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Wonderful Havana celebrates 500 years

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In the midst of a heightened traveler interest from all over the world in Cuba, its capital of Havana reaches its 500th anniversary this November 16, demonstrating its unquestionable appeal.

Refurbished restaurants, social facilities, schools and other establishments reopen their doors to celebrate the date, while music and dance accompany the significant date celebrated by Cubans and foreigners alike.

Large numbers of tourists from all over the world join the revelry.

Declared among the Seven Wonder Cities of the World, Havana is known not only for its beauty, but for the traditions of its people.

The well-preserved urban landscape, thanks to the Office of the City Historian (Eusebio Leal) and the serious efforts of the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) and other bodies, welcomes people from all over the world.

Founded definitively in 1519 in the shade of a leafy Ceiba tree, Havana quickly became a very cosmopolitan city, full of travelers from all over the world.

Havana residents represent this mix of people, with Spanish, African, Chinese, Haitian, German, French, and Jewish roots.

The Villa of San Cristobal de La Habana was founded on November 16, 1519, on the shores of Puerto Carenas, after an initial settlement was founded on the south coast of the country in 1515.

This first city in the western insular area is described by historians as hugely significant, due to its monuments and unique patrimonial values, where five centuries of history come together.

Its bay became the meeting point of the entire Spanish fleet on their voyages to the metropolis carrying riches from all over the Western Hemisphere, guarded by warships, given the constant threat of pirates.

Given its particular appeal, the city was invaded in 1555 by pirates and in 1792 by the English.

Havana's historic richness was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) when it was declared a World Heritage Site in 1982.

The capital of the Republic of Cuba stretches over an area of 732 square kilometers and has 15 municipalities of which nine are totally urban.

Old Havana is formed by 4.5 square kilometers, 2.2 kilometers of which attract more than 90 percent of all travelers who arrive in the country.

Today the city is rejuvenated, despite the difficulties presented by its magnitude, and ready to celebrate its 500 years.

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