched publication "Nature Positive Travel & Tourism in Action," amplifying the momentum towards environmentally responsible practices within the tourism sector.







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Cuba with **28 years**  
of experience

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# Partnerships for wellness tourism in Cuba



**THE TRIPARTITE PROJECT BETWEEN BLUE DIAMOND HOTELS IN CAYO GUILLERMO, THE DOLPHINARIUM OF THE PALMARES EXTRA-HOTEL COMPANY IN JARDINES DEL REY AND THE MEDICAL SERVICES ENTERPRISE WILL OFFER NEW EXPERIENCES, ESPECIALLY TO FAMILIES “WHOSE MEMBERS INCLUDE CHILDREN OR OTHER PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL DISORDERS**

demands of travelers with a preference for this Caribbean destination, as explained by the Director of International Sales, Dr. Ileana Reyes.

The tripartite project between Blue Diamond hotels in Cayo Guillermo, the dolphinarium of the Palmares Extra-Hotel Company in Jardines del Rey and the Medical Services Enterprise will offer new experiences, especially to families “whose members include children or other people with social disorders. During the holiday period, they will be able to enjoy Cuban culture and also have three hours of daily training with dolphins and our therapists, representing an excellent opportunity to unite the family and to carry out wellness activities.”

**C**uba’s Medical Services Enterprise (Comercializadora de Servicios Médicos S.A.) is planning new partnerships with the Cubasol Business Group and other agencies linked to the Cuban Ministry of Tourism to diversify its portfolio in accordance with the

TEXT DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE





modality has been introduced, which is becoming increasingly important in the world," she added.

According to the doctor, the programs are very varied and are linked to the vital activities of human beings, from nutrition to sleep disorders, stress management, addictions and other aspects of modern life.

The sales executive also said that they are developing other projects in alliance with agro-ecological farms, healthy food restaurants and safari options, including the Cubasol Group's marinas.

Cuba has a group of specialized clinics for medical tourism. Among the best known are the Cira García, Camilo Cienfuegos and Siboney international clinics; La Pradera International Health Center and the International Center for Neurological Restoration.

The enterprise also offers a series of medical care services within the country's third level institutions (the most important institutes and hospitals). "This area has a group of programs related to nationally developed biotechnology products," de Armas Aguila specified,

## **In April 2025, this specialized health organization will present all its products and services to its partners and allies at the II International Medical Tourism and Wellness Fair**

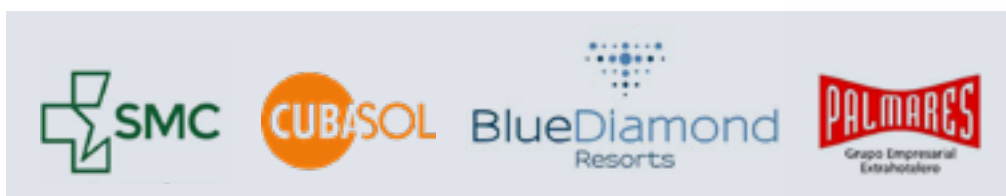
while highlighting the strength of the professionals of the national health system.

International clinics are spread across all the country's tourist resorts and a group of clinics function inside hotels as a complement to medical tourism and wellness tourism, as part of the Cuban Medical Services network.

In April 2025, this specialized health organization will present all its products and services to its partners and allies at the II International Medical Tourism and Wellness Fair.

The announcement confirms statements to TTC made by Dr. Yamila de Armas Águila, president of Comercializadora de Servicios Médicos Cubanos S.A., who noted that the institution's priorities include the offer of new services and products related to quality of life, as well as the creation of strategies and alliances with all tourism organizations.

"Most recently, our priority has also been the production of a group of new quality of life programs within the hotel facility itself, a sort of second level of care with more than twenty-six programs. We have been working with different hotel chains; we have just entered into an alliance with Blue Diamond in which the wellness





# Free Walking Tour Havana or how to showcase a city's heritage

TEXT RACHELL COWAN CANINO PHOTOS ABEL ROJAS BARALLOBRE

If you are visiting Cuba for the first time or if you have not visited the Caribbean island for some time, we recommend a perfect introduction to its history, politics, heritage and society through the Free Walking Tour offered by the Habana de Calle Local Development Project.

This social communication and cultural marketing venture offers visitors experiences focused on promoting the tangible and intangible heritage values of Havana's historical center, but also covers less touristy areas such as the Centro Habana municipality, without charging a cent.

FREE WALKING TOUR OFFERS VISITORS EXPERIENCES  
FOCUSED ON PROMOTING THE TANGIBLE AND  
INTANGIBLE HERITAGE VALUES OF HAVANA'S  
HISTORICAL CENTER, BUT ALSO COVERS LESS TOURISTY  
AREAS SUCH AS THE CENTRO HABANA MUNICIPALITY



Those who enjoy the tour can contribute something to the team that brings it to life at the end, should they wish.

We at TTC wanted to experience a tour and chose that of Old Havana, its plazas and fortifications. With daily departures at 9.30 am and 4.00 pm from Central Park, visitors can find young guides who are willing to answer all their questions. It is worth noting their extensive training.

The first part of the tour is along Empedrados Street up to Cathedral Square; it includes recommendations for accommodation, currency exchange, lunch, dinners and dancing, to ensure the best stay in the capital. Along the way, our guide explained topics related to Cubans' daily lives and other concerns expressed by Spanish and Portuguese tourists.

Afterwards, we wanted to meet Jaime Abel Ramón Morales, co-founder of Free Walking Tour Havana, who assured us that the plan is to cover all the country's heritage cities. "However, our policy is to go to areas farther away from the tourist centers. That is why we have tours in Central Havana. We were the first group to carry out tours there because people assumed there was nothing to show.

"For us, daily life, history, politics and society are incentives for travelers to come to Cuba, even in a percentage similar to those seeking the sun and beach," he noted. The cultural



tourism venture was founded in 2016 and today has about twenty guides, all young people.

The management model is based on understanding and valuing heritage. "I believe that one of the main achievements of the Office of the Havana City Historian (OHCH) has

been to educate people about this. Heritage belongs to all Havana residents, to all Cubans, and we owe that thought to the tireless work of Eusebio Leal Spengler, to the OHCH Master Plan and to the Network of Offices of the Heritage Cities of Cuba."

Currently, Free Walking Tour is offering a new experience allowing visitors to enjoy a taste of the nightlife of the neighborhood of Vedado, as an extension of the tours of Old and Central Havana. The venture also offers private, gastronomic and conventional tours with classic cars.



**Currently, Free Walking Tour is offering a new experience allowing visitors to enjoy a taste of the nightlife of the neighborhood of Vedado, as an extension of the tours of Old and Central Havana**



# Escape to Cayo Largo del Sur



TEXT TTC STAFF PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

**I**f you want to enjoy a peaceful vacation in direct contact with an unspoiled nature, Cayo Largo del Sur is the ideal option. Located at the eastern end of the Los Canarreos archipelago, to the south of Cuba, this attractive tourist destination offering sunshine and beautiful beaches appears like a desert island due to its remote location. Twenty-five kilometers of white sands stretch before the eyes of visitors.

The dream-like Sirena and Paraíso beaches stand out among the most unspoiled in the world, according to National Geographic magazine.

Travel guides point out that this is one of the few places in Cuba where tourists will find hotels with clearly identified beach sections where those who wish to can opt for a topless tan. Cayo Largo has been awarded the title of the most beautiful “Au Naturel” beach in the “UK Bare Beaches” guide.

The coral reef formations around this key offer impressive underwater scenery. In full harmony with the ecosystem, there is a modern hotel

installation, a marina, a diving center and an international airport.

Leisure and adventure activities, such as tours to contemplate the colonies of iguanas that coexist with hutias, sparrow hawks and seagulls; the option of swimming in shallow natural pools inhabited by starfish; as well as air excursions and specialized nautical practices (diving, deep-sea fishing) can all be included in travelers’ programs.

**Twenty-five kilometers of  
white sands stretch before  
the eyes of visitors.**







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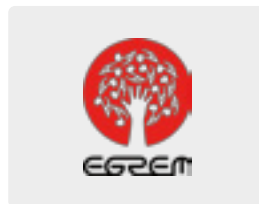
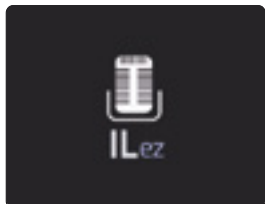
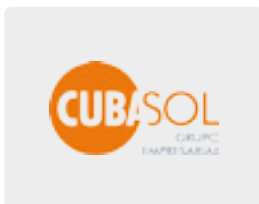
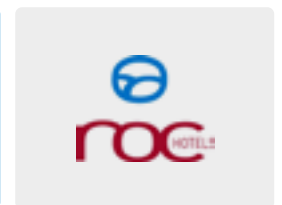
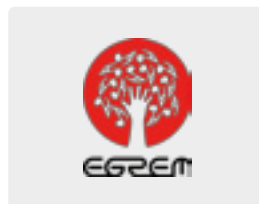
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# Nature and tourism in eastern Cuba

TEXT AND PHOTOS DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN

Cuba treasures the greatest diversity of landscapes and lifestyles in the Antilles. That collage of colors, flavors, reliefs, waters, fauna, textures and much more, is one of its main attractions for the development of tourism associated with the enjoyment of nature.

The eastern part of the country, with ideal conditions for this type of travel, attracted the attention of tour operators and the media that joined the Ecotur Travel Agency to participate in

the 14th edition of TURNAT and tour the provinces of Granma, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo. The purpose: to promote the natural wealth of this region, as well as to encourage the conservation of local ecosystems and care for the environment and biodiversity.

Mountains that end just where the sea begins; thousands of species, many of them unique in the world; dozens of crystal-clear rivers; millenary footprints in the rocks; and dark-sand beaches surprise travelers in this area of the country,

hand in hand with its history and culture. Options associated with the beach, nautical activities, culture, health and the enjoyment of green environments, can be included in the planning of a vacation consisting of adventure or tranquility in the east of the Cuban archipelago.

The Hotel Segundo Frente in Santiago de Cuba, for example, is ideal for any of these preferences. Located in a natural environment, both its design and the portfolio of products offered include one or the other choice.





On a climb to the Gran Piedra Biosphere Reserve, standing 1,234 meters above sea level, explorers will find ruins of the coffee plantations founded by French-Haitian settlers in the late 18th century that are now recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. In one of them, a flower plantation has developed over the last five decades in which a multicolored species of Asian origin boasts the name "bird of paradise," among many others that have adapted to the climate of this Caribbean mountain.

The wrecks submerged in the insular platform of the province are a must for nautical activities. The remains of the Spanish fleet of Admiral Cervera, defeated by the United States in the naval battle of July 1898, can be found there. Meanwhile, the coral reef of the southern coast also stands out for its high degree of conservation and those who dive recommend snorkeling here.

But the most outstanding element of Santiago's geography is located in its mountains, especially in the Sierra Maestra, home to the highest elevation in the country, the Pico Real del Turquino, which towers about 1,974 meters above sea level.

Throughout the province of Granma there are dozens of trails that also allow explorers to enter the largest mountain range in the country, the scene of the struggle against the government of Fulgencio Batista in the late 1950s and where the Desembarco del Granma National Park, a World Heritage Site, is located. Marea del Portillo is a tourist resort in the foothills of the Sierra Maestra, where beach and nature coexist. Immersion programs, contemplative scuba diving, trekking and horseback rides provide contact with the mountain's people, their customs and culture.

But if you really want to enjoy a tourist experience that stimulates all the senses, you have to go to Baracoa. Distinguished for being the first villa founded in Cuba by the Spanish, it is also blessed by nature. It is worth the zigzag through the 47 kilometers of the La Farola viaduct or along the narrow roads to get there. The vision of dozens of rivers pouring into the beaches that appear on the coastline; the silhouette of the evergreen mountains reflected in the sea or in the rushing freshwater tributaries; the flavors of coconut, cocoa, banana that its inhabitants have learned to cultivate, preserve and share through time; the rhythms and movements with which they celebrate in the local communities; the animals that can only be seen there, such as the polimita or the Monte Iberia frog, along with the friendliness of its inhabitants and much more, make this



"Olympus of Nature" a unique destination in Cuba and the Caribbean.

Alejandro de Humboldt Park, the core of the great Cuchillas del Toa Biosphere Reserve and home to the country's widest rivers and best-preserved forests, awaits visitors eager to experience ecotourism and backcountry excursions in this World Heritage Site.

Sal Rahmaty, Canadian executive of the Cubatram agency, who participated in the recent edition of TURNAT, summed up the challenge: "This area of Cuba offers travelers different attractions to other well-known destinations such as Varadero or Havana. The magic would be to have better connectivity to reach here."





# Jamaica: A land touched by fame

TEXT MARINA MENÉNDEZ  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

If you want to discover Caribbean sites where fame was born, you have to visit Jamaica. The third-biggest island in the Greater Antilles, after Cuba and Hispaniola, has unique characteristics, beyond its natural beauty.

For example, it is renowned for having been the setting that inspired British writer Ian Fleming to create James Bond, Agent 007, who traveled the world in his novels and an unmissable saga of films.

The spy and writer came up with the character when he spent long periods in the city of Oracabessa. The local beach is now known as James Bond Beach, a paradisaical site with minimal hotel infrastructure, offering the protected landscapes and peace that many vacationers seek alongside the sun and sea.

Another popular Jamaican site is the Blue Lagoon, where it is said scenes from the film of the same name were shot. Previously known as the Blue Hole, the locals changed its name following the success of the movie.

This is possibly one of the most interesting sites for tourists. Amid lush vegetation, the lagoon is fed by the springs that surround it, but it flows into the sea. For this reason, its blue waters are both fresh and salty.

The island's waterfalls, mountains and jungles also fuel its charm and mystery. Part of the Commonwealth of Nations, Jamaica is perhaps best known as the birthplace of reggae and one of its greatest artists, Bob Marley, the flag bearer of a culture

**THIS INSPIRING ISLAND  
HAS BEEN A SOURCE  
OF CREATIVITY AND A  
CRADLE OF GLORY**



**The local beach of Oracabessa is now known as James Bond Beach.**



not always well-understood in the West, nor initially in Jamaica itself: the Rastafari movement, which celebrates the African roots of the Jamaican people.

As if that were not enough, the island is also the homeland of Olympic track champion Usain Bolt, a living legend who first started out playing cricket, the national sport, a legacy of the British presence that remains strong despite the African influence.

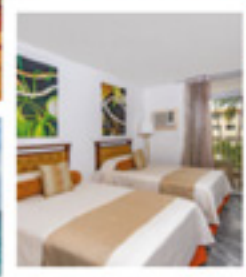
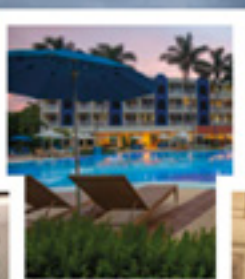
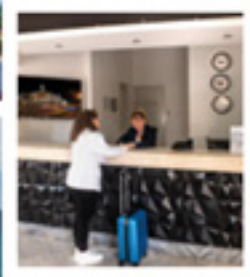
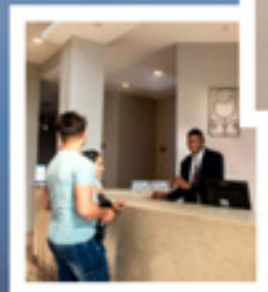
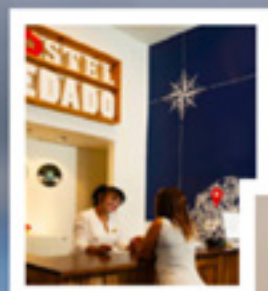


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# New pathways to sustainable tourism for 2025-2030

**TEXT** JOSÉ ENRIQUE SALGADO, PHD, PROFESSOR,  
FACULTY OF TOURISM, UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA  
**PHOTOS** TTC ARCHIVE

**T**he United Nations agency for the leisure industry, UN Tourism, defines sustainable tourism as that which “takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

These ideas have become one of the main objectives of the international organization, aligning it globally with the main source and host countries.

## Meetings that set the course for sustainability

At the most recent meeting of G20 Tourism Ministers held in September in Belém, Brazil, the Secretary-General of UN Tourism, Zurab Pololikashvili, stressed the importance of harnessing the sector’s potential to empower communities, combat climate change and move towards regenerative and circular tourism.

Data provided by the G20 itself indicates that the economies of its member countries account for 70% of international tourist arrivals and 82% of global tourism GDP.

In 2023, the sector directly contributed 3.1% of the G20’s GDP and 5% of its total exports. These figures are likely to be higher by 2024, as in the first seven months, international arrivals reached 97% of pre-pandemic levels.

The G20 adopted the Belém Declaration, which reaffirms the commitment of G20 countries to promote more sustainable, resilient and inclusive tourism.

UN Tourism highlights this document as a key step toward





measuring the economic, social and environmental impact of tourism, and the creation of reliable data to support sustainability and the alignment of the sector with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Likewise, on September 22 at the UN General Assembly, a majority of the organization's 194 member states approved the Pact for the Future. The representatives of just 15 countries abstained and seven voted against the resolution for various reasons.

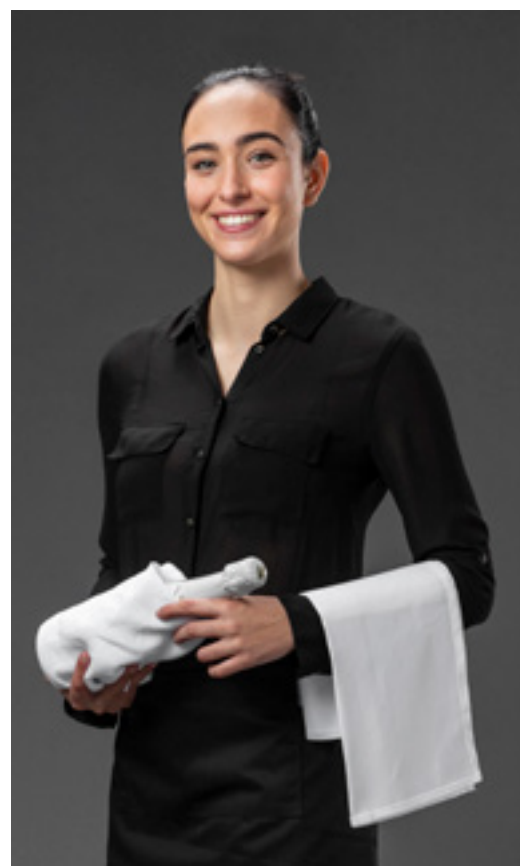
The Pact declares that "that sustainable development in all its three dimensions is a central goal in itself and that its achievement, leaving no one behind, is and always will be a central objective of multilateralism," and reaffirms the ongoing commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

The Pact constitutes a commitment to address the "greatest challenges of our time," and comprises 56 actions that if implemented could make the world a better place to live. Through these actions, UN Tourism and the various travel and tourism entities will find the necessary elements to update sustainable tourism development programs, their financing and investment promotion; the use of science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; as well as the transformation of global tourism governance.

Both the Pact and the Global Digital Compact promote the training of populations, just as UN Tourism emphasizes the need for training and skills development to address the growing demand for skilled employees in the tourism sector, especially in

## Several leading companies in the sector have reinforced the tendency of investors to show interest in projects that promote sustainability and digitalization

areas such as customer service and management. Several leading companies in the sector have spoken along the same lines, reinforcing the tendency for investors to show interest in projects that promote sustainability and digitalization.





# Connectivity in the Caribbean

TEXT RACHEL COWAN CANINO  
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE



## **Turkish Airlines increases weekly flights to Cuba**

As of November 15, Turkish Airlines will increase its number of weekly flights to Cuba to five, as part of the 2024-2025 season. The Istanbul-Havana-Caracas-Istanbul route will see an additional frequency aboard a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, according to the specialized site AeroRoutes.

With this increase in flights, which will also benefit Caracas with an increase of eight frequencies per week from Istanbul, a new air bridge opportunity opens up not only for Turks. Russians, an important segment within the Cuban visitor strategy, can also make use of this route.

## **Return of charter flights from Argentina to Cayo Largo**

By January 2025, charter flights from Argentina to Cayo Largo will resume, as was reported during the recent International Tourism Fair 2024 (FIT), the most important tourism event in Latin America. Havanatur, the International Group of Tour Operators and Travel Agencies and leader in the promotion and

commercialization of Cuba as a destination, with 30 years experience, is once again proposing this exclusive offer for the Argentine public.

The charter includes an 8-night itinerary in Cayo Largo, a well-positioned destination that Argentines know very well for its excellent beach in the Caribbean Sea. On the other hand, occupancy rates in combined packages through Cuba with BoA are guaranteed until May 2025.

## **LATAM to increase flights for the 2024-2025 season**

A new booking system update has revealed that LATAM Airlines Group will increase its flights to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, ahead of the 2024/25 summer season. The new frequencies will begin in December and run through March 2025.

According to the platform Cirium, subject to change, by January 2025 LATAM will increase its passenger carrying capacity by 53.7% (ASK) compared to the same period in 2024. Currently, Punta Cana is connected to Lima, Peru; Miami, United States; and Santiago, Chile, all year round.



# Caribbean Cruise News



## New Carnival Cruise Line Schedules

Carnival Cruise Line is extending Carnival Magic and Carnival Sunrise schedules from PortMiami to the Caribbean. The move offers guests more booking options for future cruise vacations during 2026 and early 2027.

Both ships will offer a wide variety of voyages connecting Miami to popular destinations in the Bahamas. These include Carnival's upcoming exclusive destination, Celebration Key, as well as other popular ports of call in the eastern, western and southern Caribbean.

## Guatemala opens its 2024-2025 season

The Guatemalan Institute of Tourism expects 51 cruise ships to dock at the two ports of the country during the 2024-2025 cruise season (from October to July).

On welcoming the Sapphire Princess, which arrived at the coasts of the land of the quetzal for the first time, it was announced that 80,000 visitors are expected to arrive through this route in the next 10 months. Cruise tourism is a great opportunity for the development of respective local communities and populations.

## Panama also announces its new cruise season

With the arrival of the Brilliance of the Seas in the Panama Canal, the 2024-2025 cruise season kicked off in that country. According to the Panama Canal Authority (ACP), it is expected that some 225 vessels of this type will pass along the canal from October to May of next year, whose passengers will spend a little more than 40 million dollars.

Departing from Los Angeles (California, western United States), the Royal Caribe cruise ship, with capacity for 2,500 passengers and 800 crew, entered the Miraflores locks and crossed the interoceanic waterway from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

## Puerto Plata strengthens its cruise ship boom

Puerto Plata celebrated the arrival of four cruise ships to its two tourist ports in October, bringing with them 24,266 visitors and crew.

These figures were confirmed by Yokasta Almonte, head of the Tourism Office. The official announced that two large ships arrived at the Amber Cove port: the Carnival Mardi Gras, with 6,241 visitors and 1,751 crew; and the Carnival Freedom, with 3,497 visitors and 1,133 crew.

Simultaneously, the Symphony of the Seas arrived in the port of Taíno Bay with 6,194 visitors and 2,139 crew; along with the MSC Magnifica, which brought 2,310 visitors and 1,001 crew. Puerto Plata is an organic and vibrant tourist destination, located in the northern part of the Dominican Republic.



# Fusterlandia: Where the real becomes marvelous



TEXT CÉSAR GÓMEZ PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

A few kilometers to the northwest of Havana, where the beautiful Fifth Avenue ends, lies the neighborhood of Jaimanitas, where visitors can discover a surreal world.

Pink elephants on top of buildings, mermaids in pools, carnivalesque bus stops, walls, houses, corners and an entire community built or transformed with colorful mosaics is known as "Fusterlandia," a sort of open-air gallery, unique in the world.

Cuban visual artist José Fuster, from a modest background, one day decided to design the interior and exterior spaces of his own home, a

humble dwelling like almost all those that make up Jaimanitas.

This was his way of expressing his inner art and making something of himself, which he achieved with great effort and dedication over many years.

Inspired by the work of the great Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí, the Cuban artist developed his own style, combining the naïve and the kitsch, to produce an immense work where paintings, phrases and even iconic figures of Cuba's past and political life form part of the Fusterlandia environment.

What began as a family gallery is today a social project, which has transformed the houses and streets of this community into a rare beauty, as well as the spirit of the people of Jaimanitas.

What was a community of laborers and fishermen is today that of loyal collaborators of Fuster and this huge open-air gallery, with many having changed their way of earning a living by selling artworks and food to visitors from Cuba and beyond, who come in search of "Fuster's house."

Families and friends gather here to celebrate birthdays, national holidays and religious festivals.

Artists including Katy Perry, Bon Jovi and Madonna have visited this emblematic site, where colorful mosaics seem to speak to visitors, glimmering in the sunshine and remaining in the memory of tourists who visit this wonderful place, just a few kilometers from the Cuban capital.





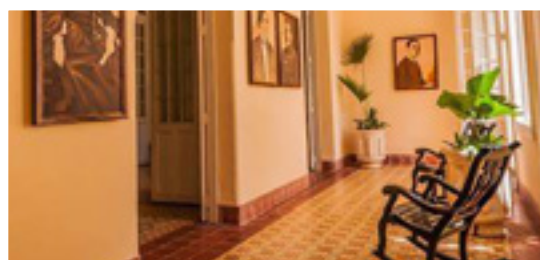
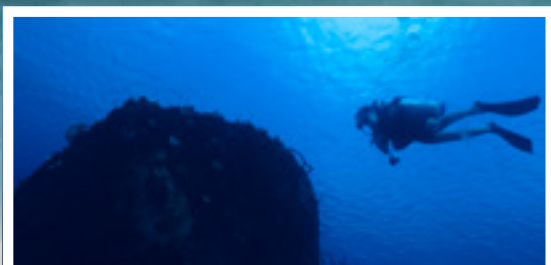
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