

A CUBA EXPERIENCE

BEHIND THE SCENES

JANUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 6, 2025 | 12 DAYS



Havana

WorldwideQuest
Alumni Expeditions

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DETAILED ITINERARY

Sunday, Jan. 26: Arrive Varadero

Most of you will have arrived at the Hotel a day or two early, been met at the airport and transferred to the Melia Varadero for a relaxing start to our Cuba experience. Meet for introductions near the piano in the lobby bar around 5:30. If you would like to join the group for dinner, I have made a reservation at Sakura, the Japanese Restaurant for 6:30 pm.

Overnight: Melia Varadero Hotel, Varadero

Meals: All inclusive

Monday, Jan. 27: Varadero

Join Wendy at 10 am (room to be determined) for a talk on Cuba, after which we will put together our donations in Wendy's room and make up some goody bags for UNEAC and the CDR. The rest of the day is yours to relax. Meet in the Lobby Bar around 6-ish for 7 pm dinner in Fuenteventura.

Overnight: Melia Varadero Hotel, Varadero

Meals: All inclusive



Tuesday, Jan. 28: To Cienfuegos

Head off south across the island to the Bay of Pigs, a crucial place in the national consciousness as the site of the failed 1961 USA-backed invasion of Cuba. In the town of Australia, the administration building at the former sugar mill was Fidel Castro's headquarters during the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. The towns of Playa Larga and Playa Giron were the main landing sites, and a museum in the latter is dedicated to the battles that took place. Continue on after lunch at Cueva de los Peces to Cienfuegos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a fine example of the architecture of 18th century Cuba. Dinner in the Rooftop Restaurant at our hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Melia San Carlos, Cienfuegos

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Wednesday, Jan. 29: Cienfuegos

Explore Cienfuegos, a pleasant colonial gem (with pockets that look distinctly like 1950s Floridian suburbia). Visit the fabulous Botanical Garden, a centre for tropical plant research founded by Harvard University in the 1920s and the grand Tomas Terry Theatre which welcomed Enrico Caruso and Anna Pavlova. Enjoy lunch at Esquina 373, then visit with members of the local chapter of UNEAC (the (National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba) for discussions with artists and writers. Hopefully joining us on our pre-dinner sunset boat tour of Cienfuegos Bay will be Leonard, head of Cienfuegos' CDR network to give us a short talk on how they work and receive our CDR donation. We have invited Leonard to join us for dinner at Paladar Camila.

Overnight: Hotel Melia San Carlos, Cienfuegos

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Thursday, Jan. 30: To Trinidad

On the way to Trinidad, travel to Topes de Collantes in the Escambray Mountain Range, home to small mountain villages, slopes covered in Caribbean pines, ancient tree-ferns, bamboo, and eucalyptus. Enjoy a nature walk and a traditional roast pig lunch before proceeding to Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Enjoy a salsa lesson before dinner then a special Paella prepared just for us at Restaurante San Jose!

Overnight: Hotel Iberostar, Trinidad

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Friday, Jan. 31: Trinidad

Trinidad is far and away the most handsome town in Cuba, with multi-coloured pastel hued terraces and rust-red roofs. It's also an authentic Cuban town, not only for its well-preserved architecture, but also for its deep-rooted traditions. The old town is a time capsule of the late 18th to late 19th centuries when fabulously rich Spanish families raised gorgeous mansions around Trinidad's main square off the back of their sugar mills in the valley. Travel outside the city this morning to the Valley de Los Ingenios with cane sugar mills, plantation houses and facilities related to this vulnerable industry and meet with community members to discuss the Caribbean independence struggles that impacted the sugar industry. Return to Trinidad to sample traditional canchanchara (aguardiente, honey, fresh lime juice) then head for lunch at Esquina 373. Visit the studio of a local jewelry artist Orbien. Enjoy some free time this afternoon to explore the outstanding historical core of the city. Dinner at the Iberostar dining room then take in music and dancing under the stars in the main square.

Overnight: Hotel Iberostar, Trinidad

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Saturday, Feb. 1: To Havana**

Drive across the Topes mountain range to Santa Clara. Stop at the Monumento Ernesto Che Guevara; the huge sculpture of the revolutionary hero overlooks a vast plaza where massive demonstrations are often held. Travel on to the capital and check into Hotel Nacional. Dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Nacional, Havana

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Sunday, Feb. 2: Havana**

Architect Miguel Coyula will meet us in the hotel to give us a presentation tracing the history of Havana through the roots of its colonial architecture and public spaces. Afterwards, we will go on a guided walking tour of Habana Vieja, the old colonial centre, now being spruced up with painstaking restoration work. After lunch at a local paladar we will explore the San Carlos de la Cabana Fort at the mouth of Old Havana before returning to the hotel. Dinner will be at Café Laurent, a few blocks from the Nacional.

Overnight: Hotel Nacional, Havana

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Monday, Feb. 3: Havana

Early departure for Soroa, a beautiful natural area southwest of Havana. Visit the Orchid Garden founded in the 1940's by a Spanish collector with over 700 species from around the world. Visit Finca Marta, where Fernandito Funes is demonstrating cutting edge 'agroecology'. Funes advocates 'smart, resource-efficient artisanal farming' as an alternative to the agribusiness model practiced abroad. This eight-acre farm supplies organic produce to many of Havana's top-rated restaurants. We'll be hosted by Fernando for a tour and a farm lunch and enjoy a presentation by his dad, Fernando Funes (recipient on behalf of ACOA of the Right Livelihood Award for Urban Agriculture from the Swedish Parliament in 1999) who will explain how Cuba learned to grow in the cities. Return to the Hotel Nacional, along the way dropping our donation off at the Havana Children's Hospital. This evening, enjoy the floor show at Hotel Nacional's Cabaret Parisien, with an optional dinner in the Cabaret before the show.

Overnight: Hotel Nacional,

Havana Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Tuesday, Feb. 4: Havana

Learn more about two of Cuba's iconic exports with a visit to a working Havana cigar factory and Havana's Rum Museum which showcases the rum-making process from freshly cut sugar cane to a scale model factory. After lunch, we will be picked up by classic American convertibles from the 1950s to cruise the broad boulevards of the city before returning to our Hotel. Enjoy a pre-dinner lecture from Susana Hurlich, US/Canadian Anthropologist and Cuban resident for 2 decades then head off for dinner at La Guarida. For night owls, some late-night Jazz at La Zorra y El Cuervo just a block from our hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Nacional, Havana

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Wednesday, Feb. 5: Havana

Start the day at a bustling farmers market. Visit the Museo de Belle Artes, a world-class showplace of Cuban painting and sculpture housed in a modernist building that traces the development of painting on the island from the colonial to the contemporary. Enjoy lunch at Los Mercaderes overlooking Plaza Vieja, then. enjoy some free time exploring the historic squares, strolling in the craft market in the heart of old city or taking a final stroll along the famed Malecon. Celebrate our trip over dinner this evening at Cocina de Lilliam.

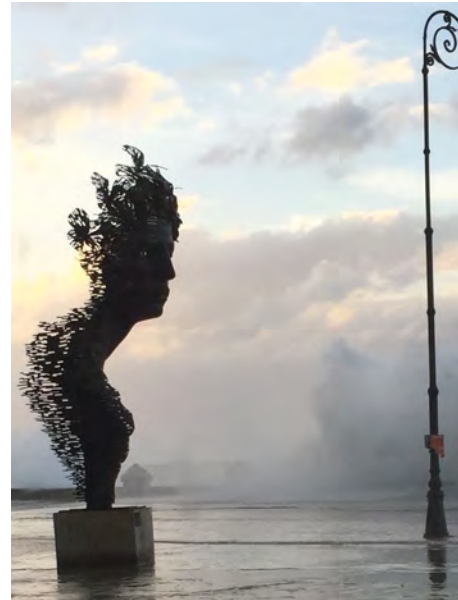
Overnight: Hotel Nacional, Havana

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Farewell Dinner

Thursday, Feb. 6: Depart Varadero

Transfer to Varadero for homeward-bound flights; some travel on to Melia Varadero for post-tour stays.

Meals: Breakfast



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