Newsletter

A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

21 July 2025

Weekly Newsletter covering Latin America and the Caribbean issues. A Project between Green Zone Foundation and teleSUR.

Holguín's Cultural Traditions: A Tapestry of Heritage, Faith, and Artistic Expression

The cultural traditions of Holguín, one of Cuba's most historically rich provinces, are deeply rooted in the transculturation of aboriginal, Hispanic, and African influences. This fusion has shaped a vibrant legacy of festivals, music, and rituals that continue to define the region's identity.

Among Holguín's oldest celebrations, dating back to the 18th century, are the fiestas patronales, altars of the cross, and the iconic Romerías de Mayo. Originally inspired by Spanish customs, these events have been reimagined by the criollo population, infusing them with local flavor and meaning.



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The Romerías de Mayo stand as Holguín's most emblematic cultural expression. The festival begins with a pilgrimage to Loma de la Cruz, a hill crowned by a Christian cross placed in 1790 by Fray Antonio de Alegría to ward off epidemics. From there, the city bursts into life with street parades, concerts, art exhibitions, theater performances, and cultural forums, welcoming both national and international artists.

Holguín's countryside still celebrates guateques campesinos, where son montuno and punto guajiro—the oldest musical forms of Cuban peasants—are performed. In Sagua de Tánamo, the tumba francesa, a dance of Franco-Haitian origin, remains a living tradition, showcasing the province's syncretic cultural depth.

In the coastal town of Gibara, known as La Villa Blanca, the Festival Internacional de Cine Pobre takes place each April. This event champions independent filmmakers and emerging audiovisual talent, offering a platform for voices outside the mainstream industry.

Holguín's cultural scene is supported by institutions like the Centro Provincial de Patrimonio Cultural and the Centro Cultural "Lalita Curbelo Barberán", which preserve and promote the region's artistic and historical legacy.

Holguín's traditions are not just preserved—they're lived. From mountaintop pilgrimages to grassroots music and cinema, the province continues to celebrate its multicultural soul with pride and creativity.

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Jamaica Flower: A Global Blossom of Culture, Wellness, and Tradition

From ritual offerings to vibrant beverages, the Jamaica flower—also known as hibiscus or Roselle (Hibiscus sabdariffa)—has bloomed into a cultural and medicinal icon across continents.

Native to Africa and India, but widely cultivated in Mexico, the Caribbean, South America, and parts of Asia, this tropical plant has grown into a staple in kitchens, gardens, and healing practices around the world.

In Mexico and Central America, agua de flor de Jamaica, a tart magenta tea made from dried calyces, is a cherished refreshment paired with traditional foods. In Panama, seasonal blends include ginger, cloves, and cinnamon for Christmas and Chinese New Year.



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Across West and North Africa, the tea—locally known as karkadé—is often served at weddings or sold in bustling street markets. In Senegal, it's considered the national drink, embodying hospitality and celebration. The plant's significance crosses borders: it is also the national flower of Haiti, South Korea, and Malaysia, and holds ceremonial value in Hindu rituals where red hibiscus is offered to the goddess Kali.

Beyond its cultural footprint, the Jamaica flower plays a vital role in traditional medicine. Studies highlight its potential to lower blood pressure, combat inflammation, and support metabolism and liver function. The dried calyces, rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, are used in teas and extracts available in pharmacies and holistic markets worldwide.

Botanically, there are more than 300 hibiscus species, known for their bell-shaped blooms and adaptability to diverse climates. Whether it's the Sharon hibiscus thriving in urban shade or the rose mallow loving North American sun, the plant remains a garden favorite. Most varieties bloom in spring and summer and require six hours of sunlight, well-drained soil, and proper hydration and fertilization.

In recent years, UNESCO included hibiscus blends in its documentation of intangible cultural heritage, recognizing the flower as a carrier of history, resilience, and healing across communities.

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From colonial trade routes to backyard herbal remedies, the Jamaica flower continues to thread together stories of migration, resistance, and renewal, echoing the enduring power of plants to nourish both body and spirit.

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Leonora Carrington: The Surrealist Who Reimagined Magic in Mexico

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) is one of the most influential figures of Surrealism and an artist who left a lasting mark on art history from her adopted home in Mexico. Born in Lancashire, United Kingdom, to a wealthy family, Carrington defied social and family expectations from a young age to devote herself to painting and writing.

Her artistic training began in England and Italy, but it was in Paris, in 1937, that she entered the Surrealist circle led by André Breton and interacted with figures such as Max Ernst, with whom she had a personal and artistic relationship. From that point on, her work was defined by symbolic animals, alchemy, mythology, and active female protagonists—an explicit challenge to the traditional role of women as mere muses in the movement.



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In 1942, after a personal crisis that included her internment in Spain, Carrington arrived in Mexico. The country became her permanent home and the setting where she consolidated her style. There she formed close friendships with artists such as Remedios Varo and Kati Horna, helping shape a creative nucleus that revitalized the Mexican art scene.

Among her best-known works is Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse) (1937–38), a key piece for understanding her imagery, and Les Distractions de Dagobert (1945), which reached a historic milestone in 2024 when it sold for $28.5 million at Sotheby's—making her the most expensive British-born artist ever sold at public auction. Another emblematic work, And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur (1963), underscores her gift for merging the mythical with the personal.

Carrington worked beyond painting, exploring sculpture, printmaking, jewelry, and literature—always guided by a vision dense with symbolism and mystery. In Mexico, her legacy endures in the Leonora Carrington Museums in San Luis Potosí and Xilitla, inaugurated in 2018, which preserve an important share of her work. Her former studio in Mexico City's Colonia Roma survives as a space for research and documentation.

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Today, Carrington continues to be the subject of exhibitions, documentaries, and scholarship highlighting her role as a pioneer of a mystical, feminist, and deeply personal strain of Surrealism. She was no one's muse, as she liked to say, but the creator of a singular universe that continues to inspire new generations.

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Peru Declares 18 Pre-Hispanic Textiles Repatriated From Italy Cultural Heritage

The Ministry of Culture of Peru declared as 'Cultural Heritage of the Nation' to 18 textiles of pre-Hispanic origin that were repatriated from Italy and stand out for their high historical value, reported this Sunday an official statement.

The archaeological pieces, organized in 17 record sheets, represent cultural expressions of ancient Peruvian central Andean societies, including Nasca, Nasca-Wari, Sihuas, Chancay, Chimú and the Late Horizon.



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TThe Ministry of Culture highlights the importance of Peruvian cultural material for its technical complexity, symbolic iconography and good conservation status, highlighting its value as a testimony to the social and technological development of the native cultures of Peru.

Specialized technical reports highlight the high cultural value of the goods, as they allow reconstructing original textile practices, analyzing the knowledge of weavers and studying the beliefs embodied in their designs.

The recovery of cultural property stolen from international illicit traffic reaffirms the commitment of the Peruvian State to the protection and enhancement of its cultural heritage.

The Peruvian Ministry stated that the seizure of illegally exported cultural goods is based on the General Law of the Nation on Cultural Heritage, which states that the State automatically recovers ownership of any property illicitly exported from Peru.

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Huapango: The Rhythmic Soul of Mexico's Musical Heritage

As Mexico continues to celebrate its rich tapestry of traditional music, the huapango stands out as a vibrant emblem of cultural fusion and artistic expression. Born from the mestizaje of Indigenous, European, and African influences, huapango is more than a genre—it's a living tradition that pulses through the heart of the country's musical identity.

Originating in the Huasteca region, which spans Veracruz, San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, Tamaulipas, Puebla, Guanajuato, and Querétaro, huapango—also known as son huasteco—emerged in the late 17th century, blending Spanish folk styles like flamenco and fandango with Indigenous rhythms and African syncopation.



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The term “huapango” is believed to derive from the Nahuatl word cuahuitlipanco, meaning “on the wooden plank,” referencing the traditional dance performed atop wooden platforms, where dancers execute intricate footwork in sync with the music.

Huapango manifests in three distinct styles:

- Huapango huasteco: Performed by a trio featuring guitarra huapanguera, jarana huasteca, and violin, with musicians often improvising poetic verses.
- Huapango norteño: Played by ensembles using accordion, bajo sexto, tololoche, snare drum, and saxophone, offering a more robust and regional flavor.
- Huapango de mariachi: Delivered with vihuelas, trumpets, guitarrón, and violins, this version is often heard in festive celebrations and national showcases.

The genre continues to thrive through events like the Feria Nacional del Huapango 2025 in Tamazunchale, where traditional dance competitions and musical performances celebrate the enduring legacy of the Huasteca sound.

From ranchera ballads to corridos, huapango remains a cornerstone of Mexico’s musical landscape, embodying the sensitivity, resilience, and creativity of its people.

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