

# EXPEDITIONS

## ITINERARY

### Cuba: Discovering Its People and Culture

January 3 – 11, 2016

**As explained in the Expedition Planner, we do our best to adhere to the itinerary listed below. However, in Cuba, changes, sometimes significant, are likely to occur to the itinerary and often with very little notice.**

The order of activities, the time of events, the activities themselves, the speakers scheduled, and even the hotels and restaurants currently confirmed may change. The exact time for each activity will be announced by your expedition staff throughout your trip. We ask that you pay careful attention to daily announcements by your expedition staff to ensure that we are able to keep everyone informed.

With this in mind, we ask that you are highly flexible and understanding of changes to our scheduled program. Approaching your trip to Cuba with a sense of adventure, humor, and flexibility will make for the best possible experience. For the benefit of the group, please be prompt for all activities.

*\* Itinerary Modification Note for Cienfuegos, January 8: Please note that some activities on this day have been modified from the originally published itinerary scheduled to visit the Topes de Collantes nature reserve and surrounding mountainous area, as well as an eco-village, in the countryside outside of Cienfuegos. We have determined that the people-to-people encounters, along with operational factors, do not provide the most valuable or suitable experience for our guests at this time. Instead, the updated itinerary that day reflects our activities in and around Cienfuegos that National Geographic travelers have enjoyed on our programs in recent years.*

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### January 3

#### Miami, U.S./Havana, Cuba

Meet this morning at 6:30 a.m. at the **Miami International Airport Concourse D**, in front of the Nathan's Famous, to check in for our 9:30 a.m. group flight to Havana. Meet your National Geographic Expert, Juan Valdes, and Expedition Leader, Sylvia Griffin.

Please arrive dressed in comfortable clothes and shoes for walking, with a daypack containing sunglasses, camera, any prescription medications, etc. Please make sure to have your passport and visa in hand to depart the U.S. and to enter Cuba.

Arrive in Havana at approximately 10:30 a.m. After claiming your luggage and clearing customs, visit *Finca Yolandra*, an *organopónico* (urban organic farm) on the outskirts of Havana, that also serves as a restaurant and community project. Meet with a local farmer to learn about urban gardening in Cuba, the growing agrarian movement, and Cuban cuisine. Enjoy lunch at the restaurant, *Il Divino*.

Then, visit the community art project of *Muraleando* and witness how artists, dancers, and musicians have been changing a downtrodden neighborhood into a haven of self-expression. Hear the story of their project and talk with the community's leaders and members.

Transfer to the hotel, the *Parque Central*, with time to settle in and exchange money.

Meet at 6:00 p.m. for an informational program briefing and welcome reception before heading out to our welcome dinner at a privately owned restaurant (known as a *paladar*), *Atelier*.

*Hotel Parque Central*

Lunch, Dinner

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**January 4**

**Havana**

Meet at 8:30 a.m. for a talk with Miguel Coyula, renowned architect, urban planner, and community development specialist from the UNEAC Commission on the City, Culture, and Architecture. The architecture of Havana is astounding in its breadth and elegance, yet years of neglect have left many building in need of restoration. Learn about the successes and challenges facing Havana's effort to preserve its architectural and cultural heritage.

Then set out on a walking tour of Old Havana with your National Geographic Expert and Cuban guide, viewing the beautiful Spanish colonial architecture. Meet local artists, shop owners, and workers as you explore the four main plazas. Visit a graphic prints workshop, as well as a *bodega* (ration shop) to learn about the system for guaranteeing all Cubans access to state-subsidized basic commodities.

Have lunch at *Ivan Justo*, a *paladar* located in Old Havana.

This afternoon, visit *Yoruba Museum*, a museum and research institution dedicated to Afro-Cuban history. After a guided tour of the institution's African art collection, meet with local Afro-Cuban filmmakers for a short film screening and discussion of race relations and other issues in Cuba.

After returning to the hotel, gather at 6:00 p.m. for a talk by Juan Valdes: "Ser Cubano/ On Being Cuban."

Enjoy dinner tonight at *La Moneda Cubana*, located in Old Havana, just off of Cathedral Plaza.

After dinner, you will have the opportunity to enjoy a special musical performance at *Café Taberna*. Musicians that frequently sit in at the sessions here have included those from the Buena Vista Social Club.

*Hotel Parque Central*

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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**January 5**

**Havana**

This morning, visit a *fábrica de tabaco* (tobacco factory) to meet with cigar experts and rollers to learn about the role that tobacco has played in Cuban history.

Then, engage in a specially arranged question-and-answer session with a Cuban economist and/or sociologist to discuss topics of interest such as Raul Castro's economic and political reforms, social issues, women's rights, and education.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, *El Aljibe*, visit the sports stadium where the Cuban Baseball Hall of Fame was established to explore the historical and political importance of baseball in Cuba with local sports journalists.

Later, meet the instructors and students at La Colmenita, an after-school program center that uses song and dance as a social development tool. Enjoy a performance by the students followed by an open discussion with the instructors to learn more about the center and its impact.

Depart at 7:30 p.m. for dinner at a local paladar, *Elite*.

*Hotel Parque Central*

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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**January 6**

**Havana/Cienfuegos**

Depart Havana this morning and drive three hours southeast to Cienfuegos, enjoying the scenery and learning about rural life in Cuba. Have lunch at *Club Cienfuegos*, an old yacht club—and a remarkable example of Beaux Art architecture—that has been converted into a restaurant.

After lunch, visit the Benny Moré Art School, where gifted students from throughout the province take classes in music, dance, and the visual arts.

Then embark on a guided walking tour of Cienfuegos, a port city with architecture that reflects its French colonial roots. Visit the statue commemorating José Martí, a renowned author and a leader in Cuba's quest for independence from Spain, and engage with local *cuentapropistas* (independent business owners) on Cienfuegos' main commercial street.

Later that afternoon, gather with local athletes to further discuss the role that sports play in Cuban culture.

Return to the hotel and gather for a talk by Juan Valdes: "Cuba as mapped in the pages of National Geographic."

Dinner tonight is at *Los Laureles*, located in the gardens of the *Palacio de Valle*, overlooking this architectural masterpiece of Moorish, Gothic, and baroque styles. After dinner, there will be an opportunity to get to know residents of a typical neighborhood in Cienfuegos.

*Hotel Jagua*

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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**January 7**

**Trinidad**

Depart Cienfuegos at 8:00 a.m. to travel along the Caribbean coast to Cuba's best-preserved colonial city, Trinidad, founded in 1514 and now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Meet for an educational exchange with a representative of the Office of the City Historian to hear about the city's preservation efforts and challenges. Admire the Colonial Spanish architecture as you then set off along Trinidad's cobblestoned streets, pausing at colorful pastel-colored houses along the way to meet artisans, antiques collectors, and longtime residents who have transformed their historic homes into *casa particulares* (guesthouses).

After lunch at *Nueva Era*, a local *paladar*, continue to engage the local *cuentapropistas* around Trinidad's city center.

This afternoon, pay a visit to Julio Muñoz, a photographer and union representative for the self-employed, whose wife and niece appeared in an October 1999 *National Geographic* magazine article about Trinidad. At his colonial-era house, learn about his private businesses such as his bed-and-breakfast, and hear about his program promoting equine care.

Return to Cienfuegos and enjoy dinner on your own tonight at a local Cienfuegos *paladar*. Your Expedition Leader will provide restaurant recommendations.

*Hotel Jagua*

Breakfast, Lunch

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**January 8**

**Cienfuegos \***

Depart the hotel at 9:00 a.m. to stroll through a former sugar mill complex and interact with the town's present day inhabitants, including teacher and local historian Nancy Robaina, who will inform us about the community's transformation and how it copes in the aftermath of the mill's closure in 2002.

Then, visit the Cienfuegos Botanical Garden (the country's largest of its kind), and walk with a botany expert, who will educate us about Cuba's efforts to maintain the rich biodiversity of its extraordinary plant life.

After lunch at *Casa Verde*, enjoy a musical performance from the Choir of Cienfuegos, followed by a discussion with this world-renowned a cappella group.

Tonight, dinner will be at the *paladar, Casa Prado*.

*Hotel Jagua*

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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**January 9**

**Bay of Pigs/Havana**

This morning, set out for Havana, stopping along the way to visit the historic Bay of Pigs. Trace the dramatic events of the bay's recent past at a small museum, and then step foot on the Playa Girón, one of the two landing sites for the 1961 U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion.

Stop for lunch at *Hostal Enrique* before continuing to *Finca Vigía*, the home of Ernest Hemingway. Meet with the director of the museum and tour the property, learning about Hemingway's strong connection to the Cuban people and the Cuban way of life. Then drive to Old Havana and check into the *Parque Central*.

The remainder of the evening is at leisure. Your Expedition Leader will provide restaurant recommendations.

After dinner, you have the option of heading to the Tropicana for a uniquely Cuban cabaret experience (*please note that the price of the Tropicana is not included in the expedition cost*).

*Hotel Parque Central*

Breakfast, Lunch

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**January 10**

**Havana/Jaimanitas**

This morning, gather for a talk by Juan Valdes: "Making a NGS Reference Map: Cuba".

Then visit the fishing village of Jaimanitas and wander through the fantastical studio and home of ceramic artist José Fuster, known as the "Picasso of Cuba." Stroll down village streets decorated with his mosaics, stopping to interact with neighborhood families along the way. Our hosts will provide lunch amongst Fuster's work.

After lunch, attend a question-and answer session with American author and Havana resident, Marc Frank. Meet with Marc and a Cuban journalist to discuss his recent book, *Cuban Revelations*, and learn about their perspectives on Cuba's past, present, and future.

Tonight, gather for a farewell reception at the hotel before heading out for our farewell dinner at a local *paladar, El Litoral*.

*Hotel Parque Central*

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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**January 11**

**Havana/Miami, U.S.**

This morning, depart for the airport to check in for our 9:30 a.m. group flight back to Miami (scheduled arrival time is 10:30 a.m.).

**Breakfast**