



ROOFTOP VIEW OF TRINIDAD BY KATE PEREZ

CUBA

Connecting with People and Culture in Central Cuba

9 DAYS | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: **NOV - SEP**

Over the course of centuries, Cuba has been shaped by a blend of indigenous, European, and African influences. This program examines different aspects of the country's cultural heritage, from the 19th century sugar trade and its lasting impact, to the incorporation of various religious identities, to more recent history, like the 1959 revolution and Bay of Pigs invasion. Interact with Cuban people as you meet with modern-day artists, converse with taxi drivers in their classic American cars, hear live traditional music, and visit with students of an urban rehabilitation project. Plus, explore natural areas like Zapata National Park — a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Ramsar wetland — and go snorkeling to experience Cuba's marine biodiversity.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover the many historical influences that have impacted Cuba during a tour of Old Havana's colonial architecture.
- Learn about the country's native inhabitants during a visit to a traditional Taíno Village, where the indigenous way of life is depicted through life-sized statues.
- Visit the mountains of El Nicho, where you can hike through caves, swim under a waterfall, and look for native flora and fauna.
- Visit the Castillo de Jagua fortress, restored main square, and the Malecón promenade in Cienfuegos, the "Pearl of the South."
- Stroll the cobble streets and view the colorful houses of Trinidad, a colonial town.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

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



HAVANA BY DEBBIE STURDIVANT JORDAN



CLASSIC CAR IN CIENFUEGOS BY GUILLAUME BAVIERE

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - HAVANA

Upon arrival in Havana, clear customs and immigration, a process that takes about one hour. A Cuban representative will welcome the group and transfer you to your accommodation, stopping along the way at Revolution Plaza. The center of government, this area contains most of the offices of the main ministries and is often used for massive rallies, including the one held during Pope Benedict XVI's visit in 2012. Check in at the hotel. Tonight attend a welcome dinner at Paladar San Cristóbal. This art nouveau-style restaurant has a reputation of excellence in both atmosphere and local cuisine. *Overnight at Hotel Sevilla or similar. (D)*

DAY 2 - HAVANA

After breakfast take a walking tour of Old Havana. (Please make sure to wear comfortable shoes.) Thanks in part to history and ideology, Cuba—and especially Havana—is a treasure trove of architectural styles spanning centuries. Since 1982, when the city became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the government has embarked on an ambitious preservation and restoration program concentrated in the Old City. However, a severe lack of funding and materials has hampered efforts. Therefore, the decay and neglect of the past 40 years, coupled with the destructive tropical weather, continue to claim buildings every year. Stroll through Plaza de Armas, a scenic tree-lined plaza formerly at the center of influence in Cuba. It is surrounded by many of the most historic structures in Havana, as well as important monuments. Continue through the Plaza de San Francisco, a cobbled plaza surrounded by buildings dating from the 18th century, dominated by the baroque Iglesia and Convento de San Francisco dating from 1719. Visit the Plaza Vieja, one of the oldest plazas in Havana, dating from the 16th century.

Learn about the massive historical preservation program that began in this plaza under the leadership of city historian Eusebio Leal. Visit Fototeca, Cuba's leading venue for photographic exhibitions, and the Escuela de Taller, where you will learn about the restoration project that is underway in Old Havana and meet the students, engineers, builders, woodworkers, and other craftsmen utilizing traditional handcrafting methods to preserve the authenticity of these once-resplendent structures. Have lunch at Paladar Doña Eutimia, a restored home in Old Havana, for traditional Cuban food at its best. The remainder of the afternoon is free to explore the historical area surrounding the hotel, including Havana's Central Park. *Overnight at Hotel Sevilla or similar. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - HAVANA

Board the bus to visit Finca Vigía, the former house of Ernest Hemingway, located on the outskirts of the city. Have lunch at a paladar. In the afternoon visit western Havana, including the Vedado District, the city's modern political and cultural center, and Miramar, Havana's most elegant



CUBAN MUSICIAN BY LUCASH

quarter, whose main tree-lined avenue Quinta Avenida is flanked by splendid villas. On the return visit the iconic Hotel Nacional de Cuba overlooking the Straits of Florida and the Malecón. Return to Old Havana and observe the massive renovation project of the Capitolio before continuing to the Parque de la Fraternidad. This is “Old Taxi” central; here you will find all makes and models of American cars from the 1950s. This is a great opportunity to mingle and converse with taxi drivers and engage in their favorite subject, their cars. Return to your accommodation at your own pace. Have dinner at a paladar in Old Havana. *Overnight at Hotel Sevilla or similar. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - ZAPATA PENINSULA

Today travel to the Zapata Peninsula, also known as the Bay of Pigs, which is home to the largest wetlands in the Caribbean. 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 embark on a short excursion crossing the Tesoro Lagoon to visit the Taína Village, where Cuban sculptor Rita Longa has depicted the primitive way of life, skills, and habits of Cuba’s native inhabitants through the creation of life-sized statues. After lunch at a local restaurant, receive an introduction and welcome to Zapata National Park. Afterwards continue with a visit to the town of Palpite to interact with the artist community here, part of the Korimacao Project. Continue to Playa Larga Hotel, arriving before sunset for dinner. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*



CASTILLO JAGUA IN TRINIDAD BY MAXENCE

DAY 5 - 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. After lunch, enjoy snorkeling to explore the marine biodiversity of the area. Later return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. (An optional stop at Cueva de los Peces for additional snorkeling is possible.) *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - CIENFUEGOS

Today travel to Cienfuegos. Established in 1819, more recently than most major Cuban cities, and the only city in the country founded by French settlers, Cienfuegos is an easy-going place, noticeably cleaner and more spacious than the average provincial capital and deserving of its label as the “Pearl of the South.” Cienfuegos is also one of the chief seaports of Cuba, and the center of its sugar, coffee, and tobacco production. After lunch explore the city, visiting the Castillo de Jagua, a fortress erected in the 1740s for protection against Caribbean pirates, the restored main square, and also the Catedral de la Purísima Concepción and the Teatro Terry. Also see its Prado, decorated by monuments and important buildings such as the former Rotary Club building, today the House of the Culture of

the City. Afterward, drive along Punta Gorda on a 1.8-mile-long peninsula where the Malecón promenade is bordered by imposing villas, vestiges of the American period under Fulgencio Batista. Have dinner at the hotel restaurant. *Overnight at Hotel Jagua. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - CIENFUEGOS

Today visit nearby Trinidad. Trinidad is the perfect example of a colonial town, which has earned it a position on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The cobbled streets are lined with colorful houses from a bygone era that remain well-preserved even today. The impressive palaces on the Plaza Mayor, which used to belong to wealthy sugar barons, are a particular highlight. Visit Trinidad’s historical city center and have an opportunity to walk around the town and see the handicrafts, especially the embroidery and textiles, for which the city is known. Before lunch experience live traditional music at La Canchánchara, where you can taste the Cuban drink of the same name. Lunch will be in the Manaca Iznaga ruins, at the heart of the sugar cane valley of San Luis. This historic site belonged to the Sanchez Iznaga family, and the visit will allow you to learn about the history of the sugar barons and the development of the sugar cane industry in the first half of the 19th century. After lunch, visit the Tres Cruces square and the former Fisher House. Also visit El Cabildo de San Antonio, the first “cult house” where African slaves got permission from the Spanish authorities to worship their deities. Stop at a family-run pottery workshop where the tradition of making pottery has been passed on for generations. Return to Cienfuegos. Dinner at hotel restaurant this evening. *Overnight at Hotel Jagua. (BLD)*

DAY 8 - CIENFUEGOS

Set out today to explore the mountains of El Nicho, where you can hike through caves and track the mountain’s exotic flora and fauna. All the way through the reserve you’ll find picturesque waterfalls inviting you to bathe in the natural pools at the base of each cascade. Continue to a protected sanctuary for bird-watching and the chance to see the Toco-ro-ro, or Cuban Trogon (Cuba’s national bird), which lives in this mountain region. Originally called guatini by the indigenous people, the Toco-ro-ro was chosen as Cuba’s national bird for two main reasons: because of its resistance to captivity, and because its feathers reflect the colors of the national flag. Return to the hotel. This afternoon you’ll have time to take advantage of the beach in front of the hotel. *Overnight at Hotel Jagua. (BLD)*

DAY 9 - DEPARTURE

After an early breakfast, make the trip back to Havana (141 miles) and directly to the airport for your return afternoon flight. (B)

LAND PRICING

\$3,065 (20 participants + 2 leaders)

\$3,395 (10 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, 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 2019.

THE FINE PRINT

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. 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. Non-refundable final payment is due at 95 days prior to departure. Travel/trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. For more information call Travel Insured at 800-243-3174 or visit travelinsured.com. Holbrook Travel's agency number is 15849.

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