

## “A perfect day in Cuba”

Our cruise director, Carlos, prepared us well with useful information before we disembarked. We received our CUBAN visa at the Port of Miami when we checked in and simply presented it with our passport at Cuban immigration. The Havana cruise terminal was fairly modern. As a note, the terminal had one elevator. There is also a long staircase that one would need to use in and out if you did not want to wait for the elevator. The modern, air conditioned tour buses were at the cruise terminal waiting for the guests to disembark. They had an ample amount of English speaking tour guides to escort each tour.



My tour began with a short bus ride down the famous “Malecon” to the historic Nacional Hotel. This iconic hotel has a long history, hosting the likes of the infamous, famous and tourists from around the world. We had some time to stroll the hotel and then went into the bar to enjoy a cold and delicious Mojito. I must say it was the best I ever had! It was prepared with fresh limes and their local rum, Santiago de Cuba. Once the Mojitos were drained, we headed to the front of the hotel to choose a vintage convertible to ride in. Lucky me, I got the pink 1958 convertible of my dreams! We drove through the old city, past all of the government buildings and through all classes of neighborhoods. All of the areas were described to us by our guide. We ended up in Revolution Square. All of the classic cars and their tour passengers arrived here. It was like a classic car rally with time to take lots of pictures of these vehicles that have amazingly stood still with time.



Once the photo ops concluded, we boarded our bus again and the driver gave us the option of going back to the ship or stopping at the San Jose market. Of course, I opted for the market and it did not disappoint!

This is where the local artisans displayed and sold their carvings, paintings and other works of art. Here in my opinion was the best place with the biggest selection to purchase souvenirs of Cuba. It had been suggested to exchange U.S. currency to the CUC, Cuban tourist dollars (exchange 87 CUC's to \$1US dollar) at the cruise terminal or any hotel, but I chose to take my chances and bring small bills from home. Every vendor that I made a purchase from eagerly accepted my U. S. currency. You

should know that if you do exchange money and do not spend it all, you cannot exchange it back.

Once my purchases were made, it was an easy 6 or so block walk along the Malecon back to the cruise terminal. I chose to spend a little more time exploring on my own in Havana and crossed the street and



walked up and down the cobble stone streets enjoying the Colonial architecture. (Please note that the streets are cobble stones and are not evenly paved in most areas.) I discovered a lovely restaurant in an old multi-story home. Each level had small, quaint dining rooms. I kept going to the top to the roof top patio, where I enjoyed a delicious seafood meal, as we enjoyed the view while listening a local singer perform.



What a wonderful experience I had in Havana! It was a very full day!

As we sailed out of the harbor, I left with hopes that I will return again in the very near future.