



Cuba's Car Culture: Celebrating the Island's Automotive Love Affair

Tom Cotter

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Welcome to Cuba's automotive time capsule, filled with classic cars.

The story of how Cuba came to be trapped in automotive time is a fascinating one. For decades, the island country had enjoyed healthy tourism trade and American outpost status, and by the 1950s it had the highest per capita automotive purchasing of any Latin American country - its middle class ensured an interesting variety of vehicles plying the roads. But when Cuba fell to communist rebels in 1959, so ended the inflow of new cars. Since then, trade embargo forced Cuba's car enthusiasts to develop a unique and insular culture, one marked by great creativity, such as:

Keeping a car alive with no opportunity to acquire replacement parts

Customizing a car with no access to aftermarket parts

Drag racing with no drag strip

In many ways, Cuba is an automotive time warp, where the newest car is a 1959 Chevy or perhaps one of the Soviet Ladas. *Cuba's Car Culture* offers an inside look at a unique car culture, populated with cars that have been cut off from the world so long that they've morphed into something else in the spirit of automotive survival.

Authors Tom Cotter and Bill Warner (founder of the Amelia Island Concours) take readers of *Cuba's Car Culture* on a whirlwind tour of all things automotive, beginning with Cuba's pre-Castro car and racing history and bringing us up to today's lost collector cars, street racing, and the challenges of keeping decades-old cars on the road. The book is illustrated throughout with rare historical photos as well as contemporary photos of Cuba's current car scene. For anyone who enjoys classic cars, from old Chevy Bel-Airs to Studebakers to Ford Fairlanes, a cruise around Cuba will make you feel like a kid in a candy store.

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