
Havana, Same as Always, in its 498 Years

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Havana walks in a pilgrimage toward its origins on November 16th, when it celebrates the 498th anniversary of its foundation, while the monumental conservation and restoration work in its eldest side continues.

In many ways the date will be celebrated in the different cultural institutions under the City Historian Office.

On Wednesday November 15th, starting 10 A.M. it will take place the traditional ceremony for the 498 years of the establishment of San Cristóbal de la Habana village in the former Carenas Harbor, right on the eve of its foundation date.

The journey will begin at the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales and will reach the Templete, place that marks the foundational spot of Cuba's capital. There, the Historian of the City, Doctor Eusebio Leal Spengler, will speak of Havana in its new anniversary.

And on Thursday November 16th, Havana residents and visitors will return to the Templete, to go around the foundational Ceiba tree, as it's tradition, thus remembering a new anniversary of an event, mysterious until today that should have happened on such a day, but of year 1519.

Museums and cultural institutions of the Havana City Historian Office will also join the celebration, with different proposals.

All through November, from Thursday to Sundays, in the mornings, the Quinta de los Molinos organizes the calls to the winter Routes, traveled through that great garden with just visiting the first Butterfly House of Cuba and other attracting themes of this ecological park.

On the other hand, the Casa de la Obra Pía on Tuesday November 14th, in the afternoon, a Habano Cigar Gathering, organized by the Museum of Tobacco and dedicated to two personalities linked to Havana and cigars: Francesco Minettif and José Casteleiro. While, on Wednesday 15th, also in the afternoon, it will be inaugurated at

the Government Palace, the exhibition “Landmarks for the 498th Anniversary of the City.”

The exhibition proposes a journey through the history of Havana using patrimonial pieces on Cuba’s first coinage system, the first coins made in the former village, the medals of the city and the Havana lottery.

According to sources from the Direction of Cultural Administration of the Havana City Historian Office, on November 16th, in the morning, in the Public Library Rubén Martínez Villena will take place the awarding ceremony of the competition “The Giraldilla Wants to Know”. AND for 2:00 p.m., the House of Chinese Arts and Traditions will organize the performance “Painting my City”, with students from the plastic arts workshop from the School for Special Needs Adelaida Piñera.

On November 15th and 16th, starting at 8:00 p.m. will be exhibited on the walls of Real Fuerza Castle Museum, located around the Armas Square, the projection of nearly a hundred pictures of historical postcards of Havana dating 1900-1930. The images have been taken of the book “Havana Revisited. An architectural inheritance”, of the photographer and art historian Cathryn Griffith.

Likewise, several exhibitions are announced, regarding this celebration, in different cultural institutions of the City Historian Office, among them, the House of Africa, the Numismatic Museum and the Museum of Colonial Art.

Since 1982, the historical center of Old Havana and its fortifications were declared by UNESCO, Cultural Patrimony of Humanity. A lot it has been done since then by the City Historian Office, lead by Doctor Eusebio Leal, and other Cuban institutions, for the conservation and restoration of the entire historical and cultural legacy of the city.

This whole monumental work has been developed from a global and multiple vision of restoration. This has allowed to not only to face the whole work from a point of view not only cultural, archaeological, and patrimonial, but also social. And today Cuba shows a viable and sustainable experience, with possible forms of applicability and/or adaptation to different cities of the World Patrimony.

Special attractions in the historical center of Old Havana are the multiple museums; the network of tradition bazaars that reproduce flourishing trade of Havana from the XVIII and XIX centuries; its gallery-workshops where famous plastic contemporary Cuban artists create and exhibit their works; the concert rooms, specialized in coral, chamber and ancient music; the squares that rekindle the vitality of old.

Hence, Havana, the capital of all Cubans, reaches its 498th anniversary, with a city that looks to its past, proud of its present, a city that received the condition of Wonder City of the World.
