

SOUL PACKER

LOW BUDGET BACKPACKER TRAVEL
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JOURNEY#
VOL
12

EXPERIENCE & JOURNEY
to HAVANA, TRINIDAD and more!

ENJOY THE BEST MOJITO
by the CARIBBEAN SEA

LATEST GADGETS
for BACKPACKERS

SEASON'S TOP PICK!

CUBA



**HAVANA
TRINIDAD**

MAR/2019 CAD\$12 US\$9





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Islands in the Streams

COVER STORY

Backpacker Brent shares her top moments, spots and discoveries at Havana and Trinidad.

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Mojito by the Oceans

COVER STORY

A true leisure with world's first and best Mojito made in Cuba, at the lounge of Playa Paraiso Beach.



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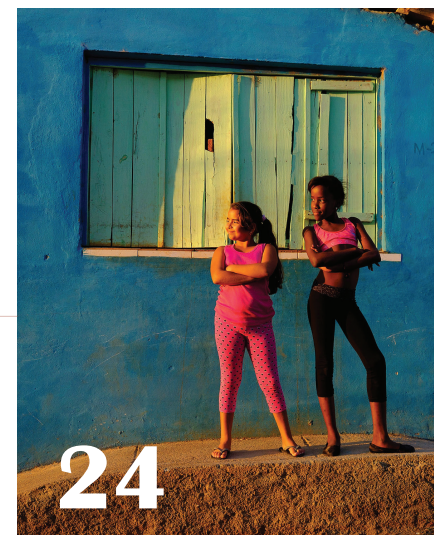
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A place where local would lie all day to feel the waves, the breeze and watch sunset in Spring.

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On The Cover
Photography by Brent Calis and Nicola Bailey

HAVANA &
TRINIDAD

ISLANDS IN THE STREAM

Story by Brent Calis.
Photography by Brent Calis and Nicola Bailey.

Living on the Islands of Colors, 5-year backpacker Brent Calis shares her discoveries and experience of colors from an outsider to insider

A backpacker, photographer's dream, Cuba has long captivated artists, writers and travellers with its vintage cars, cobbled streets and colorful facades. But Cuba isn't just a pretty face. Social structures, political battles, and Castro's rule make it fascinating for a thousand other reasons.

Like many backpackers, I had always wanted to visit Cuba. From what I understood, the drawcards were bountiful, from vibrantly painted houses, crumbling facades and old cars to the people—dancing to music in the streets, riding horses over cobbled paths, mingling together outside in the streets. Whether you're into architecture, portraits, street photography, landscapes or the details of life, Cuba, I was told, was a traveller's checklist, photographer's dream.

With that all said, I was also acutely aware that life isn't a bed of roses for the people living there and that for every crumbling building we get excited about, a family is living inside in less than ideal circumstances, often with few economic opportunities, and sometimes hungry. Despite not being American myself, given I was visiting from my home in the United States, I also wondered what, if any, impact the past 50 odd years of strained diplomatic relations would have on people's attitudes toward me.

MALECON, HAVANA



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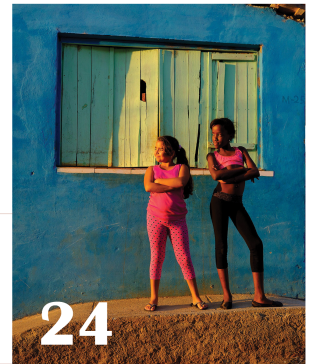
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On The Cover
Photography by Brent Calis and Nicola Bailey



TAXI RUBY, HAVANA

TAXI COLECTIVO TAXI COLECTIVO

It was relatively easy and fairly affordable to jump in a taxi colectivo—essentially an old '50s car—to travel between places, and head out of town. While many people on a short trip hit up the cities for the architecture, there's no shortage of natural beauty in Cuba, from beaches to lagoons, verdant valleys, grottos and pristine waterfalls.

Longer ride on Classic Cars: I was able to get a taxi on one occasion to take me to *El Parque Cubano*, a natural park outside of Trinidad. Here I discovered one of the most magical swimming spots of my life. After plunging into the clean green waters, I swam over to a full flowing waterfall, only to discover that behind it was a deep cave full of stalactites that you could admire while floating on your back.



BUSES - Viazul

Cuban buses are cheap, but the routes fill up quickly, so you usually need to get your tickets in advance either online or in person at least a day or two early.

CUBAN TAXIS

Official taxis, in **modern cars**, will be marked and some even have meters.

Old classic car taxis are more expensive, often with set rates of **\$8-10 CUC per ride**. Try to negotiate a price before you get in!

Almendrons are local shared taxis, cheapest option at **\$ 0.50 CUC per ride**, however they aren't easy if you don't speak Spanish. They run on set routes.

Bicycle Taxis costs about **\$1 CUC**. Officially they aren't allowed to pick up tourists, but they still do.

Viñales also has a number of great attractions outside of the small town, including the 'Mural de la prehistoria', a colorful mural by **Leovigildo González Morillo** which depicts the evolution of life on the wall of a rock face, and **Cueva del Indio**, a series of caves that can be visited in a small boat.

CLEAR WALLS

In every other country where I've lived or traveled—be it a developed or lesser developed nation—there is no escaping the adverts in the streets, on billboards, on public transport, on small posters pinned to walls. Yet here there was nothing. No Coke, soap or Victoria's Secret signs. There were revolutionary images and slogans, like those above; however, advertising as we know it was absent and I can't say I missed it. I've no idea how the Cuban people feel about this, but my head certainly felt clearer.



LOCAL CONVENIENT STORE, HAVANA

LOCAL STORES

I found the stores, or lack thereof, fascinating. Accustomed to having everything you want and don't want offered to you, it felt really strange to have what felt like nothing in comparison. Locals have their stores, like the one pictured, which allows them to use their coupons, or to buy food at **market price** (if the coupons don't last the month). Mostly though these are staple items, things like rice, beans, cigarettes and detergent. Meanwhile 'luxury' items including beauty products, sunblock, contraceptives and toothpaste are much more costly and often harder to come by. Outside of the tourist areas it was a challenge even to find a bottle of water to drink.

BYE INTERNET

One thing which really stood out was the **lack of devices**. I'd become so accustomed to seeing people disengaged with the world as they peer into their luminous phone screens, that it was surprisingly pleasant to see people walking the streets with their faces raised, engaged in conversation or playing games.

There were **Wi-Fi hotspots** in some of the towns I visited; you'd know immediately when you were passing through one (the top image shows one in Havana) because locals and tourists alike would be congregating silently as they swiped away at their phones. What was also clear was while it seemed refreshing to me to be device-free, there's a clear desire for Cubans to be digitally connected to the world.

Internet card from ETECSA costs between **\$2-6CUC** for an hour of service. The internet isn't super fast, but it is fast enough to upload travel images.



“
**A COUNTRY
 THAT
 EVERYWHERE
 YOU GO,
 THERE IS
 SUNSET,
 MUSIC AND
 PEOPLE
 DANCING –
 ESPECIALLY
 IN HAVANA!**
 ”

6PM MALECON SUNSET, HAVANA



STREET MUSIC, HAVANA

GOLDEN HOURS: SUNSET

One of my favourite times of day to walk around when I'm traveling is an hour or so before the sun sets, right before the streets start to get dark. For photographers, this 'golden hour' provides the best light for taking pictures—the sun is softer than at any other time of day.

In Cuba, this time of day coincided with when the bulk of the people would come out of their homes, where they had been escaping the heat of the day, and into the streets. The streets then would be abuzz with all sorts of interactions and activities—neighbours catching up, children running round, games being played on the sidewalk, even dancing in the streets is a common sight here.

After one such afternoon of people watching, the photo above was taken as I walked back to my casa particular (a local homestay). The night had already set in, but I was captivated by the lone figure walking under the dim street lights.

CUBAN MUSIC

I remember the way the film *Buena Vista Social Club* - brought Cuban music to Western audiences in the '90s and became the soundtrack to the mojito-fueled summer parties of my youth. To the locals though, the Buena Vista Social Club was just one of many music clubs that make up their history. Indeed, Cuban music, with its West African and European (particularly Spanish) influences, is key to the culture and can be seen performed on countless street corners and bars, not to mention heard from the windows of cars and homes.



BAND PLAYING LA BAYAMESA ON STREET



LIFE IN TRINIDAD, VILLA FARM

CLOSER TO NATURE: TRINIDAD

Trinidad was possibly my favourite place in Cuba. There was so much natural beauty just outside of town, including valleys, hills and waterfalls. Yet simply strolling the cobbled streets of the town, admiring the colorful houses could provide me with hours of entertainment. As the sun set each night, locals and foreigners alike would gather to drink rum and listen to live salsa music on the steps leading up to **Casa de la Música**. For those who liked to carry on into the night, there were a couple of salsa clubs in town, though the most well known was **Disco Ayala**, located deep in a cave on a hill leading out of town.

NIGHT LIFE

DISCO Ayala

A slightly tacky cabaret with an indigenous theme that takes place in a cave up on the hill behind the Ermita Popa church. A frenetic disco, usually thick with jineteras, kicks off afterwards. Entry includes as many mojitos as you care to sink.

Hours: 10pm-3am
Price: \$10 CUC



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CAROL CALLIS, Nicola Bailey

60-YEAR-OLD LOCAL FARMER,
TRINIDAD

NICE DRIVER WHO HIGHLY
RECOMMEND CUBA CIGAR,
HAVANA

THE FAMOUS CIGAR: TOBACCO

Cuban tobacco is one of the country's main export industries. I stopped at a farm near Viñales to see a demonstration of the country's tobacco-growing process, a lesson in how to roll a cigar and, of course, how to smoke one. The tobacco worker I met explained that despite Cuban tobacco being world-renowned for its quality, the local people rarely enjoy the best of it. It's a similar story with Cuban coffee, with the best coffee beans exported overseas.

HABANA, EL FLORIDITA



FERNEST HEMINGWAY

My last night in Cuba was spent here at El Floridita, dubbed 'the cradle of the daiquiri' and one of Ernest Hemingway's old haunts. Admittedly, the cocktails' New York prices were catering to a tourist market, but some things need to be experienced, right?

As I sat at the bar, I reflected on my trip. Sure, I'd been rewarded photographically; that was a resounding yes. But I'd also experienced a journey into an entirely different economic and societal model to our own. In Cuba, I discovered it feels criminal to view things with the one white, capitalistic lens, because there is always so much more to it.



SPANISH TALK WITH LOCALS

When traveling anywhere, the beauty of a place can be a major selling point; but it's often the people you meet who make your visit unforgettable. While I don't think it's essential to have a mastery of Spanish in order to travel in Cuba, knowing a handful of key words and phrases would make your trip both easier and more enriching. I'm lucky that I have a good grasp of the language and once I was able to get a hang of the Cuban accent, I had some great conversations with some real characters, including one delightful man who showed me how his chicken loved to sit on his head.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CAROL CALLIS, Nicola Bailey

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FEATURE

How to be a Cuban in 14 days wandering in Havana and Trinidad?

Living on the Islands of Colors, 5-year backpacker Brent shares her discoveries and experience of colors from an outsider to insider.

STORY BY BRENT CALIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOLA BAILEY

MAR 1, 2019



Like many backpackers, I had always wanted to visit Cuba. From what I understood, the drawcards were bountiful, from vibrantly painted houses, crumbling facades and old cars to the people—dancing to music in the streets, riding horses over cobbled paths, mingling together outside in the streets. Whether you're into architecture, portraits, street photography, landscapes or the details of life, Cuba, I was told, was a traveller's checklist, photographer's dream.

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Biggest Taxi Ruby at Havana, where traveller can get all kinds of vehicles from buses (Viazul), taxis (old classics, almendrons and bicycle).

TAXI COLECTIVO

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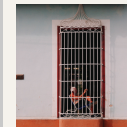
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EDITORS' PICKS



70th Year In Cuba: Try Cuban Lifestyle

Stories about a local 70 years in Cuba and treasures, hidden spots in Havana.



How has time passed by in Cuba? A closer look at local art and culture.



Paid Post: Cuba's new wifi coverage service: Better or Worse? Traveller Review

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SOULPACKER
LOW BUDGET BACKPACKER MAGAZINE

VIDEO

#CUBA Day 1: Journey from cool ride 1951 Chevrolet to Malecon Sunset



Include plan from vehicle selection, routes to attraction and approximate price spent on day 1 in Havana, stories shared by backpacker Brant Calis and Nicola Bailey.

PLAYLIST

How to entertain Cuban with Canadian jokes?

New country life in Trinidad, and meet the cows

Get first taste, smell of authentic Cuban Cigar

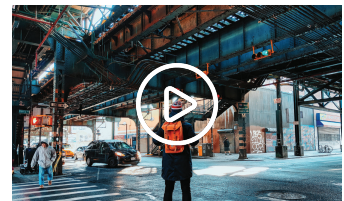
- TRAVEL LOG
- ALL LOCATIONS
- INTERVIEW



#CUBA



#JAPAN



#USA

Publication Name: **Soul Packer - CUBA**
 Issue: **March/Spring Tktk**

Editorial Lineup

STORY NAME	PAGES	STORY DESCRIPTION <i>*Be concise but add/subtract lines as needed</i>	#WORDS	% IMGS	% TEXT	STORY TONE
Front-of-Book Content (6)						
Masthead	# 1 1/3	Contributors, Travel Writers, Photographers	#400	15%	85%	profile
Editor's Letter	# 2/3	Free My Spring Spirit	#300	60%	40%	inspirational essay
Table of Contents	# 2	/	#200	80%	20%	informative service
Department: Spotlights						
Backpacker Network	# 2/3	See ambitious backpackers and their adventures in early spring	#120	80%	20%	funny, personal
Wonder Woman	# 1	Introduce backpacker Jennie Page and her 5th backpacking travel	#400	60%	40%	inspirational profile
CUBA On My Mind	# 1	Why Cuba is perfect for Backpacking in this season	#100	80%	20%	informative service
Department: The Moments						
Local Flavours	# 2	Introduce the must-try flavours and popular Cuban comfort food.	#450	60%	40%	informative service
Why is Cuba Colorful?	# 2	Interesting design influence on local architecture.	#450	60%	40%	informative service
Born and Raised	# 2.5	Two Cuban ladies Benita and Angela introduces their daily life in Havana.	#600	30%	70%	inspirational essay
Revolutionary Heritage	# 2	History and revolution background that influences current Cuba.	#400	70%	30%	informative service
Feature Well Explorer x Insights						
Islands in the Streams	#8	Backpacker Brent shares her top moments, spots and discoveries at Havana and Trinidad.	#1200	65%	35%	inspirational essay
Mojito by the Oceans	#9	A true leisure with world's first and best Mojito made in Cuba, at the lounge of Playa Paraiso Beach.	#1000	70%	30%	inspirational essay
Department: Plan x Pack						
Map My Map	#1 1/3	14 days itinerary from backpacker to another (include coming events and festivals)	#400	40%	60%	informative service
Reduce My Pack Weight!	#1 2/3	10 light weight travelling items you may not know.	#200	50%	50%	informative service
The Checklist	#2/3	Flights, Accomodation, Transport, Meals	#300	20%	80%	informative service
Quick Note from Jennie	#2of3	Notes on weather, departure date recommendations, safety, local culture	#300	25%	75%	informative service
Back-of-Book Wallflower						
Spring Breeze by Malecon	# 1	A place where local would lie all day to feel the waves, the breeze and watch sunset in Spring.	#250	20%	80%	Serious Essay
Urban Art	# 1of2	Local art and symbolism.	#120	70%	30%	Serious Essay
Like a Cuban	# 1	Comics: Speak and Act like a Cuban	#80	90%	10%	Funny short story
Ask The Experts	# 1	Travel experts answer some of the most commonly asked questions	#700	0%	100%	informative service
Next to Cuba	# 1	Backpacking destinations next to Cuba	#350	60%	40%	inspirational service

