

# SOANE TRAVELS: Havana

An Insider's View of Architecture and the Arts · Saturday, 16 Feb. to Thursday, 21 Feb. 2013

## SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM FOUNDATION

*A PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROGRAM*

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### STATEMENT ON THE TRIP:

Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation members traveled to see and learn about architecture and the arts in Havana (February 16-21, 2013). The trip, our second to Cuba, was organized over the course of many 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 Cuban American architect Hermes Mallea, local architect and professor Maria Elena Martin and others. Hermes Mallea was with the group for all five days. 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](http://www.soanetravels.com)

**HOTEL:** Parque Central

**FLIGHTS:** Marazul Charters using Boeing 737 passenger planes from World Atlantic Airways and SkyKing. Flights used Miami International Airport to Havana's Jose Marti International Airport.

**MEALS:** Many meals were taken at paladars including: La Moneda Cuba, La Moraleja, Dona Carmela, San Cristobal.

*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:

- Lectures, walking and driving tours with Cuban American architect Hermes Mallea focused on the great houses of Havana and mid-20th century architecture. Architect and professor Maria Elena Martin presented an overview 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.] On the driving tour of mid-20th century buildings, we had a brief visit to the famous La Colon cemetery was also conducted.

- Special lecture on Current Cuban Reality presented by Jose "Pepe" Viera, a retired Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who also had served at the Cuban Mission to the United Nations in New York City.

- Artist visits included 7&60 Visual Arts Studio with Maria Cienfuegos – photographer; Frank Mujica – landscape drawings; Adrian Fernandez – photographer; and Alex Hernandez – painter. We also visited the home and studio of Sandra Ramos, an internationally recognized artist who paints dreamlike scenes. Other special visits included Museo Nacional of Bella Arts (Fine Arts Museum), and Museo Nacional de La Ceramica.

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

- House visits were made to the Alfred de Schulthess residence completed in 1956 to designs of Richard Neutra with gardens by Roberto Burl Marx, Finca La Vigia (the Hemingway House in the nearby town of San Francisco de Paula), and the former residence of María Luisa Gomez-Mena, completed in 1927 in the French Renaissance style, which now houses the Museo de Artes Decorativas (Decorative Arts Museum).

- Teatro Nacional de Cuba where we attended a rehearsal of the contemporary dance company.

- Performances were enjoyed by the classical baroque group Ars Longa, and at La Taberna, the Buena Vista Social Club. Additionally, music and street performers are everywhere in the city and live music was enjoyed at every paladar / restaurant.

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

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

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