

AUTO-TOUR CENTRO SUR DE CARACAS HOTEL EL ARROYO

Live the Magic of Caracas: An Unforgettable Self-Guided Tour Around the El Arroyo Hotel

The Autotour of Downtown Caracas reveals a city rich in history, culture and architectural transformation. From Hotel El Arroyo, founded in 1982 and evolved from a vibrant merengue and salsa hub to a tranquil oasis, the tour traverses the historic street corner address system, a unique Caracas tradition. The Municipal Theater, inaugurated in 1881, and the National Theater, since 1905, are pillars of cultural evolution, symbolizing the transition of Caracas from a colonial city to a modern metropolis. The El Silencio neighborhood, with its squares and residential blocks, exemplifies urban progress, while the influence of Guzmán Blanco in the Ezequiel Zamora Park or El Calvario and his admiration for Paris are evident in the aesthetics and design of the city. Diversity stands out in Plaza Ali Primera and the presence of the Religious Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, reflecting a multicultural and welcoming Caracas.



Duration : 2 to 3 and a half hours , depending on the pace

Google Maps of the Tour: <http://tinyurl.com/tourarroyo>

Website: <https://www.elarroyohotel.com/>

Social networks: @elarroyobakery @hotelelarroyo (Instagram)

WhatsApp Reception (24 hours) : 0424 122 4919 / +584241224919

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AUTO-TOUR CENTRO SUR DE CARACAS HOTEL EL ARROYO

1. Hotel El Arroyo

- Founded in 1982, Hotel El Arroyo has established itself as a prominent symbol in the heart of Caracas.
- Its privileged location makes it an ideal starting point for exploring historical attractions such as El Calvario and the Municipal Theater.
- The hotel is appreciated for its internal garden, which offers a haven of peace and tranquility in the middle of the vibrant city.
- Historically, he was known for his energetic merengue and salsa events at the restaurant, which led to nightly rumbas at his nightclub, creating a festive and lively atmosphere.
- Today, it stands out for its serene and relaxed atmosphere, ideal for those seeking a quiet city retreat.
- This calm atmosphere is complemented by modern amenities, including high-speed internet, ensuring guests enjoy a comfortable and connected stay.
- El Arroyo is located on Avenida Lecuna, between the corners of *Reducto* and *Miracielos*.

Corner Address System in Caracas

- **Operation** : In Caracas, the address system is unique and characteristic. Instead of using street or avenue numbers, corner names are used. Each corner has a name, often historical or descriptive, used to orient yourself in the city. This is due to a tradition dating back to colonial times, when streets did not have official names and people used known landmarks to describe locations.
- **Benefits and Challenges** : This system brings cultural charm and a sense of history to urban navigation, but can be challenging for those unfamiliar with it. Often, street corner names reflect historical, cultural or anecdotal aspects of the area.

Reducto Corner

- **History of the Name** : The corner of "Reducto" owes its name to a military redoubt that existed in that area. A redoubt is a small, temporary fortification, and in this case, it refers to a defensive structure used during the time of Venezuela's independence. This name is a reminder of the conflicts and struggles that were experienced in Caracas during that crucial period.

Miracielos Corner

- **History of the Name** : "Miracielos" is a name that evokes a poetic image, possibly referring to a place from which expansive views of the sky could be seen or, metaphorically, a place of aspirations and hopes. In the context of Caracas, names like these often have roots in urban legends, historical events, or geographical features.

2. Municipal Theater of Caracas

The Municipal Theater of Caracas, an emblem of Antonio Guzmán Blanco's admiration for Paris and his desire to transform Caracas into a "Little Paris", is a fascinating place full of history. Its inauguration in 1881 and the events that have defined it over the years make it an essential site for your tourist tour of Caracas. Here is a detailed description that combines all the information provided:

- **Design and Construction**
 - Originally designed by French architect Esteban Aricar and completed by Venezuelan Jesús Muñoz Tébar, it incorporated iron structures imported from Great Britain.
 - In 1949, it underwent significant modifications for the development of downtown Caracas, including the reduction of its façade and the loss of the semicircular peristyle and the original vestibule.
- **Featured Events and Repertoire**
 - Inaugurated as the Guzmán Blanco Theater on April 7, 1885 with the opera "El trovador" by Giuseppe Verdi.
 - From 1960 to 1988, he stood out in national and international opera with performances by artists such as Luciano Pavarotti and Montserrat Caballé.
 - Renovated in 1967 to celebrate the 400 years of Caracas, reopening it with the opera "Doña Bárbara".
- **Curious and Cultural Facts**
 - Until 1983, he focused almost exclusively on operas, with exceptions such as a concert by Teresa Carreño in 1886.
 - Closed in 1988, with Miss Venezuela 1988 as the last event. Reopened in 1998 under the name Teatro Municipal de Caracas Alfredo Sadel.

AUTO-TOUR CENTRO SUR DE CARACAS HOTEL EL ARROYO

- Recently restored by the Mayor's Office of the Libertador Municipality of Caracas through Fundapatrimonio.
- **History and Renown**
 - The final cost of the work was 2,402,178 bolivars, evidencing the ambitious reforms of Guzmán Blanco.
 - Renamed the Municipal Theater in 1888, later adding the name of Alfredo Sadel in 1993.
 - It has been a key setting for important opera and ballet works.

This rich combination of architectural design, cultural history, notable events and Guzmán Blanco's passion for reflecting the Parisian aesthetic in Caracas, make the Municipal Theater a unique and representative place of Venezuelan cultural history.

3. Neighborhood of Silence: Plaza Miranda and Plaza O'Leary

The El Silencio neighborhood in Caracas represents a milestone in the urban development and modernization of the city, located in the center of the Venezuelan capital. This neighborhood was designed as a modern residential and commercial area, standing out for its urban planning and the integration of public spaces such as Plaza Miranda and Plaza O'Leary. El Silencio reflects the vision of modernization of Caracas in the 20th century, combining functionality and aesthetics in its design.

Miranda Square :

- Located in the San Juan Parish, it is part of the El Silencio Redevelopment, located between Baralt and Lecuna avenues.
- It is named after Generalissimo Francisco de Miranda.
- Inaugurated in 1945 as part of the project of President Isaías Medina Angarita and designed by Carlos Raúl Villanueva.
- Restored and reopened in 2006 after a period of deterioration.
-

Silence Blocks :

- Set of residential buildings in the center of Caracas, representing a significant change in urban design.
- Built by Carlos Raúl Villanueva, these buildings are an example of the modern architectural style.
- Designed to offer affordable housing and improve the quality of life in the capital.

O'Leary Square :

- Also designed by Villanueva as part of the same redevelopment project.
- Named in honor of General Daniel Florencio O'Leary.
- Known for its artistic elements and sculptures.

El Silencio and its architectural components, such as Plaza Miranda and Plaza O'Leary, are not only architecturally important but are also fundamental in the cultural and social history of Caracas, reflecting the evolution and modernization of the city. over time.

President Guzmán Blanco

Antonio Guzmán Blanco was a central figure in the history of Venezuela during the 19th century. Born on February 28, 1829 and died on July 28, 1899, Guzmán Blanco was a Venezuelan politician and military man who played a dominant role in Venezuelan politics from 1870 to 1888, through several presidential terms.

Presidencies : Guzmán Blanco had three presidencies: the first from 1870 to 1877, the second from 1879 to 1884, and the third from 1886 to 1887. His mandate was characterized by a strong centralization of power.

Importants achievements :

- He implemented a series of modernizing reforms in the country, known as "Guzmancism", which included improvements in infrastructure, education and urban services.
- He founded the Bank of Venezuela in 1877, the first of its kind in the country.
- He promoted public education and the construction of important buildings and public works.

Caracas and Paris :

- Guzmán Blanco had a great admiration for Paris and its urban development. His intention was to modernize and beautify Caracas so that it resembled the French capital, which is reflected in the numerous French-style works and buildings that he ordered to be built in the city.
- During his government, Caracas experienced a significant transformation with the construction of new buildings, squares and avenues, following the Parisian urban model.

Guzmán Blanco left a lasting legacy in Venezuela, particularly in its capital, Caracas, where his modernization and beautification efforts are still evident. His government, however, was also marked by an authoritarian and centralized style of leadership.

4. The Calvary

Ezequiel Zamora Park, also known as El Calvario, is an emblematic public space in Caracas, Venezuela, with a rich history and cultural significance. Its development and evolution reflect the admiration of Venezuelan leaders, especially Antonio Guzmán Blanco, for the style and aesthetics of Paris.

- **History and Development** : Opened in 1873, Guzmán Blanco transformed the hill into an urban park as part of his project to modernize Caracas and give it a Parisian touch. Reforestation and the creation of artificial lagoons were fundamental to this change, integrating the idea of the English natural park with the geometry of French gardening.
- **Calvario Stairs** : One of the most distinctive features of El Calvario Park are its large stairs. These are not only a means to ascend to the park, but they also have a deep cultural meaning for Caracas residents. **Symbolism and Popular Sayings** : The Calvary stairs are so famous that they have given rise to popular sayings such as "you have to climb higher than the Calvary stairs." These types of expressions reflect the effort and perseverance that is associated with climbing these stairs, comparing it to overcoming great challenges in life. **History and Cultural Context** : The stairs also represent a physical and symbolic connection between the city of Caracas and the park, uniting them through a path that is both literal and metaphorical. The experience of climbing them becomes a kind of pilgrimage, reflecting the history and traditions of the city.
- **Arch of the Federation** : Inaugurated on October 28, 1895 by President Joaquín Crespo, this arch is a colonial monument located within the park. It was designed by Juan Hurtado Manrique and Alejandro Chataing in allusion to the Venezuelan Federal War. The Arch, restored in 2010, symbolizes values such as freedom and encounter.
- **Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes** : Built in 1885, this Gothic-style chapel was added to the park during the government of Joaquín Crespo. Its architectural design adds a distinctive touch to the park's landscape.
- **Plaza el Parnaso and Other Plazas** : The park is home to several important plazas such as Plaza Simón Bolívar, Agustín Codazzi, and El Parnaso, each with its own history and meaning.
- **Sculptures and Environments** : Inside El Calvario there are busts and statues of Venezuelan historical figures such as José Joaquín de Olmedo and Simón Bolívar, enriching the cultural value of the park.
- **Historical and Cultural Heritage** : In 1993, El Calvario was declared Historical, Artistic, Architectural and Environmental Heritage, reflecting its importance in the history and culture of Caracas.
- **Rehabilitation and Changes** : Over the years, the park has undergone several rehabilitations and changes, including the restoration of its landscaping and street furniture.

El Calvario represents not only a space for recreation and nature in Caracas, but also a testimony of the efforts to beautify the city and give it a Parisian air, a reflection of the vision and aspirations of leaders such as Guzmán Blanco and Joaquín Crespo. Its mix of natural, architectural and artistic elements make it an essential destination for any tourist tour of the Venezuelan capital.

5. Simón Bolívar Center and Plaza Diego Ibarra

The Simón Bolívar Center and Plaza Diego Ibarra in Caracas are leading examples of the city's transformation into a modern metropolis. The modernization process in Caracas, reflected in these constructions, was driven in part by the discovery and exploitation of oil in Venezuela, which led to a significant increase in income and investment in urban development projects. There was also a desire to break with the colonial past and establish a modern, progressive identity for the city. These buildings and public spaces not only changed the urban landscape of Caracas, but also became symbols of its evolution towards a modern and cosmopolitan capital. Here is a detailed description that includes information about the Rotival Plan and what can be seen from Plaza Diego Ibarra:

AUTO-TOUR CENTRO SUR DE CARACAS HOTEL EL ARROYO

Simon Bolivar Center :

- Founded in 1947 as part of the Rotival Plan, an ambitious modern urbanization project.
- The Simón Bolívar Center is an architectural complex that includes the El Silencio Towers, a symbol of modern Caracas in the 1950s.
- This complex represented the change from an economy based on agriculture and oil towards industrialization and urban modernization.

Towers of Silence

- **Construction and History** : The Towers of Silence project was started by President Rómulo Gallegos in 1948 and continued after his overthrow by the Military Government Junta. Construction ended during the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez in the 1950s.
- **Architectural Design** : Designed by Venezuelan architect Cipriano Domínguez, the towers are an example of the modern style. Its architecture combines volumes and colors, with a focus on the functional and the decorative.
- **Characteristics** : The Towers have a height of 102 meters, with 30 floors above ground and 3 basements. The steel structure of the towers weighs 7,397 tons, and a total of 14,682 cubic meters of material was used in its construction.
- **Functionality** : The Simón Bolívar Center was conceived as a functional organization, with restaurants, party rooms, commercial premises, offices and various services, as well as garages and other facilities.
- **Cultural and Urban Significance** : They were the heart and symbol of modern Caracas until the construction of the Central Park Towers in the 1970s. They represented the change towards modernization and urban development of the city.

Plaza Diego Ibarra :

- Located near the Simón Bolívar Center, the plaza was inaugurated in 1968.
- The square has a central sculpture called "La Aguja", a 20-meter-high work by sculptor Luis Alfredo Ramírez, reopened in 2011.
- From the square you can see views of the National Electoral Council and the Towers of the Simón Bolívar Center.

6. Basilica of Saint Teresa

The Basilica of Santa Teresa in Caracas is a site of great religious and cultural importance, known especially for the veneration of the Nazarene of Saint Paul. Here is a detailed description of the basilica and the tradition of the Nazarene with the lemon tree:

- **Construction and Architecture** : The Basilica of Santa Teresa was built between 1877 and 1881, under the direction of the architect Juan Hurtado Manrique. It has a neoclassical style, with a central dome and facades dedicated to Saint Anne and Saint Teresa. It was during the period of Antonio Guzmán Blanco when this construction was carried out, in a context of large works and urban reforms.
- **Nazarene of San Pablo** : The image of the Nazarene of San Pablo, venerated in this basilica, is one of the most important for the faithful in Caracas, especially during Holy Week. The image was originally worshiped in the chapel of San Pablo until in 1880, during the government of Guzmán Blanco, it was transferred to the Basilica of Santa Teresa.
- **The Miracle of the Lemon Tree** : There is a popular legend related to the Nazarene of Saint Paul and a miracle that occurred in 1697 during an epidemic of the black vomit plague or scurvy in Caracas. According to tradition, in a procession with the image of the Nazarene, it became tangled in the branches of a lemon tree. The sick people who drank the juice of these lemons recovered quickly, which was interpreted as a miracle.
- **Cultural and Religious Significance** : The Basilica of Saint Teresa is not only a place of prayer and veneration, but also a meeting point for the community. During Holy Week, the image of the Nazarene of Saint Paul attracts faithful from all over the city and the country.

The Basilica of Santa Teresa and the devotion to the Nazarene of Saint Paul are examples of how religious traditions and popular beliefs have been intertwined in the history and culture of Caracas. These elements reflect not only the faith of the people of Caracas, but also the social and urban history of the city.

7. Ali Primera Square

AUTO-TOUR CENTRO SUR DE CARACAS HOTEL EL ARROYO

The Plaza Ali Primera and the Religious Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Caracas are representative of the cultural and religious diversity of the city. Plaza Ali Primera, formerly known as Plaza Padre Sojo, has gone through several name and function changes over the years, reflecting changes in Venezuelan society and politics. Initially associated with the Church founded by Father Sojo, it was renamed after George Washington and Henry Clay at different times, before adopting its current name in honor of Venezuelan singer-songwriter Ali Primera in 2011. This change underscores Primera's importance as a figure cultural and its influence on Venezuelan identity.

Ali Primera, known as "The People's Singer" of Venezuela, was an influential musician, singer-songwriter, and political activist. Born on October 31, 1942 in Coro, Falcón State, and died in a car accident in 1985, Primera is widely recognized for his protest music that focuses on social, political and humanitarian issues.

Her music reflects the struggle and aspirations of Venezuela's working and poor classes, and is often considered a powerful voice against injustice and oppression. His lyrics are known for their strong political and social message, mixing Venezuelan folk music with modern instruments and rhythms.

Primera used her music as a tool for awareness and social change, openly criticizing inequality, corruption, and the influence of foreign oil companies in Venezuela. Throughout his career, he became a symbol of resistance and hope for many Venezuelans, and his songs remain popular and relevant in Venezuelan society today.

Although her music was censored during her lifetime by the governments of the time, Primera gained a considerable following and her songs continue to inspire generations of Venezuelans and people around the world interested in social justice and protest music. His legacy lives on in Venezuela, where he is remembered as an important cultural figure and a defender of the rights of the less privileged.

The Religious Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, located nearby, represents the presence and growth of this denomination in Venezuela. Jehovah's Witnesses originated in the 19th century and have expanded worldwide. In Venezuela, they have grown steadily, despite being a religious minority in a predominantly Catholic country. Their practices and beliefs, such as their focus on biblical education and evangelism, set them apart from other Christian denominations. The organization is known for its unique structure, which includes branch committees, circuits, and congregations that meet in "Kingdom Halls."

The proximity of the Religious Center of Jehovah's Witnesses to the Basilica of Santa Teresa, an important Catholic temple, is an example of the coexistence of diverse beliefs in Caracas. This coexistence illustrates how the city has become a mosaic of different cultures and religious practices. The presence of Jehovah's Witnesses in the city and its growth reflect a trend towards greater religious and cultural diversity in the Venezuelan capital. Additionally, it is common to hear Jehovah's Witnesses singing psalms and other religious songs during their meetings and activities, which adds to the cultural richness of the city.

8. National theater

The National Theater of Caracas, inaugurated on June 11, 1905, is a prominent cultural space in Venezuela, especially known for presenting plays, operas and zarzuelas. Located in the center of Caracas, in the Santa Teresa Parish, the theater is an icon of Venezuelan architecture and culture.

- **History and Construction** : Its construction was ordered by President Cipriano Castro in 1904, in the area occupied by the old Plaza Washington. The work was commissioned by the architect Alejandro Chataing, with the collaboration of the painter Antonio Herrera Toro and the Catalan sculptor Miguel Ángel Cabré. The theater opened its doors with the presentation of the zarzuela "El Relámpago."
- **Architecture and Design** : It has an eclectic architectural style with French influences, and its horseshoe-shaped structure is built with an iron frame. The main façade stands out for two large columns that support sculptures symbolizing comedy and tragedy. The theater has a main hall with three levels and capacity for 664 spectators.
- **Cultural Importance** : It was the main place for presenting zarzuelas in Caracas, initially competing with the Municipal Theater and the now-defunct Teatro Caracas. Artists such as Alfredo Kraus, Francisco Kraus, Ernesto Palacio, Monserrat Caballé, Fedora Alemán, Alfredo Sadel, and Plácido Domingo have performed in this theater.
- **Restorations** : Over the years, the theater has gone through several stages of restoration, including work in 1949, 1967, 1992, 2005 and 2023. These efforts have been crucial to maintaining its structure and preserving its historical value.

AUTO-TOUR CENTRO SUR DE CARACAS HOTEL EL ARROYO

The National Theater of Caracas is an emblem of Venezuelan culture and a testimony of the artistic and architectural history of the city. Its rich history, impressive architecture and its role in promoting the performing arts make it an essential place to understand the cultural evolution of Caracas

9. El Arroyo Bakery

Tired of the long journey you have taken through the center of Caracas? Arroyo Bakery is the perfect place to replenish your energy. Delight yourself with our sweet pastries, from traditional strawberry tarts to irresistible bombs. Our little pieces, praised for their soft dough and abundant filling, are ideal to accompany with a refreshing malt, following the Venezuelan tradition. Relax in the cozy interior or on our beautiful oasis terrace, a respite of peace in the city.

The **ham slice** is an icon of Venezuelan bakery. Its history dates back to the mid-20th century, when European immigrants arrived in Venezuela and brought with them their recipes and culinary traditions. Adapting to local tastes and available ingredients, the cachito evolved from the French croissant, being filled with ham to satisfy Venezuelans' preferences for more robust flavors. Over time, the cachito became ubiquitous in the country's bakeries and became a staple for breakfast and snacks, often enjoyed with a malt or coffee.