
Reading & Watching List

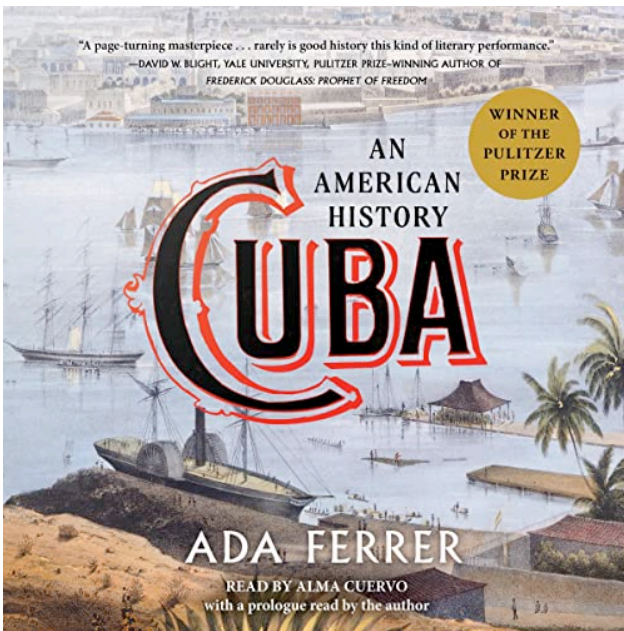
Some background for visitors to Cuba

Colin Ganley - October 2, 2022



Cuban history and literature abound. The island seems to capture the imagination of writers and academics. This list is far from complete. But if you read or watch any of these, you will be able to begin your trip early, in your imagination.

Cuba's own famous writers include: Jose Marti, Fidel Castro, Heberto Padilla, and Cecelia Valdez among many others.



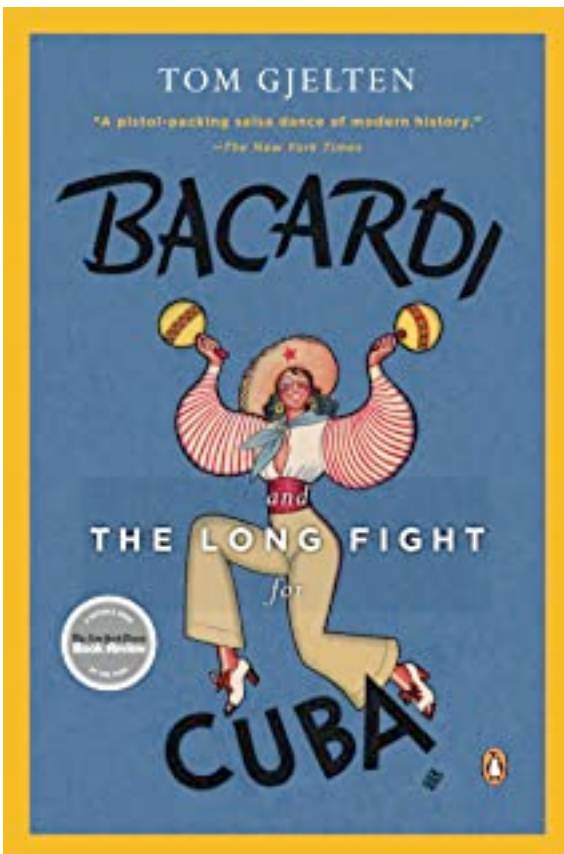
This Pulitzer Prize winning book, *An American History, Cuba*, is one I have not yet read but I will be done with it before our trip. I am mentioning it here because of its positive reviews. I cannot personally recommend it yet but others do.

The Double Life of Fidel Castro is a book written by Fidel Castro's personal bodyguard. It firmly states the perspective of many in the Expatriate community about Fidel Castro. Those more sympathetic to Fidel Castro's legacy claim that the book is filled with lies

and fabrications.

Bacardi, *The Long Fight for Cuba*, is a great history of a single influential family in Cuba and their experience and adjustments before, during

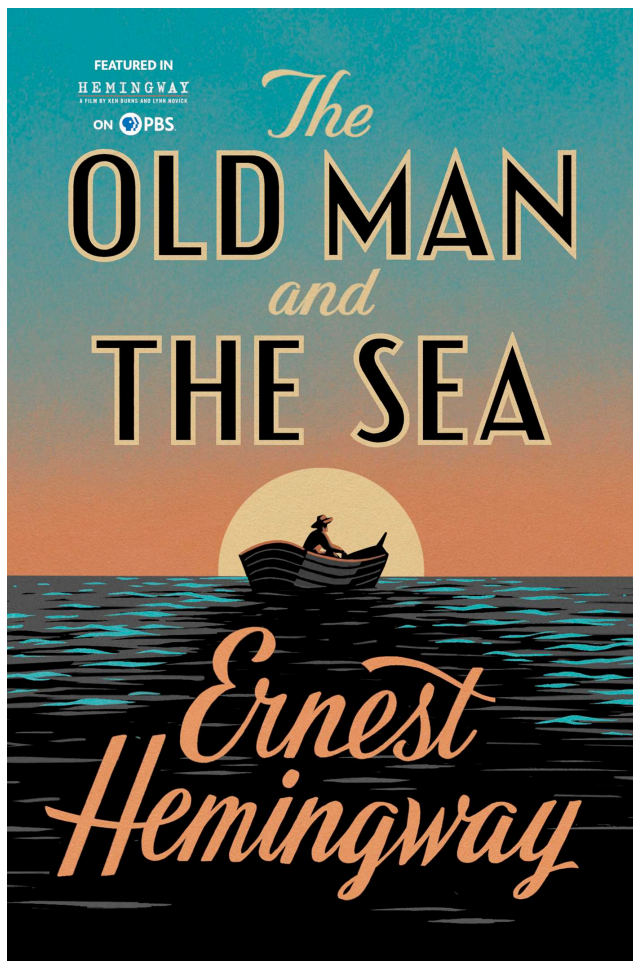
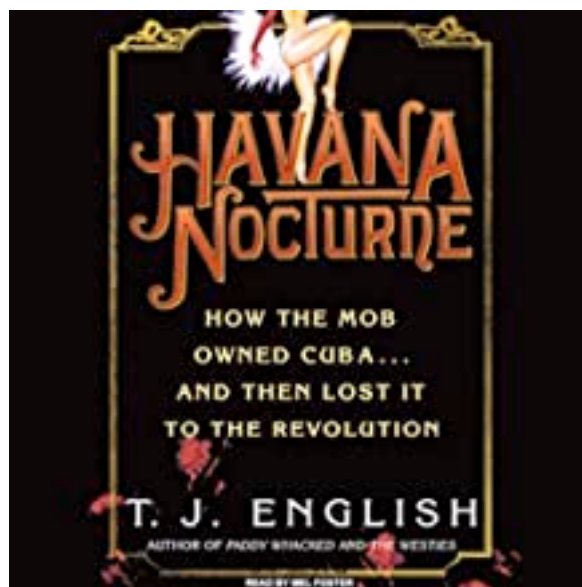
and after the Cuban



Revolution. They were not only Cuba's most famous rum company but also a politically involved family who faced an extraordinary challenge, mostly together.

Havana Nocturne is one of my favorite histories about Cuba. It does what it says on the cover. It beautifully tells the story about how the US Mafia 'owned' Cuba then lost it to the revolution. It

Ernest Hemingway left his mark on Cuba in many ways. His haunts in Havana remain operating today and his home has been turned into an historical site of interest. He wrote most of two books in Cuba and a number of articles and



letters. The iconic *The Old Man and the Sea* and *For Whom The Bell Tolls* were the major works. Of the two, *The Old Man and the Sea* is the one which clearly takes place on and off the shores of the island.



Films, movies and documentaries are challenging to recommend. Each seems to bring heavy biases. Perhaps it is the visual medium that brings this challenge, or it may be something else.

A classic of modern Cuban Cinema is Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y Chocolate) 1993. We will see some of the settings of this film during our trip. It is available to watch for free on YouTube. [Click here.](#)

A significant part of The Godfather II was set in Cuba, though filmed in the Dominican Republic. If this is a movie you like, it might be time to re-watch it. While fiction, the story and details reflect a very real aspect of Cuba's revolutionary period.



Andy Garcia's passion project, The Lost City, is again, a very stylized film but does give a sense of what Cuba was like, from a particular perspective. It is a visually rich and well produced film.

The many documentaries on the subject of Cuban History are typically biased and extreme. There are too many to name. But if you were to watch any, they would certainly offer subjects for conversation during the trip.