

CUBA

HAVANA & TRINIDAD



DAY 1 - ARRIVE HAVANA

On arrival at the airport in Havana, you will be met after luggage collection (which can be quite chaotic!) by your private guide, who will remain with you throughout your time in Cuba.

Transfer to the Gran Hotel Manzana Kempinski, a centrally located hotel featuring some of Havana's best city views from the rooftop bar.

In the evening, meet your guide in the hotel lobby for a stroll through Old Havana. You'll quickly notice the music, coming from all directions – Havana (and all of Cuba, for that matter) is bursting with sound.

Dinner this evening is at a small *paladar*, a privately-owned restaurant. Don't believe everything that you hear about Cuban food, there are creative and delicious things cooking in the *paladares* throughout the island.

Overnight Hotel Manzana

DAY 2 - HAVANA

In 1982, UNESCO declared Havana's historic city center a world cultural heritage site. There is no city in all of Latin America with a larger colonial center.

On foot today, explore the alleys and central squares of Havana Vieja: Plaza de Armas, Temple, Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza Vieja, Hemingway's "Bodeguita".

Visit the Museo de Bellas Artes, with over 30,000 exhibits. The museum is a representation of Cuban heritage and daily life from the 17th century to the present through its paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints and installations.

Lunch this afternoon is at one of Old Havana's best-known state-run restaurants. The contrast between the privately-owned *paladares* and the state-run restaurants is quite something.

After lunch, you'll be picked up in a classic convertible car for a cruise around Havana.

In the late afternoon, visit the home and gallery of José Fuster, the "Gaudí of the Caribbean". Fuster has made major contributions to the rebuilding of the fishing town



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of Jaimanitas on the outskirts of Havana, where he lives. By extending his artistic practice from his home to entire streets and neighborhoods, he has transformed Jaimanitas into a unique work of public art, decorating over 80 houses with ornate murals to suit the personalities of his neighbors.

You will be transferred by vintage car to a *paladar* located on the opposite side of town for dinner this evening.

Overnight Hotel Manzana

DAY 3 - HAVANA

Your focus today is on the life of the Cuban people living in Havana. You will visit a number of studios and workshops for a glimpse into Cuban creativity and innovation.

The owners of Nostaglicar will joke that the one thing that Cubans should thank Fidel Castro for are the old, majestic American cars that crowd the streets of Havana. The repair shop oversees a small fleet of meticulously restored vintage cars that are used to transport tourists around the city. Visit the shop, meet the owners and see these beautiful cars up close.

After lunch, visit the home and studio of artist Eduardo Guerra. Guerra is best-known for his collagraphy, a printmaking technique in which materials are assembled on a flat plate to form different textures. Not only will you see Guerra at work, but you'll also have the opportunity to meet his family and learn more about his personal life as you stroll his residential neighborhood.

Finally visit the Callejon de Hamel, a socio-cultural project founded in the '90s by Cuban artist Salvador Gonzáles Escalona. The project aims to create a safe space for Afro-Cuban art and creativity in the Cayo Huseo neighborhood. The once-desolate area is now home to colorful mosaics, sculptures and paintings that spill onto the streets. Rumba sessions usually take place here on Sunday afternoons.

Overnight Hotel Manzana

DAY 4 - HAVANA

From Havana, transfer to the Viñales Valley, surrounded by lush countryside where the world's best tobacco is grown. The valley is an outstanding karst landscape encircled by

mountains and dotted with spectacular dome-like limestone outcrops (*mogotes*) that rise as high as 1,000 ft. Time seems to stand still here.

You will visit the farm of a local tobacco producer, where traditional methods are used to grow tobacco. Witness how tobacco leaves are grown and dried, as you learn more about the importance of tobacco and cigars, which have been smoked by Cubans for centuries, long before the valley was colonized.

Lunch is at a small farm overlooking the valley. Everything that you eat this afternoon—meat, vegetables, fruits and herbs—are produced onsite at this biodynamic farm. Guaranteed to be your favorite meal in Cuba!

Return to Havana in the late afternoon.

Overnight Hotel Manzana

DAY 5 - HAVANA TO TRINIDAD

After check-out this morning, depart Havana for Trinidad, making an important stop en route.

Approximately two-hours into your drive, you'll reach Playa Girón, located on the east bank of the Bay of Pigs. In April 1961, Playa Girón was one of two landing sites in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Enjoy lunch and a swim on this beautiful beach.

Arrive Trinidad in the late afternoon and check-in to your *casa particular* (private home) located just off of the city's main square. Privately-owned *casa particulares* are very popular in Cuba and offer a personalized alternative to the state-run hotels.

In the evening, stop for a drink at the casa de la trova, where you'll see local musicians play. You'll likely find more tourists than Cubans here, but the music is fabulous and the experience fun.

Overnight Casa Particular

DAY 6 - TRINIDAD

You will be met by your guide this morning for a full day exploring Trinidad.

A perfectly-preserved Spanish colonial city, Trinidad is flanked by the Escambray Mountains and the Caribbean Sea. The city was founded in 1514 by the Spanish conquistador Diego Velázquez de Cuéller; its fortunes rose with slave-cultivated sugar production. In the mid-19th century, Trinidad's heyday, the town and its environs produced a third of all of Cuba's sugar exports; it was then that Trinidad acquired its elegant appearance. UNESCO designated the town and the surrounding valley a world heritage monument in 1988.

Stroll along the cobblestone streets, observing the colorful single-family homes and opulent mansions featuring Spanish and Moorish influences. A number of these mansions are open to visitors and are stuffed with colonial furniture and antiques as well as artifacts from the slave trade.

Trinidad is known for its pottery production. In the afternoon, visit the Casa del Alfarero, a well-known pottery producer using local clay and a traditional wheel. A good opportunity to shop for souvenirs!

As the sun sets this evening, you'll have a private salsa lesson on a rooftop overlooking the city. Salsa is a vital part of both the music and energy that defines Cuba – it is quick, smooth and seductive (and not easy to learn!).

Overnight Casa Particular

DAY 7 - TRINIDAD

Met by your guide this morning, head out together for a half-day in the Valle de los Ingenios.

Trinidad's immense wealth was garnered not in the town itself, but in a verdant valley to the east. The Valle de los Ingenios still contains the ruins of dozens of 19th-century sugar mills, including warehouses, milling machinery, slave quarters, manor houses and a functioning steam train. Most of the mills were destroyed during the War of Independence and the Spanish-Cuban-American War, when the focus of sugar-growing in Cuba shifted west to Matanzas.

The afternoon is yours to further explore Trinidad or head to one of the nearby beaches, which are beautiful (think white sand and turquoise waters) and secluded.

Overnight Casa Particular

DAY 8 - TRINIDAD TO HAVANA & DEPART HAVANA

Early check-out this morning for a 4-hour transfer to the airport in Havana, where you'll be met and assisted with check-in procedures prior to your international flight home.