



VINALES VALLEY BY GUILLAUME BAVIERE

CUBA

Ecology & Society in Western Cuba

9 DAYS | Choose your dates

About this trip

Renowned for its natural beauty, Cuba has lush mountains, limestone mounds riddled with caves and underground streams, pristine beaches, coral reefs, and biodiverse wetland habitats. Students will begin their exploration in Havana, Cuba's largest city and vibrant capital. From there, they will examine the relationships between Cuba's history, culture, ecosystems, and natural resources as they traverse the island's western provinces, from its cities and farmlands to national parks and coastal environments.

Your students will...

- Discover the historical influences that have impacted Cuba during a tour of Old Havana.
- Journey to Las Terrazas, a self-sustained ecological community, and visit the studios of local artists.
- View the limestone formations known as mogotes and visit a tobacco farm in Viñales Valley.
- Interact with artists from the Korimakao Project, a community performing arts initiative.
- Contribute to a conservation service project in Zapata Peninsula, home to the largest wetlands in the Caribbean.

Educational Connections



Marine Science



Biology



Geology



Culture &
Social Sciences

What's included?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting

Itinerary

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - HAVANA

Upon arrival in Havana transfer to your hotel. In the evening you will receive a welcome orientation. *Overnight at ROC Presidente. (D)*

DAY 2 - HAVANA

Today take a day trip to explore old Havana. Havana is a living time capsule, from its Spanish colonial history to the enduring legacy of the Revolution, characterized by 1950s American cars and colonial architecture. Havana can be divided into four main areas: the old quarter, which as the name suggests is the historic heart of the city and declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982; central Havana, containing the famous Paseo del Prado, Capitol building and many outstanding museums; Vedado, the modern political and cultural center including Revolution Square; and Miramar to the west, Havana's most elegant quarter, whose main, tree-lined avenue Quinta Avenida is flanked by splendid villas. This afternoon visit the model of Old Havana and have lunch at a local restaurant in Plaza Vieja before continuing the exploration of the city treasures. This evening dinner will be at the hotel then enjoy the grounds. *Overnight at ROC Presidente. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - VIÑALES VALLEY

Today head west to the province of Pinar del Rio. This province is a rural heartland of Cuba and is home to the best tobacco growing farms in the world. In this region, the isolated limestone mounds known as "mogotes" seem to appear without any reason in contrast with their surroundings. En route stop at Soroa and hike to the 115-foot waterfall. Trees surround the falls, and there's a small natural pool that's a fine place to swim at the bottom. While there you will also visit Mirador de Venus, a lookout that has spectacular views of the valley. Next visit Las Terrazas for lunch. Las Terrazas is an ecotourism center set in the Sierra del Rosario UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. It dates back to 1968, when the Cuban government launched a huge reforestation project on terraced hills ringing the area. The project, which included the creation of a village where today 1,000 locals live in a largely self-contained community, is an internationally recognized success. The buildings in the village, set above a lake, were designed to blend in with their natural surroundings. After lunch explore the area and visit the studios of local artists as well as some of the hiking trails. *Overnight at Rancho San Vicente or casas particulares. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - VIÑALES VALLEY

This morning hike in the national park for close-up exploration of the jaw-dropping mogotes, 250-million-year-old, loaf-shaped limestone mountains that rise as high as 300 meters. This morning visit Cueva del Indio, a limestone cave set adjacent to hills covered in lush vegetation. Here, board a boat and enjoy an underground magical world of stalagmites, stalactites, and folklore during a short cruise through this cavernous wonderland. *Overnight at Rancho San Vicente or casas particulares. (BLD)*

DAY 5 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

Today travel to the Zapata Peninsula, home to the largest wetlands in the Caribbean as well as the Bay of Pigs. Seventy percent of the area is a biosphere reserve and Cuba's largest national park. Isolated and serene, the Bay of Pigs is famed for its marine species, coral reefs, and birds. Upon arrival you will have free time to enjoy the beach. Later in the day visit the town of Palpite to interact with the artist community here, part of the Korimakao Project. Continue to Hotel Playa Larga, arriving before sunset for dinner. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

This morning receive an introduction and welcome to Zapata National Park, followed by a visit to Cueva de los Peces for

snorkeling. Los Peces is a natural aquarium in a 201-foot-deep cenote (sinkhole). It is filled with tropical fish that swim in from the bay via a subterranean passage. You will have time to snorkel, and then the remainder of the day is free to explore the Zapata area with your guide. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

After breakfast participate in community work with the Zapata National Park. The work will be focused on ecological conservation and protection. After finishing up the community project, visit the town of Playa Girón and its museum to learn about the famous events of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Have lunch at Caleta Buena, a beautiful inlet in the heart of the bay. After lunch, enjoy snorkeling to explore the marine biodiversity of the area. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*

DAY 8 - HAVANA

You will have some time to snorkel from the beach or hike this morning. After lunch return to Havana. Upon arrival your guide will be available to explore areas of interest in the city. In the evening enjoy a special farewell dinner. *Overnight at Hotel Sevilla. (BLD)*

DAY 9 - DEPART

Transfer to the airport for your flight home. (B)

Program pricing

\$2,745 (10 participants + 1 leader / 20 participants + 2 leaders)

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included. Valid for travel in 2018 and 2019.

Travel protection

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants traveling in 2018 or beyond. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

The fine print

Rates are based on triple and quadruple occupancy for participants; complimentary leader accommodations may be single or double occupancy based on availability. International airfare is included for complimentary leaders. Holiday surcharges may apply. A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due upon booking. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 95 days prior to departure are non-refundable.



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe