

Hotel K-23: Cuba's tallest (and most controversial) building opens



The hotel is located at the corner of 23rd and K in Havana's Vedado district (source: [TTC/AI-scaled](#))

Havana has a new landmark: the Iberostar Selection La Habana officially [opened its doors](#) in the Cuban capital this Wednesday. At 42 floors and 154 meters high, it is the country's tallest and most modern hotel, and also the tallest building in Cuba. However, the new building was anything but uncontroversial.

A hotel of superlatives

The hotel, which is run by the Mallorcan hotel chain Iberostar and was built entirely from the equity of the Cuban military holding Grupo Gaviota, is located on Calle 23 in the Vedado district, in the immediate vicinity of the La Rampa cinema and the Coppelia ice cream parlor. Many of the rooms in the five-star hotel are named after iconic films. On the ground floor, for example, there is the restaurant “Taxi Driver”, the lobby bar “La Dolce Vita”, an area for Cuban cinema, the buffet restaurant “Fresa y Chocolate” and the pool bar “Habanastation”, as the *Travel Trade Caribbean* portal reports.

On the roof terrace on the 32nd floor, the “Habana Selfies” area offers panoramic views of the city. At the top of the building, the “Habana Blues” sky bar promises unparalleled views. Other amenities include a parking lot, fitness studio, spa, hair salon, business gallery, bank and a multipurpose room.

According to Iberostar, the 594 rooms are free of disposable plastic. The company says it is committed to “sustainable and responsible tourism”. According to media reports, room rates

range from 147 to 325 euros per night, depending on the category, view and board basis booked. With the new construction, Iberostar is strengthening its presence in the urban segment in Cuba. In the capital, the Spanish chain already operates three other hotels in the old town: the Iberostar Grand Packard, the Iberostar Selection Parque Central and the Iberostar Marqués de la Torre.

Controversial new construction in the midst of the crisis

The “K-23” was the last major project of several luxury hotel [new builds](#) that began in the late 2010s. The construction of the skyscraper was controversial from the outset. Many Cubans see it as an affront in view of the massive supply bottlenecks. There was criticism on social media that the estimated construction costs of \$226 million to \$565 million would have been better spent on solving the power outages, renovating hospitals or building housing.

In addition, the fundamental need for such a large hotel in the area was questioned, while the neighboring Habana Libre, built in 1958 and previously Cuba's tallest hotel, can hardly be used due to [urgent renovation needs](#). On the other hand, planning for the new hotel dates back to at least 2017, when significantly higher visitor numbers were still expected.

Architecturally, the high-rise has not been met with universal approval either. Critics complain that the building does not blend in well with the cityscape. The reflective glass façade also disturbs drivers on 23rd Street and, due to its orientation, causes high energy costs for cooling the interior. Because of its design, the building is also jokingly called the “USB stick”. ([Cubaheute](#))