

CUBA

A WEEK IN HAVANA

Immerse yourself in the vibrant rhythms, colors and tastes of Havana. Engage in meaningful support of individual Cubans while you experience all that Cuba's capital city has to offer.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

- Havana, 4 nights at the four star Grand Aston Hotel
- Arrivals & Departures from Jose Marti International Airport, Havana

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover the best of Havana while meeting and supporting Habaneros – Cuban people from all walks of life.
- Cruise along the Havana Malecon in a classic convertible and meet a mechanic who maintains them
- Visit an organic farm and discover how produce is organically and sustainably grown

DETAILED ITINERARY

DAY 1 - MONDAY HAVANA

Independent arrivals to Havana Jose Marti International Airport. Once you've cleared immigration, collected your baggage and cleared Customs, you'll be met at the airport exit by your Cuban Host. We'll head to a paladar in for a lunch of traditional Cuban fare.

Included meals typically feature three courses, with a limited selection from which to choose. Meals typically include two beverages: House welcome cocktail then a choice of one additional beverage: bottled water, Cuban soft drinks or beer, or a glass of house wine. Coffee (espresso) is not always included but may be purchased individually. One of the most enjoyable aspects of dining in a paladar is the connection you'll make with the owner and staff, as they share their personal stories. Learn how private enterprise in Cuba functions on an individual level, as well as how the paladar's ingredients are sourced and the chef's inspiration for the food they serve. Each paladar has its own unique story and style of interpreting Cuban cuisine today.

Climb aboard classic cars, cruisin' the town in a classic convertible. The driver shares his story of how he acquired and maintains his marvelously preserved automobile from the 1950's. On an overview of Havana, pass the recently renovated Capitol Building, the Grand Theater, and Central Park along Paseo Prado (the wide avenue separating Old Havana from Centro Havana) and continue along the Malecon, passing the reopened U.S. Embassy. We'll drive through the western neighborhood of Miramar, passing along Fifth Avenue, lined with old mansions. Some are still private houses, but many are now Embassies or Ambassadors' residences. Stop at Revolution Square, where crowds have gathered to hear speeches by Fidel, the Pope and more. We arrive at the private home and mechanic shop of Fernando Bayerites. We're invited in to visit his home as he explains the ingenuity needed to maintain American classic cars without access to parts.

Check in at the Grand Aston Hotel, then take some time to freshen up before dinner in a paladar. **Meals: L, D**



DAY 2 - TUESDAY HAVANA

After breakfast we begin our exploration of Havana and meetings with *Habaneros* - the people of Havana. Heading towards Old Havana, we'll drive along the *Malecon* (the main thoroughfare in Havana running along the coast) passing the American Embassy in the Vedado neighborhood, on to La Rampa, past Havana University, the Capitolio, the Grand Theater, and Central Park along Paseo Prado (the wide avenue separating Old Havana from Centro Havana) and into *Habana Viejo* - Old Havana. We'll leave our vehicle and explore the historic area on foot.

Explore Old Havana's four main plazas and meet the self-employed entrepreneurs in business along the winding streets. We begin *Plaza de Armas*, Havana's oldest square. Learn about the history and rich heritage of the buildings in this charming plaza - the site where Havana was founded. Continue to *Plaza de San Francisco* which faces Havana harbor. Stroll along Calle Obispo and San Ignacio, where Havana's *cuentapropistas* sell handmade crafts, books and art. Learn about Cuba's dual-sector economy, in which private and government-owned businesses operate. Continue to *Plaza Vieja*. Originally laid out in 1559, this plaza is Havana's most architecturally eclectic square, where Cuban Baroque nestles seamlessly next to Gaudí-inspired art nouveau.

We finish our walk in *Plaza de la Catedral*. Notice here the traditional Baroque style in the anchoring Cathedral de la Habana. In the plaza, local *Habaneros* dressed in traditional costumes are eager to earn their living by posing for photos. We'll have lunch in a paladar.

After lunch, we drive to the Jaminitas neighborhood, where we find Jose Fuster's house, *Fusterlandia*. Dubbed the "Picasso of the Caribbean," this local artist created an entire neighborhood of ornately decorated homes during thirty years of continuous work. Its humble growth is an inspiring example of the Cuban sense of community and how a neighborhood unites to benefit together. Learn of how 80 homes in this ornate neighborhood now make up an incredible work of art created by one man's vision to enhance an impoverished block of houses in one of Havana's many urban neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhood have set up businesses in front of their homes, an opportunity to support individual Cubans selling their wares.

We end the afternoon with a visit at the Antonio Nunez Jimenez Foundation. The non-profit, non-governmental Antonio Nunez Jimenez Foundation is our tour's host organization, and is focused on nature, conservation, and sustainable farming projects around Cuba. We'll meet the foundation's president, to learn her personal story as daughter of the founder as well as visit her private enterprise: making artisanal soap and natural cosmetics.

Return to the hotel. Dinner this evening is on your own. There are many interesting paladars nearby and your guide will assist you with making a reservation. **Meals: B, L**

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY HAVANA

Head east of Havana to Cojimar, the small seaside town that served as backdrop in Ernest Hemingway's award-winning novel, "The Old Man and The Sea". We'll stroll the waterfront with our Cuban Guide and learn how locals earn a living today. We continue



to an organic farm, where we meet a horticulturist to learn what they produce, their innovative growing techniques and the challenges of distribution. For lunch, we'll have a mojito making lesson and traditional cuisine in a paladar.

This afternoon, continue to San Francisco de Paula to Hemingway's former home, Finca Vigia. Here, we'll meet a Cuban who works as a private interpreter and will provide insights to the interesting memorabilia and stories of the famed writer's life in Cuba.

Returning to Havana, we'll stop at the artisan craft market at San Jose, where you can shop and support local entrepreneurs. We've made a reservation in a paladar, but left dinner at your own expense, so that you may choose what you like from the menu.

This evening, we explore Havana's iconic Hotel Nacional, a symbol of 1940s-50s Cuba and its ties with America's elite, as our Cuban guide unravels its history and its lasting impact on Cuban-American relations. Discover the hotel's glamorous past and its role during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

This evening a unique experience, join Vivian Melendez in her Central Havana home with its lofty ceilings filled with a breeze from the sea. She is an expert in cigars having been the manager of the largest cigar store in Cuba for over twenty years. Always with a stogie in hand, Viviana leads you (parents) through this cigar experience while paring your cigar specifically with coveted Cuban rum. Also, enjoy the opportunity to visit with a master cigar roller as you see up close and personal how cigars are made. Followed by dinner at a special paladar at your own expense. **Meals: B, L**

DAY 4 - THURSDAY HAVANA

First, we'll stop in at the neighborhood farmers market, to see what is in season and how city folk find and purchase fresh produce.

Next a visit to the Havana Queens or Habana Compas Dance troupe encompassing the rich rhythm and flow of the island. Set your sights on young Cubans bursting with enthusiasm and energy while performing a mix of modern and traditional dances born from their Spanish, Cuban, and Afro-Cuban heritage all the while playing a variety of instruments and never missing a beat.

To maintain flexibility, lunch today is at your own expense at a good paladar.

Next a visit to Havana's Fine Arts Museum, Bellas Artes. It is a must for many people traveling to Cuba who want to learn about the country's past through the eyes of its artists. Visit the famous Cuba modern collection this morning and enjoy works of art that display the stunning creativity of the island nation's vibrant art community.

After time to freshen up, we'll depart to dinner. For dinner this evening, we have a reservation at the iconic La Guari-da Paladar, located in a former sugar barons' home. This paladar is one of the oldest and most known to the outside world and where the Oscar-nominated Cuban movie *Strawberry and Chocolate* was filmed. The chefs here are considered the fathers of "nouvelle Cuban cuisine," preparing local ingredients with creative flare. This dinner is left on your own expense, so that you may choose what you like from the menu. **Meals: B**

DAY 5 - FRIDAY DEPARTURE

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for check-in and return flight home. Your transfer time will be confirmed in Havana by your Cuban Guide, and will be scheduled to arrive at the airport approximately three hours prior to flight departure. **Meals: B**

Please Note: *This itinerary is preliminary and may be adjusted according to conditions on the day of operation.*

RATES FOR JOAN AND FRIENDS

November 11-15, 2024

\$3,599 per person (in a double)

\$499 single supplement

Cuban Visa, in advance \$125 per person

Optional Tropicana Show \$150 per person



INCLUSIONS:

- ✓ Accommodations and activities as described in the itinerary
- ✓ Expert private Cuban guide and vehicle as per itinerary
- ✓ Certification of participation in a pre-planned, fully scheduled program of support for the Cuban People travel to Cuba, as required by the U.S. Department of the Treasury general license
- ✓ Meals as per noted in the itinerary
- ✓ 2 drinks per each included lunch and dinner (local beer, bottled water, soft drinks, house wine if offered by the restaurant)
- ✓ Bottled water while touring with the guide/motorcoach
- ✓ Gratuities for included meals and luggage handling

EXCLUSIONS:

- International Airfare to Havana
- Airline baggage fees
- Meals not mentioned in the program as included
- Optional activities, if any, that are not already included in the itinerary
- Tips for hotel housekeeping and live music during meals
- Other expenses of a personal nature
- Gratuities for your Cuban Guide, US \$20 per day/per guest recommended
- Gratuities for your Driver, US\$10 per day/per guest recommended
- Cuban tourist visa, required for entry and departure



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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