

# White Girls Don't Salsa



*Diana & Leyma teaching me salsa moves*

## 9 Hours of Salsa Lessons

Maybe not all white girls “don’t salsa”, but this white girl tried and did not get the hang of it! The set-up of my trip was 9 hours of full on, move that body, first class salsa lessons. My teachers were top professionals, two ballerinas, a dance professor, dance director and choreographer who were all trying to move my hips one way, my shoulders the other while counting out steps; one-two-three, one-two-three. After 45 minutes of heart pounding and pulsating salsa attempts, my joints creaked, my muscles ached and sweat dripped down my cheek. Further frustration occurred when a toddler watching from the sidelines, out maneuvered me with fancy hip twirls and butt thrusts! I declared my salsa lessons officially over.

**ANITA'S TIP:** take a dance class if you dare.

# Hemingway's Havana



*Floridaita Restaurant & Bar*

## "Papa's" Watering Holes

The spirit of "Papa" Ernest Hemingway floats through Havana like a thick cloud of cigar smoke. **La Bodeguita del Medio** is where he ventured for his mojito. **El Foridita** is where he chased it with a daiquiri. Passing beneath one of Havana's last vintage neon signs I stepped inside the Floridita and back in time. Posing with the life-sized bronze Hemingway perched on his favorite bar stool, Jose the bartender served me the famous **Daiquiri** rumored to have been invented by Hemingway and owner Constante Ribalaigua. Despite warnings of a "tourist trap" the Floridita is seething with indefinable mystery.

### WHERE TO GO & WHAT TO DRINK:

**Floridaita** for daiquiri - Obispo No.557  
Habana Vieja

**La Bodeguita del Medio** for mojito -  
Calle Empedrado No 206

# Trinidad



*Hat vendor on cobblestone street of Trinidad*

## The Sugar Boom

When sugar was king, **Trinidad** became one of the most prosperous cities in Cuba. Built in 1514, it is one of the few colonial treasures to endure the harsh reality of the Revolution. Named a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1988 and preserved to its original state, a stroll down the cobblestone streets is like stepping back in time. Trinidad was one of my favorite places because the ochre, blue, green and pink buildings give this historic place immense charm. The first slave rebellion took place here in 1830. Today it is a bustling tourist destination.

### WHERE TO GO:

***Bell Tower at Convento San Francisco de Asis*** - for a breath-taking view.

***Delfina's Paladar*** - small place & Camilo's friend, he called ahead.

***Shopping*** - not much to buy, street vendors and small shops in private homes.

# When Mobsters Ruled



*Poolside at the Riviera Hotel*

## Swanky Mob Spots

If you squint hard enough you can see through the veil of time when American gangsters walked the streets and ruled the casinos. Gambling, vice and corruption were legalized under dictator **Fulgencio Batista** from 1952-59. For the price of a ferry ride from Key West, Havana in the 1950s was the place to be where all the top acts in show business played. Color barriers were a non-issue. Mob boss **Meyer Lansky** set it all in motion. First, he took over the historic 1930s Nacional Hotel, then he built the super swank Riviera Hotel in 1957 where the most famous Cuban bands of the day performed. At the glam **Hotel Capri** actor George Raft was the official greeter.

### BEST 'EX' MOB SPOTS:

**Riviera Hotel** - Malecon at Paseo

**Hotel Capri** - 21st and N

**Nacional Hotel** - 21st and O



# Santa Clara



*Rusted fire hydrant in Santa Clara*

## Lively City in Central Cuba

**Santa Clara** is an inland city founded in 1689 to avoid pirate attacks. It is a university town and where Ernesto Guevara is buried and where the legend of “Che” originated. Until 1894 it was racially segregated with fences separating the sidewalks between black and whites. There are beautiful old buildings like **Teatro La Cardid** (1885) built for the poor. Santa Clara is also where my guide’s father built a spacious modern home for his family before the Revolution. They welcomed me with open arms and I had the best chicken dinner ever. His father was a wealthy jeweler. Jailed for 3 years. The government feared anyone with money would unbalance the system. Every year police show up at their door to take whatever they please, *“This belongs to us.”* You can see real sadness in his father’s eyes.

**ANITA’S TIP:** connect with locals.