

# HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



## NEW YEAR'S IN HAVANA: A FAMILY PROGRAM IN CUBA DECEMBER 27, 2022 – JANUARY 1, 2023 DETAILED ITINERARY

As diplomatic and economic ties between the United States and Cuba are reformed over the next few years, the landscape of Cuba will dramatically change, making it more important than ever to experience Cuba as it is today.

On this family-friendly program to Havana, experience a variety of Cuban art, music, and dance with activities aimed at all ages. Enjoy playing a baseball game with Cubans close to Hemingway's favorite hang-out in Cojimar. Dine at some of the most popular *paladares*, private restaurants run by Cuban entrepreneurs—often in family homes. Learn about the nation's history and economic structure, and discuss the reforms driving changes with your Harvard study leader and local guest speakers. Learn how to salsa in a private class—and much more!

*Despite the June 2019 changes made to the regulations governing travel to Cuba, it is still possible on programs booked prior to the June 2019 changes, to travel on a People to People/Support of the Cuban People program. These programs differ from more traditional trips in that every hour must be accounted for. Each day on the HAA program has been structured to provide meaningful interactions with Cuban people or educational or cultural programming. Please note that the Harvard Alumni Association and Distant Horizons intend to fully comply with all requirements of the general license. Travelers must participate in all group activities. Each traveler is required to keep a copy of their final program which could be requested by OFAC officials at any point in the next five years.*

## SCHEDULE BY DAY

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27 MIAMI / HAVANA

Independent arrivals in Havana.

Upon arrival, proceed directly to the Hotel Nacional for a welcome drink in the hotel's hall of fame. Designed by the famous New York firm McKim, Mead and White, the hotel features an eclectic mix of architectural styles. It opened in 1930 when Cuba was a prime travel destination for Americans, long before the embargo. In 1955 the infamous organized crime figure Meyer Lansky managed to persuade then President Fulgencio Batista to give him a piece of the Nacional. Lansky refurbished a wing of the

grand entrance hall and added a bar, restaurant, showroom, and a luxurious casino.

Enjoy lunch at La Barraca Restaurant located outside on the grounds of the Hotel Nacional before heading to the **Hotel Grand Aston La Habana**, a new property located on the famous Malecón.

This evening attend your first lecture and then walk to dinner at **Ivan Justo**, a popular paladar nestled in Old Havana.

Overnight: *Hotel Grand Aston La Habana* (L, D)

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28 HAVANA

This morning explore Havana's historical core on a walking tour. Admire the city's many squares and its

cathedral, as well as the buildings renovated by Habaguanex, the semi-private entity that manages the restoration of Old Havana. Stop at a ration store to learn about the “ration card” and the role it continues to play in Cuban life. Also admire a scale-model of Old Havana that serves as an excellent introduction to the layout of the city.

Enjoy lunch at La Moneda Cubana, a roof-top paladar in the heart of Old Havana.

After lunch, stop at Los Clandestina, which was founded by young Cuban artists and entrepreneurs, Clandestina is Cuba’s first design store—providing both tourists and residents with contemporary products that are uniquely designed and manufactured in Cuba.

Next attend an interactive musical workshop to learn more about the Cuban musical tradition. Afro-Cuban music has its roots deep in a history that was never written about but rather lived through traditions in religion, story, music, song, dance, and family knowledge dating back to the slave ships and before. There are many different kinds of salsa music and dance in Cuba but most of these styles are derived from “Son,” which will be the focus this morning. Son developed in eastern rural areas of Cuba around the turn of the twentieth century, but traces of it date back to the 1700s. It is a distinctly Afro-Cuban musical style because it uses an African rhythm (also called son), Spanish poetic styles in the lyrics, and the use of plucked instruments (including guitars).

End the day with a visit to Ernest Hemingway’s home, which has been lovingly preserved by the Cuban government. The house was designed by Spanish architect Miguel Pascual y Baguer in 1922 and was inhabited by Hemingway from 1939 to 1960. Today it hosts a large collection of over 22,000 items including books, records, furniture, paintings, and stuffed animals. The house is just as Hemingway left it, with the books on the tables and many of his favorite photographs on display. While it is not possible to go inside the house, the windows are left open for a decent view of the interior.

Enjoy dinner tonight at Restaurant Le Chansonnier.

Overnight: *Hotel Grand Aston La Habana* (B, L, D)

## **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29 HAVANA**

After breakfast meet with Griselda Aguilera Cabrera who is featured in the documentary film *La Maestra* (running time 33 minutes) which tells the personal stories of the youngest women literacy workers who went to the mountains and valleys across the island to teach—and found themselves deeply transformed in the process. Griselda was one of youngest of those women.

Continue on to visit the Museo de Bellas Artes, Cuban Collection accompanied by Luz Merino, a curator of contemporary art. The museum’s origins date back to 1842 when the San Alejandro Art Academy started its collection, which forms the nucleus of the museum founded in 1913. It expanded greatly after Castro took over in 1959, notably with works from the private collections of Julio Lobo and Oscar Cintas.

From the museum, drive a short distance to NostalgCar, a classic car mechanic shop. Here you will meet with the owner of the shop who will talk about his business.

From here drive to the home and studio of artist José Fuster for a private lunch. Fuster’s art is a cherished part of Cuban culture, evoking the nation’s African roots from ceramics to whimsical paintings drawn from ordinary life in Cuba. But it is the mosaics that make the visit special—Fuster has turned his neighborhood into one enormous piece of mosaic and the visit to his home is enchanting. Guests can wander among several levels of mosaic animals, plants, and people enjoying an immersive experience before having a typical Cuban lunch.

After lunch drive to Marianao to learn about a project called Angeles del Futuro (Angels of the Future) in which children aged between 7-15 years are trained in circus skills.

Continue on a private performance of the dance/musical group Havana Compass. Liliet Rivera is the founder of Cuba Havana Dance Troupe, which is dedicated to the study and choreography of traditional and modern dances. In partnership with percussion artist, Eduardo Cordova, the troupe has created an exciting, diverse performance with traces of Spanish dance form, African-Cuban Jazz rhythm and modern dance.

On the way home stop at the famous Copelia to taste some of Cuba's best ice-cream. The ice-cream parlor located in a park serves up to 10,000 customers a day and initially served 26 flavors of ice-cream in honor of the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in July 26, 1953.

This evening, enjoy a round-table discussion on "the Cuban Economy" by Professor Jorge Mario Sanchez. Dr. Sanchez is a macro-economist and professor at the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy at the University of Havana. He has been a visiting professor at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

Dinner tonight is at Café Oriente, an elegant government run restaurant in San Francisco Square in Old Havana.

Overnight: *Hotel Grand Aston La Habana* (B, L, D)

## **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30**

### **HAVANA / PINAR DEL RIO / VINALES**

Depart for a full day excursion to the western part of Cuba, with its jungle-covered summits dropping down limestone cliffs to verdant valleys. Drive along one of the new roads in Cuba to the town of Pinar del Rio.

After a drive of just over an hour stop at the Orchid Farm at Soroa, which is maintained by the University of Pinar del Rio. The hilly grounds contain over 800 species of plants, including 200 endemic to Cuba, all thriving in the humid climate.

Continue on to the Valle de Vinales, Cuba's most famous landscape, located in the province of Pinar del Rio. This area was the last refuge of the Ciboney, the hunter-gatherers who were pushed here by the more advanced Taino. The province's mountainous landscape is riddled with caves, some running for many kilometers, in which Ciboney burial and cave paintings have been found.

Visit a tobacco farm to learn about the growing of tobacco and the economics of the tobacco industry in Cuba.

After lunch spend some time exploring the town of Vinales. Arrive back at the hotel late afternoon.

Dinner is on your own this evening. We will supply a list of restaurant suggestions and your local guide will both be happy to assist with reservations.

Overnight: *Hotel Grand Aston La Habana* (B, L)

## **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31**

### **HAVANA / COJIMAR**

Depart the hotel to drive to the Presidential Palace, now known as the home of the Revolutionary Museum. The history of Cuban political development is illustrated here from the slave uprisings to joint missions with the ex-Soviet Union. Part of the museum is the Granma Memorial, which preserves the vessel that brought Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and other revolutionaries from Mexico to Cuba in 1956.

In Cojimar, have a pig roast lunch followed by a baseball game with a local youth Cuban baseball team.

After lunch enjoy a private salsa class. Salsa has its origins in Cuba where the blending of African drum rhythms and Spanish guitar evolved into a variety of Latin American music: Son, Danzón, the rhythms of Carnival, Cha Cha Cha, Mambo, Salsa, and even Tango came out of Cuba. The Salsa movements originate from the Cuban Son dancing of the 1920s, and more specifically through the beat of Son Montuno with strong influences from the dance of Danzon, Mambo, Guaguanco, and other Afro-Cuban folkloric dancing. Today's Salsa dancing is a rich blend of Latin-American and Western influences.

Return to the hotel for some pool time.

This evening drive to L' Atelier, a wonderful paladar, for a celebratory New Year's Eve dinner.

Overnight: *Hotel Grand Aston La Habana* (B, L, D)

## **SUNDAY, JANUARY 1**

### **RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES**

Depart the hotel this afternoon for the airport for your return flight to the U.S. (B)