

BEST OF CUBA

HAVANA, TRINIDAD, CIENFUEGOS & VIÑALES

MARCH 8-15, 2025



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Immerse yourself in the vibrant rhythms, colors and tastes of Havana, Cienfuegos, Viñales and Trinidad. Engage in meaningful exchanges with individual Cubans as you explore all that Cuba's most famous cities have to offer

ITINERARY SUMMARY

- Arrivals in Santa Clara Abel Santamaría Cuadrado International Airport
- 2 Nights in Trinidad at a privately owned B&B
- 1 Night in Playa Larga at a privately owned B&B
- 4 Nights in Havana, Grand Aston Hotel
- Departures from Jose Martí International Airport, Havana

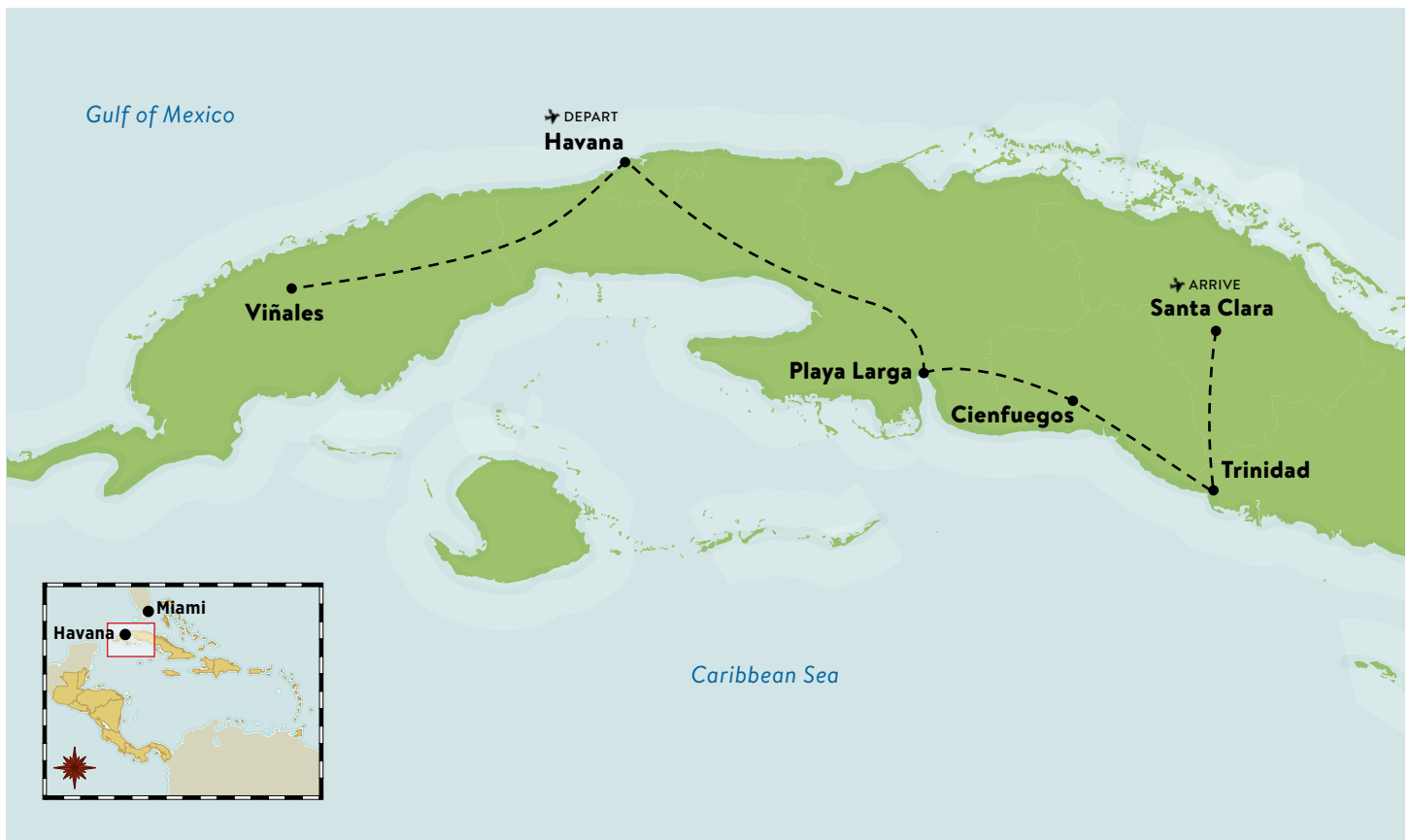
HIGHLIGHTS

- Stroll 500-year-old cobblestone streets while meeting artists and artisans in Colonial Trinidad de Cuba and learn the history and evolution of the sugar industry in the Valley of the Sugar Mills
- Walk through the main square of Cienfuegos and enjoy a special private performance of the Guitar Orchestra Ensemble
- Discover the best of Havana while meeting and supporting Habaneros – Cuban people from all walks of life
- Discover Cuba's Afro-Cuban roots and gain understanding of the extensive influence of the African diaspora on Cuban life and culture.
- In Viñales, a tobacco farmer takes you through the process of growing tobacco and turning it into Cuba's famous cigars. Enjoy an exclusive pairing experience highlighting the unique characteristics of Cuba's finest cigars.
- Cruise along the Havana Malecon in a classic convertible

EXPLORING CUBA WITH CONSERVANCY TRAVEL

Conservancy Travel operates OFAC-compliant educational tours in partnership with the Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez de la Naturaleza y el Hombre. The Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity (FANJ) is a Cuban cultural and scientific nongovernmental institution, dedicated to research and promotion of programs and projects for the protection of the environment as it relates to culture and society. Its main focuses are on stakeholder engagement, poverty reduction and land restoration.





DETAILED ITINERARY

DAY 1: Saturday, March 8

ARRIVAL IN SANTA CLARA - TRINIDAD

Arrivals in Santa Clara, Cuba at Abel Santamaría Cuadrado 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.

Take a brief walk around the main square of Santa Clara, the beautiful provincial capital of the region Villa Clara, before our drive (2 hours) to Trinidad de Cuba, where we'll check in to our accommodations. After time to settle and freshen up, we'll reconvene for a welcome dinner in a privately owned paladar, featuring Cuba's oldest known cocktail *canchanchara*, made of Cuban Aguardiente, honey, and freshly squeezed lime juice.

Meals Included: D

DAY 2: Sunday, March 9 TRINIDAD

After breakfast, we'll take a guided walk, through Trinidad's historic center - one of Cuba's original Spanish Settlements and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The small city is a pristine example of Spanish colonial Caribbean architecture and celebrated its 500-year anniversary in 2014. As we stroll the picturesque cobblestone streets, we'll meet independent business owners, local artists and artisans and support a handcrafts community project that provides income for women.

After lunch in a paladar, drive into the UNESCO World Heritage Sugar Mill Valley and visit artisans at the San Isidro de los Destiladeros archaeological site. Return to Trinidad in the late afternoon. There are many options to dine at paladars throughout the town. **Meals Included: B, L**

DAY 3, Monday, March 10

EL NICO, CIENFUEGOS AND PLAYA LARGA

After an early breakfast, we'll depart Trinidad to El Nicho Park and its stunning waterfall and natural pools. Later on to Cienfuegos. Nicknamed "Pearl of the South", the city's long history is illustrated through its outstanding architecture and is home to a large artistic community. We'll walk around the main square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and stop in at the independent artists' guild. We'll enjoy a special private performance by the Guitar Orchestra Ensemble.

After lunch in a paladar, we depart to Playa Giron, also known as the Bay of Pigs, a small coastal village and the site of the historical 1961 clash between CIA-trained Cuban exiles and Cuban rebel forces. We'll discuss the Cuban perspective of the incident.

At the end of the afternoon, we reach our destination, Playa Larga, situated on the coast in the heart of the Zapata Wetlands conservation area. We'll check in at our privately owned B&B, located just across the road from the beach.

This evening we'll enjoy a delicious home-cooked meal on the rooftop terrace of our B&B. **Meals Included: B, L, D**



DAY 4: Tuesday, March 11

FINCA VIGIA AND HAVANA

After a delicious breakfast, depart the coast and head north to Havana. The drive through the countryside is a unique and interesting experience as you observe the forms of transportation available to Cubans, including an abundance of horse-drawn carriages. Our drive will be approximately 3 hours, and we'll arrive on the outskirts of the city in time for lunch in a paladar.

After lunch, 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. Continue to Havana and check in at the hotel. After time to freshen up, we'll depart to dinner in a paladar.

Return to the hotel. **Meals Included: B, L, D**

DAY 5: Wednesday, March 12 HAVANA

After breakfast we begin our exploration of Havana. Heading towards *Habana Viejo* – Old Havana, we'll leave our vehicle and explore the historic area on foot.

Explore Old Havana's four main plazas: 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. This plaza came to importance in Havana in the 16th century when Spanish galleons stopped by at the



quayside on their passage through the Indies to Spain. The Plaza is anchored by the Basilica San Francisco de Asís and Cuba's first 'Wall Street.'

Stroll along Calle Obispo and San Ignacio, where you can support Havana's *cuentapropistas* who sell handmade crafts, books and art, as we discuss 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, as we step into the boutiques of Cuban entrepreneurs. Outside in the Plaza, local *Habaneros* dressed in traditional costumes are eager to earn their living by posing for photos.

After lunch in a paladar, we'll depart Old Havana aboard classic American cars that have been in constant use by individual Cubans since the 1950s and 60s. Drive along the Malecon, passing the US Embassy and Revolution Square. Continue 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. We stop in for a visit at the headquarters of the non-government organization, the Antonio Nunez Jimenez Foundation, to learn about its many conservation initiatives in Cuba and view the extensive collections and memorabilia of the founder. FANJ is the Cuban host organization of your trip.

For dinner this evening, we've made a reservation in a paladar, but have left the meal on your own account, so that you can choose what you like to eat.

After dinner, head to the historic Hotel Nacional, one of the most important historic locations in Havana. The hotel is an illustration of America's history with Cuba in the 1940s and 50s, when Havana was the playground of America's most privileged personalities. Designed and constructed by American firms in 1930, the

Nacional has hosted world leaders, royalty and movie stars for nearly a hundred years. Walk through the Hall of History and imagine Havana in late December 1946, when the Cosa Nostra (the Sicilian Mafia) and the American Mob converged here for the 'Havana Conference' to negotiate agreements that would lead the mafia for decades. American mobsters, led by Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano turned their interests toward Cuba to avoid the intensified government crackdown back in the USA. Examine Havana's glamorized past, whose remnants are still an integral part of Havana's landscape today, and delve beyond the romanticized images to gain an understanding of history. Walk through the extensive grounds that overlook the Malecon with impressive views of the city — not only a lush tropical setting but the location of anti-aircraft gun emplacements during the Cuban Missile Crisis. **Meals Included B, L**

DAY 6: Thursday, March 13 VIÑALES / HAVANA Rise for an early breakfast, then depart on a full day tour to Viñales, where a tobacco farmer takes you through the process of growing tobacco and turning it into Cuba's famous cigars.

We'll enjoy a farm-to-table lunch at an organic farm and as a special highlight, delight in a rum and cigar pairing experience before returning to Havana.

Dinner is on your own this evening. There are several paladars within walking distance of the hotel. Your Cuban guide will be happy to assist in making reservations. **Meals Included B, L**



DAY 7: Friday, March 14 HAVANA

We begin our day with a visit to a neighborhood market in Old Havana selling produce, meat and flowers. Here, we observe how Cuba's informal markets work and gain an understanding of how Cubans source fresh products, and what is available in the market, versus in grocery stores.

Next, we'll meet Beyond the Roots, a project founded by private business owners in the Afro-Cuban community. We begin with an introduction to learn how entrepreneurs have created a business serving the local community that enhances Afro-Cuban aesthetics and identity.

Drive to the suburb of Guanabacoa with our Beyond the Roots host. We'll look at the neighborhood's deep cultural roots and the connection to African ancestry through spiritual practice, music, food and art. First, we'll meet a Babalawo – the Yoruba term for a spiritual leader. We'll learn about the traditional African practice of spiritual cleansing, that aims to remove negative energy and restore balance to the individual's spiritual,



mental, and physical well-being. Then we'll enjoy a vegetarian lunch of traditional foods, prepared by your hosts.

After lunch, we'll kick up the action with a lively traditional musical performance, enjoyed while sipping traditional *canchanchara*.

Returning to Old Havana, we'll finish our day at *Almacenes de San Jose Artisan*, an artisan market situated along the Havana harbor. This reclaimed 1800s warehouse is home to self-employed vendors and artisans. Meet the entrepreneurs to learn how they source their goods and do business. One can find almost any type of handicraft made in Cuba at this enormous market, spread over two floors. From paintings and sculptures to hats and clothing, San Jose has it all.

After some time to freshen up, we'll depart to our farewell dinner in a paladar. **Meals Included B, L, D**

DAY 8: Saturday, March 15 DEPARTURE

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for check-in and return flight. 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 Included: B**

Please Note: This tour operates with a maximum of 12 travelers. This itinerary is preliminary and may be adjusted according to conditions on the day of operation.

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\$4,999 per person

Deposit: \$850 per person

Final Balance Due January 8th, 2025

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 under the U.S. Department of the Treasury general license
- ✓ Meals as per noted in the itinerary (B, L, D): 7B; 6L; 4D
- ✓ 2 drinks per each included lunch and dinner (bottled water, local beer, soft drinks, house wine if offered by the restaurant)
- ✓ Bottled water while touring with the guide
- ✓ Gratuities for included meals and luggage handling
- ✓ Gratuities for local specialty guides when required

EXCLUSIONS:

- International Airfare
- 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 - \$125 per person additional when issued by Conservancy Travel

Deposits and Payments: A \$850 deposit per person is required to confirm your reservation for the trip. The deadline for registration is 120 days prior to trip start date. After that date, any requests for additional registrations will be accepted based on availability.

Final payment of the balance due by 120 days prior to trip start date.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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WHAT TO EXPECT: This is an active journey, requiring walking and standing for up to an hour at a time, and walking up to 2 miles unassisted during half-day tours. You will engage in 4-6 hours of physical activities daily and need to board and disembark vans or motorcoaches multiple times. The itinerary includes multiple locations and hotels, with fully scheduled days. Tours involve walking on uneven cobblestone streets in historic areas, with extended sun exposure in a tropical climate. Some activities and meals are in historic buildings without elevators, requiring climbing 2-4 flights of stairs. Bedrooms and private vehicles are air-conditioned, but most public places are not. Transportation varies with the itinerary, involving drives between 2-6 hours on poorly maintained roads. Rest stops occur every 1.5-2 hours on longer drives. Flexibility is essential, as itineraries may change based on conditions. Your expert Cuban guide will manage any adjustments needed. We trust that the beauty of the country and the warmth and hospitality of the Cuban people will make up for any shortfalls in service. Cuba is unlike any other country in the world. We know that you will return home transformed by your journey.



The Center for Conservation and Community d/b/a **Conservancy Travel** is a not-for-profit organization that creates experiential journeys to explore the Earth's greatest natural and cultural destinations on every continent.

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conservancytravel.org

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