



CUBA

Gardens, Culture, Natural Sites & Music

Led by Sarah Reichard

February 20 - March 3, 2016

Experience the best of Cuba's culture, gardens, and natural beauty during this unique journey with the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. Among this tour's many highlights, you will have the chance to discover the historical capital of Havana and its many museums, churches, fortresses, and buildings under restoration, travel to Viñales Valley, one of the most beautiful parts of Cuba, and explore Zapata National Park, home to an impressive number of plant and bird species. Despite the revolution and economic hardships endured by the people of Cuba, its botanical gardens, organic farms, private gardens, and agriculture have thrived. Join the University of Washington Botanic Gardens for the trip of a lifetime!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Spend time at the Cienfuegos Botanical Garden, home to more than 2,000 species of tropical and exotic plants.
- Experience breathtaking views of the Valle de Viñales and the Mogotes.
- Learn about the fascinating history and architecture of some of Cuba's most intriguing cities during walking tours of Havana, Trinidad, and Cienfuegos.
- Join the weekly Sunday festivities at Callejón de Hamel, known for its electrifying and hypnotic rumba music and Afro-Cuban inspired murals.
- Visit the home and studio of Nils Navarro, a Cuban wildlife artist, and meet a Cuban family and tour their tobacco farm.
- Enjoy opportunities to see diverse wildlife while snorkeling and birding at the Zapata Peninsula.

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

FEBRUARY 20 - MIAMI

Upon arrival at the Miami International Airport, after collecting your luggage, you will proceed to the complimentary shuttle service for a quick ride to the Sheraton Airport Hotel. You will have the remainder of the late afternoon and evening to relax and prepare for your early morning departure back to the airport the next day. *Overnight at Sheraton Airport Hotel or similar.*

FEBRUARY 21 - HAVANA

Early this morning you will meet your Miami hostess who will escort you via the shuttle service to the Miami airport and assist you with check in. There is a four hour check in time required, as all of the paperwork is handled manually, and the ticket counter closes one hour prior to departure. Upon arrival at the José Martí International Airport in Havana, you will be met by your guide and driver, and transferred to your hotel. It may still be too early for check in; in that case you will give your bags to the bellman, exchange money, and enjoy lunch at the hotel. After lunch, you will be able to join the weekly Sunday festivities at Callejón de Hamel, which is known for its electrifying and hypnotic rumba music and home to hundreds of Afro-Cuban inspired murals. This will be a very exciting way to spend your first afternoon in Cuba! Dine this evening at the private restaurant La Guarida, which is the location of the Oscar-nominated Cuban film “Strawberry and Chocolate.” *Overnight at Ambos Mundos or similar. (LD)*

FEBRUARY 22 - HAVANA

Today you will be given 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 Asís, and Plaza de Armas. You will also learn about the restoration projects going on throughout Havana, and see the giant model of the city. This evening dinner is on your own. *Overnight at Ambos Mundos or similar. (BL)*

FEBRUARY 23 - VIÑALES

This morning visit the National Botanical Garden in the outskirts of Havana. Explore the gardens with your guide, following lunch at El Bambú, an ecological restaurant. After lunch, you will continue

your travels to Valle de Viñales. *Overnight at La Ermita or similar. (BL)*

FEBRUARY 24 - VIÑALES

Today you will have breathtaking views of the Valley and the Mogotes, flat-topped hills dating back to the Jurassic period that can be found in only four countries in the world. Meet a farming family and tour their tobacco farm. Your host, Paco Hernandez, will explain how Cuban farmers collaborate with the government in order to get farming supplies and transport produce to market. Paco’s family is one of the many hardworking Cuban families that have been growing tobacco for more than 100 years. Lunch today is at a very special location known as the Prehistorical Mural restaurant. After lunch, you will have a special treat, to visit the home and studio of Nils Navarro, a Cuban wildlife artist. Talk with Nils about his amazing work and learn about the life of an artist in Cuba. Later in the evening, go to a paladar located in the hills surrounding Viñales called the Agro Ecologico. Savor all the dishes made with the produce from the land where the restaurant is located. *Overnight at La Ermita or similar. (BLD)*

FEBRUARY 25 - ZAPATA

This morning travel to the Zapata Peninsula. After lunch at La Giraldilla, you will meet with a local expert from the conservation station to learn about Zapata Park’s ecosystem and the current conservation efforts that are being implemented. Zapata Park is renowned for its great diversity of ecosystems, in which more than 1,000 species of plants and 37 species of reptiles, including the Cuban Crocodile, inhabit. The park is also considered one of the world’s premier bird watching destinations. You will have the opportunity to go birding at the Sopillar site with your guide. Dinner this evening will be at a local paladar. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga or similar. (BLD)*

FEBRUARY 26 - ZAPATA

This morning, enjoy birding on the Bermejas site. Lunch at La Cueva de los Peces. This afternoon you will have the opportunity to go snorkeling, where the coral reefs are accessible from the coastline. This evening learn about the Korimakao Project, an innovative community development initiative to help residents develop their artistic skills. After observing a performance, you’ll have an opportunity to chat with the performers. *Overnight at Hotel Playa Larga or similar. (BLD)*

FEBRUARY 27 - CIENFUEGOS

Today you will travel to the city of Cienfuegos. Upon arrival, enjoy lunch at a local paladar. Following lunch, you will be given a guided tour of the city. Some of the places you will see are the following: Castillo de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles de Jagua (fortress), Arco de Triunfo (the only Arco de Triunfo in Cuba), Catedral de la Purísima Concepción (a cathedral with stained glass work built from 1833 to 1869), Museo Provincial (a furniture and porcelain museum), Palacio de Valle (built from 1913 to 1917 in Neo-Gothic style), Parque José Martí (a park in Plaza de Armas), and the Palmira Yorubá Pantheon (a museum of religious Afro-Catholic syncretism). This evening is yours to explore your surroundings on own. *Overnight at Rancho Luna or similar. (BL)*

FEBRUARY 28 - TRINIDAD

This morning you will be taken to Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos. With 97 hectares (239 acres) it's one of the oldest institutions of its kind on the island. It was founded in 1901 by Edwin F. Atkins and his wife when they arrived in Cuba in 1899 in search of the island's most precious commodity — sugarcane. Atkins built the Soledad sugar mill, followed soon after by a research center dedicated to investigation and enhancement of sugar cane under the name of the Harvard Botanical Station for Tropical Research and Sugar Cane Investigation. Mr. and Mrs. Atkins were also fond of plant collecting and later started a tropical and rare species garden in the backyard of their estate, where plants from as far as India and China were grown in tropical Cuba. Today the garden has a large collection of tropical exotic plants (2,000+ species) clustered in 670 genera and 125 botanical families. Among the most complete collections are orchids (400+), palms (230+), ficus (65+), and bamboo (29). Following your time at the garden, you will be transferred to the beautiful city of Trinidad. Trinidad, Cuba's best-preserved colonial town, was the third settlement in Cuba and founded in 1514 by Diego Velázquez, the country's first governor. During your stay in Trinidad, you will have the opportunity to experience a relatively new entrepreneurial allowance in Cuba, accommodations in private homes, known as *casas particulares*. *Overnight at casas particulares. (BL)*

FEBRUARY 29 - TRINIDAD

This morning visit Topes de Collantes, a nature reserve park in the Escambray Mountain range. It is

the third highest peak in the reserve, where a small settlement and tourist center is located, all sharing the same name. After your visit, return to Trinidad for lunch, followed by a walking tour of Trinidad. Explore the cobblestone streets of this UNESCO Heritage Site that are seemingly just as they were centuries ago. You will be able to visit the artisans and street vendors in the local market. There are also several *casas de musica*, including one next to the cathedral in Plaza Mayor. The remainder of the afternoon and evening are yours to enjoy on own. *Overnight at casas particulares. (BL)*

MARCH 1 - HAVANA

Today you will travel back to Havana. En route, stop in Santa Clara, the beautiful provincial capital of the Villa Clara region. Visit the Che Guevara Memorial and Mausoleum which features unique historical pieces from one of the most influential revolutionary leaders. The displays chronicle the events of an era in this extraordinary man's life. The mausoleum is the final resting place of Ernesto "Che" Guevara and his companions. Also enjoy lunch en route. Upon arrival in Havana, you will have the remainder of your late afternoon and evening on own. *Overnight at Ambos Mundos or similar. (BL)*

MARCH 2 - HAVANA

This morning, visit Alamar Organoponic Gardens, an incredible urban garden located outside of central Havana. Here you will meet with one of the cooperative owners of the garden and discuss how this garden functions as a cooperative and the techniques that have been utilized to minimize the use of pesticides. Enjoy lunch at a local paladar. In the afternoon, visit the Wilfredo Lam Center of Contemporary Art, an institution dedicated to the promotion of contemporary visual arts from developing countries. The center features both permanent exhibits and regular traveling exhibits. This evening, following dinner at your hotel, enjoy the innovative musical show Opera de la Calle to celebrate your last night in Cuba. *Overnight at Ambos Mundos or similar. (BLD)*

MARCH 3 - DEPARTURE

This morning you will be transferred to the airport in Havana for your flight back to Miami. After going through customs and collecting your luggage, you will check in for your next flight(s) home. *(B)*

PROGRAM PRICING

\$3,910 (minimum 14 participants)

A \$300 tax-deductible donation paid directly to University of Washington Botanic Gardens is required to enroll and is not included in the price of this program.

COST INCLUDES:

- Accommodations, entrance fees, and activities as listed in the itinerary
- Meals as listed in the itinerary (11 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 5 dinners)
- Private vehicle transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary
- Non-alcoholic beverages with meals
- Full time guide for duration of program
- Bottled water on the bus
- Carbon offset

NOT INCLUDED:

- International airfare (estimated at \$1,250 from Seattle)
 - Gratuities
 - Alcoholic beverages
 - Travel insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
-

THE FINE PRINT

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room add \$1,345.

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form are required to hold your space on the trip. Deposit is refundable until December 11, 2015 excluding a non-refundable \$100 cancellation fee. Cancellations after this date will result in loss of full deposit. Final payments are due no later than December 11, 2015.

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.

MEET YOUR LEADER

Sarah Reichard is the Orin and Althea Soest Professor of Urban Horticulture at the University of Washington, and Director of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. Her professional interests include the biology of invasive plants as well as rare plants, urban food systems, and botanic gardens. Her personal interests include designing and maintaining her own 3/4 acre garden, testing new and rare plants, and reading long novels. Sarah loves to travel and has visited more than 20 countries, doing everything from tasting wines in South Africa, Chile, and Australia, to zip lining in Costa Rica. She believes that traveling and seeing how people live across the world expands horizons and teaches understanding of the human condition, and that seeing great gardens and natural features helps one appreciate the diversity and beauty of life!



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL:

Contact Sandy Schmidt at schmidt@holbrooktravel.com or 877-907-5360

Register online at holbrooktravel.com/privategroups/uwbgcuba