

### From the Hato de Holguin to the Cuban City of the Parks

Holguin is one of the most beautiful Cuban cities which had belonged to the former province of Oriente until 1976. That year a political division took place in the country from which emerged new provinces and capital cities, among them Holguin.

Holguin, located about eight hundred kilometers east of Havana, has been historically called "Ciudad de los Parques" (City of the Parks), but lately in order to avoid been mistaken by the Colombian city of Bucaramanga, also baptized that way, it was changed into the Cuban City of the Parks.

Holguin, a city with large corridors and tile roofs with reservoirs to collect rain water, has solid and straight streets. Its parks (squares) are gorgeous lungs of the city's identity for the exquisite and faithful conservation of the colonial architectonic structure.

There are many parks in Holguin for natives and visitors have fun in their spare time, and the Calixto Garcia the biggest of all.

Naming that park after Calixto is an everlasting homage to the noble Cuban hero born in Holguin and who ranked Lieutenant General of the Mambi Cuban rebel army, who took part in the three wars for the national independence from Spanish colonial rule.

A few meters away from the park is located the most emblematic building in the city: La Periquera, an old house that once completed belonged to Spaniard Don Francisco Rondan.

For over a century the building was also the official home of the local government. Today La Periquera is seen as the most important place in town.

The oldest parks in Holguin originated from a system of plazas in town, as the popularly named "De las Flores" (The Flowers Park), "Marti", or the "San Jose", each of them endowed with their corresponding charms and unique style.

Outside the city's downtown one can find a good deal of parks, as those located in the neighborhoods of Pueblo Nuevo, Vista Alegre and Peralta.

One thing that stands out about the parks of Holguin city is their location over the level of the streets, that's why, to reach at them you have to have to walk up stairs. They say that such a situation comes from the time the city was often flooded by the spring rains.

## **Holguin, the most beautiful land**

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Such things have been the concern of researchers who have studied the origin and all about the system of plazas which are part and parcel of the history of Holguin, which started in 1545.

More than 470 years have lapsed since the Spanish conquistador Don Garcia Holguin decided to settle down in the lands granted for his participation in the conquest of Mexico, and passed by the town hall of Bayamo, thus giving birth to the Hato de Holguin (cattle-ranch), the seed that grew till turning into one of the biggest Cuban cities today.

This is our history, as depicted in the huge mural "Origenes" (Origins), across from the city's Cathedral and Las Flores Park. But today's history, for a city like Holguin, cannot be taken into the biggest of the known murals... and its inviting and always shining parks with their special touch... and its about half a million inhabitants, in addition to the daily visitors... with virtues and faults, with its every day renovating work at the expense of the sweat shed and the huge sense of belonging.

That is Holguin... the City we love.