

La Calle Ocho / 8th Street



Right in the heart of Miami is an area that is from a Cuban storybook. In "Little Havana", you can find hand-rolled cigars, fruiterías, meat markets, herbal stores and windows with cafecitos for only 25 cents. Although Miami is new, as far as cities are concerned, you can walk from downtown with all of its art deco high rises right into old-time Cuba. On 8th Street (or Calle Ocho) between 12th and 27th Avenues lies a time warp into another reality.

A good place to start your sight-seeing is (like anywhere in Miami!) with the food! Calle Ocho offers many authentic Cuban restaurants. El Pescador offers shrimp tortillas and fish croquetas- rare but excellent. El Pub offers traditional Cuban dishes with wonderful atmosphere; spend an afternoon browsing the Cuban memorabilia on the walls.

At Maximo Gomez Park, or Domino Park as the locals call it, you can see the older generation of Cubans meet to play dominoes or chess each day. There is a large mural depicting the Summit of the Americas in 1993. Around the corner, don't miss the Little Havana Paseo de las Estrellas (Walk of the Stars). It is reminiscent of the one in Hollywood, but stars are given to Latin American actors, writers, artists and musicians.

At the corner of 13th avenue lies a memorial park with monuments to many Cuban heroes. It is a peaceful place, a nice place for a break. You can see memorials to Jose Marti (poet and revolutionary), Antonio Maceo (war hero), the Island of Cuba Memorial, and the Memorial Flame (to the heroes of the Bay of Pigs). There is a large ceiba tree with things around it- don't touch! These are offerings left by patrons affected by the souls there; to touch or remove these offerings is considered very bad luck.

For an authentic Cuban evening, plan your trip around the end of the month. The last Friday of each month is known as Viernes Culturales (Cultural Friday). It is a large Latin street party complete with music, dancing, street performers, food, local artist's wares, and theater. It is good, clean fun for the whole family.

Of course, each March, [Calle Ocho is best known as the biggest street party in the country](#) - more than 1 million people from around the world come to this single-day event! In 1998, more than 119,000 people joined in the world's longest conga line, and the festival still holds its place in the Guinness Book of World Records. You'll see dancing, eating, partying, costumes, street performers and the biggest latin stars performing. Major news crews from all over broadcast the event as Cubans from all over the country return to celebrate their roots.

Whether it's your first time on Calle Ocho or you want to see it with new eyes, whether you are coming for a day in Domino Park or the Calle Ocho Festival, there's always something new here in Little Havana. It's a piece of history you have to see to understand.