



VALLE DE VIÑALES BY JAUME ESCOFET

WESTERN CUBA | Gardens, Culture, Discovery, and the Caribbean Sea

9 DAYS from \$4,295 | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: NOV–JUN

EXPLORE Cuba's unique indigenous species of flora and fauna on this 9-day itinerary. Discover the history and culture of Havana, with its many museums, churches, fortresses, and other buildings under restoration. Despite the revolution and economic hardships endured by the people of Cuba, its botanical gardens, organic farms, private gardens, and agriculture have thrived. Travel to Viñales Valley, one of the most beautiful regions of Cuba, and to Soroa, home to a stunning orchid garden. Evidence of the Cuban population's passion is evident at every turn, from their music, dance, love of life, and appreciation of the natural beauty found on this small Caribbean Island.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit a selection of Cuba's public and private gardens, including the National Botanical Garden of Cuba, a family-owned garden in Viñales, and an urban cooperative garden in Havana.
- Meet with a staff member and tour the Soroa Orchid Garden, which has over 20,000 plants representing 700 orchid species.
- Take guided hikes in Viñales National Park, the valley of the limestone formations known as mogotes.
- Explore Old Havana on a walking tour and enjoy a private dance performance.
- Stroll through the butterfly house of Quinta de Los Molinos Garden, Cuba's oldest botanical garden and a breeding nursery of *Polymita* spp., an endemic genus of colorful terrestrial mollusk.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Specialist guide
- Private transportation
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Bottled water on the bus
- Carbon offsetting



HAVANA CATHEDRAL BY MICHELLE KORCZYNSKI



PLAZA-DE-ARMAS IN HAVANA BY MICHELLE KORCZYNSKI

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

Day 1 | **Havana**

Early this morning you will check for your flight to Havana. Upon arrival at the José Martí International Airport, you will be met by your guide and driver, and transferred to your hotel. You will be able to check-in, change money, and freshen up before dinner at a local Paladar in Old Havana. *Overnight at Meliá Cohiba or similar (D)*

Day 2 | **Havana**

This morning take a guided walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Discover the four “plazas” in Old Havana: Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza Vieja, Plaza de San Francisco de Asis, and Plaza de Armas. Learn about the ongoing restoration projects throughout Havana, and see the giant model of the city. After lunch at Hemingway’s Old Havana favorite — Sloppy Joes — enjoy a private performance of Danza-Teatro Retazos. This incredibly talented group of dancers and their instructor will amaze and delight you, as they have been doing for audiences not only in Cuba, but internationally in the US and Europe. This evening, dine at the private restaurant La Guarida, which is the location of the Cuban Oscar-nominated film “Strawberry and Chocolate.” *Overnight at Meliá Cohiba or similar (BLD)*



ALAMAR ORGANOPONIC GARDENS BY SANDY SCHMIDT

Day 3 | **Havana**

This morning you will visit Alamar Organoponic Gardens. Meet with one of the cooperative owners and learn about the garden’s history, accomplishments, and horticultural practices of organoponics in Cuba. You will then be given a guided tour to see the many crops that are grown, and the practices they use. Enjoy lunch at La Terraza de Cojimar, another one of Hemingway’s favorite Cuban restaurants. It offers a fabulous view of the Cojimar Bay where Hemingway would go out fishing and where he met the fisherman on which *The Old Man and the Sea* is based. After returning to Havana this afternoon, you will meet representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) which has created a special unit to promote and support urban agriculture. Agricultural extensionists from MINAGRI advise and

disseminate knowledge based on the principles of organic agriculture, and usually play a pivotal role in the start-up and functioning of the popular gardens and horticulture clubs. Dinner will be on your own this evening. *Overnight at Meliá Cohiba or similar (BL)*

Day 4 | **Soroa**

Today begins your travels to Western Cuba, stopping first en route at the National Botanical Garden in the outskirts of Havana. Explore the gardens with a specialist guide from the Garden. She will then join you in your vehicle as you drive the expansive acreage that is the gardens arboretum, featuring trees from many different countries and regions.

Enjoy lunch at El Bambú, an ecological restaurant located within the Garden. Continue your journey, stopping for a visit at Las Terrazas, a self-sustained community named after their 5,000 hectares reforestation project. While at Las Terrazas, visit a local artist and see how he makes his own paper for his paintings. Arrive in Soroa late this afternoon. Dinner is at a local Paladar this evening. *Overnight at Horizontes Villa Soroa or casas particulares (BLD)*

Day 5 | **Viñales**

This morning enjoy a guided tour of the Orchid Garden, which is run by the University of Pinar del Río. Meet with a staff member for insight about the garden. The garden also hosts a botanical research center belonging to the University of Pinar del Río. Lunch will be at El Salto restaurant, within walking distance of the orchid garden. After lunch you will travel to Viñales, home of the Mogotes; flat-topped hills dating back to the Jurassic period that can be found in only four countries in the world. Viñales is also famous for its rich soil and agriculture, including tobacco production. Dinner tonight will be at a local Paladar. *Overnight at Hotel Los Jazmines or casas particulares (BLD)*

Day 6 | **Viñales**

This morning you will visit the Finca of Raul Reyes. Learn about his crops and how he makes a living in this area. Take a walk on the Cueva de la Vaca trail, which not only goes through Raul's finca, but gives you a chance to see the "Mogotes triad": *Bombacopsis cubensis*,

Gaussla princeps, and *Spathelia brittonii*. Continue walking to reach the cave entrance, and with a lamp in hand, you can see the bats and at the end, you will be out in Palmarito Valley, surrounded by palms and many species of birds. You will then be taken into town for lunch at a typical café, followed by a visit at a local botanical garden that has been in the family for many years. Located on one acre right in the heart of the neighborhood, this home and garden is a delight, and quite whimsical. Dinner this evening is at a local Paladar located in the hills surrounding Viñales called the Agro Ecológico. Savor all the dishes made with the produce from the land where the restaurant is located. *Overnight at Hotel Los Jazmines or casas particulares (BLD)*



Day 7 | **Havana**

Following breakfast and check out, you will head to the coast, your destination; Cayo Jutias, a lovely playa with turquoise water and beautiful coastlines. En route, you will have the opportunity to view the typical life outside the cities, often seeing horse-drawn carts and interesting homes. Once you get to the beach, you can decide if you'd like to walk to the end of the caye, rest under the palm trees with a cerveza, or enjoy a wonderful swim.

After about an hour or two of relaxation, lunch will be served at the seaside restaurant located right at the beach. There are restrooms in this area if you would like to change out of your swimsuit. After your meal, you will travel back to Havana, taking time for a nap or a chance to take pictures of the views on the way. This time, you will be staying in Old Havana at a centrally located Colonial-style hotel. This evening, dinner is on own. *Overnight at La Florida or similar (BL)*

Day 8 | **Havana**

This morning you will visit the oldest Botanic Garden of Cuba, Quinta de Los Molinos Garden. It was founded in 1864, and has a butterfly house as well as a breeding nursery of *Polymita* spp., a terrestrial and eastern endemic genus of a very colorful mollusk. After your visit, you will have the remainder of the day to explore on your own. You may wish to check out the San José crafts market, Havana's main enclosed local arts and

crafts market and cultural fair, housed in the restored and renovated historic San José warehouses, originally built in the 1880s. Or perhaps take in a museum or two. Tonight, enjoy a very special farewell dinner and spectacular show at the famous Tropicana. *Overnight at La Florida or similar (BD)*

Day 9 | **Depart**

This morning you will be transferred to the Havana International Airport for your late afternoon flight home. (B)



Prothechea cochleata BY JULIO LARRAMENDI



CAYO JUTIAS BY SANDY SCHMIDT

LAND PRICING

\$3,895 per person, double occupancy, based on 18 participants (plus 1 complimentary from New York City, single occupancy). *Single supplement: \$650.*

Cost includes: Accommodations, meals as indicated, specialist guide, transportation, gratuities for guide & driver, activities per itinerary, bottled water on bus.

Cost does not include: International airfare and visa, gratuities not listed, items of a personal nature, optional activities.

Price valid until Dec. 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.

MORE FROM HOLBROOK

Holbrook was founded on the principle that travel fosters a greater understanding of our world's cultural and natural treasures and that these experiences allow individuals to become agents for global change. Whether you are seeking a tried-and-true experience or a garden expedition customized to your needs, Holbrook is adept at combining your specific interest in gardens with a multitude of cultural, environmental, or adventure-based activities.

