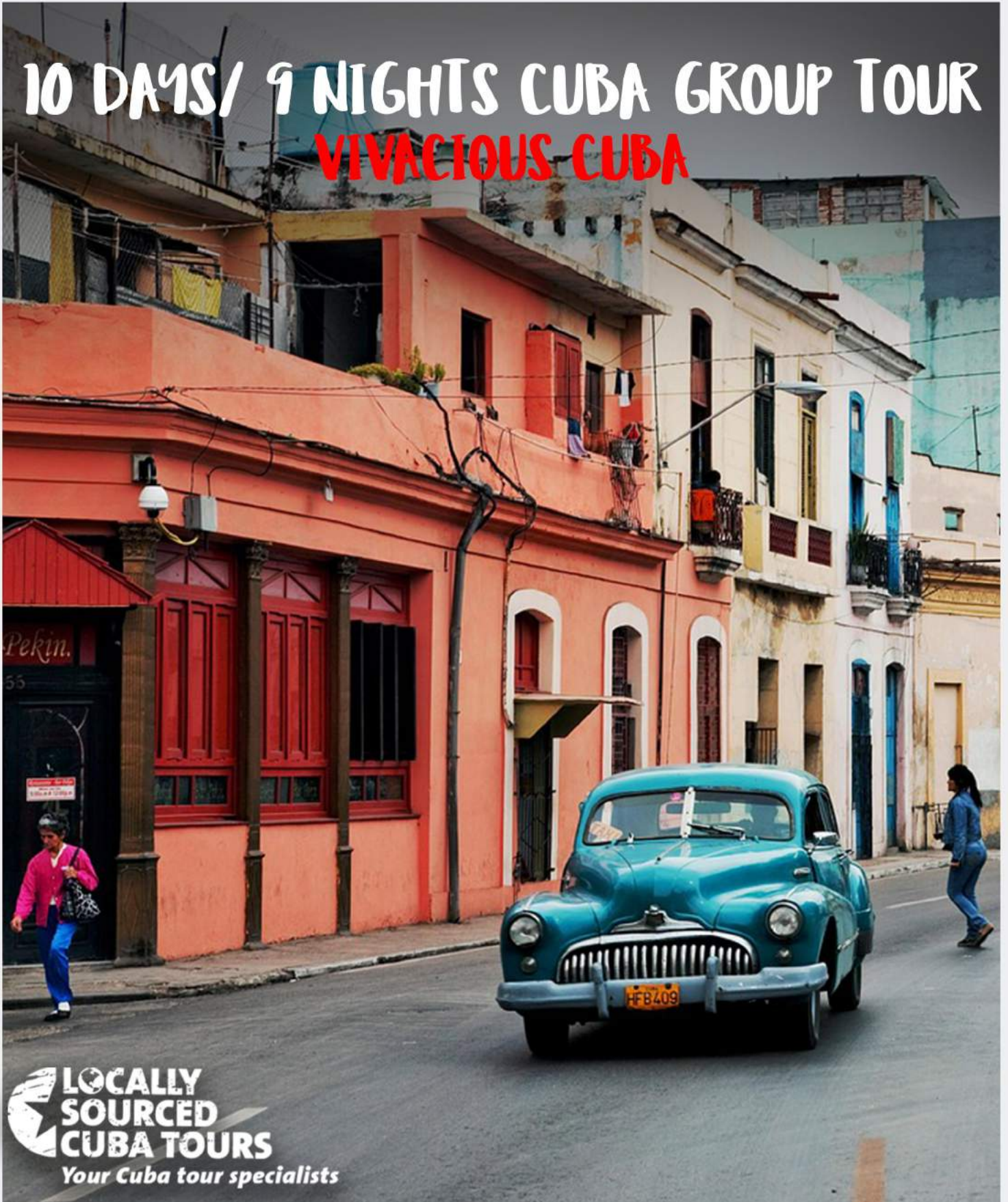


ITINERARY

10 DAYS/ 9 NIGHTS CUBA GROUP TOUR
VIVACIOUS CUBA



**LOCALLY
SOURCED
CUBA TOURS**
Your Cuba tour specialists

INTRODUCTION



How can you sum up a place like Cuba? This is something you will undoubtedly have difficulty with after your 10 day Cuba group tour, since it's a destination that defies classifications. The country has a richness of culture and history, and can be fascinatingly contradictory. It bustles with life, there is always something to see and do (or to eat and drink), and yet is remarkably relaxed. The people of Cuba have an unbreakable spirit, and they (much like their country itself) are going to charm you.

ITINERARY OVERVIEW



The exquisite cultural history of contemporary Cuba will be on proud display over 10 unforgettable days. Your senses will be stimulated as you gain a unique overview as to what makes Cuba so magical. The island nation is in a fascinating state of transition, simultaneously embracing its past while looking towards the future. You can look forward to ambling along the cobblestoned streets of gorgeous Trinidad and discovering the delights of Havana's Old Town. Perhaps you'll be most enchanted by the rustic charm and red-soiled farmland of Viñales. Get ready, because 10 days of pure joy are about to begin. Bienvenida! Cuba welcomes you with open arms.

YOUR 10 DAY CUBA GROUP TOUR WILL UNFOLD AS FOLLOWS

- ★ **Day One: Tour arrival day in Havana**
- ★ **Day Two: Cienfuegos via Bay of Pigs**
- ★ **Day Three: Trinidad via Santa Clara**
- ★ **Day Four: Trinidad**
- ★ **Days Five and Six: Viñales**
- ★ **Day Seven: Havana**
- ★ **Days Seven, Eight and Nine: Havana**

Cuba is finally embracing the concept of private enterprise, and so all of our group tours are dedicated to supporting the Cuban people. This involves utilising the services of carefully selected, privately owned small businesses across Cuba.

The tour itinerary is arranged in a way that introduces you to the local Cuban people, steering funds towards its citizens in a manner that adds to the prosperity of the country. On our group tours you will stay in Casa Particulares (privately run Cuban B&B's) and eat at Paladares (privately run restaurants). You will also have the chance to interact with Cubans from all walks of life, listening to their stories, and sharing your own.



SUPPORTING THE CUBAN PEOPLE

U.S. TRAVEL TO CUBA

This document represents a full-time itinerary of activities compliant with the General License pursuant to Federal Register Vol. 80, No. 11 issued November 9, 2017 on behalf of the Department of the Treasury of Foreign Assets Control 31 CFR Part 515 Cuban Assets Control Regulations 515.574 Support for the Cuban People. No financial transactions have taken place with entities or subentities associated with the "Cuba Restricted List". In addition to this itinerary, and in accordance with CFR Part 501 Subpart C 501.601 and 501.602, the booking receipt, airline receipt, and any supplemental insurance purchased will also be retained and available for examination for at least five years after the completion of travel.

Please note that U.S. travelers are required to engage in a full-time schedule of activities that result in meaningful interaction with individuals in Cuba and must not include free time or recreation in excess of that consistent with a full-time schedule (8 hours per day including meals and transportation). When there is scheduled free time in the itinerary, U.S. travelers will have activities available to them that are approved to "Support the Cuban People" including eating at privately-owned Cuban restaurants (paladares), shopping at privately-owned stores run by self-employed Cubans (cuentapropista), visiting with your Casa Particular host or Cuban guide to learn about Cuban culture, or visiting with Cuban entrepreneurs launching their privately-owned businesses.

TOUR SUMMARY TABLE

Your Cuba group tour runs for 10 days and 9 nights, including 9 x breakfasts, 1 x lunch and 1 x dinner towards the end of the tour. There will also be an airport transfer upon arrival.

The group size can range from 2 to 15 participants, staying in Casa Particulares.

There are a vast array of optional activities and excursions to be enjoyed on all our Cuba group tours, and this is in addition to the following inclusions. Your 10 day Cuba tour includes:

- ★ GUIDED ORIENTATION WALKS AT EACH DESTINATION VISITED
- ★ SWIM/ SNORKEL – BAY OF PIGS
- ★ MUSEUM GIRON - PLAYA GIRON
- ★ 1 x DRINK AT THE PALACIO DE VALLE - CIENFUEGOS
- ★ CHE GUEVARA MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM - SANTA CLARA
- ★ INFORMAL SALSA LESSON - TRINIDAD OR VINALES
- ★ TOBACCO FARM AND DRYING HOUSE - VINALES
- ★ LUNCH AT A ORGANIC FARM - VINALES
- ★ CITY TOUR IN A CONVERTIBLE CLASSIC CAR - HAVANA
- ★ MOJITO MAKING CLASS - HAVANA
- ★ ROOF-TOP FAREWELL DINNER - HAVANA
- ★ RUM MUSEUM - HAVANA
- ★ PARTAGAS CIGAR FACTORY - HAVANA
- ★ VISIT CALLEJON DE HAMEL - HAVANA
- ★ OLD HAVANA WALKING TOUR - HAVANA

Naturally, there are also a range of optional activities and excursions you can enjoy on your 10 day Cuba group tour.

Meals included: Breakfasts, 1 x lunch, 1 x dinner

DURATION

10 Days with 9 Nights Accommodation Included



SMALL SINGLE SUPPLEMENT FEE

Your own private room for a small extra charge on our 10 day Cuba group tour.



LOCAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING GUIDE

A passionate, local, English-speaking guide to show you the Cuba they love, and hope you fall in love with



B+B ACCOMMODATION

Casa Particulares/ B&B's/ Guesthouses - a cultural experience unique to Cuba. Ensuite facilities and air-conditioning whenever possible



GROUP SIZE

2 - 15 people



GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

We only need two people booked on a group tour, to guarantee its departure



PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION

Private air-conditioned transportation between destinations



AIRPORT TRANSFER

We include your airport transfer on arrival



STAYING IN CASA PARTICULARES

A mainstay in the Cuban accommodation industry, Casa Particulares (Casa's) are the Cuban equivalent of a bed and breakfast. Casa's offer a taste of authentic Cuban life as you are essentially staying in a family home, in specially designated guest rooms. You'll have your privacy while still being able to interact with the locals as much as you want during your stay.



*B,L,D denotes breakfasts, lunches and dinners included.

*Please note that the map is for illustration purposes only and does not indicate the path you will follow across Cuba or the type of transportation included.

IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

OFFERING AN ABUNDANCE OF FREEDOM AND THE FLEXIBILITY TO TRAVEL AT YOUR OWN PACE, THIS INTIMATE TOUR COMES WITH A LOCAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING LOCAL GUIDE WHO WILL BE WITH YOU AT EACH STAGE OF YOUR JOURNEY. SOME OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW:



Casa Particulares are family-run businesses which are set-up to provide B&B style accommodation to foreigners – a unique cultural experience. Casa Particulares are generally of a higher standard than normal Cuban dwellings but can be more basic than foreigners are used to. It is important to remember that each room at a Casa is unique in its size and set-up. Whether you stay in a hotel or Casa, sometimes power cuts and breaks in hot water are unavoidable in any developing country, although it's not a regular occurrence in Cuba.

Part of the experience of traveling through Cuba is experiencing Cuban resourcefulness. Spare parts for vehicles and appliances are often difficult and cost-prohibitive to come by, so don't be surprised if you notice that Cuban ingenuity has been used to keep various things working.

Access to the internet in Cuba is rapidly expanding but can still be variable, slow and unreliable. It is also relatively expensive to get online at a hotel or one of the various Wifi zones that have been set-up across the country. Traveling through Cuba offers a great opportunity to take a break from your electronic devices and have a truly relaxing experience.

Cuba is a unique travel destination and this is one of the many things that make it so popular. It's part of the 'laid back Caribbean' and things don't always go to plan or schedule. A great sense of humour and patience are qualities that will go a long way in making your stay in Cuba an enjoyable one. Just go with the flow!



ESTIMATED TRAVEL TIMES

A relaxed pace of life is quintessentially Cuban, so while you will be taken from destination to destination at an efficient and safe pace, you will never feel rushed. On a longer journey we will of course stop for lunch, refreshments, a chance to stretch your legs, and to take a closer look at the beautiful countryside you'll be pacing through. The approximate travel times are as follows:

- ★ From Havana to Cienfuegos (via Bay of Pigs): 5 hours
- ★ From Cienfuegos to Trinidad (via Santa Clara): 3 hours
- ★ From Trinidad to Viñales: 7 to 8 hours
- ★ From Viñales to Havana: 3 hours



FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

In order to fully enjoy your 10 day Cuba group tour, you will need an average level of fitness and mobility. Group travel can potentially be more demanding than a more conventional holiday. You should be able to walk without assistance from another person, climb flights of stairs in buildings without elevators, safely step on or off the tour bus (and other forms of transport), and carry your own luggage.

YOUR DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

DAY 1: HAVANA

It doesn't matter what time your flight touches down on day one, as there are no activities planned. You'll probably want to familiarise yourself with your joining accommodation and get to know the surrounding area. ATMs aren't always so easy to find in Cuba, so you might want to use the machine at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport (HAV). There's one in the arrivals lounge (along with a currency exchange office), and there's a second machine upstairs in the departures area. Your airport transfer on arrival is included as part of your tour with us, so we will have a representative at the airport, waiting to greet you and transport you to your joining accommodation. You can expect a travel time of around 20 to 30 minutes, and you might want to tip the driver an additional two or three CUC for good service. It can be helpful to have the address of your joining hotel or casa particular to give to the driver.





Havana fizzes with life, her buoyant, joyous energy is infectious, and it's a stunning start to your 10 day Cuba group tour. After a rather turbulent several centuries, Havana has settled into a rhythm that just seems to work. After the collapse of the USSR, a lot of the international aid that Cuba relied upon simply disappeared, and this was the catalyst for the country to recognise its own attributes and open itself open to tourism in a way that hadn't been seen for decades. Upon arrival, you will want to get out and about to explore the city, and this bustling city never feels overwhelming.

While a walk around Havana's Old Town will have your eyes bulging with excitement (it's said that daily life in the Cuban capital resembles street theatre), just to the west you will find the gritty working class district of Centro Habana (a picture of ruined, yet haunting beauty), and the comparably well-heeled districts of Vedado and Miramar. All these pieces come together to form modern Havana in all her glory and contradictions. There's a true cultural wealth in the city, with realms of museums and cultural spaces. Havana is a city that literally dances, and you can enjoy virtuoso ballet, Afro Cuban dance, flamenco, jazz and timba. The Cuban dining scene was rather fairly reviled for many decades, but this is changing at a rate that is nothing less than astounding.



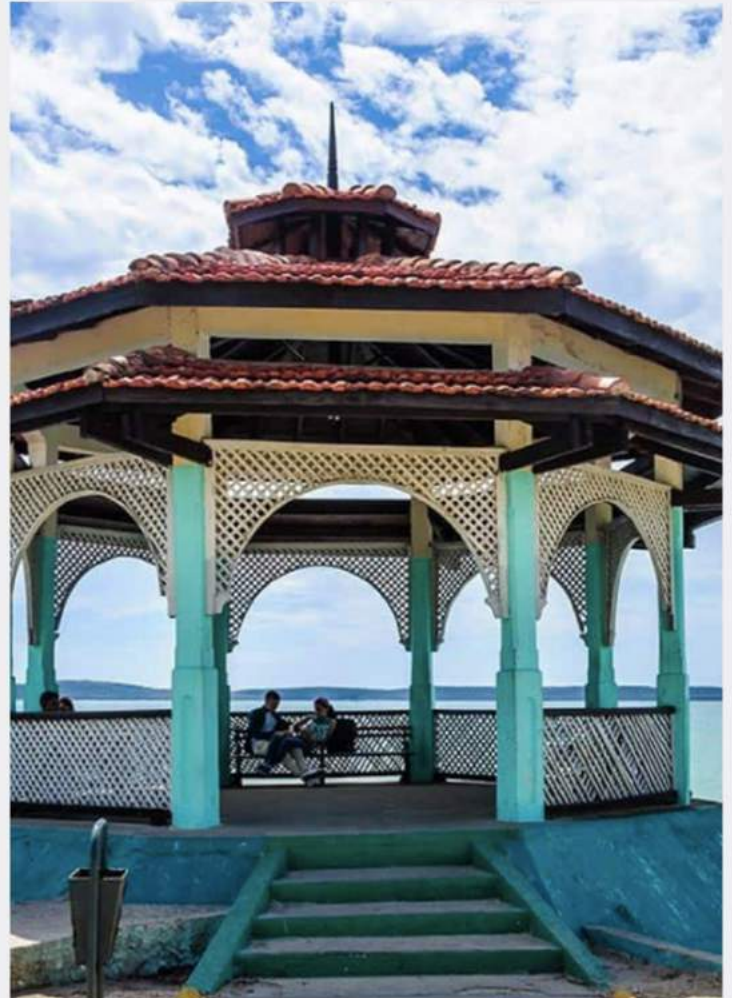
The government eased the once tight restrictions when it came to operating a private business, and new restaurants are expanding Havana's culinary borders with innovation and aplomb. Depending on your time of arrival, you can even join your guide and fellow tour group members for dinner in a gorgeous setting - an authentic Cuban Paladar (privately operated restaurant) close to your hotel or casa particular.



DAY 2: CIENFUEGOS VIA BAY OF PIGS

Your guide will meet you first thing in the morning, and then it's time to set off on your Cuban odyssey. Travelling in comfortable private transportation, you will arrive at your first destination in two to three hours. The Bay of Pigs/Playa Girón has a certain infamy due to its association with the USA's first military failure in Latin America. The military machinations that took place on this very spot are but a distant memory, far removed from the stunning natural beauty on display, with cave systems, coral formations and an abundance of sea life making it a must for snorkelers, divers and ocean lovers alike. You will enjoy a sumptuous lunch at a local Paladar, before setting off on the second stage of today's journey. It only takes approximately 1.5 hours before you arrive in Cienfuegos.

This pearl of a city (it has in fact been dubbed the Pearl of the Caribbean) demonstrates many of the cultural influences that have shaped contemporary Cuba. Many of the city's early settlers were French, generally coming from other French territories in the New World. Of course your guide will take you on a detailed tour of the city with its grand, crumbling architecture, culminating in a relaxing cocktail.



The grandness of Cienfuegos is fascinatingly contrasted by one of the city's more unexpected pleasures - the Palacio de Valle, which seems to have taken Arabian Nights as its inspiration. This upscale restaurant dates back to 1917, and it's a tremendous (and indeed, amusing) sight to behold.

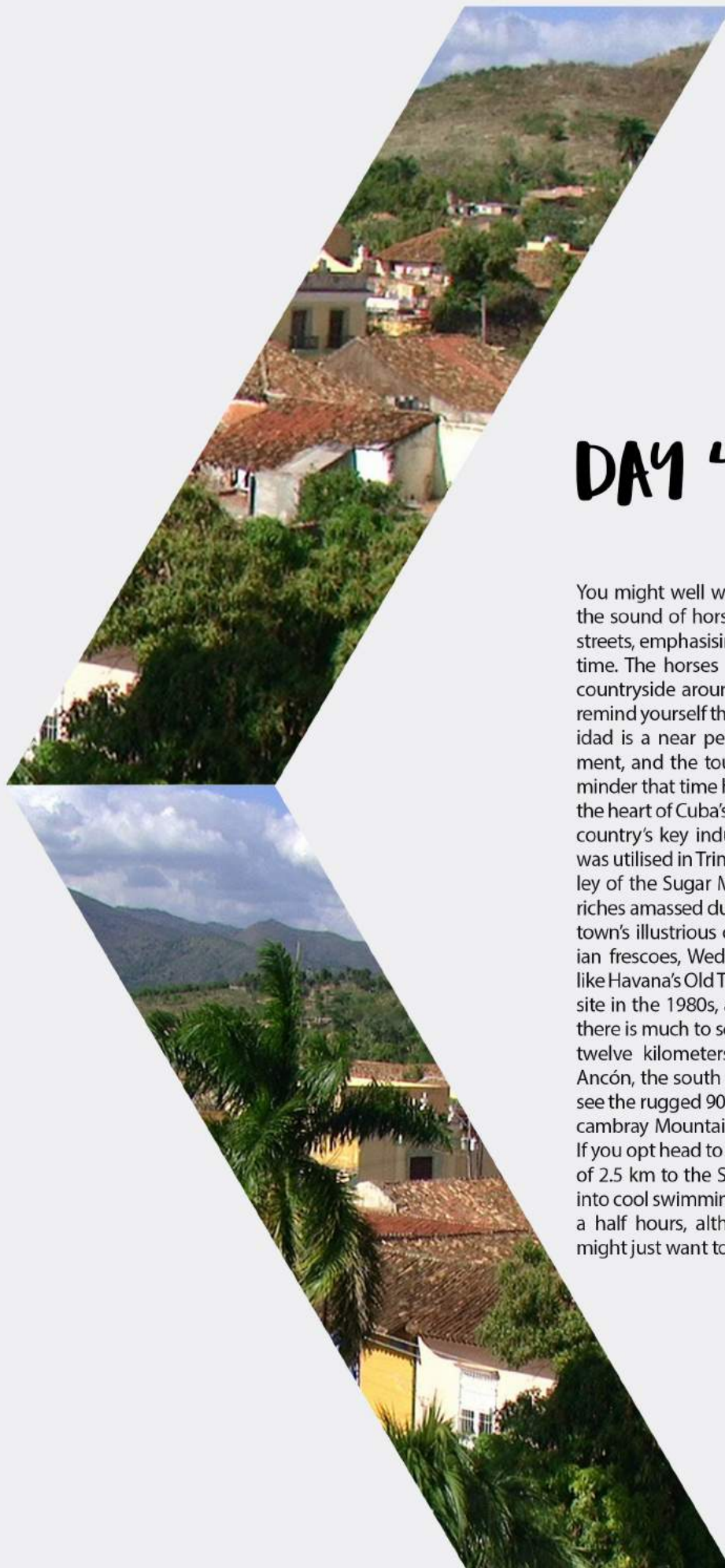
Something to look forward to tonight - it's your first time staying at a Casa Particular outside of Havana. You might find this to be a truly memorable part of your Cuban experience. You are welcomed into a local Cuban's home and are made to feel like one of the family. It varies, but many of these authentic homestay experiences can accommodate between six and ten guests. Our carefully selected Casas are all conveniently located in a central location at each destination. The rooms are well cared for, and there's always a group area and/or veranda to relax in and meet other travellers. You can also take full advantage of the proprietor's insider knowledge and can help to arrange any activities or excursions in the area. It's a truly authentic experience, providing an unbeatable level of service and attention in a supremely comfortable setting. After you have settled in, you can your guide and fellow tour group members for an evening cocktail.





DAY 3: TRINIDAD VIA SANTA CLARA

You'll start the day with a hearty Cuban breakfast before setting off to a place that pays homage to Cuba's best-known adopted son - the Che Guevara Memorial and Museum. This is where the remains of this hero of the Cuban Revolution were interned after decades in a lonely, unmarked grave in Bolivia where he died. Here you will learn about how Guevara played a pivotal role in the demise of the dictator Batista and the rise of Fidel Castro, a turning point in the Cuban revolution. After time to explore and reflect, it's time to hit the road again, voyaging to the favourite destination of many a traveler to Cuba. The town of Trinidad was founded in 1514 by Diego Velázquez and is considered a jewel in Cuban colonial architecture. Many people are struck by how the town feels like a living museum, seemingly stuck in the era of Cuba's first War of Independence (one of the many struggles that shaped the nation). The relatively small size of the town is deceptive, since Trinidad has a vibrancy that will take your breath away. You will have almost two full days to explore the town and its lush surroundings. After your induction walk around the town, your guide will make a number of suggestions as to the best optional activities to do at this time of year.



DAY 4: TRINIDAD

You might well wake up on your first morning in Trinidad to the sound of horses clip-clopping along the narrow cobbled streets, emphasising the feeling that you have stepped back in time. The horses of Trinidad are often used for treks in the countryside around the town. It can take a few moments to remind yourself that you are in fact still in the 21st century. Trinidad is a near perfect example of preserved colonial settlement, and the tourists milling around are about the only reminder that time has in fact moved on. The town flourished as the heart of Cuba's sugar production, which remains one of the country's key industries, albeit under a different model that was utilised in Trinidad. The adjacent Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills) was a source of great wealth, with the riches amassed during the early 19th century on display in the town's illustrious colonial-style mansions bedecked with Italian frescoes, Wedgwood china and French chandeliers. Just like Havana's Old Town, Trinidad was declared a World Heritage site in the 1980s, and in addition to the Valle de los Ingenios, there is much to see just beyond the town's boundaries. Some twelve kilometers to the south lies platinum-blond Playa Ancón, the south coast's best beach, while 18km to the north you'll see the rugged 90 km-long north the Sierra del Escambray (Escambray Mountains) loom dramatically over the countryside. If you opt head to the hills to explore, there's a convenient hike of 2.5 km to the Salto del Caburní, a 62m waterfall cascading into cool swimming holes. This is round trip of around two and a half hours, although if the mountains don't appeal, you might just want to spend time by the beach.

Playa Ancon is a stunning ribbon of white beach on the shoreline of the luminous Sancti Spiritus region, considered (with good reason) to be the best beach on Cuba's southern coast. The beach is less than 15 minutes from Trinidad by car, or if you so desire, around 40 minutes on a bike.

Your time in Trinidad would not be complete without at least one evening sitting on the steps outside the Casa de la Musica. Every night the area beside the Cathedral in Plaza Mayor (Trinidad's main square) come alive with a live 'Salsa' band. Entrance is free, the music and atmosphere is great, the mojitos are cheap, and what's more... you get one of the most beautiful starry skies thrown in for nothing! Don't forget to take advantage of the included informal salsa lesson in Trinidad. These lessons are suitable for all skill levels and are a whole lot of fun!





DAY 5: VIÑALES

The sixth day of your Cuba tour sees you hitting the road and making your way from Trinidad to the dramatic limestone pin-cushion hills of the Pinar del Rio province and the rural town of Viñales. This veritable definition of a sleepy village is set in a beautiful, lush valley, and it's arguably one of the most breathtaking locations in the entire country. The rare and dramatic pin-cushion hills that draw the eye are karst hill formations, also known as mogotes. The plains between the mogotes are rich and fertile, and Viñales sits in the heart of Cuba's prime tobacco growing region. Much like Trinidad, Viñales feels like a part of Cuba that has been untouched by modernity, and as you near the town you will see farmers working the fields with oxen and ploughs as they tend the tobacco crops whose destiny it is to be rolled into a sublime Cuban cigar. To call it a relaxed pace of life is an understatement here, and Viñales is a wonderfully traditional settlement that occupies one of Cuba's most beautiful natural corners

You will revel in the hospitality on display, and chances are that you'll be eating more than your fair share of fresh, locally-grown fruit. Ask your guide about the numerous outdoor activities available to you. The views are stunning, the locals are charming, the nightlife is surprising - all these things come together to ensure that your stay in Viñales will be a memorable one.



DAY 6: VIÑALES

After breakfast, your guide will take you on orientation walk around the Viñales township, concluding with a sumptuous lunch on an organic farm. There is one key crop grown in these parts. Even if you're not a smoker, you will be enchanted to learn about the local tobacco growing process. Your guide will take you to a tobacco plantation, including a fully operating secadero (drying house) in which tobacco leaves are cured from February to May. You'll come away with a thorough understanding of the process, with staff on hand to detail the journey from leaf to cigar. You will also have the option to undertake a guided walk of the surrounding farmland of Viñales.

Viñales is the perfect opportunity to experience the 'real' Cuba - away from the crowds.



DAY 7: HAVANA

It's a fairly short drive from Viñales back into the Cuban capital, with a stunning view to enjoy along the way. Watch as the rural plains of the countryside give way to the urban hustle and bustle of Havana. There will be more driving this afternoon, but it's probably something you've been waiting for. Your guide will take you on a tour of greater Havana in a classic car. This allows you to see the different sides of the city, giving you a greater understanding of all the parts that combine to make Havana. The estimates vary, but there are around 60,000 pre-1960 vehicles still proudly prowling Cuba's streets. This number is down from around 150,000 vehicles before the US slapped a trade embargo on Cuba, but of course, some of them have had to retire over the decades. This iconic mode of transport is the perfect way to see wider Havana and a very different side of the city. Here you will be chauffeured around some of the most famous areas of Havana including New Havana, Old Havana, the affluent neighbourhood of Miramar and the famous cemetery of Colon.

And later in the day, we'll take you to a special rooftop terrace in Havana's Old Town that makes a sublime mojito (or a non-alcoholic alternative). You'll be taught how to make a classic Cuban cocktail before enjoying a scrumptious dinner with your group and guide, with an unbeatable view over the rooftops of the city.



DAY 8: HAVANA

Your guide will meet you after breakfast on day eight, and then it's time to hit the streets for a walking tour of Havana's Old Town. One of the best-preserved old towns in the former New World, the streets are lined with colonial architecture, 16th century fortresses and countless churches. Your guide will be able to give you advice on what to see and do, but we think you'll want to see the four main squares - the Plaza de Armas, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza San Francisco de Asis and Plaza Vieja. You will also pass by a number of museums including Museo de la Revolución and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

There will be time to take a walk along the city's famous Malecón - a sprawling waterfront esplanade that dates back to 1901. This is the perfect place to soak up the atmosphere of the city and watch the eclectic characters who gather here - a true cross section of the city's residents.

The walking tour will culminate in a visit to Havana's iconic Callejon de Hamel. This is a true surprise in a city that's full of them. While many streets in the Cuban capital are a riot of different colours, the Callejon de Hamel takes it to the extreme. This is where a number of local artists have chosen to live and work. Not content to confine their work to their studios, it has spilled out onto the street, and the Callejon de Hamel is a brilliant sensory overload of street art.



DAY 9: HAVANA

Today gives you the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the delights that Cuba has truly made her own. The Havana Rum Museum is housed in a repurposed colonial mansion, and while it can be fascinating to learn about the history of rum and how it's properly made, you might be more interested in having the chance to taste a few of the beverages on offer.

The next stop is the Partagas Cigar Factory where the mystique behind cigar making will be revealed, allowing you to gain a sense of the significance of these beauties. You will also witness first hand the amount of effort, care and tradition that goes into making these Cuban treasures (even non-smokers will find this tour very interesting).

Later today you might wish to sample some of that Cuban rum in the "real world" by going to one of the best-known bars in the city. El Floridita claims to have invented the daiquiri, and it's a claim you can easily believe when you sample one of their stunning concoctions. This was Ernest Hemingway's preferred watering hole in the city, and there's a life-sized statue of him standing at the bar.



DAY 10: DEPARTURE DAY

Your schedule for the final day will depend on the time of your departure flight, and it's important to arrive at the airport three hours before take-off. If time permits, you'll be able to check off anything in Havana that you still might want to see. The earlier parts of the day should be devoted to seeing as much of Havana as you can (or just sit in a plaza with a Cuban coffee and watch the world go by).

You might wish to see how much time you have to play with on this last day before you need to get to the airport, and then ask your guide about the best activities that can comfortably fit into your schedule. And then it will be time to bid Cuba a fond farewell, until we see you on one of our future tours.

Viva Cuba!

VIVA CUBA



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SOURCED
CUBA TOURS**

Your Cuba tour specialists