

# HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



## CUBA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE HAVANA & TRINIDAD

NOVEMBER 5–12, 2023

### DETAILED ITINERARY

Cuba is a resplendent tropical island unlike any other in the Caribbean, hosting picturesque colonial towns, magnificent 20th-century architecture, stunning landscapes, and intriguing Afro-Cuban culture. Unravel the complicated history and explore the cultural richness of Cuba on a program that includes time in Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, and Santa Clara.

This OFAC\* compliant program promises to be a rare treat for art enthusiasts, music lovers, and those who appreciate beautiful scenery. Meet with contemporary artists and see how art in Cuba has transformed since the Revolution, shifting from content that glorifies revolutionaries to embodying intensely personal and introspective expressions.

Walk through colonial towns where the architecture is linked together by a grid of small squares and cobblestone streets. 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.

Throughout, there will be opportunities to interact with several locals from different walks of society, and group members will gain a new in-depth understanding of Cuban life.

*\*Office of Foreign Assets Control—It is still possible 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*

*Please note that this schedule is in development and is subject to change. Activities and places visited might occur on different days or in a different order than presented below—or replaced with comparable activities. The program will be updated closer to departure.*

### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5 INDEPENDENT ARRIVALS IN HAVANA

Independent arrivals at Havana's international airport. Please note that you will need to fly into Havana on November 5 and out of Santa

Clara on November 12. Flight suggestions will be provided to program participants.

Drive to Havana stopping enroute at the Plaza de la Revolución. This is the most politically important square in Cuba and one of the largest city squares in the world. It has stood witness to many rallies and revolutions that have altered the course of Cuban history. Presiding over the square is an almost 60-foot statue of José Martí.

Enjoy lunch at the historic Nacional Hotel, located on the Malecón and featuring an eclectic mix of architectural styles.

Continue to the *Grand Aston hotel* for check-in.

Meet for a welcome and introductions followed by dinner this evening at the elegant *Café del Oriente*, where a talented jazz trio will perform for the group.

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

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6 HAVANA

Begin exploring Old Havana by foot, stopping to admire the city's many squares and its cathedral, and to talk with residents—many of whom have returned to their homes that have been renovated by Habaguanex, the semi-private entity that manages the restoration of Old Havana. Stop at the scale-model of Old Havana, which serves as an excellent introduction to the lay-out of the city.

Enjoy a fabulous lunch at *La Moneda Cubana*, located in Plaza de la Catedral and boasting magnificent views of Old Havana.

After lunch, enjoy a city orientation tour by bus (and parts by foot) led by architectural historian, Ayleen Robaina. Explore the City Garden of El Vedado, which was planned in 1859-60 but not developed until early in the twentieth century according to modern planning principles that introduced "green" in the city for the first time. Drive along La Rampa, which climbs past the offices of *Cubana*. Stop at the steps to the University of Havana and climb up to view the campus. Close by are 1950s hotels like the former *Havana Hilton*, designed by California architectural firm *Welton Becket & Associates* in 1958, as well as Art Déco and Streamline modern style apartments influenced by South Beach in Miami. The tour will include an inside visit to the wonderful *Riviera Hotel* which, when it opened in 1958, was considered a marvel of modern design. It was owned at the time by Meyer Lansky. Parts of the public areas of the hotel have recently been restored to recapture its 1950s ambience. Admire Havana's tall office buildings such as the award winning 1953 *Odontological Building* and the 1958 *Ministry of Public Health*, both designed by Antonio Quintana Simonetti. See

the 1956 *FOCSA building* designed by Ernesto Gomez Sampera and Martin Dominguez.

Return to the hotel late afternoon.

Dinner this evening at the hotel.

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

## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7 HAVANA

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

In 2012, Fidel Castro was quoted as saying to an American journalist that the Cuban economic model, "doesn't even work for us anymore." Monumental changes since then have been announced including, but by no means limited to, the layoffs of more than half a million state workers, the privatization of small businesses, a new credit law offering certain Cubans bank loans, and the devaluation of the peso to bring it on par with the dollar. As part of our roundtable, we will discuss whether these moves signify genuine change or not.

After the discussion, watch a rehearsal of the *Danza Contemporánea de Cuba*. This extraordinary dance group melds the techniques of classical ballet and American modern dance with the rippling spines and head rolls of traditional or folkloric, Afro-Cuban dance; the complex rhythms of Cuban rumba; and the twirling hands and syncopation of Spanish flamenco.

Next, visit *Nostalgicar*, a classic car mechanic shop. Here you will meet with the owner of the shop who will talk about his business.

From the shop, drive in the classic cars to a private lunch at the home and studio of artist Jose Fuster, who has turned his neighborhood into one enormous piece of mosaic art. Fuster is dedicated to his creations, a vast array of artwork from ceramics evoking the nation's

African roots, as represented in the Santería religion, to whimsical paintings drawn from ordinary life in Cuba.

After lunch, enjoy a special visit to a newly opened art gallery.

Return to the hotel for an early evening meeting with Norma Guillard, who is featured in the documentary film *La Maestra*. View the documentary *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. Dr. Guillard was one of those women and is now an adjunct professor at the University of Havana teaching largely on issues of psychology and gender. She is a past president of the Cuban Association of Psychologists and an advisor to UNESCO and UNDP on issues of gender in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

This evening, enjoy dinner at 5 Sentidos, located in the heart of Old Havana.

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

## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8 HAVANA

This morning, enjoy a lecture from your HAA Study leader.

Continue to the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes: Arte Cubano (Cuban Collection) which will be led by curator Lucila Fernandez. The museum's origins date back to 1842 when the San Alejandro Art Academy started its collection, forming 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.

Then head to Vivero Alamar, a state-owned research garden to learn about urban gardening. The effects of the Special Period—an extended period of economic crisis that began in the early 1990's—and the consequent food shortages had great repercussions on the city's estimated 2.5 million occupants (about one fifth of Cuba's population). The period radically transformed

Havana's urban agriculture, taking on many forms, ranging from private gardens (*huertos privados*) to state-owned research gardens (*organicponicos*).

Have lunch at El Divino Restaurant, which is part of La Finca Yoandra, an urban garden located in the southern part of Havana.

End the day at Ernest Hemingway's home, which has been lovingly preserved by the Cuban government. The house is just as Hemingway left it, with the books on the tables and many of his favorite photographs on display. Although one can only admire the home from the outside, it is a fascinating visit, and our local guide here will provide some interesting insights into Hemingway's life in Cuba.

Dinner at leisure this evening.

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

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9 HAVANA

Meet for a discussion on US and Cuba Relations led by Professor Raul Rodriguez from the University of Havana. Dr. Rodriguez has written extensively on US-Cuban Relations including an article written for the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

After the discussion, visit the Presidential Palace, a huge ornate building topped by a dome and 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. Although undergoing renovation, the Revolutionary Museum is still open for visits. Nearby is the Granma Memorial, which preserves the vessel that brought Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and other revolutionaries from Mexico to Cuba in 1956.

In the evening, enjoy dinner at La Guarida. This well-known restaurant served as the setting for the main apartment in the film *Fresa y Chocolate*. Please note that there is no elevator in this building and the restaurant is located on the third floor of the building.

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

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10 HAVANA / CIENFUEGOS / TRINIDAD

This morning, drive to Cienfuegos, stopping en route at the Bay of Pigs Museum, which is dedicated to the Bay of Pigs invasion.

In April 1961, during the Cold War, approximately 1,400 Cuban exiles invaded the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) with the aim of overthrowing Cuban leader Fidel Castro. This attack failed with most of the force being taken prisoner and around one hundred being killed. The Bay of Pigs invasion was particularly humiliating for the US government under President John F Kennedy, who supported the exiles in their attempted coup by land and by air as well as training them. Today, Museo Playa Girón is a small museum near the exiles' landing site and battle sites. It houses a collection of photographs and other historic pieces relating to the invasion, whilst outside lie the remains of an American aircraft, as well as other military vehicles.

Enjoy lunch in a private home.

Upon arrival in Cienfuegos, take an orientation tour of the city. Founded by French settlers in 1819, Cienfuegos' historic center was declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 2005 due to its outstanding early example of implementation in urban planning in Latin America in the 19th century.

Late this afternoon, drive to the Museo Historico Provincial to attend a performance of Cantores de Cienfuegos, a versatile, 23-member choral group. The choir has an eclectic repertoire, singing everything from Renaissance to Japanese fisherman's folk music.

Stop at the nearby Cienfuegos Botanical Garden for a guided tour. Once known as the Atkins Institution, the garden was a center for tropical plant research in the early 1900s. In the early 20th century, it became the Harvard Botanic Station for Tropical Research and Sugar Cane Investigation. In 1924, the Harvard Biological Laboratory was constructed at the garden. The garden was used by professors, students, and visiting fellows to study tropical botany, and was tended by local citizens. With the Cuban revolution and the Trade Embargo, the garden reverted to the government.

Continue to Trinidad and check in at the *Ronda Hotel*.

Dinner at the hotel this evening.

Overnight: *Ronda Hotel* (B, L, D)

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11 TRINIDAD

Begin exploring Trinidad—the fourth of the seven cities founded by Diego de Velasquez in 1514 as a base for expeditions into the “New World.” Today it is maintained as a living museum, just as the Spaniards left it in its period of greatest opulence. It is the crown jewel of Cuba's colonial cities. The whole city is a national monument, with its fine palaces, cobbled streets, and tiled roofs, and, since 1988, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Begin the day at the Plaza Mayor, which is in the center of town and elegantly adorned with glazed earthenware urns. Around the plaza are the Museo Romantico, the Museo Arqueologia, and the cathedral, Iglesia Parroquial de la Santisima Trinidad, which was built between 1817 and 1892. Explore the cathedral, which is the largest church in Cuba, and is renowned for its acoustics.

After a short walk, explore the Palacio Cantero, a former mansion with breathtaking views over the square from the upper floor balconies.

Stop at the studio of Yami Martínez whose works of art center around coffee makers, portrayed as women. The pots come in all sizes and are made from metal, papier-mâché, and clay.

Next visit the home and studio of artist Carlos Mata and daughter, Amaya Mata, who are both artists. (It will be possible to purchase art here.)

Enjoy lunch at one of Trinidad's wonderful paladars, Sol Ananda, where the owner will greet the group and talk about running a small, private business in Cuba.

After lunch, drive east of Trinidad to an area known as Valle de los Ingenios, which used to be the center of the sugar industry. Trinidad's

immense wealth was earned not in the town itself but in this verdant valley where sugar was grown and processed. Most of the mills were destroyed during the War of Independence and the Spanish-American War, when production shifted to Matanzas. Today this area is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Overnight: *Ronda Hotel* (B, L, D)

## **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12**

### **TRINIDAD**

Depart the hotel and drive about 2 ½ hours to Santa Clara, for flights home.

Arrive in Santa Clara and enjoy lunch at Santo Rosalia.

After lunch, visit the Che Guevara Monument, which houses the remains of executed Marxist revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara and 29 of his fellow combatants who were killed in 1967 during Guevara's attempt to spur an armed uprising in Bolivia. This site includes a museum dedicated to Guevara's life and an eternal flame lit by Fidel Castro in Che's memory. Cuban officials chose to pay tribute to Guevara in Santa Clara because his troops took this city in the Battle of Santa Clara—the final skirmish of the Cuban Revolution—which forced dictator Fulgencio Batista to flee.

Later this afternoon, fly on American Airlines from Santa Clara to Miami. (B, D)