

The Ultimate Cuba Tour

14-Night Escorted Tour of Cuba | November 2023 - May 2024 | Wednesday Departures



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The Ultimate Cuba Tour | 14-Night Tour



Introduction

A 14-night fully escorted tour that has been carefully designed from over 25 years of experience of tour planning in Cuba.

You will gain a fantastic insight into Cuba, one of the most unique destinations in the world. Our fully escorted tour, led by an experienced guide will cover all the most important sights of the island, but also allow you to discover the real Cuba.

We have included unique highlights into the tour itinerary that other tours do not offer. These include:

- An afternoon cruising the streets of Havana in a chauffeur driven old American car
- A visit to a famous working cigar factory in Havana
- A visit to the fascinating City Museum overlooking the historic Plaza de Armas
- Authentic cocktail making and tapas served at a unique private bar-restaurant
- A day exploring picturesque Vinales Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with spectacular scenery
- A visit to the Las Terrazas National Reserve and time in the local community
- 2 weekend nights in the historical UNESCO World Heritage city of Trinidad where the live music scene is at its best
- A trek to La Plata, the former HQ of Fidel Castro's revolutionary heroes, situated deep in the Sierra Maestra mountains
- A visit to Santiago De Cuba, a passionate and revolutionary city, home of the Mausoleum of Fidel Castro
- The birthplace of Fidel and Raul Castro at their former farm at Biran
- Sun-kissed shores and opportunities to relax in postcard-worthy settings in Guardalavaca
- A tour to the beautiful El Nicho national park
- A visit to the charming French influenced small colonial city of Cienfuegos
- A final farewell dinner in one of Havana's famous private restaurants
- A final night performance by the outstanding Legendarios de Guajirito

General Information

- This tour has been designed for small groups to maximise our guest's experience
- Unlike many other tours, this tour is guaranteed to operate every Wednesday when there are 2 or more people booked, check with us for the latest availability
- This tour operates year-round offering a great choice of departure dates
- This tour is guided in English throughout
- Maximum group size can be up to 21, but usually with an average of 6 to 14 guests
- Minimum age of 14 years old required
- This tour is designed and created by Captivating Cuba, and is marketed by us, other tour operators and travel agents in the UK & Ireland

- The tour has been set up to operate with flights from London and also with direct TUI Airways flights from Manchester
- As an extension to this tour, you can continue your journey to the beach resorts of Jibacoa, Varadero, or further afield or alternatively return to Havana for some extra nights at leisure

Itinerary



Wednesday | Day 1 - Havana

After a welcome at Havana airport, your transfer will take you to your accommodation confirmed for the tour, well located in Old Havana.

Depending on the time of arrival, you may be able to wander through the local area and sample [Havana's](#) amazing street life before retiring to bed ready for the tour ahead.

Overnight in Havana.

Thursday | Day 2 - Havana

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast, you will meet our guide for the first time at your accommodation at 8.30/9.00am and head to one of Havana's fascinating working cigar factories, to see where Cuba's famous cigar brands are still hand made by the local workers. Experience first-hand the stages in production from the dried tobacco leaves to the famous branded boxes being ready for export around the world.

You will then continue to the City Museum, housed in the beautiful former Governor's palace known as the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the museum depicts the history of life in Havana.

Lunch will then be served in one of our favourite traditional restaurants in Old Havana.

After lunch, there will be a fascinating, guided leisurely walk-through Old Havana, visiting the four famous historical squares, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de San Francisco, Plaza Vieja and Plaza de Armas. Absorb the atmosphere and amazing vibrancy of Old Havana and explore the narrow bustling streets which many have described as walking through a film set. Experience an interesting insight into Old Havana where your guide will ensure you have seen the sights but also hidden, and fascinating locations away from the normal tourist routes.

In the afternoon you will explore the other areas of central Havana in Old American vintage cars. Be chauffeur driven through the city in fantastic vehicles dating back to the 50s, a thrilling way to enjoy this unique city.

The cars will take you to the impressive Revolution Square overlooked by the mural of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, through the downtown Vedado district of the city, and then on a spectacular drive along the Malecon, Havana's seafront promenade. Next, past the elegant mansions and embassies in Miramar district as the tour then heads further into fascinating residential areas that are far from the main tourist areas. You will then enter the 'Bosque De La Havana', a beautiful tropical woodland and park area with the Almendares River running through and known as the lungs of Havana. This area of parkland is a beautiful place to drive through and you can stop to take photos and explore the area.

Your old American car will drop you at bustling and vibrant tapas bar, where there will be an authentic Cuban cocktail making lesson and homemade tapas will be provided for a light meal. A fitting end to a fabulous day.

For those guests who would like to visit the world-famous Tropicana open air cabaret show that dates back to the 1930's, you can pre-book your tickets before arriving in Cuba (or on arrival in Cuba, noting the show is often sold out). For those guests adding this optional extra, after dinner you can head off to the show.

Your local guide can recommend bars and music venues in the city for those that might want to enjoy the evening independently.

Overnight in Havana.

Optional Extra | Club Tropicana Cabaret

Option 1 Standard seating - Adults (18+) £119 (solo travellers £150)

Option 2 Main table seating – Adults (18+) £135 (solo travellers £165)

£15 per person supplement applicable 24 December – 2 January inclusive

£200 per person supplement 31 December

Open: Nightly, 365 days per year (*reduced since covid disruption, please ask us for latest information*)

Enjoy a night under the stars and spectacular dazzling lights at the historic and world-famous Tropicana cabaret which has been an iconic part of Havana's nightlife for 80 years. Enjoy the most beautiful dancers, exotic choreography and flashy carnival costumes and listen to the varied rhythms of Cuba whilst sipping your Cuba Libres made of course from Havana Club Rum. The original Tropicana Cabaret was inaugurated in Havana in 1939 and ever since then it has become an iconic landmark that has enchanted visitors from all over the world. The open-air venue can accommodate up to 1750 people on decorated tables surrounded by tropical plants, palm trees and large glass arches.

☆ *Minimum age 18*

☆ *Formal dress required*

☆ *Venue opens at 8.30pm, with the performance starting at 10.00pm*

☆ *Price includes Return private transfers from Havana accommodation, welcome drink, ¼ bottle rum, 1 cola, cold nibbles*

Note that seating at the Tropicana is on large, shared tables close together. Rum, cola and nibbles are shared between guests sat at your table. Dinner is not included.





Destination Information | [Havana](#)

Havana, the capital of Cuba, is a vibrant city with a strong sense of its unique history and literally bursting with character. Here you will find a diverse mix of building design, a dynamic music scene, impressive monuments and museums, and a city known for its passion for music and dance.

The city's architecture is an eclectic mix of Baroque, Neo-classical and Art Deco styles, and pastel-shaded Old Havana is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Seemingly frozen in time yet peppered with modern touches, Havana is home to crumbling buildings that lie alongside beautifully restored colonial homes and 20th Century high rises from a more austere age. This is a city like no other, a place of rusting Cadillacs, fruit carts, dilapidated colonial buildings, Sovietesque monuments to revolutionary heroes, and locals chatting on the seafront wall or dancing and singing in the heat of the day.

Havana is very safe to explore day and night, and you can visit museums and galleries, enjoy a vast array of music in bars, clubs and other venues throughout the city. Spend an evening at the Opera or Ballet in the ornate Grand Theatre, or just relax at a café or bar and watch the absorbing street life. Dine in one of many new hidden-away private restaurants and you will be amazed at the quality and service, the myths of Cuba having bland or substandard food has been banished! Chat to the friendly and approachable locals, explore this intriguing metropolis, and if you want a break from the bustling city, head to the beaches of East Havana for a swim and relax!

Friday | Day 3 – Vinales Valley & Las Terrazas

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast, you will leave Havana and head west to the immensely picturesque [Vinales Valley](#), an area protected by UNESCO as a world heritage site for its outstanding natural beauty, dominated by unusual limestone mountain formations called 'Mogotes'.

The valley is also the home of Cuba's tobacco plantations and during your time in [Vinales](#), there will be a subterranean boat ride through the El Indio cave system, and a visit to a typical tobacco drying house to see how the tobacco crops are turned into the world's best cigars.

A fabulous unique lunch will be served at a local organic farm affording wonderful views across the valley and you can learn a little more about the farm and its organic methods which attracted the attention of President Obama when he visited Cuba.

In the late afternoon you will leave Vinales and head to [Las Terrazas National Park](#) an area of outstanding natural beauty which is protected as one of Cuba's most important national parks. After settling in at the [Moka Hotel](#) for the night, there will be a short tour of the National Reserve, local village and an introduction to the eco-activities and farming practices that take place here.

There will be free time this evening for you to enjoy an early night after some fascinating days, enjoy a wander down to the local village for a drink and bite to eat or just relax in this very peaceful location.

Overnight in Las Terrazas.



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. An area of peacefulness and tranquillity with country life taking place all around.

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.

Saturday | Day 4 – Santa Clara & Trinidad

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast, you will leave Las Terrazas and head past Havana, down the very 'quiet' motorway towards the east, where our first stop will be to explore [Santa Clara](#), a city of major historical significance in Cuba.

Visit the final resting place of Che Guevara at the very symbolic mausoleum with time to visit the museum dedicated to his life, as well as Tren Blindado. This is a small museum and the iconic remains of the government train that was attacked by Che Guevara and his revolutionaries, a significant turning point in the Cuba Revolution. The city itself has a delightful, small colonial centre and enjoys a large student population who add to the vibrant and friendly nature of this important Cuban city.

A light lunch will be offered in a local restaurant in the centre, before you take the picturesque road through the [Escambray Mountains](#) towards Sugar Mill Valley where the 145ft Manaca Iznaga Tower stands as a silent witness to Cuba's history of slavery. Over 30,000 slaves worked in the sugar plantations overlooked by the tower. As the day draws to a close you will head along the picturesque road to [Trinidad](#), a small city preserved by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, for a two-night stay. Tonight, you are free to choose where you would like to have dinner on an independent basis, with the support of your guide and our local team in [Trinidad](#).

Overnight in Trinidad.



Destination Information | [Santa Clara](#)

A likeable colonial city and provincial capital, Santa Clara is most famous for its pivotal role in the Cuban revolution. On December 31, 1958, the combined forces of Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos, attacked the city by de-railing a train carrying military supplies for the dictator Fulgencio Batista's troops. Once Che and Camilo had captured the city, Cuba was effectively split in half, cutting off all communication between the west and east of the island. This was the decisive moment in the revolution and Batista fled the country a few hours later. Then on 1 January 1959 the victorious revolutionaries, including Fidel Castro, arrived in Havana seizing power and starting a new era in Cuban history.

Part of the train is still on display in the city and there is a huge memorial where Che Guevara and other revolutionaries are buried in the city's Plaza de la Revolución, both locations offer a fascinating insight into Santa Clara's history.



Destination Information | Trinidad

Located close to the Caribbean Sea on the south coast of Cuba, lies the fascinating small city of Trinidad. Similar in size to a typical UK market town and sitting proudly between the coastline and the impressive Escambray Mountains, lies Cuba's most beautiful and cultured city.

Trinidad was founded in 1514 by the Spanish conquistador Diego Velasquez and became a major centre for trading sugar and slaves for almost 200 years. The wealth generated by the landowners during this region's dark past, is reflected in the treasures found in Trinidad's museums, as well as the ornate colonial architecture found in the centre.

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988, Trinidad is regularly described as a living museum. Cobble streets are lined with pastel-coloured houses, while the beautiful plazas are overlooked by striking 18th and 19th Century buildings. The centre is home to a number of lovely squares, churches, museums and mansions and can easily be explored on foot. There is also a growing market scene with a range of local artworks and handicrafts on sale, and Trinidad is particularly known for its lace and pottery.

In the evening, Trinidad offers a vibrant and growing selection of lively venues to sample Cuban food, music and dancing. The Casa de la Trova and Casa de la Musica are also both really lively with locals and visitors alike, and feature live music, dancing and typical Cuban fare.

Also, very close to Trinidad lie sugar-white Caribbean beaches and the warm clear ocean, perfect to spend some relaxing time away from the heat of the city. Many enjoy sunrise or sunset on the beaches, and they are easy to reach by taxi.

Sunday | Day 5 - Trinidad

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast there will be a comprehensive tour of the centre of [Trinidad](#) including a visit to the History Museum focusing on a family's life in Cuba in the 1800s, and then you can sample the unique Trinidad rum and sugar cane cocktail at La Canchanchara, an old house dating back to the 18th Century, beware they are delicious but very strong!

After the tour ends, the afternoon will be free to relax, enjoy an independent lunch and further exploration of the city, or perhaps take a taxi to the nearby Caribbean beach of Playa Ancon, enjoy the beach and perhaps even sunset there.

Dinner tonight will be at a local private restaurant. It is the final evening in Trinidad, and dancing to local live music is a must so feel free to visit one of [Trinidad](#)'s growing number of bars and listen to some excellent live music.

Overnight in Trinidad.

Monday | Day 6 – Camaguey & Bayamo

Breakfast at accommodation.

An early departure today as you leave Trinidad and travel alongside the foothills of the Escambray Mountains and head towards the east known locally as 'Oriente'.

The journey takes you through central Cuba where the flatlands allow for large government farms producing sugar cane and a variety of tropical fruits and vegetables. After an interesting drive through many smaller Cuban towns and villages, you arrive in [Camaguey](#), a town known for its delightful pedestrianised colonial centre with a maze of alleyways and shaded plazas, as well as an abundance of historic and ornate cathedrals, some with a very European design. After lunch there will be a short tour of Camaguey where you can discover why the colonial centre was established so differently from other Cuban cities and enjoy learning more about this hidden gem that is less visited in Cuba.

After leaving [Camaguey](#), the journey will continue onto the picturesque small city of [Bayamo](#). Known locally as 'La Heroica' due to its long history of revolutionary battles against the Spanish in the 19th Century and Batista's troops during the last revolution.

On arrival, settle in at the hotel and the evening is free to relax and maybe take a walk around the small colonial centre of [Bayamo](#), dinner is included at the hotel tonight.

Overnight in Bayamo.

Destination Information | Camaguey

Cuba's third largest city Camaguey is located in central Cuba and offers an interesting overnight stay for any visitor travelling across the island.

In the centre there is a stunning colonial plaza called Plaza San Juan de Dios, which is cobblestoned and surrounded by brightly painted traditional buildings. The heart of Camaguey is a labyrinth of narrow winding streets that were created this way in order to confuse pirates! A city where you can find many European-style Cathedral's, with one of the most interesting being Nuestra Senora de la Merced, which has extensive catacombs that include a solid silver coffin.

Camaguey is also famous for the local production of large clay pots called tinajones that are used for collecting rainwater. Legend says that if you drink from one of the clay pots, you will fall in love with the city and one-day return. There is an active cultural scene and Camaguey is home to a highly respected ballet company. Evenings can be spent enjoying a growing range of live music venues, private restaurants, cafés and bars and weekends especially can be lively with locals wandering through the cobbled streets, chatting, laughing, and enjoying the music. Surrounding the city lies a vast area of open plains, pastureland and cattle ranches, typical landscapes for the heart of Cuba, and nearby are some excellent opportunities to enjoy birdwatching at a local ranch.



Destination Information | Bayamo

Antiquated yet dignified, Bayamo, the former capital of Cuba and now the provincial city of Granma Province, embraces the tailormade traveller with its quiescent charms.

Historically, it was notably an insurgent stronghold in the Ten Years' War, from 1868-1878; the desperate conflict nearly destroyed the city. Bayamo is unruffled by its conflict-ridden past; this now sedate city's serenity will charm even the most frenzied traveller.

The Plaza de la Revolucion, amidst leafy walkways, is seemingly tranquil, the serenity is only broken by imposing bronze statue of Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, the First War of Independence's champion and an impressive marble memorial of Perucho Figueredo, featuring the lyrics of the Cuban national anthem, which he authored. Visit Bayamo and appreciate its elegance and relaxed charm whilst uncovering historically significant features.

Tuesday | Day 7 – Sierra Maestra Mountains

Breakfast at accommodation.

This morning there will be a short walking tour of this picturesque and friendly city, focusing on the leafy square of Parque Cespedes, named after the 'Father of Cuba', Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, born overlooking the square. In fact, he announced Cuba's first independence from Spanish rule in the same square in 1868.

Continuing deep into the [Sierra Maestra Mountains](#), passing small farmhouses and villages with wonderful mountain scenery, later in the morning you will arrive at Villa Santo Domingo, nestled deep in the mountains with views to Cuba's highest and most sacred mountain, Pico Turquino.

Upon arrival, lunch will be served and afterwards, jeeps will take you higher into the mountains for a walk deep into the forests to La Plata**, the former HQ of Fidel Castro's revolutionary heroes. You can discover the various hidden buildings including Fidel's actual house and the radio station from where they launched the Revolution. Continuing the trail, there is an option to visit the tiny mountain community of La Platica.

Upon your return to the beautiful and peaceful tiny mountain village, the remainder of the day will be free to relax and explore or wander along the river for a dip in one of the natural pools and watch the day draw to a close over the mountains.

Dinner tonight will be hosted by a local mountain family that operate a small bed and breakfast for visitors. The food will be traditional and home cooked, and it will be an opportunity to chat with the family about simple life in the mountains.

Overnight in Villa Santo Domingo

Fitness and Mobility

***A considerable amount of walking and hiking is involved so a decent level of fitness and mobility is required. The La Plata walk is approximately a 6km round trip. The terrain around Comandancia de la Plata can be uneven, rocky, and possibly muddy (especially after rain) with some fairly steep climbs. For guests not wanting to take part in this day due to a concern of it being too challenging, it is possible to relax instead at Villa Santo Domingo whilst others take part.*



Destination Information | The Sierra Maestra Mountains

The Sierra Maestra is Cuba's largest mountain range. Located in the southeast of Cuba a few hour's drive from Santiago de Cuba, it once served as a refuge for the Cuban revolutionaries. Today, these striking, colossal sierras house a spectacular range of colourful birds, many of which can only be seen in Cuba. The panoramic views from the top of these majestic mountains command reverence; the beautiful and tranquil surroundings must be admired.

The more adventurous and energetic will test their endurance with a trek to Pico Turquino, the revered highest peak in Cuba. This test of endurance starts at approximately 5am lasting a minimum of 12 hours for experienced trekkers, but with the chance for an overnight stay, in a hut high up in the mountains on the ascent. Those taking the challenge will be rewarded; the brave mountaineers will witness spectacular views of the stunning, serene surroundings and spend the time almost alone in the mountains with their guide and very few other trekkers.

Alternatively, La Plata offers an adventurous and rewarding visit. Venture into the mountains, and attempt to detect Fidel Castro's headquarters, the place where he launched the revolution, its masked by seemingly impenetrable forests.

Or simply stroll along the riverbank and through the tropical forests, take cooling dips in river pools and marvel at the peace of the area.

Wednesday | Day 8 – Santiago de Cuba

Breakfast at accommodation.

Today you will depart for [Santiago de Cuba](#), a city of crucial importance throughout Cuba's history, stopping en route at El Cobre, a picturesque church and Cuba's most sacred pilgrimage site with a shrine to Virgin Mary. Here, you can enjoy a tour of the church and its many historic gifts bestowed by visitors.

The tour will continue to [Santiago de Cuba](#) and the remainder of the day will be free to relax at the hotel or explore the local area. Dinner tonight is included in the hotel restaurant.

Overnight in Santiago de Cuba.



Destination Information | [Santiago de Cuba](#)

Nestled between the Sierra Maestra mountains and the Caribbean coastline, sits Santiago de Cuba; Cuba's second biggest city. This memorable metropolis is considered the 'Cradle of the Revolution'; the place which sparked the uprising and ultimately, it is where Fidel Castro announced its success. Additionally, Santiago is the final resting place of Castro. For those wishing to pay reverence to the revolutionary leader, his mausoleum, placed next to Cuba's national hero Jose Marti is a much-revered resting place, though visitors must adhere to the respectful code.

Fidel Castro launched an attack on Santiago de Cuba because it was reputed that soldiers would be too busy celebrating the carnival to pose any threat to his men. Today, Santiago de Cuba, hosts Cuba's biggest carnival event; retaining its passionate reputation.

At the end of July, for two weeks, the effervescence of Santiago de Cuba can be witnessed: there's an explosion of colour whilst dynamic dancers cavort along the streets to rhythmic drumbeats. This awe-inspiring carnival is a time for Cubans to remember their history, community and cultures and it is something which shouldn't be missed.

Music and dance appear hereditary here, many musicians, notably from the Buena Vista Social Club were born in Santiago de Cuba. Additionally, it is the place where the traditional son dance, from which the salsa is derived, began.

Avid readers may note that Santiago de Cuba is the birthplace of the poet Jose Maria Heredia and that the Casa Granda Hotel features in Graham Greene's novel, Our Man in Havana. Enjoy leafing through the texts, whilst

sipping on a Ron Santiago, the signature rum of Santiago de Cuba and known to be even better than the famous Havana Club rum.

Historians will, no doubt, relish the opportunity to visit El Morro. This legendary fortress witnessed heroic battles between marauding pirates and King Philip II's men, as the King battled to defend his territory from attack. This building later imprisoned disorderly and disobedient nobles and military personnel.

Thursday | Day 9 – Santiago de Cuba

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast, you will spend the day with a full exploration of this fascinating city. Visit the Moncada Barracks, the location for what many describe as the start of the revolution and the small museum that depicts Fidel Castro's attack on the barracks on 26th July 1953. Next visit the central square, Parque Cespedes, surrounded by historic buildings, including the Ayuntamiento, where Fidel Castro gave his victory speech when the revolution was won in January 1959.

There will also be a visit to the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, a most important site in Cuba and the final resting place of Fidel Castro, one of the world's most recognised leaders. His simple, but powerful mausoleum is constantly guarded and there will be a chance to stay for the impressive changing of the guard ceremony. The cemetery also contains the final resting place of Cuba's national hero Jose Marti, as well as other important revolutionary and historical figures including the Bacardi family.

There will then be a visit to Calle Heredia, one of the city's liveliest streets, Padre Pico Street, made famous by the intense games of draughts played by the locals.

A visit to [Santiago de Cuba](#) cannot miss the Castillo del Morro, a historical fortress offering fantastic views across the Caribbean Sea and the impressive Sierra Maestra mountains. Enjoy a traditional Cuban lunch at a restaurant next to the fortress offering stunning views of the coastal scenery.

The remainder of the evening will be free to relax, and maybe wander through the centre of Santiago de Cuba and choose a local restaurant for dinner, visit a local music club such as the famous Casa de la Trova.

Overnight in Santiago de Cuba.



Friday | Day 10 - Guardalavaca

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast, the tour will leave Santiago de Cuba, passing through many pleasant towns and villages before you stop at the tiny village of Biran in the foothills of the Nipe Mountains. Biran is the birthplace of Fidel and Raul Castro who both became iconic world leaders, and you will see the house where the brothers were born, which is also the final resting place of their parents. A traditional Cuban lunch will be served in a local restaurant in Holguin offering home cooked cuisine from Eastern Cuba.

The journey will continue to [Guardalavaca](#), a stunning beach setting which will provide a beautiful backdrop for a couple of nights during your Cuban adventure. The hotel we have chosen has a relaxed but fun and friendly atmosphere and we are certain you will enjoy your stay here.

Overnight in Guardalavaca.



Destination Information | [Guardalavaca](#)

Located in the eastern Holguin province of Cuba the area today tempts any travellers with its alluring and welcoming idyllic beaches. Many will happily lounge in the sun-kissed shores and listen to the lapping waves, drifting into a gentle slumber.

More adventurous explorers dive into the depths and discover beautiful reefs and marine life. Alternatively, many embark on a modern catamaran and sail across to the Bahia de Naranjo National Park and enjoy swimming and snorkelling in the warm, clear ocean.

If marine adventures don't appeal, take a jeep tour to a typical local village or explore the picturesque countryside on horseback.

With a range of beachside hotels to suit all budgets offering all-inclusive services, the area is a picturesque and relaxing region to enjoy.

Saturday | Day 11 – Guardalavaca

Breakfast at accommodation.

Today will be totally free, so you can relax, enjoy a well-deserved rest, and make use of all the all-inclusive facilities and services that the hotel offers.

Overnight in Guardalavaca.



Sunday | Day 12 – Sancti Spiritus

Breakfast at accommodation.

After breakfast, the tour leaves [Guardalavaca](#) and travels west towards Camaguey passing through the quieter Las Tunas province and the small provincial capital of Las Tunas. After an interesting drive through many smaller Cuban towns and villages, on arrival into Camaguey a short break will be taken before carrying on with the remainder of the journey for today.

After leaving Camaguey the journey continues to [Sancti Spiritus](#), one of the smaller cities in Cuba and one that features an attractive colonial centre and uniquely, a river running through the city. [Sancti Spiritus](#) is a delightful, quieter place.

After settling in at the centrally located hotel, dinner will be served at the hotel restaurant.

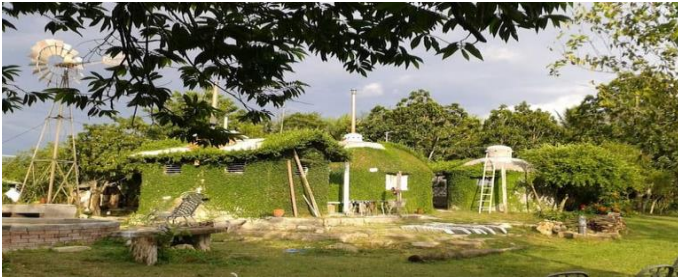
Overnight in Sancti Spiritus.

Destination Information | [Sancti Spiritus](#)

Sancti Spíritus was one of the original seven Cuban cities founded by the Spanish in 1514, and its colonial origins are evident in the buildings and layout. In any other country, this attractive colonial city would be a real highlight, however being so close to iconic Trinidad, visitors barely give it a glance. However, here lies the attraction, Sancti Spíritus is Trinidad without the crowds, and you can explore, dine, listen to boleros on the plaza and absorb the history and friendliness of the city with only a few other visitors.

There are a few interesting and iconic features of Sancti Spiritus, it's the birthplace of the dapper 'guayabera', Latin America's favourite men's shirt, also a major grower of the 'guayaba' (guava) fruit and lastly, one of very few settlements in Cuba which has a river running through and crossed in the centre by a quaint humpbacked bridge, reminiscent of the Yorkshire Dales.

Easily reached from Trinidad along a picturesque and undulating road that passes the old sugar mills at Sugar Mill Valley and the foothills of the Escambray mountains, Sancti Spiritus is worthy of a one-night stay and there are several pleasant and comfortable boutique hotels here.



Monday | Day 13 – El Nicho & Cienfuegos

Breakfast at accommodation.

An early departure from [Sancti Spiritus](#) takes you towards [Cienfuegos](#), with a visit en-route to El Nicho Park, a marvel of nature, with waterfalls and natural pools in an area, hidden among the mountains and one of the most beautiful spots in Cuba. A paradise which combines the green of the vegetation, rivers, the Black Creek waterfalls, where water can plunge more than 30 meters, and you will reach the area by taking a very scenic route through many quaint rural villages.

During the tour, you can take a gentle hiking trail of 2 km (1.2 miles). Observe the flora and fauna and enjoy swimming in the cool river pools at the end of the walk as well as a rustic local lunch which will be served at the falls.

Continuing after El Nicho to the French influenced small colonial city of [Cienfuegos](#), which sits overlooking a picturesque bay. En-route there will be a tour of the famous Botanical Gardens, one of the largest in the Americas with an abundant species of plant from tropical regions. On arrival in Cienfuegos there will be a stroll through the colonial centre and along the seafront 'Malecon' promenade. Dinner can be enjoyed independently tonight.

Overnight in Cienfuegos.

Destination Information – Cienfuegos

Known as 'The Pearl of the South', Cienfuegos is a small city overlooking a large Caribbean bay which served as a refuge against storms for explorers and pirates long ago. In 1745 the 'Castillo de Jagua' was built at the entrance to the bay for protection against Caribbean pirates and the colonial town was later founded in 1819. Initially settled by French immigrants, Cienfuegos became one of the chief seaports of the Cuban sugar, coffee and tobacco trades. This rich and culturally diverse heritage has left an eclectic legacy of French influenced colonial and neo-classical style buildings in the UNESCO listed historic centre. The beautiful bay, historic buildings and harbour-front Malecón make it a wonderful city to explore.

In the busy centre is Parque Jose Marti, here you will find locals relaxing and chatting under the shade of a tree. Surrounding the park are a variety of buildings of interest including the ornate Teatro Tomas Terry and the Paseo del Prado. The longest boulevard in Cuba is close by, also lined by many beautiful buildings. Along the bay, just outside of the town centre is a beautiful old Moorish style palace called Palacio de Valle. This building is well worth a visit to see the stunning architecture, or you may want to enjoy a meal in the restaurant or have sunset drinks at the rooftop bar. The Palace is located in the Punta Gorda area of Cienfuegos, a narrow headland in the bay. Here you can find many excellent casas and private restaurants, and visitors and locals enjoy spending time in this area.

In the evening there is a good choice of venues to listen to traditional Cuban music throughout this small city, and Cienfuegos has a strong link to Cuban music as it was the home to the world-famous musician Beny More.

Within a short drive of Cienfuegos, you can find a number of unspoilt beaches, ideal for a peaceful walk, swim or relaxation, and the foothills of the Escambray Mountains are also not too far away. Cienfuegos also boasts one of the largest botanical gardens in the Americas on the outskirts of the city, and another off the beaten track location is the small bay popular with hundreds of flamingos.



Tuesday | Day 14 – The Bay of Pigs & Havana

Breakfast at accommodation.

After leaving early from [Cienfuegos](#) you will continue to the Bay of Pigs, the site of the failed CIA backed invasion of Cuba that was repelled by Fidel and Che and their revolutionaries. There will be a short visit to the museum to gain an insight into one of the major world events from the 1960s and an important date in Cuba's revolutionary history.

Time will be available to wander through the village and along the beach and the next stop is Guama, a replica village of Cuba's earliest settlers the Taino Indians who lived on the island in the 1100s, the original settlers on the island. Located on a string of small islands and reached by an exhilarating boat ride through the mangroves, there are also a number of life-size sculptures depicting the life of these early settlers.

After arriving in [Havana](#), there will be a farewell dinner in a carefully chosen private restaurant in Old Havana, before heading to a performance by 'Legendarios de Guajirito', This outstanding band is made with former members of the Buena Vista Social Club and the Afro-Cuban All Stars. Dancing is guaranteed, and the evening is a fitting finale to an unforgettable week exploring Cuba.

Overnight in Havana.

Wednesday | Day 15 – Havana

Breakfast at accommodation.

Today is free for you to explore [Havana](#) independently, relax or leave Havana for your beach extension in [Varadero](#), the 'Cayos', or elsewhere.

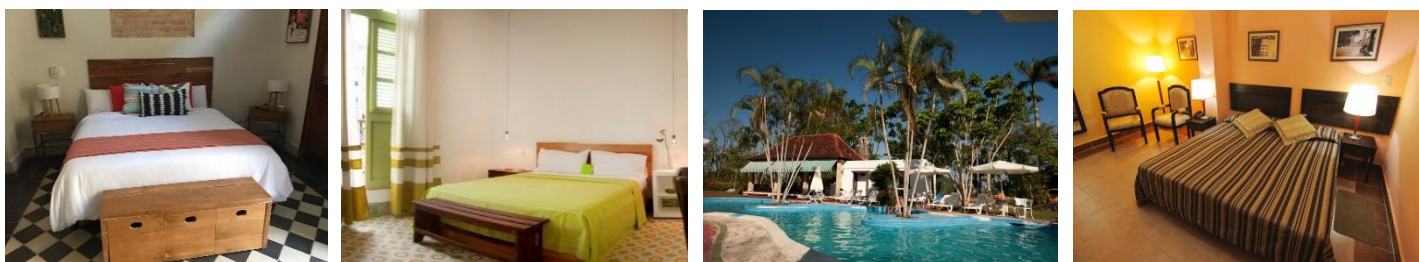
For those leaving Cuba today, a transfer will collect you from the hotel and take you to the airport for your departure flight home.

The tour concludes today.

Important

- 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 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
- Guide services commence (i.e., the point at which the tour becomes 'escorted') from day 2 at approx. 9am. Guide services conclude (i.e., the point at which the tour stops being 'escorted') on the afternoon of day 15
- 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

Accommodation Included



***We have based prices on staying at an authentic and unique superior Casas Particulares in Old Havana, offering a comfortable stay in the heart of the city. Alternatively, for a supplement, you can stay in the Iberostar Parque Central Hotel, also located in Old Havana, which is centrally located with a swimming pool. Please refer to 'optional alternative accommodation / upgraded rooms' for more information.*

- Havana 2 nights at a recommended casa (or [Iberostar Parque Central](#)) both on BB basis
- Las Terrazas 1 night at the [Moka Hotel](#), Las Terrazas on BB basis
- Trinidad 2 nights at a recommended casa, on BB basis
- Bayamo 1 night at the [Royalton Hotel](#), on HB basis
- Sierra Maestra 1 night at [Villa Santo Domingo](#), on HB basis
- Santiago 2 nights at the [Melia Santiago](#), 1st night HB, 2nd night BB
- Guardalavaca 2 nights at the [Sol Rio de Luna y Mares](#), on all-inclusive (AI) basis
- Sancti Spiritus 1 night at the [Hotel El Rjjo](#) or similar on BB basis
- Cienfuegos 1 night at the [Hotel Melia San Carlos](#) or similar on BB basis
- Havana 1 night at a recommended casa (or [Iberostar Parque Central](#)) on BB basis

If you would prefer alternative accommodation, please contact us.

Transportation and Guide Included

- All transportation as required in the itinerary using air-conditioned transportation
- The services of one English-speaking guide from Day 1 to lunchtime on Day 6
- The services of one English-speaking guide from lunchtime Day 6 until Day 15

Restaurant Lunches and Dinners Included

Breakfast is included throughout the tour and will be taken at your accommodation.

Day 2 Thursday	Lunch at La Imprenta, Havana or similar Light dinner / tapas at El del Frente, Havana or similar
Day 3 Friday	Lunch at organic farm restaurant, Vinales Valley
Day 4 Saturday	Light lunch at a local restaurant, Santa Clara
Day 5 Sunday	Dinner at local private restaurant, Trinidad
Day 6 Monday	Lunch at local restaurant, Camaguey Dinner at Hotel Royalton, Bayamo
Day 7 Tuesday	Lunch at Villa Santo Domingo Hotel, Sierra Maestra Mountains Dinner at local casa, Sierra Maestra Mountains
Day 8 Wednesday	Dinner at Hotel Melia, Santiago de Cuba
Day 9 Thursday	Lunch at El Morro Castle restaurant, Santiago de Cuba or similar
Day 10 Friday	Lunch at a local restaurant, Holguin Dinner included as part of the hotel's all-inclusive service, Guardalavaca
Day 11 Saturday	All meals as part of the hotel's all-inclusive service, Guardalavaca
Day 12 Sunday	Dinner at Hotel El Rijo or similar
Day 13 Monday	Lunch at El Nicho Natural Park
Day 14 Tuesday	Farewell dinner at a specially chosen local restaurant, Havana

Entrances Included

- Thursday Cigar Factory, Havana
- Thursday City Museum, Havana
- Thursday Old American Car Tour, Havana
- Thursday Cocktail Making Lesson Havana
- Friday El Indio Limestone Cave System, Vinales Valley
- Friday Tobacco Drying House, Vinales Valley
- Friday Las Terrazas Nacional Park, Las Terrazas
- Saturday Che Guevara's Museum and Mausoleum, Santa Clara
- Saturday Tren Blindado, Santa Clara
- Saturday Manaca Iznaga, Sugar Mill Valley, Trinidad
- Sunday History Museum, Trinidad
- Sunday La Canchanchara, Trinidad
- Tuesday Entrance to Sierra Maestra National Park, Sierra Maestra
- Tuesday Entrance to La Plata Revolutionary Base, Sierra Maestra
- Wednesday Entrance to Iglesia del Cobre, Santiago de Cuba
- Thursday Entrance to Moncada Barracks, Santiago de Cuba
- Thursday Entrance to Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, Santiago de Cuba
- Thursday Entrance to Castillo del Morro, Santiago de Cuba
- Friday Entrance to Casa de Fidel, Biran

- Monday Entrance to El Nicho National Park
- Monday Botanical Gardens Cienfuegos
- Tuesday Bay of Pigs Museum, Playa Giron
- Tuesday Taino Village and Boat Ride, Guama
- Tuesday Legendarios de Guajirito Performance, Havana

Tour Extensions

On the last day (day 15), you can transfer to the beaches of Jibacoa, Varadero, or elsewhere for a few days' relaxation, or spend additional nights in Havana. Alternatively take a flight to Mexico, Canada or further afield and perhaps enjoy a contrasting city break before journeying home.

Tour on a Private Basis

We are able to organise this tour on a private basis, enabling guests to travel alone with the guide. On a private tour, it is possible to tailor the tour further if you require (before departure only). 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 further information.

Not Included

- Dinner on arrival day
- Lunch on days 1, 4, 5, 8, 12, 14 and 15
- Dinner on days 3, 4, 9, and 13
- 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

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.

	From	To	Hours
Day 1	Havana Airport	Havana City	0.5
Day 3	Havana	Vinales	2.5
Day 3	Vinales	Las Terrazas	2
Day 4	Las Terrazas	Santa Clara	4.5
Day 4	Santa Clara	Trinidad	2
Day 6	Trinidad	Camaguey	4
Day 6	Camaguey	Bayamo	3
Day 7	Bayamo	Sierra Maestra	2
Day 8	Sierra Maestra	Santiago De Cuba	3.5

Day 10	Santiago De Cuba	Biran	1.5
Day 10	Biran	Guardalavaca	2
Day 12	Guardalavaca	Camaguey	4
Day 12	Camaguey	Sancti Spiritus	3
Day 13	Sancti Spiritus	El Nicho Park	2
Day 13	El Nicho Park	Cienfuegos	1
Day 14	Cienfuegos	Playa Larga	1.5
Day 14	Playa Larga	Havana	2

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- 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 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
- 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
- On rare occasions, where this tour departs with six passengers or less, there will be a dedicated guide service in each location visited rather than the same guide travelling with the group throughout the tour. In this instance guides will be very experienced English-speaking specialists. Customers will be informed before departure if the tour will be operating with local guides instead of one guide throughout.
- We operate our escorted tours using small groups. Maximum group size can be up to 21 guests, usually with an average of 8 – 14. Our escorted tours are usually busier/booked full in winter months. 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.
- All our escorted tours include accommodation, air-conditioned transportation, services of an English-speaking guide, restaurants, and entrances to the places we visit (please refer to the tour inclusions for more specific information on exactly what is included/excluded).
- 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 on these occasions.
- Our 2-week 'Ultimate Cuba' tour can be made up of our two 1-week tours booked back-to-back therefore there may be different people and/or more/less guests on the second week to the first. The same situation applies to the Best of Cuba Tour which is made up of our 7- night Essential Cuba Tour plus 4 nights of the Ultimate Tour.
- Please note that as our escorted 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 escorted 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 escorted 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 escorted 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 able to carry your own luggage. Comfortable and supportive walking footwear is required for all our tours.

- 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.
- Havana, Trinidad, and other cities visited on our tours typically have uneven/high/low kerbs and steps and cobbled streets.
- When visiting Vinales, Las Terrazas, and El Nicho, you may be required to climb stairs, 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.

- La Plata / Comandancia de la Plata

(Day 2 Essence of Cuba Tour, Day 8 Best of Cuba Tour, Day 8 The Ultimate Cuba Tour)

A considerable amount of walking and hiking is involved so a decent level of fitness and mobility is required. The La Plata walk is approximately a 6km round trip. The terrain around Comandancia de la Plata can be uneven, rocky, and possibly muddy (especially after rain) with some fairly steep climbs. For guests not wanting to take part in this day due to a concern of it being too challenging, it is possible to relax instead at Villa Santo Domingo whilst others take part. Whilst there is an easier trek available locally, we do not include it in the tour due to the La Plata walk being much more impressive and significant historically.

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



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