

Cuba Itinerary

Sat, Nov 5 (Day 1) – Arrive Havana

Arrive in Havana, Cuba via our planned flight. Yea for us! Easy, breezy air travel... with limited connections. We'll be picked up at the Havana airport by our local guide with private transportation for our group directly to our accommodations. So welcome to Havana! ...one of the most exciting cities in the world – definitely intriguing and unique.

Your base in Havana is in one of our Bed & Breakfast homestays in the middle of Old Havana, where we'll stay in the home of a Cuban family. See "Accommodations" tab for more details. This will allow us to have a way more authentic visit than all the tourists staying in the government-run, not-so-great hotels.

This is our arrival day so no planned activities, other than to meet and talk about our plans. If we get in earlier enough, we can get started exploring Old Havana. But we'll definitely head out to dinner together at a local paladar (privately owned restaurant) and perhaps check out the night life scene. **[Meals: Dinner]**

Sun, Nov 6 (Day 2)

In the morning we'll enjoy a guided walking tour of the historic center of Old City Havana. In addition to visiting historical sites, we'll learn about the impact of the dual-currency economy by visiting commercial centers where goods are purchased in CUC, and ration or peso stores, where goods are purchased in CUP.

We will end our tour with a visit to the fishing village of Jaimanitas and the home of the famous artist Jose Fuster. He has made his entire home, and much of the surrounding neighborhood, into artwork using tiles in mosaic forms. **[Meals: Breakfast, Lunch]**

Mon, Nov 7 (Day 3) --Viñales

We're off to the super scenic village of Viñales due west of Havana... about a 4-hour drive. On the way, we'll stop for lunch and perhaps a visit to the community of Las Terrazas and meet up with a local community leader who will share with us some insight into how the local society works. Surrounded by picturesque limestone pincushion hills ("mogotes"), Viñales is a small and culturally rich village, with friendly and welcoming residents and wide variety of outdoor activities available. Exploring caves, hiking, biking, horseback riding or simply enjoying the views of the valley and sprawling tobacco fields below are all options.

Viñales is one of the more agriculturally productive areas, so an abundance of local seasonal fruit and vegetables is always available including enormous avocados and mangoes, pineapples, papaya, guava, and a several varieties of sweet potatoes.

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It's one of the cooler areas of Cuba and a nice escape from the hotter parts of the country. The nightlife is very active in this village with the local residents more than willing participants in dancing to the local live music. **[Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner]**

Tue, Nov 8 (Day 4) – Viñales

Options in Viñales include a tour of an organic farm to learn about sustainable farming in Cuba. We can meet our local farmer and his family who will show us around the organic farm and explain to us the methods used to cultivate crops without the use of pesticides.

Another possible option is learning the tradition of Cuban cigars from a farmer and expert cigar maker. Get insight on how the communist system works, how much tobacco they will keep, how much produce they give back to the government, how they make ends meet. You can learn about the process from tobacco planting to rolling the final cigar.

There is also an opportunity to learn to cook Cuban-style with a cooking lesson from a local chef using local ingredients for platos tipicos Cubanos like congri, potaje, garbanzo soup, ajiaco, and flan. **[Meals: Breakfast, Lunch]**

Wed, Nov 9 (Day 5) – Cienfuegos via Bay of Pigs

Today we head back past Havana to the French founded city of Cienfuegos, known as the "Pearl of the South," through the densely vegetated Peninsula de Zapata swamp lands, and along the beautiful Bay of Pigs.

The landing of counter-revolutionary exile militia occurred here in 1961. There is a museum here that recounts the events of this conflict that resulted in the first defeat of a U.S. backed take-over in Latin America.

Cienfuegos appeal lies partly in the European flavor of its colonial hub with a wide Parisian-style boulevard and elegant colonnades. There is an ambience to inspire Cuba's most celebrated Son singer to write the words "Cienfuegos is the city I like best."

We'll also make stops at a beautiful swimming hole (cenote), which resembles a huge natural tropical fish tank, and if the conditions are favorable, we'll hit a local beach for snorkeling. Be sure to pack your swim suit and snorkeling gear if you have any (or you can rent it).

[Meals: Breakfast]

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Thurs, Nov 10 (Day 6) – Trinidad

For many visitors to Cuba, Trinidad is their standout favorite destination. No other colonial city in Cuba is so well preserved, and the local residents are extremely friendly and festive. The beautiful colonial city of Trinidad is home to numerous churches and many beautiful colonial buildings. We begin with a cultural tour of Trinidad where we will visit various museums including the Afro-Cuban temple to Yemaya and learn about the Afro-Cuban religion.

Trinidad is steeped in religiosity, none the least of which is Santeria, which is one of several Afro-Cuban religions. We will be invited to sit and learn about the religion and its deities from the official caretaker – a priest called Israel.

In the afternoon we'll meet members of the Afro-Cuban Folkloric dance group that perform Afro-Cuban shows at the club Palenque to learn about the cultural and social importance that dancing has to Cuba. We'll be welcomed into the venue where they train and perform before taking on a Cuban salsa class.

The thing however that visitors most love about Trinidad is the nightlife. Trinidad is probably the most accessible and intense in all of Cuba, with numerous live music venues and many dance performances every day of the week, all among the enchanting setting of old colonial buildings and the cobblestone streets.

There are no less than 10 live music venues all within short walking distance. Many of these have lovely outdoor settings in courtyards. **[Meals: Breakfast, Lunch]**

Fri, Nov 11 (Day 7) – Trinidad

Today we'll learn about the history of the area and the local industry and biodiversity as we take a short hike to a waterfall outside of the city. On the way, we'll stop in a very simple campesino's home to learn about life in the rural areas of Cuba.

We are near the lovely Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of Sugarmills) and Playa Ancón – where you can enjoy long stretches of unspoiled, white sand beaches. Scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming in waterfalls, and horse-riding are other optional activities. After cooling off in the natural pools, we return to Trinidad where you'll have the rest of the afternoon to relax and explore.

For dinner tonight we have a special bonfire BBQ at Playa Ancon with music and a delicious array of Cuban specialties prepared by our favorite local chefs. **[Meals: Breakfast, Dinner]**

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Sat, Nov 12 (Day 8) – Santa Clara enroute to Havana

On the way back to Havana we first pass by Manaca-Iznaga plantation in the Valle de los Ingenios where we will learn more about Cuba's slave trade. A 147-foot tower was built here to look over the slaves as they worked.

Continuing onwards, we stop in at the town of Santa Clara, a key city in the Cuban Revolution. Upon entering Santa Clara, we will see the iconic statue of Ernesto Ché Guevara, built to commemorate his death and that of the revolutionaries who died along with him in Bolivia. There is also a museum here dedicated to his amazing life.

We will have our lunch at a small family farm near Santa Clara and head back to Havana. It's one final night of the tour in Havana, so we'll chat about some suggestions for a farewell dinner and fun night out. **[Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner]**

Sun, Nov 13 (Day 9) – Depart Havana

Say good-bye to your guide and driver as it's time to head back to the U.S.

[Meals: Breakfast]

Included Accommodation

- 3 nights Havana Upgraded B&B
- 2 nights Vinales Upgraded B&B
- 1 night Cienfuegos Upgraded B&B
- 2 nights Trinidad Upgraded B&B

Included Meals

- 7 Breakfasts
- 5 Lunches
- 4 Dinners

Included Activities

- Havana - Canon ceremony including transport
- Havana - Walking tour of Old Havana -1/2day
- Havana - Fusterlandia Visit
- Las Terrazas - Entry and Walking Tour
- Vinales - Orientation Walk
- Vinales - Tobacco Farm visit
- Vinales - Organic farm visit with dinner
- Vinales - Cooking class
- Bay of Pigs - Museum of the Invasion
- Cienfuegos - Orientation Walk

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- Trinidad - Salsa dance lesson
- Trinidad - Trek to Waterfall (including transport)
- Trinidad - Walking tour including 3 museums
- Trinidad- Special meal including Transport
- Santa Clara- Che Guevara memorial

Included in the Price

- Private transport between destinations
- Airport arrival transfer on group basis
- Airport departure transfer on group basis
- Activities as noted above
- Meals as noted (1 drink included, no desserts)
- Local guide throughout

Not Included in the Price

- International Flights
- Visa and passport fees
- Insurance
- All meals not listed as included above
- Drinks (other than mentioned)
- Tips (Guide, Driver, Local guides, meals, etc.)
- Optional activities/day-tours/excursions (may include additional transportation expense)