


VIÑALES VALLEY BY GUILLAUME BAVIERE

CUBA

Intro to Cuban Ecology & Society

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'll traverse the island's western provinces, from the rural heartland of Viñales Valley to the wetlands and marine habitats of Zapata Peninsula. Along the way, students will interact with residents and examine the relationships between Cuba's history, culture, ecosystems, and natural resources.

Your students will...

- Discover the historical influences that have impacted Cuba during a tour of Old Havana.
- Go snorkeling in Cueva de los Peces, a natural sinkhole, to see tropical fish that swim in from the bay via subterranean passage.
- Explore Viñales National Park for an up-close view of the distinctive limestone formations known as mogotes.
- Interact with artists from the Korimakao Project, a community performing arts initiative.
- Observe and identify a host of marine species during snorkeling excursions around Zapata Peninsula.

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. Attend a welcome orientation this evening. *Overnight at Hotel Sevilla or similar. (D)*

DAY 2 - HAVANA

Today take a day trip to explore Old Havana. Havana is like a living time capsule; the city's architecture and 1950s American cars allude to its Spanish colonial history and the enduring legacy of the Revolution. Havana can be divided into four main areas: the old quarter, which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and, as the name suggests, is the historical heart of the city; central Havana, which contains the famous Paseo del Prado, Capitol building, and many outstanding museums; Vedado, the modern political and cultural center that includes Revolution Square; and Miramar, Havana's most elegant quarter, whose main, tree-lined avenue Quinta Avenida is flanked by splendid villas. This afternoon, visit the scale model of Old Havana and have lunch at a restaurant in Plaza Vieja before continuing your exploration of the city. This evening, dinner is at a paladar (a restaurant in a private home). *Overnight at Hotel Sevilla or similar. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - VIÑALES VALLEY

Today head west to the province of Pinar del Río. This rural region is known for its limestone formations called mogotes: flat-topped hills dating to the Jurassic period that can be found in only four countries in the world. The area is also famous for its rich soil and agriculture, including tobacco production. En route, stop at the village of Soroa and hike to the 115-foot waterfall. The falls are surrounded by lush greenery, and there's a small, natural pool at the base where you can go swimming. Also visit the Mirador de Venus, a lookout point with spectacular views of the valley below. Next, continue to Las Terrazas in the Sierra del Rosario UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for lunch. In 1968, the Cuban government launched a 12,000-acre reforestation project, which included the creation of a village in 1971. Today, 1,000 residents live in the largely self-contained community of Las Terrazas, which is internationally hailed as a model for sustainable development. After lunch, explore the area and visit the studios of local artists as well as some of the hiking trails. Later, arrive in Viñales, where you'll have dinner and get settled at your private homestay accommodations. *Overnight at casas particulares. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - VIÑALES VALLEY

This morning, hike in Viñales National Park for a closer look at the mogotes, some of which rise nearly 1,000 feet high. Then, descend underground at the Cueva del Indio and explore this limestone cave by boat, learning about local folklore as you observe stalagmites, stalactites, and other geological formations. This afternoon, visit a tobacco farm to meet with farmers and learn about the importance of tobacco to Cuba's economy. Dinner is at a local paladar. *Overnight at 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 comprises a Biosphere Reserve and Cuba's largest national park. Within the area's scrub, mangrove swamp, and coastline habitats, more than 1,000 species of plants, 200 bird species, and 37 reptile species, including the endemic Cuban crocodile, have been recorded. Upon arrival, embark on short excursion across the Tesoro Lagoon. Visit the Taína Village, where Cuban sculptor Rita Longa has depicted the daily way of life of Cuba's indigenous inhabitants through life-sized statues. After lunch at a local restaurant, receive an introduction and welcome to Zapata National Park. Then visit the Korimakao Community Project in the town of Palpite. Through the project, residents from nearby communities are given the opportunity to develop and improve their performing skills such as singing, dancing, and playing instruments. Learn about the program's development and interact with the talented artists. Continue to Hotel Playa Larga, arriving before sunset for dinner. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

This morning, visit Cueva de los Peces for snorkeling. Los Peces is a natural aquarium in a 201-foot-deep cenote (sinkhole) and is filled with tropical fish that swim in from the bay via a subterranean passage. 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, 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. This afternoon, go snorkeling for a closer look at the marine biodiversity of the area. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*

DAY 8 - HAVANA

Enjoy 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 or similar. (BLD)*

DAY 9 - DEPART

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

Program pricing

\$2,345 (21 participants + 3 leaders)

\$2,435 (14 participants + 2 leaders)

\$2,595 (7 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, local guides in each region for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included.

Valid for travel in 2021.

Travel protection

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. 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 trip/quadruplet 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