

Cuba study abroad – 2015 – Itinerary

Day 1. Hello Cuba!

Arrival at Havana International Airport.

Meet your Authentic Cuba Travel tour guide and tour bus driver.

Transfer to your Hotel Park View located in the historical quarter of Old Havana.

Day 2. UNESCO World Heritage Site, Old Havana

**Breakfast and lunch included*

Morning: Visit to the Scale Model of Old Havana for a private meeting with world-renowned architect Miguel Coyula from the Group for the Comprehensive Development of Havana City. The model serves as an excellent introduction to the layout of the city. It is color-coded by age with the historic buildings painted in crimson, pre-Revolution buildings in yellow and the post-revolutionary buildings in ivory. You'll learn how each part of the city has developed historically, and the tough challenges each district faces today. Mr. Coyula has been a leading figure in urban design, urban policy and community development for over 45 years, garnering design accolades, awards and public leadership roles. An internationally renowned architect, urban planner, and frequent lecturer abroad, he is on the faculty of architecture at ISPJAE (Instituto Superior Jose Antonia Echeverria) at Havana University.

Followed by guided walking tour of UNESCO World Heritage Site, Old Havana. Visit to the Cathedral Square, named after the masterpiece of Cuban baroque architecture: the Cathedral of Havana built by the Jesuit order. The Cathedral's baroque facade is simultaneously intimate and imposing, and one of the two towers is visibly larger, creating a pleasing asymmetry.

Visit to Square of Arms, ancient military parade ground for Spanish soldiers and surrounded by impressive buildings such as: Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the former official residence of the governors (Captains General) of Havana, Cuba. It is home to the Museum of the City of Havana. Palacio del Segundo Cabo. The seat of the second authority of the island. Today it houses important publishing houses.

Lunch at La Mina restaurant in Old Havana.

Afternoon: Continue walking tour onto San Francisco Square, named after the Convent of San Francisco, this square was conceived in 1628, with the objective of supplying water to the ships trading with the metropolis.

Visit to Plaza Vieja, the only civic square of colonial times. Notice it doesn't have a church or government building around. Here we will visit important institutions for visual arts.

Next we'll tour the Museum of Revolution, the former Presidential Palace. Today it exhibits the history of the Cuban Revolution through documents and objects among which we find the famous Yacht Granma that returned Fidel and his 82 guerilla fighters from Mexico to Cuba to launch the struggle for liberation from the Batista dictatorship. Other historic artifacts include military vehicles and weaponry from the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, a U-2 spy plane shot down during the Cuban missile crisis, and items from Cuba's nineteenth-century wars of independence.

Free time in the famous handicraft market of Old Havana, located inside the *Almacenes de Depósito San José*, an old warehouse on the harbour side where you can purchase all sorts of crafts and souvenirs by local artisans.

Evening: Attend one of the most traditional and popular ceremonies in Cuba, The Fire of the Cannon of 9 O'clock at the Fortress of San Carlos de La Cabana where Che Guevara established his headquarters after the Revolution came to power in 1959.

Day 3. Havana

**Breakfast and lunch included*

Morning: Visit to the Workshop School in Old Havana. High school graduates enroll in this institution to learn the arts and crafts necessary to authentically restore the ancient buildings of Old Havana. The school teaches young people archeological and restoration work that helps preserving the heritage and cultural wealth of Old Havana.

Tour the school and get engaged with students and professors in the different workshops such as Glass work, Carpentry, Iron work and Restoration.

Lunch at Casa de la Malta in Old Havana.

Afternoon: Special presentation on US/Cuba relations by Professor Carlos Alzugaray . Mr. Alzugaray is a Professor at the Center for Hemispheric and United States Studies (CEHSEU), at the University of Havana. He is a Cuban diplomat and scholar with 40 years of experience representing the Cuban government around the world. The Havana-born diplomat was appointed to his first position in 1961 in the Cuban Embassy in Tokyo. Since then, he has served in diplomatic and consular posts in Bulgaria, Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Kenya, Belgium, and at the United Nations. He is the author of more than 30 publications on Cuban international relations.

Followed by coach tour of the most important sites of Modern Havana such as the Capitol building, the Grand Theatre, Central Park, Prado promenade, Sevilla Hotel, Revolution Square, Malecón seawall, Monument to the Battleship Maine, Hotel Nacional, University of Havana, Cristóbal Colón Cemetery.

Evening: Tonight we have a Cuban band playing for us! You'll learn to dance to Salsa, Son, Rumba, and other popular Cuban rhythms with instruction from bandleaders.

Day 4. Havana

**Breakfast and lunch included*

Morning: Meeting with representatives from the National Institute of Sport, Physical Education, and Recreation (INDER) for a general introduction into Cuba's approach, history and development of its sports educational system.

Followed by visit to the Children's Academy of Baseball at the City of Sport.

Lunch hosted by Jose Fuster, one of the most important Cuban ceramists and painters today. Fuster has turned an entire neighborhood in western Havana into a giant art installation that involves locals and their actual homes as part of the exhibit. He's engaged and trained many neighborhood residents as artisans, especially youth. This is art for and by the people on an epic scale!

Afternoon: Visit to CENESEX (Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual / National Center for Sexual Education). This organization and its founder Mariela Castro Espín campaign for equality and dignity for lesbians, gays, transsexuals and transgendered people. In particular CENESEX leads in the areas of HIV/AIDS awareness and support services, and gender and sexuality counseling. Mariela Castro, the daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro and niece of former President Fidel Castro, made a historic visit to the United States in May 2013 to attend the Equality Forum in Philadelphia. At the event she was presented the International Ally for LGBT Equality Award.

Evening: Enjoy Latin Jazz at Club La Zorra y El Cuervo, Havana's most famous Jazz club. The club features great performances by island bands and soloists! (Optional, not included).

Day 5. Havana – Las Terrazas – Vinales Valley

**Breakfast, lunch and dinner included*

Morning departure to Las Terrazas eco-community, located in UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Sierra del Rosario in the western province of Pinar del Rio. We'll tour its rural village called Rancho Curujey and enjoy a welcome cocktail while hearing about this self-sustaining community's goals of reforestation, historical preservation, environmental balance and a good life.

Followed by visit to the local elementary and secondary schools, and the community clinic.

Visit to the ruins of a French Coffee Plantation built in 1801.

We also visit the home/studios of local artists and artisans.

Continue to La Moka, an ecological hotel with trees growing up through the balconies and ceiling

We have lunch at an open-air restaurant specializing in traditional country cuisine!

Next you'll have free time to swim in the fresh waters of the San Juan River cascades and pools, and explore the surroundings of this lush tropical paradise.

Continue on bus drive to Vinales Valley. Check-in at Los Jasmines hotel with breakfast and dinner included.

Day 6. Vinales Valley

**Breakfast, lunch and dinner included*

Exploration of Viñales Valley, containing the most spectacular scenery in Cuba and some of the most interesting and varied geological formations on the island. The valley is particularly famous for its great freestanding rock formations called *mogotes*.

Visit the Cueva del Indio, used by the Guanahatabey Amerindians as a burial site in ancient time, and as refuge from the Spaniards for both Indians and Black slaves alike. We'll take a short boat ride on the subterranean river running through the cave.

Visit to Mural de la Prehistoria, a huge painting on the side of a mogote.

Lunch at Mural de La Prehistoria restaurant. Cuban country music live and best traditional Cuban dishes in the Valley!

Explore Viñales Village at your leisure: its open-air craft market, Parque Marti, town church, and other interesting sites of this charming colonial hamlet.

Dinner at the hotel.

Free evening.

Day 7. Vinales Valley – Havana

**Breakfast and dinner included*

Morning: Transfer to your hotel in Havana.

Lunch on your own (not included on tour cost).

Afternoon: Visit the community-based project Cintio Vitier in Nuevo Vedado neighbourhood.

This project offers painting, papier-mâché, drama, music, dance, and other skill development workshops to elementary and secondary students. We'll meet with director Pedro Pulido for a presentation on his outreach work in the community of Colon.

This is a great opportunity to interact with the kids by drawing, dancing, and playing games with them! It is also a great place to donate school and art/craft supplies.

Evening: Farewell dinner at one of Havana's most popular restaurants: El Aljibe. This eatery serves the best Creole food in Cuba!

Day 8. Good Bye Cuba!

**Breakfast included*

Transfer to Havana International Airport for departure.