



Family Spring Break



**Havana and Pinar Del Rio
March 20-27, 2016**

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WELCOME TO CUBA

Cuba Educational Travel is offering the opportunity to spend a week visiting Communist Cuba. Once considered the forbidden fruit for Americans, our neighbor to the south is now closer than ever. Its fascinating history, breathtaking architecture, warm people, and rich music and art, make it the perfect place to learn about the Cuba of today, and have the time of your life while doing so. Travel to Cuba remains tightly regulated, but Cuba Educational Travel holds a license from the U.S. Treasury Department to arrange educational trips, meaning your memorable visit is fully sanctioned by the U.S. government.

A tropical paradise with a storied past, Cuba offers us a unique view of a world from a place few Americans have been able to see. This trip is geared toward travelers that seek to learn and see a lot on a short visit and prefer to travel in a small group with maximum flexibility.

In line with our mission, we take you behind the scenes of Cuba's tourist veil and connect you with scores of Cubans from different walks of life. CET President Collin Laverty has spent a large part of his life on the island over the last decade, and his knowledge and contacts will provide you with an experience few others enjoy. We firmly believe that by keeping our group sizes limited, and by working with locals, we are able to get off the beaten path and put you in contact with the top artists, chefs, experts and musicians. You will have the opportunity to speak with Cubans about daily life, learning about the country's unique political and economist system, and make many new friends along the way.



HAVANA

Havana is the capital city, province, major port, and leading commercial center of Cuba. The city proper has a population of 2.1 million inhabitants, and it spans a total of 728 km², making it the third largest metropolitan area in the Caribbean region. It was founded by the Spanish in the 16th century and due to its strategic location it served as a springboard for the Spanish conquest of the continent becoming a stopping point for the treasure laden Spanish Galleons on the crossing between the New World and the Old World. King Philip II of Spain granted Havana the title of City in 1592, and walls and forts were built to protect the fortunes that were held there soon after. The sinking of the U.S. battleship Maine in Havana's harbor in 1898 was the immediate cause of the Spanish-American War.

Contemporary Havana can essentially be described as three cities in one: Old Havana, Vedado, and the newer suburban districts. Old Havana, with its narrow streets and overhanging balconies, is the traditional center of Havana's commerce, industry, and entertainment, as well as being a residential area. It's a main tourist attraction. To the north and west a newer section, centered on the uptown area known as Vedado, has become the rival of Old Havana for commercial activity and nightlife. It is also home to the University and many residential neighborhoods. A third Havana is that of the more affluent residential and industrial districts that spread out mostly to the west, most notably the Miramar zone. Located west of Vedado along the coast, it remains Havana's exclusive area; mansions, foreign embassies, diplomatic residences, upscale shops, and facilities for wealthy foreigners are common in the area.



HAVANA

In the 1980s many parts of Old Havana, including the Plaza de Armas, became part of a projected 35-year multimillion-dollar restoration project, for Cubans to appreciate their past and boost tourism. In the past ten years, with the assistance of foreign aid and under the support of local city historian Eusebio Leal, large parts of Habana Vieja have been renovated. The city is moving forward with their renovations, with most of the major plazas (Plaza Vieja, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de San Francisco and Plaza de Armas) and major tourist streets (Obispo and Mercaderes) near completion. Due to Havana's almost five hundred year existence, the city boasts some of the most diverse styles of architecture in the world, from castles built in the late 16th century to modernist present-day high-rises, encompassing Neoclassical, Colonial and Baroque, Art Deco and Eclectic and Modernism.

Residents of Havana have by far the highest incomes in the country, and a higher percentage of relatives living abroad. There is considerable inward migration in search of economic opportunities, especially from the poorer eastern provinces. Santiago de Cuba rivals it in some art, music and dance, but Havana is hands down the cultural and economic center of the country.

Saturday, March 19

Arrive to Miami and prepare for early morning departure to Cuba. Option available for a discounted group rate at the Crowne Plaza MIA, featuring a free shuttle to the airport every 20 minutes.





Sunday, March 20

- 12:45 am **American Airlines Flight 9478**, departing Miami at 12:45 pm – check-in closes strictly at 11:15 am – and arriving in Havana, Cuba at 1:45 pm
- 03:00 pm **Visit to Morro Castle**, one of the earliest constructed and most important Spanish forts in the Americas, featuring a great view of the Havana city landscape.
- 04:30 pm **Check in at the Hotel Capri**, which was one of the first hotel casinos built by the Mafia in Cuba. Owned by mobster Santo Trafficante, and run by George Raft, the hotel was at a time one of the largest casinos in Havana. Located blocks from the University of Havana, Coppelia ice cream, and the Havana seawall, the recent remodeling provides first class amenities, while leaving the history and original charm of “The Capri.”
- 02:00 pm **Enjoy a traditional Cuban meal overlooking the Straits of Florida at the Hotel Nacional.** Tasty Cuban food served family style with a great view of the Havana sea wall and the old Spanish fortress. The setting brings many back to the 1950s, when the mafia held its annual meetings at this historic hotel.



Monday, March 21

- 09:30 am Visit to a home in Central Havana for a **discussion with Magia López and Alexey Rodriguez of the hip-hop/jazz duo Obsesión** about their experiences and views on race and gender equality in Cuba.
- 11:00 am **Visit to Christopher Colon Cemetery**, one of the oldest and most prestigious cemeteries in Latin America, where we will receive a guided tour.
- 12:30 pm **Lunch at La Bodeguita del Medio**. Located on a side street in Cathedral Square, this is apparently where the mojito, Cuba's famed National drink, was first created.
- 02:00 pm **Walking tour of the Old City**. Wander through the **Plaza Vieja**, the oldest plaza in Havana, dating from the 16th century. See 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. Visit **Plaza de la Catedral** and the Catedral de San Cristóbal de La Habana. 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.
- 05:00 pm **Socio-economic discussion with urban planner Miguel Coyula**, who's presentation will touch on housing, infrastructure, investment and restoration programs. It's bound to leave you with a better understanding of why Havana looks the way it does today and possibilities moving forward.

Evening Free



Tuesday, March 22

- 09:00 am **Depart for Pinar del Rio**, the western-most province, famous for its rich soil, tobacco production and spectacular scenery
- 11:00 am **Stop at Las Terrazas national forest** on the way for an overview of conservation programs and a discussion with local residents in the area. **We will enjoy a nice group meal in the beautiful nature reserve.**
- 02:00 pm **Arrive in Viñales Valley.** Considered by many to be the most beautiful place in Cuba, the Viñales Valley National Monument holds stunning landscapes. The area is also famous for being the premier tobacco growing area in the world. **Check-in at a casa particular – bed and breakfasts run by local families – where you will enjoy comfortable accommodations and the opportunity to interact with your hosts.**
- 07:00 pm **Enjoy a home-cooked meal** prepared by your hosts at your casa particular



Wednesday, March 23

- 08:30 am **Take a morning hike with a local guide through tobacco fields.** Talk to your guide about the possibility to try the excursion on horseback.
- 11:00 am **Spend the day at Cayo Jutia.** This beautiful key in the Pinar del Río Province, accessible only by boat, features beautiful blue waters and white sandy beaches. It has several snorkeling and diving sites, and plenty of outdoor activities to keep you busy for the day.
- 06:00 pm **Enjoy a traditional dinner** on the grounds of a local farm, **Finca Paraiso Agroecologica** (the agro-ecological Paradise Farm), where we will learn about Cuban agriculture and tobacco production, followed by a visit to the Vinales town center.



Thursday, March 24

- 09:00 am Return to Havana, about a 3 hour drive, with stops along the way
- 10:00 am **Visit a small country town where Mario Pelegrin, a community activist, has created a charming neighborhood project dedicated to local children.** In this tranquil setting, a collection of rustic cabins provide a home for amateur art programs. This wonderful program gives local kids the opportunity to have fun while learning new skills in the areas of music, dance, theatre and art.
- 01:00 pm **Private performance and lecture on Cuban Music at Bar Asturias by Prof. Alberto Faya** who has been working together as a musician, professor and researcher within the Cuban musical world for over 20 years. He will be joined by a quartet of some of the finest young jazz musicians in Cuba who will take us on a lively musical journey thru the history of Cuba. Light lunch from Centro Asturiano provided.
- 03:00 pm **Enjoy interactive salsa-dancing lessons** at Club Almendares
- 04:00 pm Check-in at the Hotel Capri
- 06:00 pm **Spend the late afternoon at Café Madrigal with Frank Delgado**, renowned singer and songwriter, for a discussion about the nueva trova movement in Cuba, followed by a musical performance. **Café Madrigal**, owned and run by film director Rafael Rosales, is housed in a beautiful colonial mansion with the walls lined with captivating art work.



Friday, March 25

- 09:30 am **Discussion with journalist Marc Frank.** Author of “Cuba Revelations” and the longest serving foreign correspondent in Cuba, Frank writes for Reuters, the Financial Times and the Economist, and is an authority on the Cuban economy. His will offer insight into important economic, political and social issues on the island and share colorful stories about being a reporter in Cuba.
- 11:30 am **Dinner at Café Laurent,** a recently opened paladar located in the beautiful Vedado District. Blocks from the Hotel Nacional, this penthouse apartment has been converted into a lovely rooftop restaurant.
- 02:00 pm **Visit to the Nostalgic Cars restoration garage.** Owners Nidialys Acosta and Julio Alvarez have taken advantage of the recent economic opening to put together a fleet of 20 plus pristine “clasicos” to provide professional service to their clientele. We will visit the garage to see how they restore these beauties from the 1950s.
- 03:30 pm **Visit to the home and studio of plastic artist Fuster,** who has converted his neighborhood into an art project featuring murals, plastic art and other designs. es town center.



Saturday, March 26

09:30 am **Visit to La Finca Vigía.** Formerly the home of Ernest Hemingway, today it still houses his expansive collection of books. It was here where he wrote two of his most celebrated novels: *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. The beautiful grounds and bizarre tales from Hemingway's many years in Cuba are captivating.

11:30 am **Visit to the Museum of Cuban Art.** We will be accompanied by **Nelson Herrera**, an art historian, who will provide an overview of Cuban art and artists over the last 4 centuries.

Lunch and afternoon free

07:00 pm **Farewell Dinner at Paladar Atelier.** This restaurant is equally known for its atmosphere and exquisite cuisine. The lighting and textures of the house, which was home to a pre-revolutionary senator, coupled with walls adorned in modern art, create a cozy, but modern setting.



Sunday, March 27

- 11:45 am Hotel check-out and depart for airport
- 02:45 pm **American Airlines flight 9479**, departing Havana at 2:45 pm and arriving in Miami at 3:45 pm. Please leave 3 hours between scheduled arrival and connecting flights.



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