



Journey to Havana & Viñales Valley, Cuba

A People to People Cultural exchange organized by Cuba Cultural Travel
I-Sustain Group March 25-31, 2016



Day 1 **Friday, March 25**

4:00 pm Miami airport check in. The flight from Miami to Havana is on **Havana Air Flight # EA3149**, operated by Eastern Airlines. Check-in is located in **Concourse G**. Enter through Door 1 and check-in at the Eastern Airlines counter. The group will be directed to a separate queue for expedited check in.

Havana Air has the following luggage policy: One personal item; no charge. If personal item is a rolling bag or large back-up, it will be considered a carry-on item. Carry-on under 20 lbs; no charge. If carry-on is over 20 lbs; \$20.00. First checked bag; \$20.00. Each additional checked bag; \$20.00 per bag. 44 lbs allowed free; \$2.00 per pound over the total weight INCLUDING any carry-on. There are no luggage fees upon return from Havana.

7:00 pm Depart for Havana. Flight time is 1 hour.

8:00 pm Arrive Havana. Clear immigration, customs and baggage, a process that takes approximately an hour and a half. Your CCT Escort Oscar Fernandez and HavanaTur Guide will be waiting for the group outside of baggage claim to assist you the bus.

9:30 pm Check-in to **Hotel Parque Central**. This five star hotel is considered the finest hotel in Havana and perfectly located in the central part of Havana. All rooms include a safe deposit box free of charge.

Hotel Parque Central ★★★★★

Neptuno, esquina Prado y Zulueta, Havana, Cuba
 Tel. 53 7 860 6627

Some will check-in to **Casa Particulares**.

Street 1ra and corner A. Building No. 1 Apartment 8
 Vedado, Plaza, Havana

Day 2 **Saturday, March 26**

Complimentary breakfast is served 7am-10am daily in the lobby level restaurant. The large buffet offers eggs prepared to your liking, imported cheeses & cured meats, cereals, yogurts, fresh breads & pastries, a large variety of fresh vegetables and fruits, chilled juices and hot beverages.

9:30 am **LECTURE:** Preserving historic architecture in Havana with **Maria Elena Martin**. This lecture will take place in the conference room of the Hotel Parque Central.

10:30 am Begin our walking tour of **Havana Vieja** with **Architect Maria Elena Martin**. Please make sure to wear comfortable shoes!

Havana's **Central Park** and the first monument erected in Cuba (1904), dedicated to National Hero Jose Marti.

The **Capitolio Nacional**, a fabulous monumental building inspired in the Capitol model and built in 1929 by Cuban and foreign artists. Gardens designed by famous French landscaper Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier.

Parque de la Fraternidad. This is "Old Taxi" central; here you will find all make and models of American cars from the 50's. It is a great opportunity to mingle and converse with taxi drivers and engage in their favorite subject; their cars.

The **Bacardi Building**, erected in 1930 and remaining today one of the most fabulous examples of art deco in Cuba.

The **Sevilla Hotel**, remodeled in 1923 by the American firm of Schultze & Weaver, and the recently restored lavish **Palacio de los Matrimonios**, the former **Casino Espanol of Havana**, built in 1914 by Luis Dediot.

Stroll **Obispo Street**, a pedestrian promenade, stopping at some of the most significant buildings like the Art Deco Style La Moderna Poesia, the Ambos Mundos Hotel, and the banks of the former Havana Wall Street.

Visit the **Plaza de Armas**, a scenic tree-lined plaza formerly at the center of influence in Cuba. It is surrounded by many of the most historic structures in Havana as well as important monuments.

1:00 pm Lunch at **Paladar Mercaderes**. This impeccably restored mansion is a welcome retreat from the bustling streets of the old city.

Visit the **Plaza Vieja**. This plaza is the oldest plaza in Havana, dating from the 16th century. Learn about the massive historic preservation program which began in this Plaza under the leadership of City Historian, Eusebio Leal.

Visit **Camera Obscura** for a bird's eye view of the city.

We stroll through the **Plaza de San Francisco**, a cobbled plaza surrounded by buildings dating from the 18th century, dominated by the baroque **Iglesia and Convento de San Francisco** dating from 1719.

4:30 pm Return to the Hotel.

6:00 pm Cocktails with local artists at **Fabrica de Arte Cuba**. This former tramway power plant located in the Vedado neighborhood was built in the beginning of the XX Century and is the most current collaborative art project in Havana. *We will invite, among others, photographer Enrique Rottenberg, Curator Nelson Herrera of the Wilfredo Lam Center, and Nelson Rodríguez FAC Curator and Director of Fototeca.*

7:30 pm Dinner at **Paladar Atelier** with renowned architect, urban planner, professor, and author **Miguel Coyula**.

9:30 pm OPTIONAL: Visit to the **World Famous Tropicana** nightclub. *(Individual pays ticket fees, transportation provided for 10+)*

Day 3 Sunday, March 27

8:00 am Transfer to **Hotel Montehabana** Hotel for bike fitting and safety briefing. Mineral water will be provided here so please bring your own water bottle or camelbak to fill up before setting off on the city tour. The idea of this morning's ride is to enjoy a panoramic tour of Havana from your cycle. We will aim to stay together and at some stages we will ask you to cycle together in a peloton for your own security.

Traffic in Havana is light compared to most cities but the condition of the roads means that you must be extra vigilant for pot-holes!

8:00 am Set off in a peloton from the **Hotel Montehabana** and cycle north and towards the coast. We reach **La Puntilla** where we make a short stop to take pictures and enjoy the view over the mouth of the **Almendares River** and towards Vedado.

We pass over 5ta Avenida and heading for the **Bosque Metropolitano**, a shady road which runs along the Almendares River and gives unexpected and lovely views of tropical forest right in the middle of Havana. We have a short stop for photos before climbing the steep hill toward Plaza district as we make our way to **Revolution Square**. Here we have time for pictures on this iconic plaza.

Getting back onto our bikes we head back toward the sea and then cut through **Vedado** toward the Hotel Nacional. We take San Lazaro Street and then head down San Rafael, a lively street that runs through the heart of Centro Havana.

We emerge in Havana's Chinatown and weave our way through the streets behind the Capitolio before heading toward the Havana railway terminal. Our final cycle is along the waterfront to Central Havana.

1:00 pm Lunch at **La Guarida** in Central Havana. This is one of the best restaurants in Havana and famous not only for its delectable dining, but also as the location for the film "Strawberry and Chocolate." It is housed on the third floor of a large, old town house carrying the charming ambience of the 1920's.

Afternoon Free. **Havana Motor Club Racing Schedule pending.**

7:30 pm Dinner at **La Terrazas**.

Evening entertainment to be determined.

Day 4 **Monday, March 28**

10:00 am Attend a private dance performance of the **Compañía Irene Rodríguez**. We will receive a warm welcome by Irene and her company at the **Centro Asturianos**. Irene is considered by many to be the finest flamenco dancer in Cuba. (With GeoEx)

11:15 am Depart for our visit to the former residence of **Ernest Hemingway, La Finca Vigía**. This beautiful estate, known as La Vigía was his primary residence in Cuba during some of his most productive years. The house remains completely intact and looks exactly as Hemingway left it 60 years ago.

1:00 pm Lunch at the **Paladar Ajiaco** in Cojimar.

3:00 pm Continue to the **Callejon de Hamel** for a tour of the sculptures and murals that define this community's creativity. Influenced by local artist **Salvador González Escalona**, the people have decorated their hometown in a celebration of Afro-Cuban culture.

"As the story goes, Salvador (as almost everyone calls him) came to the alley to paint a mural on a friend's house and wound up painting everything else within reach. The neighbours, some alarmed to see this metamorphosis taking place on their street, got involved. "The reaction was amazing," Salvador recalls. "People came up to me and said, 'Maestro, I have a little bit of red paint,' or yellow, or a little printing dye. I wound up painting with whatever materials turned up." - SOURCE, Havana Cultura

Visit to the **Arts and Crafts market**, a great place to interact with local, everyday artisans. You'll find just about anything here, a great place to find souvenirs or gifts for your friends and family back home.

5:00 pm Return to the hotel. Remainder of afternoon free.

7:00 pm Dinner at **Los Naranjos** in **Vedado** followed by No-Host drinks at the historic **Hotel Nacional de Cuba** overlooking the Malecón and the Straits of Florida. When it opened in 1930, Cuba was a prime travel destination many illustrious guests including Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich, Marlon Brando, and Ernest Hemingway.

Return to the hotel via Taxi.

Tonight you may choose to venture on your own for a nightcap at **Bar Floridita** in Havana Vieja – a short and easy stroll from the Hotel. This popular tourist destination and hangout of Hemingway offers the legendary Daquiri, live music and a life size bronze of a smiling Hemingway leaning against the bar – a great photo opportunity.

Also see the recently refurbished **Sloppy Joe's** – another Hemingway hang out located steps from the hotel.

Day 5 **Tuesday, March 29**

9:00 am Meet in the Hotel lobby and board bus for our day trip to **Viñales Valley**. Considered by many to be the most beautiful place in Cuba, the **Viñales Valley National Monument** holds stunning landscapes and jaw dropping vistas. The area is also famous for being the premier tobacco growing area in the world. This is a photographer's paradise!

Meet local ecotourism specialist and entrepreneur **Yaniel Luis Alvarez**.

Visit the **Despalillo** for a presentation of tobacco processing and a cigar rolling demonstration.

1:00 pm Arrive at **Finca Confianza** in the valley with stunning views of the mogotes. We will learn about the production of a multitude of organic fruits, vegetables, grain and tobacco. Lunch will be a community event on the farm where we will be served a variety of organic fresh vegetables, fruits, chicken and roasted pork. This is a true field to table dining experience.

2:30 pm Visit the home of **Ramón Vázquez León**, an artist born in Viñales, Pinar del Río, who graduated from the National School of Fine Arts in Havana. Ramon creates fantastic worlds full of allusions with his bright colors.

Following this visit we will continue to explore the **Viñales Valley** on foot for an easy stroll with our local guide. We will visit with rural farmers and sample some of their fresh produce. We will visit the tobacco farms and drying barns that produce the world's finest cigars and enjoy a cigar rolling demonstration.

4:00 pm Depart for Havana.

Dinner on your own. Some may choose **Habana 61** located near the **Museo de la Revolucion** or **Porto Habana** in Vedado. Reservations can be made for those who choose.

Day 6 **Wednesday, March 30**

10:00 am Visit the **Museum of Cuban Art**. We will be greeted by art historian **Aylet Ojeda**. The museum is dedicated exclusively to Cuban Art from the earliest days of colonialism to the latest generation of Cuban artists.

11:30 am Guided tour of **Escuela de Taller**, a teaching facility dedicated to the restoration of Havana Vieja. This project is preserving the architectural history and cultural heritage of the city by teaching builders, woodworkers, metal workers the skills needed to restore and preserve the authenticity of important buildings. Our guide and technical specialist, **Juan Jesús Gesen Musa**, will take us on a tour of the facilities and introduce us to students.

1:00 pm Lunch at **Paladar Río Mar** in Miramar.

2:30 pm Artist Studio Visit: **The Merger**. A collaborative venture created under the name of "The Merger" consisting of artists **Mario Miguel Gonzalez** (Mayito), **Niels Moleiro Luis**, and **Alain Pino**. The Merger recreates ubiquitous and mundane objects on a grand scale, presenting palatable socio-political metaphors to their viewers.

3:30 pm Artist studio visit at **3/31**. This new cooperative is home to three young and very talented Cuban artists: **Adrián Fernández**, **Alex Hernández** & **Frank Mujica**. They belong to an emerging constellation within the island's contemporary visual arts scene working in three different mediums (photography, painting, and drawing) and refined technique.

4:30 pm Visit the village of Jaímanitas and the home & studio of artist **José Fuster**, who has made a major contribution to rebuilding and decorating the neighborhood. Jaímanitas is now a unique work of public art where Fuster and his neighbors have decorated over 80 houses with colorful ornate murals and domes.

5:30 pm Return to the hotel.

7:00 pm Dinner and cocktails at private home with the presence of Cuban contemporary artists and an art curator invited to discuss current trends on Cuban art.

9:00 pm Visit to the **World Famous Tropicana** nightclub. *(Individual pays ticket fees, transportation provided for 10+.)*

Day 7 **Thursday, March 31**

10:30 am Hotel check-out and depart for airport.

2:00pm Flight departs Havana for Miami on **Havana Air Flight EA3144**, operated by Eastern Airlines. Flight duration is 1 hour.

3:00pm Arrive in Miami. Clear customs and connect with flights home.

* Tips may be given to your Cuban guide and driver at this time. The recommended tip is 7-10CUC per day, per passenger for your guide and minimum 5-7CUC per day, per passenger for your driver.

BE SURE TO COLLECT YOUR BELONGINGS FROM THE SAFE DEPOSIT BOX IN YOUR ROOM

- ✓ PASSPORT
- ✓ VISA
- ✓ PLANE TICKET
- ✓ OFAC LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION

** Please Note: This is a "Working" Itinerary. There may be some changes, additions and/or subtractions to the Final Itinerary. All venues and artist's studios are subject to final confirmations. Be assured that any changes made will be done to enhance the total program, and to promote a smooth operation of the tour.*