

REVIEW: Melia Cohiba Havana in Cuba



Yes I went to Cuba, and yes it was a pretty awesome time. If you are thinking of going I highly recommend booking immediately. The country is in flux and massive amounts of investment is going in and when that happens things will just

not be the same.

Part of the charm of Cuba is how quaint it is. It's lifted straight out of the 1950's and 60's, complete with oil burning Studebakers and bright yellow and green Ladas, buildings with the architecture of a completely different era, and sensibilities of the people that you wouldn't find anywhere else in the world. Whatever romantic notions of Cuba you might have, you'll want to experience them in person before it all changes.

Hotels in Cuba are far and few in between, especially when it comes to luxury accommodations. The Melia chain is a well respected Spanish hotel chain with quite a few properties just in Cuba alone. This is one of their premier properties located right on the waterfront and in the center of Havana.

We found this property through pure serendipity, as I was planning a last minute bachelor party for one of my best friends and it just so happened to fall on "Cigar Festival week" in Cuba. This was almost a non-starter for our trip until we found the Melia Cohiba.

When we got to the hotel we realized something that all American travelers should be aware of. They don't accept credit cards from US banks! So travelers beware, bring lots of cash!



Our rooms were pretty large and decently appointed, but if you don't like hard beds – well, tough luck

Rooms were decently sized, clean and hospitable, but in most other countries this 5-star establishment would be more comparable to a 3-star hotel, imagine a Garden Inn or basic Hilton property.



This is the best it'll ever look at a 5-star resort in Cuba. Come in with modified expectations and you'll be just fine!

Staff were extremely courteous, the concierge was beyond

helpful in a country where internet is sparse and you can't just Google or Yelp something on a whim, and the bar was open till very late at night – also a godsend when you're not a native Spanish speaker and television options are scarce at best.

My favorite part of the hotel? The concierge – whom was kind enough to setup activities for us on a strict budget (remember how I said how we did not anticipate having to pay the hotel in cash? Well that took a big chunk out of what we had on hand). A rum & cigar factory visit, a ride around town in a convertible, a picnic up in the hills, and even a visit to a Paladres that was highly recommended. If we had not stayed at this hotel, we would've been SOL what with the last minute planning and lack of information accessible to us.

PROS:

- The concierges at the hotel really made our trip, they knew what to do and how to do it on a budget which was important to our group during this trip, and accommodated some very last minute reservations during what was a very busy week in Havana
- Large rooms which were great for our group, it's actually very tough to find 2-3 bedroom options at hotels which aren't exorbitantly expensive

CONS:

- There was a certain air of staleness throughout the property, but this was probably just because Cuba is still in its early stages of modernization. Take it for what it is when you go!
- The pool food is absolutely terrible at the hotel, I highly recommend against it. Go for the buffet which is much better on the second floor

SECRETS:

- Buy cigars at the hotel, you're less likely to get fake ones from here than at shady vendors out in the city

OTHER THINGS TO DO IN HAVANA:

- Check out the dance halls and bars and clubs in the city. The Cuban people are extremely kind and they love to dance and you're not getting the full experience if you don't go out and mingle and dance with the locals. I promise you'll have a great time!