
Depart Los Angeles this morning on a scheduled charter flight.

Upon arrival, proceed to the Paseo Havana for check-in. The Paseo Havana is a three star hotel located in a beautiful residential part of Vedado. All rooms have private bathrooms with hot and cold water.

Enjoy a welcome dinner at El Ajibe. L,D

March 20. Sunday. Havana

This morning begin exploring Havana by foot. A short bus ride brings the group to Old Havana. As we walk through old Havana we will stop to admire the city’s many squares, its cathedral and a scale-model of Old Havana.

End the morning at the Plaza Vieja, a stunningly beautiful old square. Although the square was in a sad state of repair for many years, that decay is being reversed by the caring restoration of Habana Vieja.

Lunch at Puerto Angel located on Plaza Vieja.

After lunch, enjoy a city orientation tour by bus (and foot) which will be led by architect Ayleen Robaiyna, currently working in the City Historian’s office. The tour will include a stop at the University of Havana as well as an inside visit to the wonderful Riviera Hotel which, when it opened in 1958, was considered a marvel of modern design. Explore the City Garden of El Vedado which was planned in 1859-60 but not developed until early in the twentieth-century according to modern planning principles that introduced “green” in the city for the first time.
Drive along La Rampa which climbs past the offices of Cubana, the Hotel Havana Libre and Art-Deco apartment buildings to the Parque Copelia, an entire block of a large, lush park. In the middle of the park, visit a remarkable design icon, an ice-cream parlor designed in 1966, which serves an estimated 30,000 customers a day.

End the afternoon at the newly opened US Embassy in Havana for a briefing with US Embassy staff. We will cover the recent changes taking place and the impact of these on civil society with a focus on political leadership, human rights and Freedom of speech.

Dinner at Café Laurent this evening. Meet with the owners of this private restaurant to learn more about the challenges of running a private business in Cuba. B,L,D

**March 21: Monday. Havana.**

Morning round-table discussion in the Antilles room with economist Ricardo Torres on the “Changing Forces of Cuba’s Economic Structure”. Mr. Torres is a macro-economist and professor at the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy at the University of Havana. He has been a visiting professor at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and is currently writing his dissertation on the impact of structural change on economic growth in Cuba.

In 2012, Fidel Castro was quoted as saying to an American journalist that the Cuban economic model “doesn’t even work for us anymore.” Monumental changes since then have been announced including, but by no means limited to, the laying off of more than half a million state workers, the privatization of small businesses, a new credit law offering certain Cubans bank loans, and bringing the peso ton par with the dollar.

Drive to the Felix Varela Cultural Center, which is housed in the beautiful San Carlos and San Ambrosio Seminary, located in the heart of old Havana. Schedule permitting, the group will meet with Gustavo Andujar, the acting editor in chief of the magazine Espacio Laical (Lay Space). Both the magazine and its editors have been the target of harsh criticism from the media controlled by exiles and by some opponents of the Cuban government, because of its critical support of the process of reforms being carried out by the Cuban government. We will also meet with staff who work on the Cuba Emprende program which the center runs in co-operation with the University of Murcia in Spain. Cuba Emprende offers 4 week programs for Cubans wanting to start their own businesses.

Continue on to the Hotel Nacional for a traditional Cuban lunch. The Hotel Nacional was designed by the famous New York firm McKim, Mead and White, and features an eclectic mix of architectural styles. It opened in 1930 when Cuba was a prime travel destination for Americans,
long before the embargo. In 1955 Meyer Lansky managed to persuade Batista to give him a piece of the Nacional. That same year Pan Am’s Intercontinental Hotels Corporation took over management of the hotel. Lansky planned to take a wing of the 10-story hotel and create luxury suites for high stakes players. Batista endorsed Lansky’s idea even though there were objections from American expatriates like Ernest Hemingway. Under Lansky’s impetus, a wing of the grand entrance hall was refurbished to include a bar, a restaurant, a showroom and a luxurious casino. It was operated by Lansky and his brother Jake, with Wilbur Clark as the front man.

After lunch, learn more about the cigar industry in Cuba at the Partagas Cigar Factory. Havana is the birthplace of premium cigars and production here is unlike almost every place else. Cuban cigar makers, unlike their counterparts in most of the non-Cuban cigar world, make the entire cigar themselves. Most cigar factories in the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua split the process between roller and buncher. Built in 1845, the Partagás Factory is a grand facility. Before entering admire the four stories with their magnificent balconies, shuttered windows and the oversized red and white Real Fabrica de Tabacos Partagás sign.

Continue on to watch a rehearsal of the Mal Paso Dance Company. This extraordinary dance group melds the techniques of classical ballet and American modern dance with the rippling spines and head rolls of traditional or folkloric, Afro-Cuban dance; the complex rhythms of Cuban rumba; and the twirling hands and syncopation of Spanish flamenco.

On the roof-top of the Hotel Plaza your own salsa teacher will show you the steps to the dance that has its origins in Cuba where the blending of African drum rhythms and Spanish guitar evolved into a variety of Latin American music: Son, Danzón, the rhythms of Carnival, Cha Cha Cha, Mambo, Salsa and even Tango came out of Cuba. The Salsa movements originate from the Cuban Son dancing of the 1920s, and more specifically through the beat of Son Montuno with strong influences from the dance of Danzon, Mambo, Guaguanco and other Afro-Cuban folkloric dancing. Today’s Salsa dancing is a rich blend of Latin-American and Western influences. Salsa traces a 90-year history in which there are numerous evolutionary paths, sometimes split due to political and social influences. As a result, today there are various distinct styles of Salsa dancing, namely Cuban (“Casino”), New York Style (“Mambo on 2”), Los Angeles Style (“On 1”), Colombian Salsa (“Cali-Style”) and Miami-Style Salsa. Salsa is typically a partner dance, although there are recognized solo forms. Salsa can be improvised or performed with a set routine, choreography and freestyle.

Dinner at La Guarida. This well-known restaurant served as the setting for the main apartment in the film Fresa y Chocolate. The group will meet with owner Enrique Nunoz, who was born and raised in this building. Mr. Nunez has opened and shut La Guarida three times over the last 15 years and he will talk to the group about his experiences and the impact of the new regulations.
He now owns property in the US as well, and he will talk about how he sees Cuba in 15 years and what the business opportunities are. As he is one of Cuba’s most successful business owners and many business people look to Mr. Nunoz when it comes to making decisions.

**March 22: Tuesday. Havana.**

Depart the hotel to drive to Matanzas – a drive of about 80 minutes. Matanzas began to flourish after large sugar mills were established in the region between 1817 and 1827. Coffee also began to be exported and in 1843 the railway arrived from Havana. By the second half of the 19th-century Matanzas was the second largest city in Cuba boasting a newspaper, a library and a philharmonic orchestra. As a result of the number of artists, writers, musicians and intellectuals living here at that time, Matanzas came to be known as the “Athens of Cuba”. The most famous 19th-century resident was the mulato poet Gabriel de la Concepcion Valdes.

Explore the historic quarter including Plaza de la Vigia which marks the site that Matanzas was established on. The Matanzas fire brigade still has its headquarters in the neo-classical Parque de los Bomberos close by.

Stop at the Ediciones Vigia which was founded in 1985 and produces hand-made first edition books on a range of topics. The books are typed, stenciled and pasted in editions of 200 books. There will be a chance to meet with director Agustina Ponce and a number of the artisans who work with her.

Close by is the Pharmacy Museum housed in a former pharmacy which was founded in 1882 by the Triolett family. The house itself is beautiful but the collection of original equipment, furnishings and medical recipes is extraordinary. The group will be met by director Marcia Brito.

Stop for lunch at the Matanzas Seminary which was founded in 1946 by the Cuban Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal Churches. The only ecumenical seminary in Cuba, the Matanzas Seminary now serves about 40 students. For approximately ten years, Reverend Dr. Ofelia Ortega Suarez, self-described as a "feminist liberation theologian," served as rector of the Evangelical Theological Seminary. Upon her retirement the seminary decided to pursue a Distance Learning/Extension Program by the new dean who sought to "extend the presence of the Seminary to other spaces." This new program allows pastors to remain with their communities of faith while expanding their knowledge.

Early evening reception at the **Ludwig Foundation**. The Ludwig Foundation of Cuba (LFC) is an autonomous, non-governmental and non-profit institution in Cuba created to protect and promote contemporary Cuban artists and culture, develop research works and new technologies applied to
the artistic field, and encourage dialog with both Cuban and international cultural communities. LFC acts as a cultural center to encourage the creation of bridges of understanding in Cuba and abroad.

Dinner at La Torre this evening. B,L,D

**March 23: Wednesday, Havana.**

Morning visit to the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM). Established in 1999 and operated by the Cuban government, ELAM has been described as possibly being the largest medical school in the world by enrollment with approximately 10,000 or 12,000 students from 49 countries reported as enrolled in 2006/early 2007. All those enrolled are international students from outside Cuba and mainly come from Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Africa and Asia. Each student receives a rigorous hands-on training in primary and preventative care, family medicine and all the standard medical specialties. These full scholarships cover tuition, room and board, plus textbooks in Spanish; the only condition of Cuba’s offer is that graduates return to their home countries to practice in underserved communities. Graduates are well-versed in global health issues and fully bilingual upon completion of their studies. The Latin American School of Medicine has trained more than 24,000 doctors from 116 countries since its inception in 1999. More than 97 U.S. students have graduated since Cuba began accepting students from this country in 2001. Meet with American students as well as other nationalities.

Private lunch at the home and studio of artist Jose Fuster who has turned his neighborhood into one enormous piece of mosaic art. Fuster is an artist who is dedicated to his creations, a vast array of artwork from ceramics evoking the nation’s African roots, as represented in the Santeria religion, to whimsical paintings drawn from ordinary life in Cuba: commuters crowded inside creaky, smoke-belching buses, the ubiquitous dominoes games in backyards and street corners. Drive though his neighborhood known as Jaimanitas before arriving at his studio and home for lunch.

After lunch enjoy a private performance of the dance/musical group Havana Compass. Liliet Rivera, is the founder of Cuba Havana Dance Troupe, which is dedicated to the study and choreography of traditional and modern dances. In partnership with percussion artist, Eduardo Cordova, the troupe has created an exciting, diverse performance with traces of Spanish dance form, African-Cuban Jazz rhythm and modern dance.
Stop at the offices of BioCubaFarma to learn more about Cuba's biotechnology industry which is expected to double over the next five years, bringing in more than five billion U.S. dollars in export revenues, officials said recently. There is increasing international recognition of Cuba's biotech industry and the revenue for the 2013-2017 period is projected to double the 2.5 billion dollars that earned in the last five years, according to Jose Luis Fernandez Yero, vice president of the country's biotech firm BioCubaFarma. Products manufactured by the biotech industry are currently sold in more than 50 countries and local authorities are working to expand the market. BioCubaFarma was founded in April 2011 after the Sixth Congress of Cuba's Communist Party called for strengthening domestic pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries to boost the economy as the sectors had the greatest export potential. BioCubaFarma is to develop new products for the domestic market and help push Cuba towards a more high-tech economy, Fernandez said. The group manufactures generic drugs, therapeutic and prophylactic vaccines, biomedicine, diagnostic systems and high-tech medical equipment. It also does researches on neuroscience and neurotechnology. Of the 881 generic drugs used in Cuba, 583 are manufactured in the country, and the World Health Organization (WHO) recently acknowledged Cuba's political and financial support for biotechnology.

Round-table discussion with Dr. Rena Pérez, formerly with the Ministry of Agriculture and now an advisor to the Ministry of Sugar. Dr. Perez’s discussion, documented with slides, will address “Living in Cuba Today”.

Dinner this evening at leisure. B,L.

March 24: Thursday, Havana

This morning, participate in a discussion on US/Cuban Relations led by Professor Raul Rodriguez from the University of Havana. Dr. Rodriguez has written extensively on US-Cuban Relations including an article written for the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies Working Papers Series 1-10, Harvard University 2010, entitled “Canada, the United States and Cuba: Triangular Relations as seen in Cuban Diplomatic History 1959-1962.”

We will arrange a meeting with two or three business owners this morning.

After lunch visit Havana’s new wholesale market, El Trigal, which is run by a private cooperative and is the first such market since Cuba monopolized wholesale operations in the 1960s. We have asked one of the owners, Claudio Sabron, to talk about the market. The state owns the premises, but the market is leased to a cooperative who operate it on the basis of supply and demand. The
cooperative workers run it, pay operating costs and taxes and keep the profits. The cooperative's basic expenses include rent for the premises, taxes, electricity, wages for three contracted workers to help run the place, and fuel for the modern forklift they've leased from the State.

The private cooperative is the first to operate in Cuba outside of farming and is one of some 200 privately run wholesale markets of all types that are set to open in the coming months. They will range from food services and construction to transportation and shrimp breeding. The country imports around 60 percent of its food in part because farmers still depend on state-run allocation and distribution of subsidized supplies. Official output has not significantly increased since the reforms began six years ago. However, small semi-private farms outperform state farms on a fraction of the land and authorities are gradually deregulating the sector and leasing fallow land to would-be farmers. At the same time, the state is licensing private truckers and vendors as part of an opening to small businesses.

Dinner at El Cocinero this evening and after dinner visit the Fabrica de Arte which opened in 2014 with musician and composer X Alfonso the powerhouse behind it. X Alfonso, the son of the founders of the musical group Sintesis, looked for a place where both famous and unknown painters, photographers, musicians and playwrights could exhibit their work and settled on this location which is housed in a former oil factory. X Alfonso took over the old factory determined not to change its structure or industrial look. It's a SoHo sensibility, but cutting edge for Cuba and always packed on weekend evenings! B,L,D

**March 25: Friday. Havana**

Depart for a full day excursion to the west part of Cuba, with its jungle-covered summits dropping down limestone cliffs to verdant valleys. Drive along one of the new roads in Cuba to the town of Pinar del Rio.

Stop en route at the Orchid Farm at Soroa, which is maintained by the University of Pinar del Rio. The hilly grounds contain over 800 species of plants, including 200 endemic to Cuba, all thriving in the humid climate. After arriving at Pinar del Rio continue by a smaller road to the Valle de Vinales, Cuba’s most famous landscape, located in the province of Pinar del Rio. This area was the last refuge of the Ciboney, the hunter-gatherers who were pushed here by the more advanced Taino. The province’s mountainous landscape is riddled with caves, some running for many kilometers, in which Ciboney burial and cave paintings have been found. Visit a small tobacco farm and enjoy some time to wander through the small town of Vinales.

Enjoy a visit to a tobacco farm to learn more about the growing of tobacco and the economics of the tobacco industry in Cuba.
Enjoy lunch at a private farm with beautiful views overlooking the valley. It is possible from here to appreciate the valley’s distinctive landscape, with its steep-sided limestone mountains called mogotes rising dramatically from fertile flat-floored valleys where farmers cultivate the red soil for tobacco, fruits and vegetables. The terrain resembles a Chinese brush painting.

After a special farewell dinner enjoy a jazz performance at Havana’s best jazz club – El Zorro el Cuervo (please note the show begins at 11.00pm) B,L,D

March 26: Saturday.

Return flight directly from Havana to Los Angeles B