



# The Tobacco, Mountains & Waterfalls Tour

## 2 Night Tour | Las Terrazas | Vinales Valley | Soroa

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### Tour Highlights

- ☆ Explore the picturesque Las Terrazas National Park and engage with the local rural community
- ☆ Enjoy a unique tour to of the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage site of Vinales Valley
- ☆ Discover the process of making Cuba's world-famous cigars
- ☆ An organic lunch platter at Finca Paraiso, the farm that caught the attention of President Obama
- ☆ A visit to Soroa a stunning natural area of rolling hills and beautiful tropical scenery
- ☆ A visit to Soroa's waterfall and famous botanical gardens

### The Highlights Collection from Captivating Cuba

A collection of organised short tours covering the most popular areas of Cuba, with guaranteed departures on at least a weekly basis. Developed specifically to compliment a stay in Havana or enhance a beach holiday in Cuba or even neighbouring countries, our Highlights Tours are an excellent way to experience this fascinating and unique island.

With numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites, historic towns and cities and spectacular landscapes, the best way to make the most from so many experiences is through one of our organised tours. These hand-crafted, carefully designed itineraries are drawn from our 25 years-experience arranging tailored travel to Cuba.

The Highlights Collection perfectly tie in with a selection of flights from the UK to Havana and a 3-night Havana stay, as well as other flight choices from the USA, Canada, and neighbouring countries.

Our organised tours are led by experienced and professional English-speaking guides, who will not only show you the most important sights but will also immerse you into the fascinating life of Cubans, the political and social environment and what life is really like in Cuba.

We operate all our tours using small groups to maintain quality and intimacy, and to allow more flexibility for our guide to add some extra elements to the day-to-day itinerary according to guest interests.

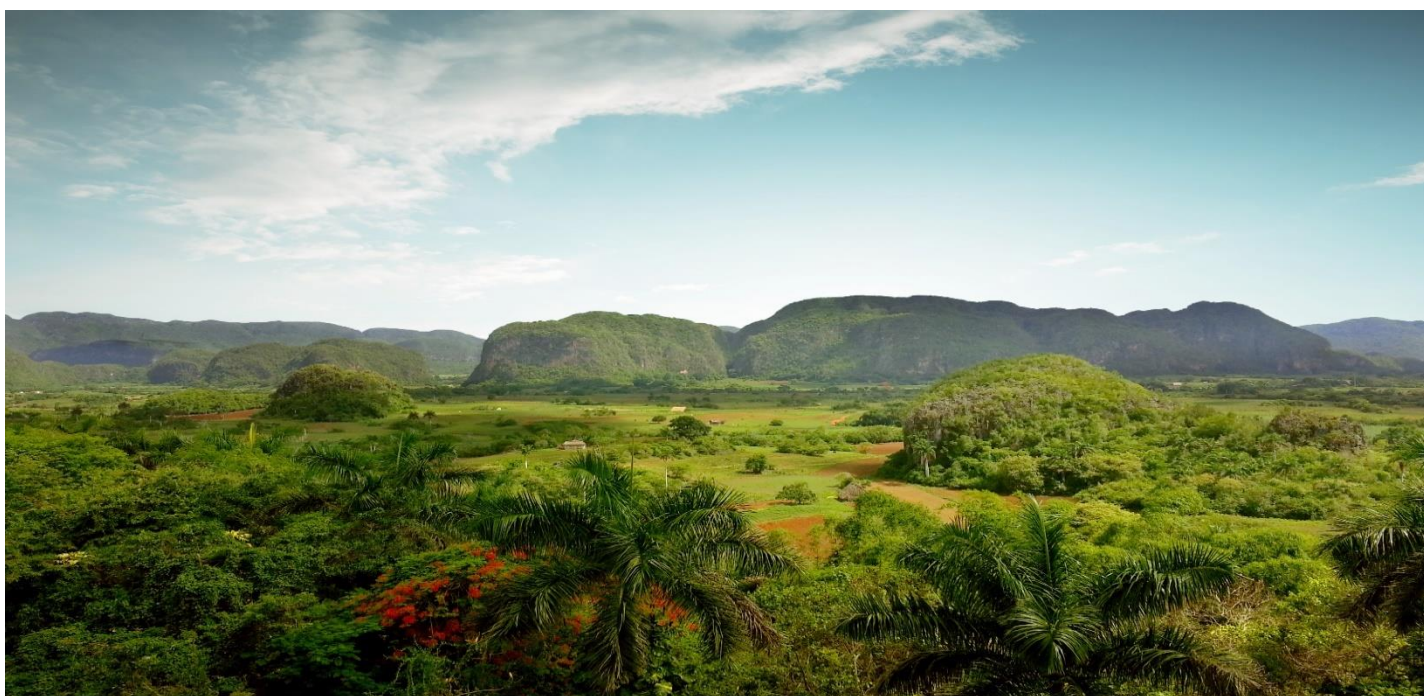
Our organised tours include quality, well-located accommodation with breakfast included, as well as lunch, air-conditioned transportation, services of a dedicated English-speaking guide during travel days a range of activities, and entrances to the places we visit. Best of all, our tours are guaranteed to operate, so we will never cancel a tour due to lack of interest.

For those seeking a private experience, we can also organise our tours on an exclusive basis, on any day of the week just for you.

## Introduction

An absorbing two-night tour that visits Cuba's most beautiful countryside in the west of the island, along with a variety of carefully chosen visits enroute. The Tobacco, Mountains & Waterfalls Tour offers you the chance to enjoy one of Cuba's most beautiful regions, preserved by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and allows some independence to explore on your own or simply relax. You can also choose your own activities and dining options at times.

## Itinerary | The Tobacco, Mountains & Waterfalls Tour



### Day 1 | Las Terrazas

Departing from Havana around 7.45am, you will first pass through the exclusive Playa district, where the mansions which are mainly Ambassadors residences are incredible.

You will then head into the rural province of Pinar Del Rio to [Las Terrazas](#), an UNESCO preserved Eco Reserve where there is also a small rural community overlooking a large lake and surrounded by forested hills. It is in these hills that Che Guevara trained his revolutionaries to successfully defend Cuba against the US backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs a significant world event in the 1960s.

A tour of [Las Terrazas](#) tour starts from the Rancho Curujey overlooking the lake where there will be an introduction to this unique biosphere reserve, one of the most important in Latin America.

You will continue with a drive into the hills to visit the immaculately restored former French coffee plantation buildings dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Discover the fascinating history of Cuba's coffee production an industry so closely linked to the slave trade, and admire the views across the reserve and over to the sea in the north. There will be time to explore the local lakeside village of Las Terrazas and meet some of the friendly local community. You can purchase a

coffee at Maria's coffee house so much better than Starbucks! Explore the studio of the famous artist Lester Campa and visit the small pottery and handicraft stalls specialising in local handmade arts and crafts.

The more adventurous can embark on an exhilarating zip wire canopy tour (payable locally) through the treetops and across the lake. Three exciting rides!

There will also be the chance to spend some time at the idyllic San Juan River where numerous pools allow the chance for a cooling swim in the clear waters or you can relax by the riverside and enjoy a few drinks at the local 'ranchon'. The more active can take a walk further along the riverbank and head towards the ruins of the La Victoria coffee plantations.

Lunch will be included during the day at one of the restaurants in the Reserve, specialising in local cuisine. In the late afternoon as the day cools you can head to the [Moka Hotel](#), situated inside the Las Terrazas Reserve.

The late afternoon will be free to explore Las Terrazas independently, take out a boat, go for a swim or simply relax. Dinner tonight will be served in one of the restaurants in the village which uses locally sourced ingredients.

### *Overnight in Las Terrazas.*



#### **Destination Information – [Las Terrazas National Reserve](#)**

*Las Terrazas was once a deforested landscape of scrubby grassland in western Cuba, just 74km from Havana, however the area was chosen by Fidel Castro as the site for an experiment in re-establishing the forests and original lush tropical vegetation, using a terrace technique on the hillsides. The project was a huge success, gaining interest from around the world and UNESCO designated the local community and its land a biosphere reserve in 1985.*

*Now it stands testament to the robust vibrancy of nature, with a rich variety of flora and fauna, deep lakes, rushing streams and walking trails. It has become a very popular tourist attraction, and our guests choose to stay here to relax and admire the beauty of the local countryside in the cool climate, or take part in outdoor activities such as walking and trekking, birdwatching, horse riding, biking and taking the longest zip wire ride in Cuba across the lake.*

*There is also a small, typical country community living close to the Moka Hotel where clients stay when visiting the reserve, and can enjoy a number of restaurants and bars, coffees shops and galleries within the community. Locals are welcoming and friendly, and eager to meet visitors.*

*The local guides are dedicated and passionate about the reserve and have fantastic local knowledge. They can also show the partially restored coffee plantation buildings that stand testament to the close relationship with coffee and the former slave trade in this area of Cuba.*

*You can rise early for guided birdwatching, walking trails, or take a short climb to the top of the Taburete Mountain, the location of Che Guevara's revolutionary training sessions before the failed Bay of Pigs US backed invasion. You can then relax afterwards at the beautiful and peaceful San Juan River.*

*Las Terrazas has a number of interesting and unique restaurants to enjoy, including a traditional Cuban restaurant at the home of a local farmer, and a very popular organic vegetarian restaurant that's sources its ingredients from the local area and serves tasty dishes, even for the non-vegetarian.*

*A totally unique experience in Cuba, a few nights at Las Terrazas is certainly worthwhile and enjoyable.*



## Day 2 – Vinales Valley

*Breakfast at accommodation.*

Continuing down the autopista you will take the road to [Vinales](#) and climb up into the mountains towards the spectacular [Vinales Valley](#).

Our tour is a classic introduction to the UNESCO preserved World Heritage site with a few unique and exclusive extras added to make it a very memorable day.

Your private tour takes you to the famous [Vinales Valley](#) viewpoint where you can look down on the valley dotted with tobacco drying houses and the spectacular karst limestone scenery. The guide will introduce you to the region and the plans for the day.

Continuing down to the valley you will drive through the Dos Hermanos Valley with the limestone 'Mogote' cliffs towering above and make a short stop at the Pre-History Mural. This 120-meter-tall painting, one of the largest al fresco paintings in the world, was commissioned by Fidel Castro in 1961 and depicts the images of the pre-historical time in Vinales.

Take a stroll into the valley and visit the world-famous tobacco plantations where the guide describes the process of the production of the tobacco leaves for Cuba's cigars. Visit a small local farm, meet the farmer and visit a special selection house where the tobacco leaves are graded for use in the different brands of Cigar when handmade at the factory. Enjoy a freshly prepared Cuban coffee or even a cigar at the farm!

Continuing to the El Palenque De Los Cimarrones, a cave in the cliffs that recreates one of the nomadic homes set up by runaway slaves and you can gain an insight into the Afro Cuba religion in Cuba in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The caves of El Indio are the next visit, which were discovered in 1920 and are thought to have been a refuge of the Guanahatabey Indians as well as a burial site! After a walk through the limestone caves system, enjoy a 400m boat ride that takes you out of the cool caves and back into the heat of the day.

Time permitting and only during times when he can accommodate visitors, you will then visit an artist project where a local farmer has created unique and amazing wood sculptures from roots and foliage found in the valley. Now a small museum his studio offers a fascinating insight into his work, that gradually is becoming recognised outside Cuba.

Lunch is planned at an organic farm restaurant at the Finca Paraiso, for an organic lunch platter. This family run cooperative farm is an award-winning organic farm and you will learn all about the farm practices whilst sitting on the terrace overlooking 'Silencio' Valley.

The late afternoon and evening will be free to explore the local area independently and take a short walk to the local town where there are a collection of bars and restaurants where you can have dinner.

### *Overnight in Vinales Valley.*

#### **Destination Information | Vinales Valley**

*Vinales Valley is arguably one of Cuba's most beautiful regions and this spectacular area has been preserved by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Vinales is also home to the tobacco plantations that produce Cuba's world-famous cigars and unique limestone mountain outcrops that rise almost vertically out of the valley floor, known locally as 'Mogotes'. A rich and fertile area with tobacco and coffee plantations, beautiful rivers, natural springs and unique landscapes, Vinales offers a wonderful introduction to rural life in Cuba and provides a peaceful contrast to the hustle and bustle of Havana and other colonial cities.*

*There is also little or nothing in the way of highly developed tourism and the towns and villages which dot the undulating landscape appear to be in something of a charming time warp. The local country folk are devoted largely to the production of tobacco and the leaves rolled here account for the very best cigars that Cuba produces. During your journey, we can arrange visits to tobacco farms where you can witness the handicraft involved from cutting and drying the leaves to the making of the cigar.*

*An area of peacefulness and tranquillity with country life taking place all around, a few nights here are a must. For the more active, enjoy sunrise or sunset cycling trails, horse-riding through the valley with treks to suit all abilities, including the chance to climb a Mogote! There are also some fascinating limestone cave systems which can be explored with the Santo Tomas system being the largest in the Americas. Close by to Vinales are several almost deserted beautiful beach areas that can be visited for the day, where the sea is so very clear and welcoming.*

## **Day 3 – Vinales & Soroa**

### *Breakfast at accommodation.*

Early morning as it gets light, the day begins with one of the following activities (to be selected at the time of booking). Please advise whether you require a beginner, intermediate or advanced level for your chosen activity.

- ☆ 2-hour guided horse riding trek
- or
- ☆ 2-hour guided gentle walk or hike
- or
- ☆ 2-hour guided scenic bike ride

After your morning activity and checking out of your accommodation, there will be an early lunch served at a local restaurant, Balcon del Valle, with amazing views of the surrounding countryside before heading away from beautiful Vinales and east along the motorway where after approximately 90 minutes there will be a detour to the Botanical Gardens at [Soroa](#), the largest collection of orchids that can be found in Latin America. With magnificent views of the rolling palm clad hills of the Sierra Del Rosario the gardens are beautiful and contain over 700 species of Orchid alone. You can also enjoy a short walk to the impressive Soroa waterfall, a tranquil setting in a sub-tropical valley. Bring your swimming costume for a swim in the lagoon!

You will then continue to Havana where you will be dropped off at your chosen accommodation around 5pm/6pm.

*Tour concludes.*



#### **Destination Information | [Soroa](#)**

*Just an hour's drive west of Havana, lies Soroa, a stunning natural area of rolling hills and beautiful tropical scenery, known as 'Cuba's rainbow', for its spectacular array of colours. A designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Soroa is home to Cuba's largest botanical garden; this peaceful natural location is surrounded by coffee plantations and home to tall trees and orchids. The area inherited its name from the French settler called Jean-Pierre Soroa, who owned a 19th-century coffee plantation nearby.*

*Closely situated to Las Terrazas National Reserve, this tiny dwelling has just a smattering of private homes and casa particulares and one simple hotel in a picturesque location where tranquillity and calm reign. Soroa is an ideal base to explore the nearby area of Las Terrazas or enjoy an overnight stay on a journey through the serene and soothing west of Cuba.*

*Visitors come here to marvel at the natural beauty of the area, which is surrounded by rivers and mountains, but most popular are the Soroa Botanical Gardens and Orchidarium, one of the largest in the Americas, and the 20 meter El Salto del Arco Iris waterfall. This stunning area has many opportunities for flora and fauna enthusiasts, walkers and cyclists.*

## General Information

- This itinerary is a small group tour that departs on selected days of the week, please ask us for more information
- Guests who wish to make the tour private can do so for a supplement, please talk to us
- The tour has been designed carefully for clients to see a great variety of sights and visits, but also have the chance for independent time away from other guests if preferred
- Both evening meals have not been included on the tour, with the purpose to allow for some independence on the second night. There is a small town in Vinales with plenty of cafes, bars and restaurants to choose from
- You can stay longer in Vinales Valley and enjoy a range of experiences and excursions including Cuba's world-famous tobacco tour, the beautiful island of Cayo Jutias, the Santo Tomas Caves and the Great Cavern or perhaps scuba diving at Maria La Gorda or simply relaxing for an extra day or so. Please ask if you would like more information
- Rather than returning to Havana it is possible to arrange for you to continue your journey to the beach resorts of [Varadero](#), [Cayo Santa Maria](#), [Cayo Coco/Guillermo](#) or eastern Cuba (additional fee applies). In this way guests can enjoy a Havana-mini-tour–beach stay holiday
- We are pleased to advise that the tour will operate on a guaranteed basis (based on a minimum of 2 clients booked on the tour)
- Tour prices are based on a minimum of 2 guests. Please ask us for a solo traveller price

## Important Information



- Any timings and order of activities provided are for rough guidance only, and may vary considerably due to local availability, constraints and demand
- As our tours are set up many months in advance, changes can occur to accommodation, restaurants, and places to be visited because of changes in the local provision of services in Cuba. This is especially apparent in the winter season as Cuba continues to cope and change as a result of unprecedented global demand for the island, as well as a rapidly emerging USA visitor market that is both politically and commercially important to the Cuban Government and Tourism Authorities
- The services of an English-speaking guide are included for the transfers between locations and the tours included in the Highlights Collection
- Please refer to the end of this document for important information on required mobility and fitness required for this tour. Please talk to us if you have any concerns and we can advise you further



- Some experiences, excursions, and transfers on this tour (if doing the shared/group tour) may at times be shared with our other customers who are on a different tour/route but have the same services occurring at the same time. This is not applicable if you have booked a private tour

## Accommodation Included

- **Las Terrazas** 1 night at the **Moka Hotel** on HB basis
- **Vinales Valley** 1 night at a recommended casa particular on B&B basis

*Highly recommended and extremely popular, Casas Particulares (often referred to as 'Casas') are fully licensed private bed and breakfast accommodation, with many offering a more boutique hotel-style stay. The recommended properties in our portfolio consistently attract excellent feedback from guests and for many are a highlight of their holiday in Cuba. Please visit our website for more information.*

## Optional Alternative Accommodation (Upon Request)

*Prices given are per person per night (pppn)*

- **Vinales Valley** - For those who prefer to stay at the 3\* **E-Central Hotel**, a supplement of £20pppn double/twin or £30pppn single occupancy will apply

## Transportation and Guide Included

- All transportation as required in the itinerary using fully air-conditioned transportation
- The services of English-speaking guide specialising in central Cuba on days 1 and 3 during sightseeing transfers as described, and also during the activities included on day 2

## Restaurant Lunches & Dinners Included

*Breakfast is included and will be taken at your accommodation.*

- Day 1 Lunch in Las Terrazas Reserve
- Day 1 Dinner at a local restaurant in Las Terrazas
- Day 2 Organic lunch platter at Finca Paraiso, Vinales
- Day 3 Lunch at Balcon del Valle, Vinales

## Entrances Included

- Day 1 Entrance and tour of Las Terrazas National Reserve with a local guide
- Day 2 El Indio Limestone Cave System, Vinales Valley
- Day 2 Tobacco Drying House, Vinales Valley
- Day 3 - Entrance to Soroa Orchid gardens and waterfall

## Tour Extensions

On the last day, it is possible to transfer you to the beaches of Varadero or Jibacoa, or after an overnight stay in Havana, you can continue to Trinidad, Cayo Santa Maria, Cayo Coco or further afield. Alternatively, simply return to Havana or elsewhere for more exploration time.

## Journey Times

Approximate journey times by road without breaking to give an indication of travel required. Road closures and other local conditions may mean changes, so please treat as a rough guide rather than definitive times.

	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Day 1	Havana	Las Terrazas	1
Day 2	Las Terrazas	Vinales Valley	2
Day 3	Vinales Valley	Soroa	1.5
Day 3	Soroa	Havana	1.25

## The Tobacco, Mountains & Waterfalls Tour on a Private Basis

We are able to organise this tour on a private basis, enabling guests to travel alone with the guide departing on any date that suits. On a private tour, it can also be possible to tailor the tour further if you require. Visits can be added, as can duration, or indeed a specialist interest can be catered for. We would be delighted to assist, please ask us if you would like a quotation.

## Not Included

- Dinners on days 2 and 3
- Tips (discretionary)
- Drinks (soft drinks/alcohol)
- Services of a porter / assistance carrying baggage
- Laundry
- Telephone calls, WIFI / internet
- Local camera / filming fees
- Costs when on 'free time' e.g. taxis arranged locally or optional extras
- Travel insurance / medical insurance

## Important Information

We operate our organised tours using small groups. Maximum group size can be up to 21 guests, but usually with an average of 4 – 8. Fellow passengers on travel days may not be partaking in the same organised tour and may instead only be taking that transfer. Tours run with a minimum of 2 passengers, and once 2 passengers are booked, the tour is guaranteed to operate. We will never cancel a tour due to lack of numbers.

Drivers, local staff at accommodation, attractions/places visited, restaurants/bars and local/specialist guides that you may encounter may not speak English (or languages other than Spanish). Your English-speaking tour guide is there to assist during the times specified only.

Please note that as our organised tours are set up many months in advance, changes can occur to accommodation, restaurants and places visited as a result of changes in the local provision of services in Cuba. This is especially apparent in the winter season as Cuba continues to cope and change as a result of unprecedented global demand for the island, as well as a rapidly emerging USA visitor market that is both politically and commercially important to the Cuban Government and Tourism Authorities. While we do our best to operate our tours as closely to published itineraries as we can, local conditions, demand for services,

delays and availability can change from one day to the next, so tour modifications may be needed with no advance warning.

Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements resulting from previous client feedback, guide/local staff comments and our own findings and research. Ultimately, we are trying to provide you with the best possible experience, which may not always be immediately apparent as factors unknown to you such as bureaucracy and local availability can affect an itinerary running smoothly.

Our organised tours are also marketed and sold by travel agents and other tour operators who have their own target markets. Age, nationality, likes/dislikes, lifestyle, and background of our escorted tour guests do vary.

All guests on our organised tours are required to comply with Cuban law and refrain from any illegal activities, bearing in mind your behaviour may impact on others on the tour. Anyone found to be participating in illegal activities will have their place on the tour cancelled immediately, and no refund or compensation provided.

### Mobility, Access and Fitness

Our tour itineraries are generally fast paced and will keep you busy, and a considerable amount of walking is involved (including stairs) so an average/decent level of fitness and mobility is required, and you should be physically fit and also able to carry

your own luggage. Comfortable and supportive walking footwear is recommended.

Where tour accommodation is located in a narrow side street where a larger vehicle/bus cannot access easily, or road rules (which may be sudden/unexpected for reasons such as roadworks or underground infrastructure work) imposed restrict the driver from pulling up outside, you may be required to walk with your own luggage to the closest access point.

Some casa particular bedrooms and their facilities are accessed by narrow stairways, and lifts/elevators may not be available. If you do struggle with stairs it is important that you let us know at the time of booking, so we can make sure we understand your requirements, and can advise and assist accordingly.

Trinidad, Cienfuegos and other cities visited on our tours typically have uneven/high/low kerbs and steps and cobbled streets.

When visiting El Nicho, you may be required to climb steps, walk up-hill and navigate countryside terrain (which may be wet or slippery after rain) so an average/decent level on fitness is required in these locations if you wish to fully participate.

Please ensure you read our booking conditions and Cuba destination advice before booking



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