Cuba Culture & History Tour: 8-Day/7-Night

During this seven-night journey, experience Cuba’s authentic culture and history by interacting with the Cuban people. Set out from Havana to Cayo Santa Maria, stopping at key landmarks along the way like Playa Giron, The Bay of Pigs and Cienfuegos. Then, experience Santa Clara and the Ernesto “Che” Guevara Memorial before arriving in Varadero for the night. Close out your educational journey back in Havana with more exciting cultural experiences. An English-speaking tour director and a trained, knowledgeable, local tour guide will accompany you for the entire tour.

Day 1 - Arrival in Havana

When you arrive in Havana, your tour director and guide will meet you at the airport. They will be your guides for your entire week-long experience. After transfer to your hotel for check-in, you will have the opportunity to attend a U.S./Cuba policy conference at the hotel, where you can interact with a Scholar and ask questions about current Cuba/U.S. relations. Attend a welcome briefing in the evening and then head to an authentic Cuban restaurant in an American antique car.

Meals Included: Dinner

Day 2 - Havana

After breakfast, enjoy a walking tour through Havana’s historic center with a local historian or architect. Visit vibrantly restored buildings and learn why this city earned UNESCO World Heritage site status. Connect with local artists at a graphic arts studio, then meet local dancers for a salsa lesson and attend a cocktail demonstration to learn how to mix mojitos and other Cuban favorites. Afterward, enjoy a light lunch at a local paladar (family-owned restaurant) and then it’s off to Santo Angel neighborhood, where you’ll discover how its Arte Corte community project is changing the neighborhood. Return to the hotel for a Cuban Institute of Music traditional Cuban music performance, followed by a discussion with the musicians on traditional musical styles and instruments. Close out the evening with dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3 - Havana – Cienfuegos – Cayo Santa Maria

After an early breakfast, depart for the Playa Giron region, the notorious location of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. After a quick rest stop at Fiesta Campesina, visit the Crocodile Breeding Center where you’ll view the hatchery and speak with scientists and crocodile keepers about the indigenous species of Cuba and the center’s preservation programs. Enjoy lunch overlooking the inlet at the Caleton at Casa Enrique, where owner Enrique will give an in-depth overview of private businesses in Cuba, including the challenges and benefits of opening and running a business. The tour continues to Cienfuegos for a stroll through the city center and visit to the historic Thomas Terry Theater, opened in the late 1800s. Then, enjoy interactions with local
shop owners and residents. Finally, arrive in Cayo Santa Maria, a coastal town on one of the keys of Villa Clara Province. Check in at your hotel and enjoy dinner at your leisure.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4 - Havana – Cayo Santa Maria – Caibarien – Remedios – Cayo Santa Maria

After breakfast at the hotel, depart for Caibarien to visit Color Miel, a community art project centered on honey-making. Then stop at the Sugar Museum, a historic sugar factory with much of the original machinery still on site. Interact with a local specialist while you enjoy the museum’s exhibits focused on the importance of the sugar industry in the 19th and 20th centuries. Then, board a steam train for a ride and discuss railroad history and maintenance with the conductors. After lunch at a local restaurant, ride to Remedios to meet with a parish priest at the Remedios Cathedral. He will give a brief lecture on the parish’s community projects for people of all ages and introduce you to one of Cuba’s oldest traditional celebrations, Las Parrandas de Remedio. Return to the hotel in Cayo Santa Maria and enjoy dinner at your leisure.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5 – Cayo Santa Maria - Varadero

After breakfast at the hotel, depart for the city of Santa Clara, where you'll visit the Che Memorial and Mausoleum. This mausoleum contains the remains of legendary Cuban-Argentine guerrilla, Ernesto Che Guevara, and those of some of his comrades in arms who died in Bolivia. Personal effects that belonged to Che and his comrades during the national liberation war in Cuba from 1956 to 1959 and during the Bolivian 1967 epic are also on display. (If the museum is closed, stop for pictures at the Che Monument). Next, stroll through the center of Santa Clara at Parque Vidal and visit Casa de la Cultura for a cultural exchange with the musicians from Melodias Antillanas and the Abuelitos de Fiesta community project. Interact with the musicians and learn how to dance Danzon, the Cuban National Dance, with Abuelitos de Fiesta. Grab lunch at a local restaurant before continuing the journey to Varadero. After check-in, enjoy a leisurely dinner at the hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6 - Varadero – Havana

After breakfast, depart for Casa Dupont (also known as Xanadu), the former estate of American millionaire Irene Dupont, for a lecture on Dupont family history courtesy of a local guide. Then, visit a local craft market in the heart of Varadero, where artists and vendors will share their experiences of launching a privately run store. Continue to the city of Matanzas where you'll see the Plaza de la Libertad, then head to the Triolet Pharmacy, opened in 1879. Discover instruments once used to make medications and interact with museum staff. Following lunch at the Hotel Velasco, depart for Havana and a visit to the Havana Club Rum Foundation, housed in the Rum Museum of Havana. After a local guide explains the production of the legendary
Havana Club Rum, you’ll experience it for yourself during a 7-year old Havana Club Rum tasting. Next, visit locals’ homes to learn about life as an independent artist in Cuba. After hotel check-in, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 7 - Havana**

After breakfast at the hotel, attend a morning exchange with healthcare professionals at a clinic to learn about Cuba’s healthcare system. The medical staff will explain why Cuba’s healthcare system is considered the best in Latin America. Then, visit Finca la Vigia, the former home of Ernest Hemingway, where a local expert will share stories of Hemingway’s time in Cuba between 1939 and 1960. Travel to nearby Finca Yoandra, a family-owned, urban farm that is a perfect example of organic cultivation practices in Cuba. Then, enjoy a cooking demonstration and lunch at Il Divino restaurant. Meet with local and community artists at the Muraleando community project and experience its murals, paintings, sculptures, gardens and vibrant community center, all created by neighborhood residents. Sip cocktails in the backyard bar overlooking the Malecón (boardwalk) at Hotel National, followed by a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 8 - Havana - Depart Cuba**

Enjoy a final breakfast at the hotel before check-out. On the way to the Havana Airport, stop at the Fuster’s House and Art Gallery to learn about this community project in Jaimanitas. Proceed to Havana Airport for departure.

Meals Included: Breakfast

**Tour Includes:**
- Welcome briefing
- Accommodations in Havana, 4 nights
- Accommodations in Cayo Santa Maria, 2 nights
- Accommodations in Varadero, 1 night
- 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 7 dinners and 2 beverages per meal
- Full-time Tour Director services
- Local English-speaking guide services & gratuities
- All ground transportation in Cuba
- Full program of activities as indicated on itinerary
- Two bottles of water per person per day
- Cuban Visa (Tourist Card)
- Medical Insurance in Cuba (excluding pre-existing conditions)
- Taxes & gratuities for accommodations, activities and meals
Not Included:
- Accommodations before or after the tour
- Meals not listed on itinerary
- Additional beverages
- Personal expenses
- Housekeeping gratuities
- Hotel extras (ex. phone/internet service)
- Tour director gratuities

Other Information:
- 8 days/7 nights
- U.S. credit and debit cards are not accepted. You MUST bring cash for expenses not included in your tour package.
- It is recommended that you bring or wear light casual clothing, comfortable walking shoes, camera, sunglasses, sunscreen, bug spray and a hat
- Bring all personal necessities including medications (supplies may be limited)
- Program activities are subject to change without notice