

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Arrive in Havana

Our first official welcome and orientation meeting will begin at 12PM. After lunch, we will take a panoramic tour of the city visiting the Miramar area all the way to Fusterlandia, an art center on the outskirts of the city in Jaimanitas created by the Cuban artist Jos  Fuster in the early 90  s. Fuster took the streets of the formerly average town and shaped it into a widespread art exhibition that Gaudi would have felt at home in. A stroll through Fusterlandia will show the incredible world where roofs, doorways, benches, and city blocks become expressions of the artist and iconic Cuban images. Next, we will explore Old Havana, visiting sites that mark both revolutionary and colonial times. As we walk, we  ll learn more about Havana  s complicated past and hopeful future. We  ll walk through town concentrating on 4 particular squares, each with its own unique history. Finally, we rest and return to your accommodations to relax and get ready for our welcome dinner.

Overnight: Hotel Grand Aston La Habana or similar (B, L, D) Walking: 1.6 miles, 505 ft elevation.

DAY 2

Soroa Botanic Gardens, Vi  ales

Departing from Havana, we head west to the countryside. After a scenic one hour drive, our first stop will be in Soroa where we will visit an impressive botanical garden that boasts fabulous orchids and a spectacular view over the valley from the top of the garden. The history of the Orchid Garden dates back to the late 19th century and its creation is due to Tom  s Felipe Camacho, a Spanish lawyer who wanted to honor the memory of his recently deceased wife by dedicating to her this garden filled with her favorite flowers, orchids. Enjoy a 1.6 mile out-and-back to a lookout point. After lunch, we will continue heading west to Vi  ales which is about 2 hours away.

Overnight: Hotel Horizontes La Hermita Vinales or similar (B, L, D) Driving: 4 hrs Walking: 2.6 miles, +-100 ft elevation

DAY 3

Explore Valle de Vi  ales, Cigar Maker Visit

Today, our entire day is spent in one of Cuba's finest national parks, Valle de Vi  ales, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for both its dramatic steep-sided limestone outcrops , and the original architecture of its traditional farms and villages. Erosion and sinkholes have carved this limestone landscape into what is known as a karst valley full of mogotes (or patches of brush and thickly grown shrubbery). We'll get to walk through the valley and learn more about the dramatic geological forces that shaped it. This region is also internationally famous for fine tobacco, one of Cuba's signature exports. We'll meet with a cigar maker, visit a tobacco processing plant, and learn how green tobacco leaf is processed into the final product. This afternoon we'll get to see the tobacco fields that create the world famous cigars. We will have both lunch and dinner in quaint farm to table restaurants.

Overnight Hotel Horizontes La Hermita Vinales or similar (B, L, D) Walking: 2-4 miles, +-200ft elevation Drive: 3 hours

DAY 4

Head to the Bay of Pigs

Today we say goodbye to the Viñales Valley and head to the Bay of Pigs, site of the CIA-sponsored 1961 invasion. We stop on the way for lunch at Finca Tungasuk, an organic farm in the pursuit of a more sustainable way of living, where we'll get to savor another delicious farm to table menu. We continue driving another couple of hours to the village of Palpite where we visit the Korimacao art school for an engaging and interactive visit. Nearby we check into our accommodation near a beach on the Bay of Pigs. Dinner will be conveniently served at our lodging.

Overnight Hostal Enrique or similar (B, L, D) Driving: 5.5-6 hrs.

DAY 5

Snorkeling at Playa Girón, Hiking in Enigma Las Rocas

Playa Girón is known for warm Caribbean waters and coral reefs, so we will spend the morning snorkeling and reveling in the colorful fish and aquatic life surrounding the accessible reefs. Afterwards, we will meet a local guide for a beautiful and mellow hike in Zapata National Park along the Enigma Las Rocas. Our hike will take us through the dense forest, walking on ever present limestone, watching for endemic species such as the Cuban pygmy owl, bee hummingbird and Zapata rail, peering into the mangrove swamps and into cenotes (or well-established sinkholes). Once we've had our fill of hiking, it's time to fill our bellies with lunch! The afternoon includes a visit to an excellent museum to learn more about Cuba's rich history. Then it is off to Trinidad, a colorfully preserved Spanish colonial settlement and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We check into our Casas Particulares. After dinner in town, enjoy the outdoor music scene in the town plaza.

Overnight Casa Osmay y Alberto or similar (B, L, D) Walking: 3-4 miles, +/-200 ft. elevation Driving: 3 hours

DAY 6

Gran Parque Natural Topes del Collantes & Coffee in Cuba

We'll spend the morning exploring the Gran Parque Natural Topes de Collantes, a well protected nature reserve park of deep green forests, powerful waterfalls, and jungle-covered limestone mountains (more mogotes!). We begin with a guided visit to a small open air museum with displays depicting coffee productions past and present and the traditions and role of coffee in Cuba. To finish out this experience, there is a café with plenty of coffee choices we can enjoy. After learning about the history and coffee culture of the island, we'll stretch our legs with a hike. There are several options for hikes, some more difficult than others. Many of these trails feature refreshing pools that we can take a dip in. After lunch in the mountains, we return to Trinidad in time to continue exploring the town's sights. Our day culminates with a visit to a women's textiles co-op or a visit to the home and studio of a renowned local artist Yudit Vidal. These visits are designed, as are many of the activities on this trip, to provide support for the Cuban people. Can't get enough of Cuban music? Time allowing, we can explore the local music scene after dinner.

Overnight Casa Osmay y Alberto or similar (B, L, D) Walking: 3-7 miles, +/-200 to 600 ft. elevation.

DAY 7

Cienfuegos Exploration

This morning we'll continue along the coast to the historic town of Cienfuegos, a city whose history and architecture is a melding of French, Caribbean, and Cuban influences. We will stop along the way at the Cienfuegos Botanical Garden, one of the oldest on the island, which boasts over 2,000 tropical species from around the world. Then we continue to town to walk around the main square and learn about colonial architecture. We walk along the pedestrian-only boulevard and have a very special performance and visit with the Cantores de Cienfuegos, a world-renowned choir. After the concert, we'll settle into our accommodations for a relaxing evening.

Overnight: Hotel Melia San Carlos or similar (B, L, D) Walking: 3-4 miles, +/-200 ft. elevation Driving: 1-2 hours

DAY 8

We depart Cienfuegos and drive to the outskirts of Havana to visit Finca VigÃa, Ernest Hemingway's home for nearly 20 years. Today it's a glimpse into another era of Cuban history as well as an opportunity to learn more about Hemingway's life and works. A short drive to the seaside town of Cojimar brings us to one of our favorite lunch spots, Ajiaco. By mid-afternoon we're back in Havana, the political and cultural capital of Cuba. Depending on time available and group interest, we will stop to visit a large market called Almacenes San Jos© that specializes in Cuba souvenirs - an excellent place to get any last minute items you just have to have! Souvenirs on board, we'll drop our luggage off at our hotel rooms then head out for a special treat - touring the city in a classic American car! Then on to our fabulous farewell dinner at one of Havana's best paladares or family run restaurants, celebrating all we learned and shared this week. For some of us, it may be time to call it a day. For others, Havana's energy may be irresistible and enjoying some of the night life in Havana may be a great choice! Your Cuban guide will have plenty of recommendations!

Overnight: Hotel Grand Aston or similar (B, L, D)

DAY 9

Adi's Cuba!

During breakfast, as you reflect on your travels to Cuba, we hope that you are able to feel fulfilled by the discovery and the heartbeat of the country. Today you can leave at any point after breakfast and the guides will help coordinate your taxi to the airport. (B)