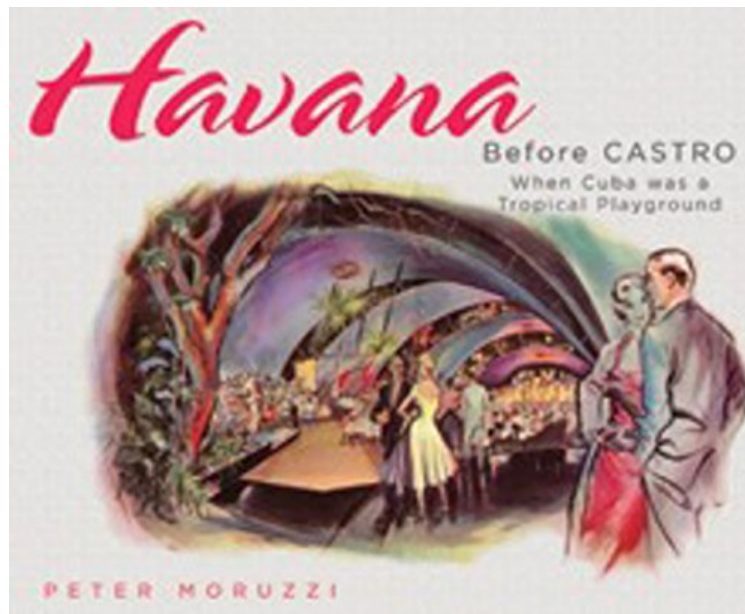


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Havana Before Castro: When Cuba Was a Tropical Playground

Peter Moruzzi

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Peter Moruzzi : Havana Before Castro: When Cuba Was a Tropical Playground before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Havana Before Castro: When Cuba Was a Tropical Playground:

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Through vintage and contemporary photographs, brochures, postcards, and artifacts evocative of time and place, Havana Before Castro tells the story of the city that was the most popular exotic destination for Americans during the forty years between World War I and Castro's revolution. See how Havana evolved from America's Prohibition haven and rich man's playground to a heady blend of glittering nightclubs, outrageous cabarets, all-night bars, and backstreet

brothels. Visit Havana's seamy Shanghai Theatre as well as its glamorous Tropicana, Montmartre, and Sans Souci nightclubs. Linger at La Floridita -- the cradle of the daiquiri cocktail (one of Hemingway's favorite watering holes) -- rub elbows with Frank Sinatra at Sloppy Joe's Bar, and learn why Cuban cigars remain the world's most highly prized. Follow the parade of corrupt presidents who, along with American mobsters such as Meyer Lansky, welcomed the mass tourism that led to Havana becoming a tropical Vegas swirling in a haze of rum and cigars, backed by a conga beat.

A fascinating look at Havana, visually rich with hundreds of photos and other unique images, this addition to the literature on one of the world's urban architectural treasures is authored by an architectural historian. Moruzzi's fluid text embellishes the illustrations, drawn mostly from his own collection. Havana enjoys a captivating history, and the legacy of gambling, hotels, drugs, sex, and nightlife makes for an unparalleled reading experience. Moruzzi emphasizes the building boom of the 1950s, when American mob characters benefited from President Fulgencio Batista's corrupt regime and tourists flocked to the enchanted island a mere 90 miles from America, helped by airlines and cruise lines offering tour packages to Havana. The vivid descriptions of casinos and hotels, many still standing, bring a lost era to life. This attractive book is written for a popular audience but is highly recommended for academic as well as public libraries. (Boyd Childress Library Journal 2008-05-15) If you're looking for images, "Havana Before Castro" has them in bulk. Peter Moruzzi's infatuation with Cuba is illustrated in grand and grandiose style. It's a pop-culture potpourri. (Peter M Gianotti Newsday 2008-09-21) [The book] really put me there: It made me feel like I was staying in towering modernist hotels, ogling dancing girls at nightclubs like the Montmartre, swilling mojitos with Graham Greene and Meyer Lansky, and tapping my toes to the Orquesta Aragon. (Los Angeles Times 2008-09-01) A juanty, poignant portrait of the city in its pre-revolutionary heyday as a Caribbean playground. [The book] goes a long way toward filling in the mental picture of a city that has been enticingly evoked by movies such as "Our Man in Havana" (1959) and "The Godfather: Part II" (1974)." (Wall Street Journal 2008-07-24) A most extraordinary book that fills my heart with profound love, sadness, and deep nostalgia. (Andy Garcia 2008-10-09) The glamour of Old Cuba with its music, nightlife, culture and tropical beauty is perfectly expressed in these pages. (Desi Arnaz, Jr. 2008-10-09) From the Inside Flap Through vintage and contemporary photographs, brochures, and artifacts evocative of time and place, Havana Before Castro tells the story of the city that was the most popular exotic destination for Americans during the forty years between World War I and Castro's revolution. See how Havana evolved from Prohibition haven and rich man's playground to a heady blend of glittering nightclubs, outrageous cabarets, all-night bars, and backstreet brothels. Visit Havana's seamy Shanghai Theatre as well as its glamorous Tropicana, roam the stately Hotel Sevilla-Biltmore and ultramodern Habana Hilton. Savor a daiquiri at La Floridita (one of Hemingway's favorite watering holes), rub elbows with movie stars at Sloppy Joe's bar, and learn why Cuban cigars remain the world's most highly prized. Celebrate the influence of Cuban music on American popular culture--the rumba, mambo, cha-cha-ch, and salsa--from its earliest stars such as Xavier Cugat and Desi Arnaz to modern acts like the Buena Vista Social Club. Celebrate the city's architectural heritage, a Havana Modernism unique to Cuba's topography and climate. Follow the parade of corrupt presidents who, along with American mobsters such as Meyer Lansky, welcomed the mass tourism that led to Havana becoming a tropical Vegas swirling in a haze of rum and cigars, backed by a conga beat. Born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1961 and raised in Hawaii, Peter Moruzzi graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and later attended the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. An architectural historian by profession, Moruzzi is an acknowledged expert on mid-century Modern architecture and design. He resides in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles and in Palm Springs, California. He has been obsessed with the history of Cuba since 1987.

www.HavanaBeforeCastro.com About the Author An architectural historian by profession, Peter Moruzzi is an acknowledged expert on mid-century Modern architecture and design. He is the founder of the Palm Springs Modern Committee, an internationally recognized historic preservation organization, and the writer/director of Desert Holiday, a documentary film chronicling the history of Palm Springs as seen through vintage postcards. He resides in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles and in Palm Springs.