



Cuba People & Culture: Havana, Trinidad & Cienfuegos

10 days | 13 days with Havana extension

Meeting students who are learning how to restore and preserve Havana's historic buildings. Taking in a Buena Vista Social Club-style performance at a 1950s-inspired cafe. Learning how to salsa dance—and play dominoes—under the tutelage of master teachers. Through these and countless other interactions with welcoming locals, get to know Cuba at its most authentic as you soak in the country's legendary, energetic culture.



Your tour package includes

- 9 nights in handpicked hotels
- 9 breakfasts
- 7 lunches
- 9 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 food tasting
- 19 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach

Included highlights

- Vintage car ride
- Old Havana
- Museum of the Revolution
- Dominoes lesson
- Remedios baseball experience
- Salsa lesson
- Coffee farm visit
- Bay of Pigs
- Ernest Hemingway's home at Finca Vigía
- Afro-Cuban Roots Community

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for about 3 hours daily across mostly flat terrain, including paved roads with some hills and stairs.

Group size

12–22

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Havana → 3 nights

Day 1: Arrival in Havana & Life in Cuba Today visit

Included meals: welcome dinner

Please note: Due to the nature of travel to Cuba, the itinerary may vary depending on departure.

Welcome to Cuba! Arrive in Havana and transfer to your hotel before meeting with a local artist or photographer for an interactive discussion about what life is like in Cuba.

Tonight, enjoy an included welcome dinner with your group.

Day 2: Vintage car ride, sightseeing tour of Old Havana & Cuban Art Factory

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Get to know the UNESCO-listed neighborhood of Old Havana, the heart of the Cuban capital.

- Grab a seat in one of the cars and go for a cruise through the beautiful Miramar neighborhood and along the seaside, interacting with your local driver as you ride along.
- Engage in insightful conversations with locals at Arte Corte, a community project centered around a hair salon and barber school.

After enjoying an included lunch at a local restaurant, continue your exploration of Havana with a local leading the way.

- View the Museum of the Revolution, housed in the former Presidential Palace.
- Engage in open discussions about recent restoration projects in Havana as you walk along the colorful main streets.
- Learn about the Fidel Castro-led overthrow of Fulgencio Batista's government, as well as the Cuban perspective on the revolution.
- Pass through Plaza de Armas, the neighborhood's oldest square, as well as Plaza de San Francisco de Asís and Plaza de la Catedral.

Tonight, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant followed by a visit to Fábrica de Arte Cubano, or Cuban Art Factory, once a cooking-oil factory—turned premier art gallery and club space.

Day 3: Havana cultural visits

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, tasting, dinner

Spend the day getting to know different parts of the city and its charming people ready to share their culture and traditions with you.

- Head to the La Víbora neighborhood, a quiet part of the city with a mix of buildings from the 1920s and 1950s. While there, take the time to explore its impressive Community Graffiti Project. In Cuba, some residents turn to street art as a means to express political views and offer social commentary; walk past some of La Víbora's colorful murals and get to know the stories behind them.
- Stop by the Hotel Nacional to learn about its significance and sip Cuba's signature drink, the mojito.
- Transfer to the Castillo de los Tres Reyes del Morro, an old Spanish fortress that was built to protect Havana's harbor.

After an included lunch this afternoon, continue your exploration of Havana.

- Visit a scenic park and learn the game of dominoes, a beloved Cuban pastime, from a local champion.
- Enjoy the opportunity to meet with local artisans at the Almacenes San José Artisans' Market.
- Exchange ideas about art with the artisans, and shop their locally made goods.

Tonight, enjoy dinner at one of the city's small, family-run restaurants known as paladares. Then, tap your toes and sway along as local musicians perform songs inspired by Buena Vista Social Club, a group of Cuban musicians whose self-titled, 1997 debut album sold millions of copies around the world

Remedios → 2 nights

Day 4: Cigar factory & transfer to Remedios via Santa Clara

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Before departing Havana, meet and converse with staff at a local cigar factory to see how Cuba's most famous export is made from start to finish

Later, en route to Remedios, stop in Santa Clara to visit revolutionary landmarks and get a taste of local music and culture.

- Discuss Cuba's revolutionary history at the Che Guevara Mausoleum.
- Walk through Parque Vidal, one of the city's most important parks featuring monuments from various eras.
- Enjoy an included lunch, then take in a traditional trova music performance and engage with the musicians.

Continue to Remedios and set off on a sightseeing tour of the city.

- Hop aboard a bicycle taxi, known locally as a bicitaxi, for a tour of Remedios.
- Head into the main square, where you'll meet your local drivers and share coffee.
- Talk with a local guide to learn about the famous Parrandas festival, one of the Caribbean's largest and oldest traditional carnivals with roots stretching back to the 18th century.

Sit down for an included dinner this evening at a local paladar.

Day 5: Sightseeing tour of Caibarién & Remedios

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Head to the agricultural and cultural center of Caibarién this morning.

- Converse with a local artist about Cuba's vibrant creative scene.
- Discuss the tools and machinery used in sugar production with local workers at the Marcelo Salado Sugar Mill Museum.
- Have lunch at a local restaurant, then meet with a parish priest at the Remedios Cathedral to discuss the church's work and community projects.
- Enjoy a lively conversation with local baseball coaches at the city's baseball stadium to learn about the importance of the sport in Cuba.
- Practice your batting and catching skills during a quick game with the coaches on the field.

Gather together at a local paladar for an included dinner this evening.

Trinidad → 2 nights

Day 6: Trinidad via Sancti Spíritus

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Make your way to Trinidad, stopping to visit Sancti Spíritus, one of the oldest European settlements in Cuba, along the way.

- Wander through the charming historic center alongside a local guide, engaging in conversation about its architecture and history.
- Stroll across Puente Yayabo, an arched bridge that spans the Yayabo River.
- Enjoy an open discussion with your guide about restoration projects in the city.

Continue on to learn about the history of the frozen-in-time town of Trinidad.

- Sit down to an included lunch at a local paladar.
- Explore and discuss the UNESCO-recognized Spanish colonial zone with a local guide.
- Pass by Plaza Mayor, the Church of the Holy Trinity, Brunet Palace, Sánchez Iznaga Mansion, and the bell tower of the old San Francisco Convent.
- Meet and interact with local artists in Trinidad to learn about their lives, work, and inspiration.

Tonight, learn how to salsa dance alongside local masters and engage with the performers during a demonstration. Then, enjoy an included dinner at a local paladar.

Day 7: Coffee farm walk & Playa Ancón snorkeling

This morning, head north of Trinidad to tour a coffee farm alongside local farmers.

- Talk about coffee production, as well as struggles that are unique to Cuban coffee farmers, as you walk the grounds together.
- Enjoy a tasting of fresh, home-roasted coffee.

Later, meet up with a marine biologist at Playa Ancón, a picturesque beach where aquatic life abounds and calm waters lap against white-sand shores. Learn about the local coral reef system before diving in yourself for some swimming and snorkeling. (If enjoying the latter, keep an eye out for the sea stars, reef fish, and other creatures that call this colorful habitat home.)

Tonight, enjoy an included dinner at the hotel followed by a group drink at the Escalinata de la Casa de la Música.

Please note: Snorkeling equipment will be provided on-site at Playa Ancon. We recommend bringing water shoes to protect your feet from the rocky surfaces.

Havana → 2 nights

Day 8: Havana via Cienfuegos & Bay of Pigs

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Make your way to the bayside city of Cienfuegos and enjoy a unique sightseeing tour.

- Set off on a walking tour of the downtown area and admire the colonial style architecture.
- Make your way through José Martí Square and view the cathedral before passing by Teatro Tomás Terry and the neo-Gothic Palacio de Valle.
- Meet with local shop owners and residents to learn more about their daily lives.

Continue to the infamous Bay of Pigs, and converse with local experts to learn about its historical significance.

- Sit down for an included lunch at the Bay of Pigs
- Visit the Playa Girón Museum to learn about the failed, U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion from the Cuban perspective

Return to Havana and enjoy an included dinner this evening after freshening up at your hotel.

Day 9: Finca Vigía & Afro-Cuban cultural visits

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, liquor tasting, farewell dinner

Head out into the city and get a look at some of Cuba's world-famous cultural touchstones.

- Get to know expert auto mechanics at a restoration garage and converse with them about how they maintain Havana's iconic vintage cars.
- Meet with a local historian at Finca Vigía, where Ernest Hemingway wrote some of his most famous works.
- Enjoy an engaging discussion about the importance of Hemingway's novels in Cuba and the U.S.
- View Hemingway's famous boat, *Pilar*, in the home's backyard.

Later, learn more about the diverse lives of people in Havana.

- Head to the district of Guanabacoa, one of the city's centers of Afro-Cuban culture.
- Enter the Guanabacoa Museum and learn about Afro-Cuban religion and ceremonies.
- Stroll the alleys to get a taste of everyday life.
- Sit down for a lunch of traditional Afro-Cuban food.
- Listen to the sounds of Afro-Cuban music while you enjoy lunch and a taste of Aguardiente liquor.

Celebrate your trip with your group at tonight's farewell dinner featuring live performances of traditional Cuban music.

Flight Home

Day 10: Departure

Included meals: breakfast

Transfer to the airport for your flight home or continue on to explore West Cuba.

Go Ahead Tours is pleased to offer educational and cultural exchanges to Cuba. Go Ahead Tours qualifies for the people-to-people general license established by the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury ("OFAC"). Under this license, Go Ahead Tours will offer educational and cultural exchanges and conversations with the people of Cuba. The itinerary is subject to change based on day of week and availability, but a complete people-to-people itinerary will always be maintained.

+ Havana extension

You could easily spend an entire trip in Havana, basing in the Cuban capital and trekking out to nearby towns and farms. So, why not stay a while longer? Call Havana home for three more nights as you explore seaside Matanzas and Varadero, roam the UNESCO-listed Viñales Valley, and gain an even clearer perspective into daily life outside the city.

Havana → 3 nights

Day 10: Sightseeing tour of Matanzas & Varadero visit

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Head outside of Havana today and travel east along the coast to get a feel for two very different Cuban communities.

- First, stop in Matanzas—the cultural hub of the country. This city of roughly 145,000 people boasts a strong poetic tradition, gave the world the sounds of danzón and rumba, and carries on the stories of Afro-Cuban folklore. Join a local guide for a tour of this dynamic place, dubbed “The Athens of Cuba,” and try to catch some of its magic.
- Continue down the narrow Hicacos Peninsula—barely more than 1.5 miles across at its widest—to the resort town of Varadero, stopping in small villages along the way to

meet the locals. Afterward, take in the clear waters of the Straits of Florida from some of the area's public beaches. (Love a day on the coast? Varadero's white-sand beaches are widely considered to be some of the best in the world.)

Make your way back to Havana and gather together for an included dinner this evening with your group.

Day 11: A day in Viñales, tobacco farm visit & boat ride

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Make your way to Viñales and take in some of the country's more unique landscapes. Then, get to know the different sides, and welcoming people, of West Cuba.

- Visit a tobacco farm, where you can watch a farmer roll cigars by hand.
- Meet and converse with a tobacco farmer to learn about the production of the highly prized product.
- Indulge in a locally made cigar, if you'd like.

Head further into the UNESCO-listed Viñales Valley to uncover its beauty.

- Enjoy lunch at an organic farm overlooking the lush valley.
- Engage with the farm's owners and staff to learn about their organic farming practices.
- Travel to Cueva del Indio, the ancient home of Cuba's indigenous inhabitants.
- Board a boat and cruise through the cave via an underground river to admire cave paintings and archeological remains, conversing with your guide about the region's history as you float along.

Enjoy an included dinner back in Havana with your group.

Day 12: Las Terrazas & coffee plantation

Included meals: breakfast, tasting, lunch, farewell dinner

Spend the morning learning about Fidel Castro's "Green Revolution" and Cuba's part in the slave trade.

- Visit the UNESCO-listed Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve and talk with an expert about the successful reforestation project.
- Learn how the mountains, ruined by Spanish loggers and hurricane damage, were salvaged with the planting of more than six million varieties of trees.
- Interact with local artisans who call the community home, and learn about their work.
- Step inside a local's home to learn more about the Las Terrazas community while sipping coffee and engaging in conversation.

After an included lunch at a local restaurant, head to the Buenavista Coffee Plantation, the first of its kind in Cuba.

- Chat with a local guide during a tour of the partially restored plantation, which was started by French refugees after neighboring Haiti gained independence.
- Engage in a discussion about Cuban plantation slave labor with your guide.
- View the ruins of slaves' stone cells, as well as the former master's house.
- See the enormous tajona, or grindstone, that was used to crack the coffee beans.

Make your way back to Havana and enjoy a farewell dinner as you celebrate your trip with your fellow group members.

Flight Home

Day 13: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.