

SOANE TRAVELS: Havana

An Insider's View of Architecture and the Arts · Wednesday, 3 April to Saturday, 6 April 2013

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM FOUNDATION

A PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROGRAM

STATEMENT ON THE TRIP:

The entertainers Beyoncé and Jay-Z (Mr. and Mrs. Shawn Carter) were among Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation members who traveled with the Foundation's recent architecture and the arts tour to Havana, Cuba (April 3 to 6, 2013). The trip, our third to Cuba, was organized over the course of several months as a fully licensed people-to-people program, and was packed with activities. The group attended lectures on the history of architecture and urban development in Havana and walking tours of architectural landmarks given by the architect and urban planner Miguel Coyula and others. Visits to several artists' studios, the ISA-Instituto Superior de Arte, and a number of other cultural stops, provided opportunities for exchanges between members of the group and Cuban students, artists, architects, and administrators. The Soane Foundation organized the tour with Academic Arrangements Abroad and Marazul Charters. To view photos from this members tour to Havana and other Soane Travels, the public may visit www.soanetravels.com

HOTEL: Saratoga

FLIGHTS: Marazul Charters using Embraer ERJ145 passenger planes from American Eagle, a unit of American Airlines. Flights used Miami International Airport to Havana's Jose Marti International Airport.

MEALS: All lunches and dinners were taken at paladars including: La Guarida, La Moneda Cuba, La Fontana, La Cucina de Lillium, San Cristobal, Dona Carmela.

A paladar is a restaurant that has been allowed to operate in a private home. All of the small privately-owned paladars afford program participants an opportunity to support the development of private enterprise in Cuba, as well as have a delicious meal. By eating in private residences, instead of state-run restaurants, program participants support the economic independence of these entrepreneurs. The owner and his or her family are present at the meal, which allows program participants to pose questions regarding the establishment and management of a business in Cuba.

PEOPLE AND PLACES PICTURED IN PHOTOS – Photos on the Soane Travels web site by Chas A. Miller III:

- Artist Yoan Capote described his works both on display and with slides projected. His work is amazingly diversified but all with meaning and purpose of message. Another work by Capote is pictured concerning the freedom of expression and art - the chained speakers are made of concrete block -- this was originally part of an outdoor installation. Other artists visited at The-Merger Studio61 gallery, and Museo Nacional of Bella Arts (Fine Arts Museum).

- ISA-Instituto Superior de Arte / National Arts Schools - built at the direction of Fidel Castro in the early 1960's. Visited the printmaking studio and met with students.

- Architect and Urban Planner Miguel Coyula presented a lecture on the architecture of Havana giving an overview from the 1600's to today. [For Soanians and Brit historians, an interesting note that Havana was occupied by the British in 1762-1763... and proved to be a pivotal moment in the development of the city, as when the British traded Havana to the Spanish for Florida – the Spaniards realized the strategic importance of Havana and the harbor, and thus major trade and development occurred following this period.] Following the lecture, Miguel Coyula lead a walking tour of Old Havana. A second walking tour was held later in the trip. A driving tour of mid-20th century large scale buildings plus low scale neighborhoods, and a brief visit to the famous La Colon cemetery was also conducted.

- We met with the director of La Colmentia, a children's theater group, and enjoyed a performance by kids ranging in age from 5 to 15 (or so...).

- Teatro Nacional de Cuba where we attended a rehearsal of the contemporary dance company. Met with the director and one of the leaders of the company.

- Performance by Haila Maria Mompie Gonzalez (know simply as Haila) who won the Latin Grammy in 2001 for the Best Folk Album; this took place at the paladar La Fontana. A variety of other evening performances were also enjoyed, including the last night with a performance by the band Charanga Habanera. Additionally, music and street performers are everywhere in the city and live music was enjoyed at every paladar / restaurant.

Required licensed operators for this people-to-people program:

Academic Arrangements Abroad, Marazul Charters, Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation

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