

# **Trip Report - Cuba**

By Linda and Chuck, s/v Jacaranda

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## **Overview** -

We used the Lonely Planet Guide as well as information we received from friends who had been to Cuba (mostly non-American friends). Tourism is certainly alive and well in Cuba - especially from Europe, Israel, Russia and Canada!!...just no Americans.

Fidel Castro “pushed the pause button” when he came to power in 1959 and the country seems to have been stuck in time. Cuba is enigmatic and challenges many of your preconceived notions; it is hard to grasp and we came home with many more questions than we arrived with. One of the best things about Cuba is its people - friendly, open, helpful, exuberant, musical. Life is lived in the busy atmospheric streets - out in the open - in the road, sidewalks, door jambs, stoops, balconies. You can glimpse their lives through open doors and windows, and by peeking into decrepit laundry draped courtyards.

Between the people, antique cars, and fabulous (mostly crumbling) architecture, Cuba is a photographer’s paradise.

English is not spoken very widely so it is preferable to have some basic spanish.

“Creeping Capitalism” - Since 2011, Raul Castro has loosened things and sanctioned some entrepreneurial enterprises for everyday people that were heretofore forbidden. Cubans can now buy and sell houses and cars (altho for all practical purposes they are beyond financial reach). Casa particulars and paladares have sprung up everywhere. There are vegetable carts in the streets. Little businesses discreetly hidden behind half-closed doors offer goods and services privately like hand-made items, beauty salons, and massages.

**Itinerary:** 12 days: Havana (4 days), Viñales (2 days), Cienfuegos (2 days), Trinidad (2 days), Havana (2 days)

## **Budget:**

We figured we spent \$150/day that included everything - lodging in casa particulares, food in either our casa particular or a paladar, transportation, and tours and a few extras like souvenirs and tips.

## **Transportation:**

From Panama, we flew Copa Airlines round trip - \$782/person.

Cubana Airlines is also a possibility. Several independent American travelers had entered through Cancun, Mexico and it seemed very affordable.

**VISA:** A visa will be issued to you at the airport. Do not lose this piece of paper since you have to surrender it at departure. There will be NO stamp in your passport.

**Money:** There are two Cuban currencies: the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) and the national peso. CUC's are used by tourists and roughly 1 CUC= \$1 USD. There are 24 national pesos to the CUC and this is used by the majority of Cuban people and will be useful to have if you are going to buy small, cheap, everyday items. US dollars are heavily taxed (10%) on conversion so it is better to bring foreign currency like euros to convert to CUCs. It is rumored that Cuba will go to a one currency system soon.

We changed US dollars to Euros at the Panama Airport and then changed some of the Euros to Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC) at the Havana airport. We changed money along the way in Cuban Exchange offices.

US credit and ATM cards will not work in Cuba. As a backup you can bring American Express Travelers Checks with a LEGIBLE receipt of purchase under your name.

Make sure you have \$25 CUC/person to pay the departure tax when you leave.

Website for conversion rates: [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g147270-i91-k4360860-All\\_you\\_need\\_to\\_know\\_about\\_Cuban\\_currency-Cuba.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g147270-i91-k4360860-All_you_need_to_know_about_Cuban_currency-Cuba.html)

**Medical Insurance** - Proof of medical insurance is required to enter Cuba but you may not be asked. If you are mandated to buy insurance you can do so at the Havana Airport for \$3.42 USD/person/day. In any case, bring a copy of your policy.

We were not asked for proof of medical insurance but we had our copies with us (we have DAN evacuation).

**Departure:** You will need to surrender your visa paper. After checking in at the airline desk and getting your boarding pass, you must go to another window to pay a departure tax of \$25 CUC/person.

**Gifts:** It was not recommended to bring small gifts such as soaps and shampoos that will end up on the black market; it is better to tip where ever/when ever you think it is deserved. We brought soaps and shampoos anyway.

**Internet:** Generally does not exist. You may find very limited internet available at the upscale hotels and at a rare internet cafe. You pay for time and it is expensive and limited. We were able to check email but access to websites is blocked. In Cienfuegos no internet cards were available anywhere in town. We got on for 20 minutes (\$5) at an internet cafe in Trinidad that had a very long line of people waiting for their 20 minute turn. Yikes! We were a little lost without our Tripadvisor!!! Do your internet surfing/ planning before you go to Cuba!

**Places to stay:** There are two types of places, casa particulares (the equivalent of Cuban bed and breakfasts where you stay in people's homes) for about \$20-35 CUC per night or Habaguanex hotels (state-run hotels usually in beautiful old palaces but still not up to US standards) for about \$200+ CUC per night. There is no middle-priced lodging. Habaguanex is a "social development agency of the office of the Historian of the City of Havana, responsible for the restoration of Old Havana and the well being of its residents". In other words, tourist dollars are used to restore the old buildings and also provide social services to the people.

Casa particulares are wonderful chances to be with the people and the quality varies widely. We checked out some mentioned in Lonely Planet that were very lovely but were fully booked and needed advance reservations (2-3 months in advance). Since our trip was taken at the last minute with no advanced planning in high season, none were available for us.

In the countryside there are rural bungalow camps called campismos run by Cubamar Viajes ([www.cubamarviajes.cu](http://www.cubamarviajes.cu)).

**For info on casa particulares:**

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g147271-i387-k7210140-Booking\\_a\\_casa\\_particulare-Havana\\_Cuba.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g147271-i387-k7210140-Booking_a_casa_particulare-Havana_Cuba.html)

A list from a knowledgeable person on TripAdvisor:

For casa particulares (Cuban version of a Bed & Breakfast), local guides and other local services and info have a look here:

- i.) <http://www.cuba-junky.com/>
- ii.) <http://www.yourowncuba.com/>
- iii.) <http://pototocuba.com/Pototow/>
- iv.) <http://www.jorge-cubaholidays.com/>
- v.) <http://www.cubaccommodation.com/>
- vi.) <http://www.destinohabana.com/>
- vii.) <http://cubacasas.net/>

**Eating:**

People still have food ration books and get their monthly allotment of basics at "bodegas", stark little corner stores with a scale and bagged food samples on display. There are now other food markets where you can buy other staples to supplement the rations (if they can afford to) as well as open air vegetable markets and vegetable carts in the streets. The latter is an example of "creeping capitalism".

There are four main types of eateries: home cooked meals in your casa particular, paladar (private restaurants), street food stands/pizza windows and state-run restaurants (you can tell these by the waiters who wear black and white). We ate in the

first two, didn't eat street food, and avoided the latter - preferring to put our money in people's hands. Food was of high quality in the better paladares and home cooked meals were plentiful and delicious (you often are given a choice of chicken, pork, fish, or lobster; beef not so often).

**Get in a Network** - Since there is no advertising or internet communication available, little wonder that the Cubans rely on networks, often involving other family members.

Guide/Agent Contacts:

Jorge

[www.jorge-cubaholidays.com](http://www.jorge-cubaholidays.com)

[jorgeguide2004@gmail.com](mailto:jorgeguide2004@gmail.com)

05-282 9444

TripAdvisor Rave Reviews for Jorge, on the Cuba Message Board: <http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g147270-i91-k6436779-Jorge-Cuba.html>

We found out about Jorge through stellar reports in Tripadvisor and communicated with him via email before we left to set up the first 4 days of our trip. We met him in person the second day we were there - he came to the casa particular with our tour guide Dania. We discussed with him the plans for the rest of the trip. Miraculously, everything always came together although we often doubted they would - but he never let us down or had us fall in between the cracks! The more advance notice you give him, the better he can work for you. We thought his casa particulars were a little hit or miss but all were fine really. Our other guide through Jorge, Elena, was outstanding and gave us a tour of Havana with a sense of the reality of life for the average Cuban. It is customary to take your guide to lunch during or after your tour. We bumped into Elena on the street on our last days in Havana and convinced her to come to lunch with us - and she took us to a very interesting paladar we would never have found on our own - that was the true Cuba!

Michel G. Núñez - met him in Viñales and saw him again in Trinidad

Young, very personable, but it seemed he might not give you budget options since the clients we met were going first class with him as their guide in all the different places (he was traveling with them).

Would like to try using him next time

(53) 5243 2562

[malmierka@gmail.com](mailto:malmierka@gmail.com)

Hard to get off the beaten path unless you pre-plan. Possible to rent a car but it is expensive and signage is poor and problems with the car or accidents were risks we did not want to take.

### **Scams**

Be careful of people coming up to you on the street with an agenda - they often try to befriend you and want you to follow them to a place to stay or to eat (their brothers?). A few people are genuinely friendly but most want to make money off you (you are the wealthy tourist in a country of poor people). "Jineteros" are scammers and there have been stories of them meeting tourists at the bus pretending to be the owner of a casa particular you think you have arranged. We let our guard down and went to listen to some music at a restaurant with a "nice" couple and their young son - where we were promptly gouged for a few non-alcoholic drinks (\$10 each!! - the family no doubt got a nice kickback for bringing us in) and then asked if we would give them money for powdered milk for their son. So a \$2 drink was 5X as much because we assumed it would be a normal price and didn't ask first (and trusted the "nice" family). We heard of the same type of thing happening with tourists who were invited to go to dinner - then the dinner bill comes and it is 3X the normal price. **Always ask how much things are before you order** and be wary of the prices of paying for food when a Cuban you have just met is joining you as your guest.

### **Helpful Information and Websites (also see those listed above)**

Use the Lonely Planet Guide - <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/cuba#ixzz2tdiNpgCo>  
<http://www.cubaexplorer.com/116.php>

## **Havana**

Population: 2.16 million

Havana is intoxicating and it would be easy to spend our entire 12 day trip just in the city here.

Pick up at the Havana airport by taxi \$25 (arranged by Jorge before we left)  
Taxicuba - Reymi Martinez Ramos  
05 271 8959

### **Casa Particular:**

Casa Victoria - highly recommended - \$35 CUC/night; breakfast - \$4 CUC/person (did not offer lunch or dinner) . Nice location on the northern border of Havana Centro and Havana Vieja.

Malecon #51 Piso 6 e/Cárcel y Genios (High rise -6th floor by elevator) on the malecon by La Punta). Enter by the back door

Victoria Cantero Lopez and sister Marguerite (M's daughter Gise, husband Martin - both doctors and 18 month old Jason Miguel)

T: 53-7-864-7415

Cell 53-53232558

Email through Marguerite's daughter who is a doctor: [gisemartin@infomed.sld.cu](mailto:gisemartin@infomed.sld.cu)

Great breezy view of La Punta and the fort at the entrance to the harbor. There are 3 rooms here for tourists.

No english is spoken - some spanish would be helpful

La Hostal Caridad - just fair - Calle (Leonor Pérez) Paula, No. 110 bajos, e/Damas and Cuba (kind of a casa particular but no one actually resided there - I think they were next door and there were at least 4 rooms). We stayed here our last 2 nights because we wanted to see a different part of Havana than at Casa Victoria's)

\$30 CUC/night; breakfast was \$3 CUC.

537 8603987

Contact: Nelson

Located at the south end of Havana Vieja near the artisan market - the area looks a little dicey but it was safe.

## **Hotels**

Hotel El Comendador - Calle Obrapia #55, corner Baratillo (really wanted to stay here for a last night treat but we didn't)

Double - over \$200/night

[reserva@habaguanexhvalencia.co.cu](mailto:reserva@habaguanexhvalencia.co.cu)

537- 867 1037

A Habaguanex (state) property

Intimate place with 14 rooms

I love the location near the sea -18th century restored house

Has a restaurant called Onda and a cafe

Hotel National

On the malecon

Famous and elegant historic hotel where many American tourists stay

THE place during Havana's heyday

## **Tours**

Hop On/Hop Off Bus

Can catch it at Parque Central

\$5 CUC each

Tour is one hour and 40 minutes

Walking Tour of Old Havana (Havana Vieja)

Elena (organized through Jorge)

Elena's direct cell is 05 3635041

10 am - 3 hour tour with a lunch together.

\$12 CUC per hour

Driving Tour

Dania (organized through Jorge). She is a very knowledgeable and bright - lived and educated in Russia for a while. Interesting political discussions altho it was at the expense of sightseeing information. She took us to a park to see the chicken sacrifices in the River.

We specifically asked to see Jose Fuster's mosaic project and Hamel neighborhood.

Don't miss these two places!!!!

\$12/hr. for the guide

\$20/hr. for the driver

Walk the Prado - Saturdays there is art on display

Book fair - Plaza de Armas (closed Sundays)

## **Restaurants**

Hotel Nacional

Walk the Malecon, get there before sunset and have a Mojito on the expansive lawn overlooking the Straits of Florida and the sweep of the malecon as the sun goes down and lights up the city....a very iconic thing to do.

Paladar Doña Eutimia - our favorite - we ate here 3 times

On Callejon del Chorro - At the entrance to the Taller Experimental de Grafica de La Habana, off of Cathedral Plaza.

About \$7 - \$10 CUC/person

Best ropa vieja and black beans ever!!!

Castropol

on the malecon near the La Punta end - yellow building

\$20 CUC for dinner

Mama Inés - Chef is Erasmo

Calle de la Obrapia #6

between Oficios and Baratillo

862-2669

Wonderful little place with great food and outdoor tables in the street - really nice area (near Hotel El Comendador)

Love the photo inside of Erasmo with Fidel Castro.

Ivan and Justo (no sign on street) - Aguacate 9, corner of Chacon - look for the blue doorway on the left with your back to the museums; it is upstairs

Near the Revolution and Granma Museums

537-863-9697

Really good food if a little expensive by their standards. Caesar salad and lechoncita mamon asado (delicious roasted suckling pig) \$44 CUC

El Reservado (Paladar)

O'Reilly #208, Apt. 7 between Cuba and San Ignacio

[natacha0721@correodecuba.cu](mailto:natacha0721@correodecuba.cu)

T: 861-4797

Heriberto (Heri) and wife Elvis, 16 year old daughter Natasha

You'd never go here on your own let alone find this place - there are no signs on the street. Elena took us here.

Past the large front door, up a flight of marble stairs, to the second floor where there is a wraparound balcony strewn with laundry and other apartments, there is a small sign on the left hand side. The food was very good but also a bit expensive (\$15 CUC/person) as these places go. THIS is the picture I had in my mind about what a paladar is supposed to look like.

Nao - highly recommended but we didn't get there

Paladar Los Mercaderes - Mercaderes #207 (upstairs)

Corner of Lamparilla and Amargura

537-861-2437

Didn't actually eat here but it looked very nice with a good menu and had violinists playing in the evening - very romantic.

Mercaderes is a wonderful fun street with some street mime performers and musicians.

### **The Arts**

Art Museum - Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes - there are two museums - I only went into the one with Cuban art - excellent

I especially liked Alfredo Sosabravo's work

Ballet - 8 pm

In the austere National Theater - unfortunately the ornate Old Theater was closed for remodeling. Octogenarian and icon Alicia Alonzo received a standing ovation when she was helped to her seat in the balcony.

\$25 CUC each

Taller Experimental de Grafica de La Habana - cutting edge art



Callejon del Chorro #6

Plaza de La Catedral

Gallery as well as workshop. Drop in and watch the artists at work, many of the printing machines are antique (17th century) but still being used. Engraving workshops are given here.

Julio C. Peña Peralta - internationally shown lithographs and linoleum cut prints; uses skulls and skeletons in his imagery. Fantastic.

Large pieces range from \$100-\$250 CUC depending on the quality of the paper he uses (Fabriano is the most expensive); small ones start at \$50. He said he could send us a print if we contacted him.

Taller Experimental de Grafica de La Habana

Callejon del Chorro #62

Plaza de La Catedral

T: 862-0979

C: 05 818-5130

[calavereando@yahoo.es](mailto:calavereando@yahoo.es)

[calavereando@cubarte.cult.cu](mailto:calavereando@cubarte.cult.cu)

[tgrafica@cubarte.cult.cu](mailto:tgrafica@cubarte.cult.cu)

Eye of the Cyclone - Gallery and studio

Artist: Leo D'Lázaro - sculptures and paintings

O'Reilly #501, corner of Villegas

[www.wix.com/leodl7/leodlazar](http://www.wix.com/leodl7/leodlazar)

T: 8615359

Jose Fuster - painter and ceramicist

Estudio Taller Fuster

Calle 226, esquina 3ra. A in Jaimanitas neighborhood

[www.josefuster.com](http://www.josefuster.com)

[fuster@cubarte.cult.cu](mailto:fuster@cubarte.cult.cu)

537-2712932

An Homage to Gaudi - part Nikki de St. Phalle meets Izaiah Zagar. Fuster's work spills out beyond his house to the surrounding neighborhood.

It is in a neighborhood outside of Old Havana and you will need to get there by car or taxi.

Callejon de Hamel - Afro-Cubano art filled neighborhood such as old bathtubs repurposed as benches and wall niches.

Don't miss coming here to see the African drumming and dancing on Sundays. We thought this was going to be a tourist activity - and there were a lot of tourists - but there were a lot of locals and neighborhood people there as well.

## **Music**

Cafe Taberna

Bars on Obispo (lluvia del Oro)

Buena Vista Social Club concerts

Hotel National - famous floor show (expensive) and has Buena Vista Social Club type concert

Casa de Africa - Obrapia #157, (off Mercadores St.) - drumming, dancing (free)

Callejon Hamel - Sundays at noon - Santeria drumming, singing, dancing

"Musica Antiguo" - Old classical music - organ with choir group - in a church at the south end of Havana Vieja near the artisan market

La Floridita?

Casa de La Musica?

## **Viñales**

Population: 27,806

Getting there: There are two buses you can take: (1) The Conectando (Cubanacan) or (2) Viazul (state-run). Both lines are identical quality, price, and speed, but the first will more conveniently pick you up at a Hotel at the designated time; the second one you have to get out to the bus station which is about a \$10 taxi ride away from the Center. We took the Colectando and were picked up at 8 am at the Hotel Sevilla. We bought our tickets 24 hours in advance at the Travel Agent in the Hotel Parque Central in Havana Vieja. The 24 in-advance is a requirement of agencies unless you want to meet the bus somewhere on its route and chance that seats are available for sale from the driver.

Cost - \$12 CUC each

Hours - 4 1/2 hours with a ten-minute stop (at a touristy tobacco drying shed on a pond with a restaurant, supports made out of the bottle like trunks of palms; tobacco farmer with oxen posing for photos.)

### **Accommodations**

Casa particulars -

Casa Papo and Niulvys (she is Jorge's cousin)

Rafael Trejo #18A (Mariana Grajales y Joaquin Perez)

\$25 CUC/night

(they were full when we arrived so we were taken to a house across the street which had one nice room and one very small room; good food; nice family)

Los Niños - friends stayed here and liked it

Hotel

Los Jazmines - Resort with the best view of the Viñales Valley and a pool outside of town

[www.cubanacan.com](http://www.cubanacan.com)

[www.hotelescubanacan.com](http://www.hotelescubanacan.com)

Go for the little individual cabins next to and below the main building and pool. They were booked solid when we went for the sunset view and a drink

053-48-79-64-11

\$99 CUC

### **Paladars**

El Olivo - on main street

Very nice Italian restaurant - ate dinner there twice

### **Things to do:**

Morning hike to the tobacco fields, saw the harvesting at a finca, coconut drink with rum and cigar rolling, and Cueva de las Vacas - Joaquin was our young guide - \$15 CUC (\$5 /hour)

Driving tour through Viñales Valley into the National Park and caves - Jordan (lived next to our Casa Particular) in his vintage car taxi ('57 Chevy Fairlane) - \$30 CUC

Included taking us later for a sunset view of Valle de Silencio where we hung out at an Agricoecological Farm with lots of tourists - very congenial and had a nice herbal drink.

Botanical Garden - \$3 CUC donation - not worth it since there were no orchids in bloom.

Sunset view at Los Jazmina Hotel - Taxi driver took us there and waited for us - \$5 CUC  
Picture-postcard view HIGHLY recommended.

## **Cienfuegos - The Pearl of the South**

Population: 186,644

On the Caribbean

### **Getting There -**

Took a bus from Vinãles at 7 or 7:30 - there was much confusion because a bus had broken down on its way to pick us up. So we left on a later bus.

Stopped in a nice park with a restaurant for a one hour lunch (had a terrific pulled pork sandwich)

Arrived in Cienfuegos at 2 pm where we were met by our paladar person

Local transportation to La Punta area - \$3 CUC by bicycle taxi

### **Casa Particular:**

Hostal Boulevard or Tony's - \$25/night; breakfast \$4 CUC  
with Tony and Miriam

54th Avenue #3519, corner of 35 and 37

T: 53-43-522378

email: tonyalex@nauta.co.cu

franco@obicienfuegos.co.cu

Good location - Right on the main pedestrian street (Calle 37 known as the Paseo de Prado)

Tony is friendly and wonderful and speaks English. He is a retired engineer from a concrete facility. He told us he was discriminated against because he is a devout catholic and lost his job teaching at a university because he got married in the church. He showed us a video of his daughter singing on TV; his 14 year old grandson is studying classical guitar. The child's father lives in Australia. He has a paladar he wanted to take us to for dinner but we didn't go.

## **Hotels**

La Union Hotel - expensive classic historic hotel in the center

Hotel Jagua - Very touristy ugly monstrosity - concrete Soviet looking building in La Punta area. (eyesore next to the exquisite Palacio del Valle).

## **Eating**

Villa Lagarto - Restaurant/hotel (Tony and Mailín)

Very nice restaurant at the end of a pier on Punta Gorda

I would stay here too altho it is at the end of everything in the city. (shows a pool too)

[www.villalagartocuba.com](http://www.villalagartocuba.com)

Calle 35 #4b e/0 y Litoral, La Punta, Punta Gorda

[villalagarto\\_16@yahoo.com](mailto:villalagarto_16@yahoo.com)

T: 53 (43)519966

C: 53 52901706

Paladar Aché - Av. 38 between Calles 41 and 43

Shared a shrimp dish for \$14.50.

Very nice garden with an interesting 3-D mural of the town's landmark buildings.

Great attentive service since we arrived just as a tour group was seated - but we got our meal before them and were not waiting at all.

It was crowded and filled up as soon as we got there - just in time!

Palacio del Valle - restaurant

Went to check out the building but didn't eat here - Tours bring busloads in for a noon meal. Spectacular building.

## **Things to Do:**

El Nicho is a popular day trip to a waterfall, swimming hole, and hiking (30 mi. away).

There is a restaurant there; [www.palmarescuba.com](http://www.palmarescuba.com). We didn't go.

## **Trinidad**

Population: 60,206

**Getting There:** By Viazul bus - \$6 CUC each. Transtur needed 2 day advance for buying tickets.

### **Casa Particulars**

Hostal Colina - Maceo #374 (in Lonely Planet) - would definitely pick this place to stay.

email: [zulenaar@yahoo.com.es](mailto:zulenaar@yahoo.com.es)

005341-992319

\$30 CUC/night

Reservation recommended 2 months in advance.

Beautiful landscaped courtyard with bar/eating area; very nice bedrooms with impressively large bathrooms (with a bidet); open feeling; nice location

Hostal Yolanda Maria - Piro Guinart #227 - directly across from the bus station

phone 041 996381

cell +53 52905508

Very large old house furnished in antiques with a spiral staircase up to an eating area on the second floor. Looked very interesting.

Our paladar near the bus stop was only fair - 1 room in the back of the house. Didn't care for the couple too much although they were nice. We could have eaten dinners there but we didn't.

### **Restaurants**

Sol Ananda - Calle Real #45 on the Main Plaza (Plaza Mayor) - really enjoyed this place!

[www.solananda.trinicuba.com](http://www.solananda.trinicuba.com)

Wonderful food served in a unique restored house museum, accompanied by a great salsa trio. The papaya gazpacho was to die for! We sat at a table in one of the "bedrooms".

\$26 CUC with 2 appetizers, one main dish, and dessert.

Wonderful live music.

### **Tour**

Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills)

\$10 CUC each - the steam engine was a big draw but it doesn't exist any more so this tour has lost much of its charm.

The train no longer uses the steam engine but another one of 1960's vintage. The cars are open wooden ones with a bar and roving troubador. Goes through the Valley where the sugar cane industry flourished in the 19th century to the village of Manaca Iznaga where there is an old hacienda and bell tower/view point (276 m. high) (with touristy vendors selling stuff like bedspreads). The tour continues to another hacienda for lunch. The 9:30 - 2:30 trip is worth one way only (you arrive at Iznaga at 11:30); arrange a car to take you back to Trinidad at about noon. That is plenty of time. Not worth sticking around any longer for the return trip.

### **Museum**

Romantic Museum in the Brunet Palace - Main Plaza

\$2 CUC entrance fee /person; great guide - tipped her.

### **Music**

Trinidad has great music!!

Casa de Musica on the steps above and to the right of the Main Plaza - the place to be!!

Great mix of live bands and salsa dancing. There was a cover charge on Thurs. night but not in the afternoons or other nights - there was also a Folkloric show with African drumming.

Casa de Trova - stopped in to listen to the music.

### **Leaving Trinidad for Havana -**

We made the mistake of buying tickets for the Viazul bus back instead of the Colectando or Transtur. This meant the end destination was the Viazul bus station in Havana which is way out of town. We bargained hard with a taxi driver and shared the cab with a German couple we met in the bus station so we paid \$8 CUC (\$4 per couple) instead of the normal \$10 CUC into the Havana Vieja.

We left Trinidad at 7:30 am and arrived at the bus station in Havana at 2 pm.

