

CUBA

DETAILED ITINERARY

PEARL OF THE ANTILLES

Aug 09/23



FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 13 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Havana • All meals included • Cuban medical insurance included
- Visit 4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites - colonial Trinidad, Old Havana, Cienfuegos and the Vinales Valley • Visit 2 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves - Sierra del Rosario & the Zapata Marshlands
- Escambray Mountains • Attend the famous Tropicana Cabaret
- Vintage 1950's car tour • Visit a seniors center • Cultural interactions and musical performances

Discover Cuba - a Caribbean gem! Now less forbidden and naturally enticing for all who desire to find a cultural oasis of warm generous people. Cuba's riches go beyond its vibrant culture and famous white sand beaches. It offers a rich natural landscape which includes no less than 4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and 2 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. Be inspired by Cuba's soulful art, musical rhythms and vibrant dance. Reconnect with Havana's heyday of the 1950's with a performance at the Tropicana Cabaret.

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Jan 16 - Jan 28, 2024	-	\$4895 USD
Feb 06 - Feb 18, 2024	-	\$4895 USD
May 07 - May 19, 2024	-	\$4895 USD

Activity Level: 1

COMFORT LEVEL

Some long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable, well-located hotels with private bathrooms throughout.

ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

Enjoy a walking tour through the streets of old Havana; visit a cigar factory; walk along paths in search of native bird life in the national parks; lay back and relax on one of Cuba's famous beaches; attend the Tropicana Cabaret show; and most importantly, make contact with the Cuban people. Our adventure maximizes our interaction with the local people so you can learn firsthand what life in Cuba is really like. Join us as we go in search of the vibrant culture of Cuba.

U.S. Travel To Cuba - Our tour is a full-time program with many inclusions and little to no free time on most days of the program. With this consideration, all our Cuban tours fall within 1 of the 12 categories that qualify for a general authorization to travel to Cuba by the US Government. Some airlines will request you to complete a self declaration or traveler certification form prior to boarding your flight to Havana. We suggest you choose the "Support for the Cuban People" option..

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN HAVANA

Upon arrival in Havana, you are transferred to Havana's famous Vedado where you can settle in and wander the lively and wide streets of one of the first aristocratic neighborhoods in the capital. Havana is bustling with museums, plazas, art galleries and prominent buildings dating from the 18th to the 20th century.

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 2 HAVANA SITES & AFRO CUBAN RELIGION

This morning, we begin our Cuban adventure with a visit to a local farmer's market as an introduction to Cuba's dynamic culture. We then enjoy a walking tour of Habana Vieja (Old Havana). We will visit the open-air plazas of San Francisco, Plaza de Armas, Plaza Vieja



and Plaza de la Cathedral. We walk by the old Palaces of Palacio de los Capitanes Generales (former office and home to Spanish governors) the Palacio del Segundo Cabo, the Castillo de la Real Fuerza and the monument to Havana's foundation, where you will learn about their historic significance and have plenty of time to take photographs.

This area of Old Havana has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is now in the process



Viñales



of a magnificent restoration project, bringing back to life the graceful and elegant colonial architecture of days gone by. Complete the scene with 1950's Chevrolets, Buicks and Oldsmobiles, and the old city comes alive as we explore on foot.

Later this afternoon, we explore the outer parts of the city, including Callejon de Hamel, where we are invited to a cultural project held by the famous Cuban muralist Salvador Gonzales for an introduction to a prominent Cuban religion. Santeria has emerged from a combination of African and Catholic faith. Here we will enjoy a traditional presentation before making our way to one of the most famous and important cultural open air venues in the heart of Havana "Plaza de la Revolucion" with Che Guevara's and Jose Marti's monuments.

After dinner we attend the traditional night cannon ceremony at Fortaleza de la Cabana; one of the magnificent fortresses that made Havana the most fortified city in the Americas in the 18th century.

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 3 SIERRA DEL ROSARIO BIOSPHERE RESERVE

We head off this morning for western Cuba to visit the first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the country, known as Sierra del Rosario. A bird watching paradise, this area is famed for the diversity of its natural beauty, lush woods, waterfalls, rare orchids and ferns. We will learn about the environmental experiences and the role of the community with a hike through this fascinating reserve, rich in local flora and fauna. We also visit the ruins of the Buena Vista coffee plantation where hundreds of slaves worked for French landlords. Later we will stop at Las Terrazas, a self sustained community initiated in 1967 and where 5000 hectares of terraced trees were planted in a major reforestation project. This will be an amazing opportunity to learn about Cuba's education system and interact with the staff at the local school. From here we visit a state-run supply store to learn about the supply and distribution of goods in Cuba. We enjoy lunch at a restaurant that serves wonderful Cuban food, which is grown and raised on site. We



Indian Cave, Vinales

continue onward to Vinales in Pinar del Rio province where we stay for the next two nights.

Overnight in Vinales.

DAY 4 VINALES VALLEY, INDIAN'S CAVE

The valley of Vinales is a picturesque, peaceful, lush area of Cuba, known for its fine tobacco fields and for its mogotes, the boulder-like hills that cover the valley floor. You will notice this impressive landscape as we

make our way to Pinar del Rio city, the largest urban community in the westernmost part of the island. This is also the capital for the best tobacco in the world. We visit the Francisco Donatien cigar factory which produces a range of fine Cuban cigars. Here we gain insight as to the process of making a cigar.

We make our way to a local farm for lunch where you will have a chance to see how rural Cuban families live and work, as well as have an informal question and answer session.

After some free time to experience the lively streets of Vinales, we make our way to explore one of the most beautiful caves and subterranean rivers in the region, Indian's Cave. A short hike will get us to the small skiffs that will take us on a boat journey that will amaze you. Our guide will point out rock formations as the rock sides tower over top of you.

Overnight in Vinales.

DAY 5 TO CIENFUEGOS VIA THE MARSHLANDS

Today we have a very busy day which starts with a four hour drive along the main highway, as we make our way to the east side of the island. We stop for lunch enroute before visiting the museum devoted to the Bay of Pigs. From here, we enjoy a guided walk through Zapata National Park, a Biosphere Reserve. This is the largest and best preserved wetlands in the Caribbean. Located in the peninsula of the same name, the Zapata Park covers an area of over 1,930 square miles. The area is outstanding for the great diversity of its ecosystems, in which more than 1,000 species of plants and 37 species of reptiles live. The diversity of bird life is also outstanding: a full 170 species of the 354 bird species reported in Cuba can be found here. The park is considered one of the premier bird watching



destinations in the world. Our local guide will explain the environmental and educational community program being implemented by the local authorities in addition to providing information about the local flora and fauna.

We finish our day by driving to Cienfuegos where we spend the next two nights.

Overnight in Cienfuegos.

DAY 6 CIENFUEGOS SITES, SUNSET CRUISE

Cienfuegos is one of Cuba's youngest cities, founded in 1819. It has a vibrant youthful population and diverse architecture of neo-classical buildings. We start our day by meeting a local historian and enjoy the city's highlights, including a walking tour passing by the Plaza Marti, the Cathedral, and the Tomas Terry Theater. We drive to lunch before visiting the Palacio de Valle - an architectural jewel which was originally a private residence of a wealthy sugar baron.

From here, we enjoy a guided walking tour of the Cienfuegos Botanical Gardens which dates back to 1899. We then return to our centrally located hotel where the remainder of the afternoon is at your leisure, before our sunset cruise.

Overnight in Cienfuegos.

DAY 7 SOCIAL CUBA, COLONIAL TRINIDAD (UNESCO)

After breakfast we visit Casa de Abuelos, a seniors center, one of the many government run institutions where members organize around cultural activities, eco-excursions and are provided with medical attention and nutritious meals. We then make our way to the Graphic Society of Cienfuegos. They will host our group by opening their doors to our questions and their artwork. This community of artists carries out important community work by complimenting the training of art school students. They also work with children with disabilities to improve their quality of life.

We continue our journey to the charming town of Trinidad, Cuba's best-preserved colonial architecture and an UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the early 19th century, French settlers fleeing a slave revolt in Haiti arrived and cultivated sugar cane, bringing wealth to the region. The town has changed very little over the last 150 years and UNESCO has assisted with the local people and government to restore many of its French colonial buildings. Trinidad is a small, relaxed place where you can see Cuban cowboys riding their horses in the streets.



Upon our arrival, we visit Casa Santander to learn more about the traditional artistic pottery, followed by lunch. We then enjoy a guided visit of the Museo Arquitectura Colonial followed by free time to enjoy a stroll around the beautiful Plaza Mayor or the local artisan street market. Here you can find splendid woodcarvings, fabric art, crochet pieces and straw work.

Dinner will be at your leisure at our hotel before we meet for a night of music and dancing at one of the famous music night clubs in Trinidad.

Overnight at Ancon Beach (near Trinidad).

DAY 8 CUBAN PERCUSSION, BEACH TIME

Today, we have an opportunity to learn Cuban percussion led by David Lopez Garabito who has toured with the group Hecho en Cuba (Made in Cuba). After working up an appetite, we enjoy our lunch in town.

After lunch we have free time to explore the local markets or visit Casa Santander to learn more about traditional artistic pottery. We return to our hotel in the afternoon where we can relax on the beach, followed by dinner at our hotel.

Overnight at Ancon Beach.

DAY 9 ESCAMBRAY MOUNTAINS, TO SANTA CLARA

Today we leave for Santa Clara city, located right in the center of Cuba. The city was founded in 1689 and was the battlefield for one of the most important victories of Fidel Castro's guerrilla war against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1958. Commander 'Che' Guevara was the undisputed leader and hero of the so-called 'Batalla de Santa Clara'.

Our route will first take us to the Escambray Mountains, Cuba's second highest mountain range, reaching 3,700 ft. The mountains are home to small mountain villages and are a delight for birders and walkers alike. Slopes are swathed in Caribbean pines, ancient tree-ferns, bamboo and eucalyptus. Here we visit a local coffee house where we enjoy an in depth explanation of the coffee production process while sipping on Cuba's finest. We then walk along a natural trail across the local arboretum. After lunch we visit a local art museum before making our way to Santa Clara, where we will stay for the next two nights.

Overnight in Santa Clara.

DAY 10 SANTA CLARA - REVOLUTION SITES

Today we explore the many highlights of the lively university town of Santa Clara. We first visit the local headquarters of the Cuban Communist Party where we visit Ernesto Che Guevara's monument and statue to learn more about his life. We continue by foot to the Armored Train Park Museum and learn how this was one of the biggest turning points of the revolution.

From here we enjoy a stroll through the streets of Santa Clara, making our way to the Parque Vidal while discussing the daily life of Cubans and their dual currency. After some free time, we meet for a local lunch followed by a tuck tuck ride back to our coach.

This afternoon we make our way to Revolution Square. Here we visit the museum and mausoleum commemorating Che and the vital part he played in the armed struggle against General Bastista's dictatorship.

Overnight in Santa Clara.

DAY 11 HEMINGWAY'S HOME, CLASSIC AMERICAN CARS & TROPICANA CABARET

Today we make our way back to Havana. Enroute, we visit the quiet seaside town of Cojimar, the little town that inspired Hemingway or "Papa" to write "The Old Man and the Sea". This is the same location where the writer kept his boat "Pilar" docked during his years in Cuba. We enjoy a daiquiri (one of Hemingway's preferred cocktails) at Las Terrazas de Cojimar Bar, followed by lunch in a private seafood restaurant.

From here, we walk in the footsteps of Ernest Hemingway with a visit to the American writer's former home, Finca La Vigia; an old colonial estate bought by the author in the '40s, where he lived for over 20 years. The house is exactly as Hemingway left it just prior to the Revolution. Visitors are able to walk around the house and view the interior

through the windows.

After returning to our hotel in Havana, we have time to relax before stepping back in time with a tour around Havana in our classic 1950's American cars. After dinner, our vintage cars will take us to the Tropicana Cabaret to enjoy a performance in one of the most historical open-air night club shows in the world. Here we get a glimpse of the Havana entertainment scene as it was in the 1950's. It will be a late evening and our bus will be ready to take us back to the hotel after the show.

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 12 HAVANA - ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB

This morning, we have an opportunity to meet with the technical director of the Cuba Classic Cars Club of Havana. Our host will share his years of experience restoring vintage cars and if possible, invite us to the shop where the restoration takes place. We will then visit the Vintage Car Museum in Havana where the Director will give us a presentation of the cars on display.

After lunch, we enjoy a visit to the Bellas Artes Fine Arts Museum.

Tonight, we reminisce on all the things we have seen and people we have met at our farewell dinner as we enjoy a performance of the world famous "Buena Vista Social Club".

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 13 DEPART HAVANA

Our Cuban adventure concludes with a transfer to Havana Airport.



US CITIZEN: TRAVELER CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

Our tour is a full-time program with many inclusions and little to no free time on most days of the program. With this consideration, all our Cuban tours fall within 1 of the 12 categories that qualify for a general authorization to travel to Cuba by the US Government. Some airlines will request you to complete a self declaration or traveler certification form prior to boarding your flight to Havana. We suggest you choose the “Support for the Cuban People” option.



Streets of Havana



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (portage), restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and comprehensive travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

All of our tours are kept flexible so that we can take advantage of opportunities to meet and speak with local people. We visit museums, national parks and reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of Cuban history, politics, culture and nature.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

We travel by comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles, by boat and by foot.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We always stay in good accommodations — both hotels and lodges, where rooms have a private bath or shower. We choose our accommodation based on local charm and location.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

All of our programs are run when the weather is optimal for travel. Our departures are scheduled throughout the dry season when the temperatures are at their lowest.

The average temperature during the dry season is 75°F (23°C) with maximums of 85°F (29°C) and minimums of 65°F (18°C). It can be cooler in the mountains, especially at night.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Comprehensive insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note however that included in the tour price is the mandatory Cuban Medical Insurance. Cuban Medical insurance coverage is required by the Cuban government.

10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

You will receive a suggested packing list with your final documents, approximately one month prior to your departure.

11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included starting with dinner on day 1, and finishing with breakfast on day 13. We eat a variety of local foods delivered in a wide range of settings. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share, allowing you to sample new foods and decide what you enjoy best.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please contact our office for additional information.

