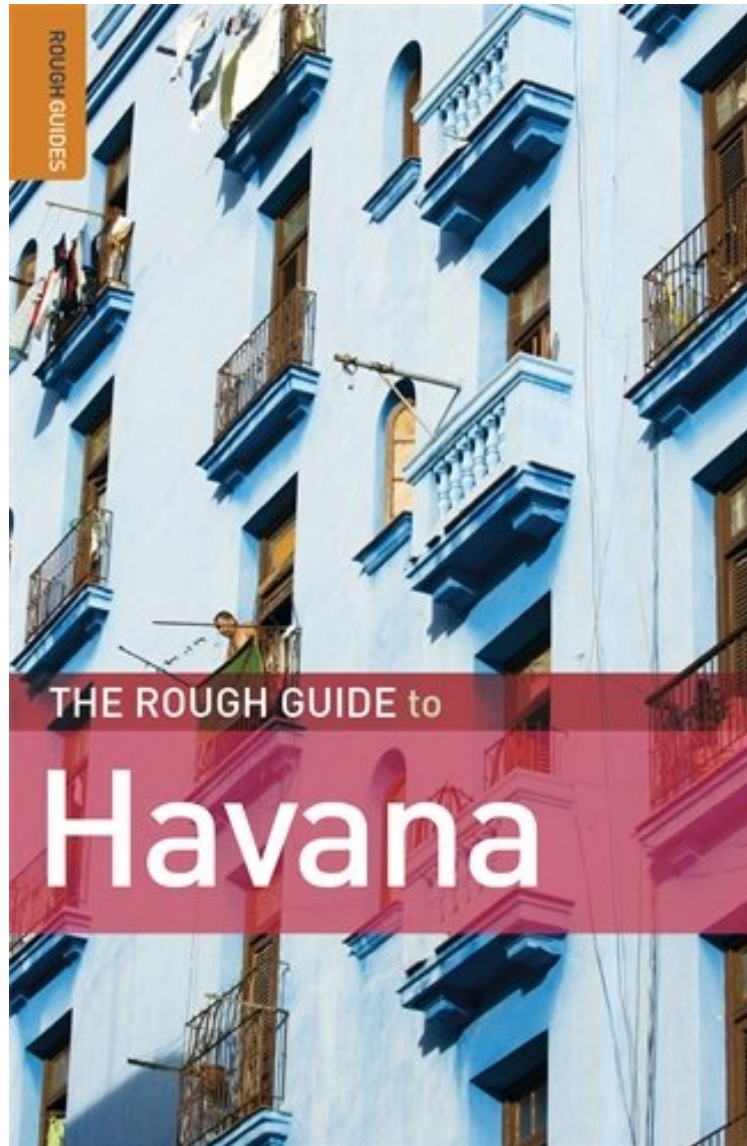


(Ebook pdf) The Rough Guide to Havana

The Rough Guide to Havana

Fiona McAuslan, Matthew Norman

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#2219282 in Books 2010-01-04 2010-01-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.75 x .59 x 5.00l, .67 #File Name: 1848362587232 pages | File size: 35.Mb

Fiona McAuslan, Matthew Norman : The Rough Guide to Havana before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rough Guide to Havana:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A very good guide that nonetheless oversells the cityBy MikeJust saying the name "Cuba" can evoke either hosannas of appreciation or violent gnashing of teeth, depending on who's doing the talking and the listening. I can't think of another destination with such divided opinion, because of the baggage that people have carried for the subject since 1958. This book tends to fall in the first camp, and, in doing so,

misses informing the reader of the very legitimate issues that so disturb the second camp. I have just returned from Cuba where I had a chance to use the book on the ground in Havana. It does a good job of laying out the city and describing its many interesting sites and locales. From the descriptions I read before the trip, I had expectations of a charming Caribbean metropolis resurgent after years of dormancy. While there is that side of Havana in certain small selected areas, the book pretty much ignores the very real widespread poverty, neglect, and crumbling infrastructure edging into outright collapse that is rampant throughout the city. Aggressive sidewalk begging (direct and indirect) are to be found in every plaza and neighborhood where tourists might be sightseeing, evidence of deep poverty throughout the capital. People beg not just for money but for things as simple as food, soap or even ballpoint pens. This is not Haiti to be sure, but it is clearly poorer than most other Latin countries. A completely honest travel guide to Havana would prepare the visitor for this experience, and provide useful advice for dealing with it. Similarly, the physical collapse of the city over the past half century still outweighs by orders of magnitude the targeted renovations that have taken place in selected areas such as Havana Vieja. Perhaps most important, the tourist needs to know that s/he is the expected source of Cuba's rehabilitation in the coming years. The country spent 30 years as a dependency of the Soviet Union, and now depends on Venezuela to keep it above water. But half a century of the socialist experiment has led to economic decline rather than to development. So the new plan is for Cuba to once again become a tourist playground for the developed world - Europe, Canada, some of the Latin American countries, and, eventually the US. The early signs are already there, the goal being to shift Cuban dependency to relatively wealthy foreigners, either by selling them tourist services (sometimes greatly overpriced), or, given the underground economy, seeking handouts and even bribes for helpful individuals and organizations. All this we experienced firsthand in our visit to Cuba, but little of it more than alluded to in the Rough Guide to Havana. A truly helpful guide would address these issues honestly, to prepare the tourist. I can offer a concrete example from the book. On page 161, there is a recommendation for a guayabera shop, Guayabera Habanera, near Plaza de Armas. The book says, "The place to come for an authentic guayabera." (the classic 4 pocket Cuban shirt) I wanted one of these shirts and made a special trip to the shop but found its products of poor quality, over-priced (even by American standards), many of them actually imported from China. The book was published only 2 years ago, so either the original recommendation was baseless, or the shop has progressed to tourist trap standards in just 24 months. Also, while relatively few Americans visit Cuba, their numbers are now growing and the book should reflect that fact in at least one respect: use of American money. The book does point out the 10% fee charged to exchange US dollars, but it should go one step further and strongly urge Americans to travel with either Canadian dollars or euros in order to avoid that fee. The costs really add up when you pay a fee of that amount. We visited with Canadian dollars and that helped us to keep the costs manageable when faced with some unexpected expenses. So to conclude, this is a good, useful book as far as it goes, but could better prepare travelers for current and evolving conditions in its next edition.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Clear and well organized guide -- the best one to use

By MYI just returned from a trip to Cuba, and the Rough Guide was the best book we had for Havana (I travelled with 2 friends, and we had 6 guidebooks between the 3 of us) -- it was the only one we used. Everything is clearly marked and easy to use. All the maps were great and we used them all. Even though published in Jan 2010, the info wasn't entirely up to date for our trip in mid-March 2010. For example, the paladar La Guarida (also listed in Lonely Planet and Frommers) is now closed down. I can't speak highly enough of this Rough Guide -- I plan to buy them from now on when travelling.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars

By altajburton Wasn't what I wanted.

The Rough Guide to Havana is the essential travel guide, with clear maps and coverage of the unforgettable attractions of Cuba's lively capital from the Museo de la Revolucion and other must-visit museums and galleries to splendid architectural gems including the Catedral de San Cristobal. This Rough Guide steers you to the best restaurants, stylish bars and cafes, and hottest nightlife in Havana across every price range. The guide provides comprehensive coverage of hotels as well as private homestays, the best places to stay for an up-close experience of life in Cuba. You'll find detailed coverage of the outer boroughs La Lisa and Marianao as well as an unprecedented level of detail for the main four city neighborhoods, Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, Vedado, and Miramar. Rely on insider tips on everything from where to go for local music and jazz; shop for Cuban film posters, guayabera shirts and rum; and witness the time, skill and effort involved in producing Cuban cigars. You can explore all corners of the city with authoritative background on Cuban history and a succinct political analysis of the Cuban Revolution, relying on the clearest maps of any guide and practical language tips. Make the most of your trip with The Rough Guide to Havana.