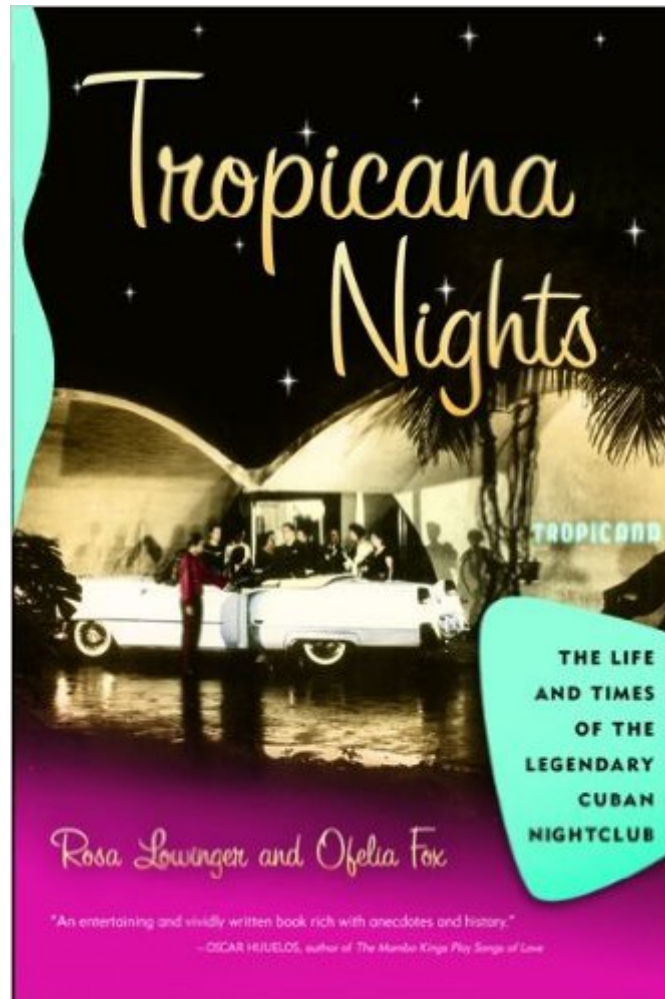


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# Tropicana Nights: The Life And Times Of The Legendary Cuban Nightclub



## Synopsis

It was to Havana what the Moulin Rouge was to Paris or the Blue Note to New York. The brightest jewel in 1950s Cuban nightlife, Tropicana was a "paradise under the stars" where you could gamble, hear the finest mambo and jazz musicians, and ogle the extravagantly risqué floorshows. Nat "King" Cole played Tropicana; so did Josephine Baker. Americans-celebrities and suburbanites both-were drawn to its kinetic sensuality and tropical setting. And Tropicana remained a uniquely Cuban institution; unlike most Havana nightclubs, it operated free from the American mob's control. Journalist Rosa Lowinger and Ofelia Fox, widow of Tropicana's last owner, vividly portray the cultural richness and roiling social problems of pre-Revolutionary Cuba and take the reader on an intimate insider's tour of one of the world's most glamorous venues at its most brilliant moment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In preparation for a trip to Cuba, I read several books. My tour included a night at Tropicana, but I felt I wouldn't have time to read *Tropicana Nights* before I left. However, the customer reviews were so glowing, that I was intrigued enough to order the book. That was a smart move on my part! The book was fastidiously researched, including many personal interviews and phone calls in several states, and in Cuba. The coauthor, Rosa Lowinger, showed a deep perception and compassion in her questioning of coauthor Ofelia Fox, widow of Tropicana's owner. I could not blame Fox for her extremely subjective recollections of the heyday of Tropicana, and I appreciate Lowinger's tact in trying to elicit more objectivity. The mesmerizing stories and photos made Tropicana come alive. How I longed to have witnessed the spectacle and elegance of those bygone

days! When I arrived at Tropicana and saw the ballerina statue in front, which had been discussed in the book, I felt an incomparable exhilaration. I love to have knowledge of a place, and then go see it for myself. To be honest, the fact that I knew so much about Tropicana's background when the others on my tour knew basically nothing, gave me a smug feeling, which I of course did not express. We were in the outdoor performance area, so I asked the tour guide about Arcos de Crystal, which had been so well described in the book. There were pictures of it posted, so even though it was closed, I got a good idea of what it looked like in its glory days. Having read such fascinating tales about the famous performers, both Cuban and American, who appeared under those arches, made the place come alive to me.

Tropicana Nights gives the reader a sense of what life was like in Havana during the 1940s and 1950s. The Tropicana nightclub embodied the creativity and glamour of that era. Tropicana still exists in Havana today. In the 1940s and 50s, it was a nightclub, cabaret and casino. It hosted performers such as Nat "King" Cole, Ginger Rogers and Liberace. Its audience was composed of the rich and famous, politicians and people wanting a special night out. Tropicana consistently met and raised people's expectations. The shows were legendary due to the imaginative choreography, live animals and beautiful Tropicana models. This book is a collaboration of two women who are brought together to tell Tropicana's story. Ofelia Fox is the widow of Martin Fox who owned the Tropicana from 1950-1962. Rosa Lowinger was born in Havana but raised in Miami. As they work together on the book, some issues are raised. Rosa and Ofelia have different views on Cuban politics. Ofelia claims that both Batista and Castro are dictators. Rosa must be sensitive about what she writes about Castro or risk being denied entry back into Cuba. Rosa is curious about the possible Mob involvement at Tropicana. Ofelia and Martin went to Trafficante's daughter's wedding and were personally entertained by Frankie Carbo (a hit man for Bugsy Siegel in the 1930s) when they visited New York. Ofelia maintains that this was just a good business relationship. but Rosa isn't so sure. It is up to the reader to decide who is right. There are also questions about Ofelia's relationship with her roommate (Rosa Sanchez). They have been together for more than 30 years yet when asked, Ofelia states that Rosa is a close friend but they are not a couple.

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