

# ITINERARY

10 DAY/ 9 NIGHT PRIVATE CUBA TOUR  
**EXQUISITE CUBA**



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



# INTRODUCTION



The bright Cuban sunlight baths everything in a warm glow. The rich and sweet scent of cigar smoke fills in the air while the seductive beats of salsa music drifts out of the country's bars and will have you tapping your feet whether you want to or not. Then there's the powerful revving of those classic cars accelerating down the street around graffiti dedicated to the revolution. Your Private 10 day Cuba tour will give you an authentic experience that will linger long in the memory.



# INCLUDED ACTIVITIES



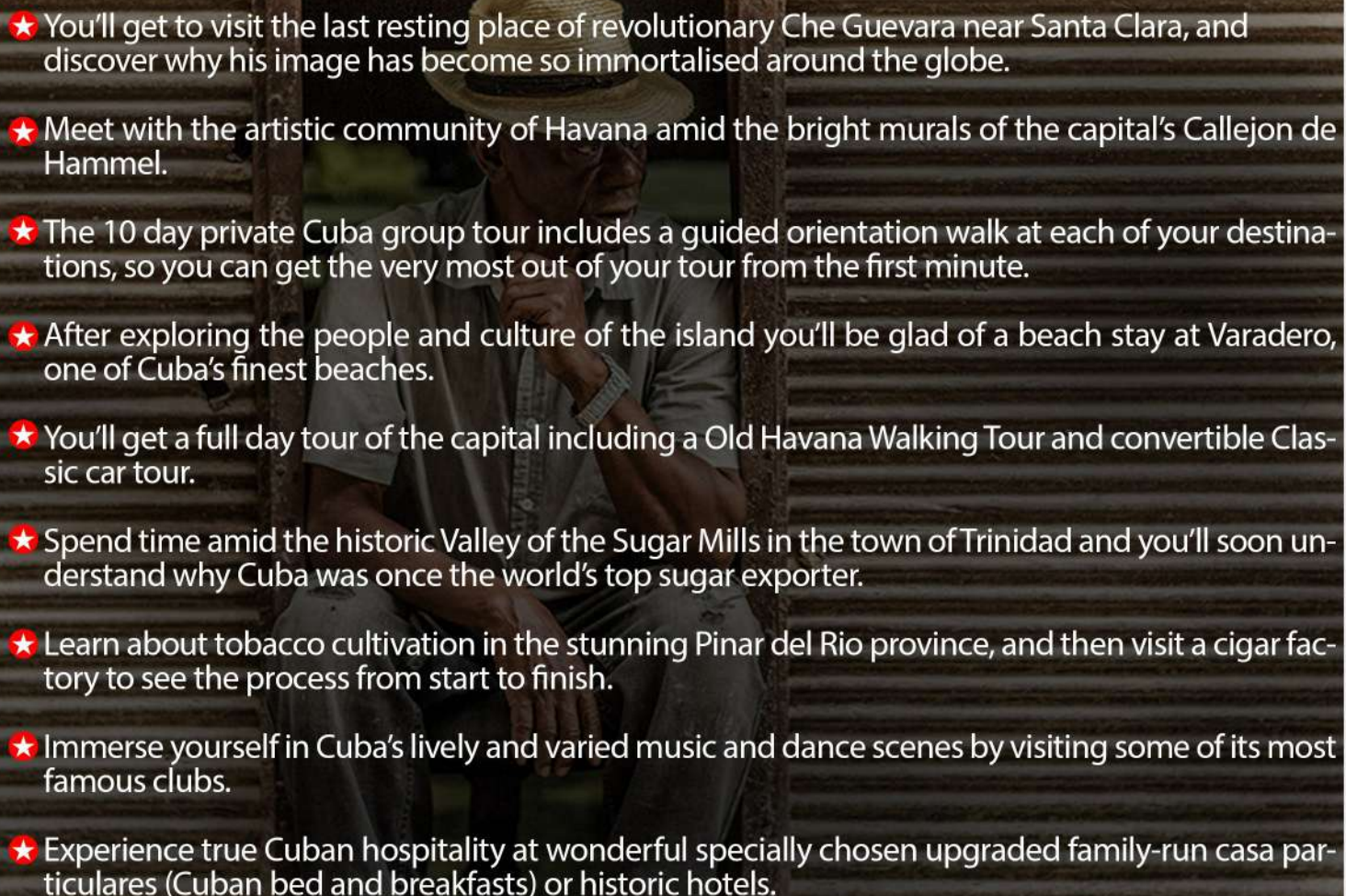
- ★ Guided orientation walk (dependent on arrival time).
- ★ Convertible Classic Car Trip to El Morro Fort and El Cristo de La Habana
- ★ Old Havana Walking Tour.
- ★ Classic Car Havana Tour.
- ★ 1 x drink at Hotel Nacional over-looking Malecon OR Salsa Lesson OR Mojito making lesson.
- ★ Vinales Day Tour with lunch at an organic farm.
- ★ Rum Museum, Cigar Factory and Floridita.
- ★ Museum of the Revolution OR Museum of Fine Arts OR Finca Vigia.
- ★ Callejon de Hamel.
- ★ Cienfuegos Guided City Walk.
- ★ Bay of Pigs Museum.
- ★ Swim/ Snorkel at the Bay of Pigs.
- ★ Che Guevara Memorial (closed on Mondays).
- ★ Trinidad township guided walk including Palacio Cantero, Canchanchara, Palacio Brunet, Plaza Mayor, Museo Romantico, Pottery workshop.
- ★ Casa de la Musica.
- ★ Two options from Playa Ancon, Valley of the Sugar Mills, Salto del Caburní waterfall trek.
- ★ Palenque de los Congos Reales.
- ★ Varadero beach-stay.



# IS THIS TRIP RIGHT FOR YOU?

Our 10 Day Private Cuba Tour is specially designed to show you as much of the island as is possible in the time without the list of destinations and activities becoming exhausting and overbearing. Our local Cuban guides love their country and also adore sharing their wonderful country with you.. A private Cuba tour means that you'll never feel lost in the crowd, allowing you to experience the best of Cuba with a focus on your interests and expectations.

## WHY WE LOVE THIS TRIP

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- A man wearing a straw hat and sunglasses is sitting in front of a wall made of corrugated metal. He is looking down and has his hand near his face. The wall has a rectangular opening through which he is visible.
- ★ You'll get to visit the last resting place of revolutionary Che Guevara near Santa Clara, and discover why his image has become so immortalised around the globe.
  - ★ Meet with the artistic community of Havana amid the bright murals of the capital's Callejon de Hammel.
  - ★ The 10 day private Cuba group tour includes a guided orientation walk at each of your destinations, so you can get the very most out of your tour from the first minute.
  - ★ After exploring the people and culture of the island you'll be glad of a beach stay at Varadero, one of Cuba's finest beaches.
  - ★ You'll get a full day tour of the capital including a Old Havana Walking Tour and convertible Classic car tour.
  - ★ Spend time amid the historic Valley of the Sugar Mills in the town of Trinidad and you'll soon understand why Cuba was once the world's top sugar exporter.
  - ★ Learn about tobacco cultivation in the stunning Pinar del Rio province, and then visit a cigar factory to see the process from start to finish.
  - ★ Immerse yourself in Cuba's lively and varied music and dance scenes by visiting some of its most famous clubs.
  - ★ Experience true Cuban hospitality at wonderful specially chosen upgraded family-run casa particulares (Cuban bed and breakfasts) or historic hotels.





*\*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.*

## TRANSPORTATION

All private transportation is included between destinations and for any activities/ excursions included in your itinerary that require transportation to and from the activity. Any extra transportation requirements can be organised through your Cuban guide and paid for locally in Cuba.

Public transport in Cuba is not for the faint hearted, but this is not something that you'll need to be concerned about as part of our 10 Day Private Cuba tour. That's because you will be driven between destinations in comfort, using private air-conditioned vehicles suitable for the size of your group.

## SPENDING MONEY ON TOUR

A great deal of potential expenses are already covered on your 10 Day Private Cuba Tour, such as private transportation between destinations, airport transfers, and 2 lunches. As a result, you'll only need to consider other expenses, namely meals that are not included, evening drinks, tips and souvenirs for friends and family. You also might want to consider bringing a little extra in case you decide to go on an optional extra excursion or activity. Because of this, we would recommend bringing approximately 50.00 to 60.00 CUC per person, per day. The CUC (Cuban Convertible Peso) is valued 1:1 with the US\$ (not taking into consideration exchange fees or penalties).

# ITINERARY OVERVIEW

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## ESTIMATED TRAVEL TIMES

We won't rush you from place to place like other tours might. We take our lead from the local pace of life for our 10 day Cuba tour, with longer journeys interspersed by lunch stops or time to stretch your legs and take a photograph. The approximate travel times you'll experience are:

**From Havana to Viñales:** 2.5 hours one way

**From Havana to Cienfuegos (via Bay of Pigs):** 5 hours

**From Cienfuegos to Santa Clara:** 1 hour

**Santa Clara to Trinidad:** 1 hour

**From Trinidad to Varadero:** 4 hours

**From Varadero to Havana:** 2 hours



# TOUR ITINERARY

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## DAY 1: HAVANA

Stress-free from beginning to end, we'll have one of our representatives awaiting your arrival at Havana's José Martí International Airport, and will ensure you are successfully transferred from the airport to your joining accommodation in Havana.

You'll get to meet with the family acting as your host at your casa particular bed and breakfast accommodation (or check-in to your hotel). It is here that you will meet your local Cuban guide for your 10 day/ 9 night Private Cuba Tour. They will run through the tour itinerary with you in detail, giving you the chance to ask any burning questions about the itinerary and the country that you may have. As English speaking locals, your guide is very knowledgeable about Cuba and eager for you to make the most of your time here.

Depending on your arrival time, your guide will lead you on an orientation walk of your surrounding area. If you have arrived early enough, your guide will also arrange a classic convertible car to take you to El Morro Fort and El Cristo de La Habana. This is the perfect opportunity to learn a little more about Havana's turbulent history and to take some impressive photos of the city and iconic Malecon as the sun sets. If you arrive too late to do this activity on Day One, it can easily be incorporated into Day Two's schedule.

As evening approaches you can choose to accompany your guide to dinner should you wish, and then perhaps experience Cuba's nightlife for the first time, should you still feel fresh after your journey to Cuba.

'B' denotes breakfast, and 'L' lunch throughout the following itinerary.





## DAY 2: HAVANA FULL DAY TOUR (B, L)

Your guided foray to see Old Havana this morning is on foot, so after your hearty Cuban breakfast we recommend pulling on a pair of good walking shoes. As part of the tour you will visit La Catedral San Cristobal de la Habana (described by the novelist Alejo Carpentier as 'music set in stone') and famous landmarks such as the Palacio de los Marqueses de Aguas Claras (now home to a restaurant) and the Plaza de Armas, complete with a statue of Manuel de Cespedes, one of the leaders of the independence movement. You will also have the opportunity to admire the exteriors of two of Havana's best museums – the Museo de la Revolucion and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

Your Old Havana walking tour continues to take in the Central Park, the Opera House, the Capitol Building, the former Bacardi Building, and the former Presidential Palace. The focal point of the Old Havana Walking Tour will be exploring Old Havana's most beautiful squares - the Plaza San Francisco de Asis, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de Armas, before finishing at Plaza Vieja. Naturally, there will be plenty of opportunities for photos, as well as the chance to sit in the shade with a cooling drink. Lunch is also included today at a authentic family run restaurant that offers traditional local cuisine.

Once you have banished the hunger pangs your guide will take you on a tour of greater Havana in one of the city's iconic classic cars. Due to the US imposed trade embargo, new vehicles have been hard to come by and Cuban's have become experts at keeping the now vintage cars running. This stylish mode of transport is the perfect way to see wider Havana and a very different side of the city. Sit back, relax and be chauffeured around some of the most famous parts of Havana including Havana Vedado, the Malecon, the affluent neighbourhood of Miramar, Revolution Square and the famous cemetery of Colon.

At the end of the Classic Car Havana Tour you have some options available to you. One option is to visit the world-famous Hotel Nacional in Havana Vedado for a drink as you watch the sun set over the Malecón. Alternatively, you have the chance to receive a salsa lesson, or learn how to make the perfect mojito at a roof-top bar in Old Havana.

The rest of the evening is your own, but if you're not sure what to do, your local Cuban guide can make recommendations, bookings and host you if requested. If you are in the mood for a late night, head to The Vixen and the Crow – a smoky jazz club that feels like it belongs in a movie.



## DAY 3: VIÑALES DAY TRIP (B, L)

Viñales is a popular day trip with both Cubans and visitors alike, since it's just a few hour's drive from the hustle and bustle of Havana and offers the perfect respite from the city. A place of deep beauty it is perhaps the quintessential sleepy Cuban village. You'll be able to admire the view from the Los Jasmines look-out.

Your lunch is included once more today, and you're guide will take you to lunch at the Finca Agroecologica El Paraiso, a local organic farm.

Viñales is also a popular spot on our 10 Day Private Cuba Tour, since guests like to see where the country's famed cigars come from. Most of Cuba's cigars are made from the leaves of tobacco plants grown in the fields that surround the town. Your guide will take you on a walking tour of both Viñales township and surrounding farmlands, which you can visit on foot or by bike. You'll get to see the various stages of tobacco cultivation at a tobacco farm, where you'll also receive a tobacco rolling demonstration.

We will also take you on a short five kilometre hop north, where we'll show you the 120m long mural de la prehistoria painted over one of the park's magote hills by artist Leovigildo Gonzalez Morillo situated inside Valle de Viñales National Park close to a network of underground caves and waterways known as the Indian Caves (Cuevas del Indio) used as refuges by runaway slaves escaping the tobacco and sugar plantations in the eighteenth century.

Back in Havana there will be many evening activities to choose from, which can be organised with the support of your local Cuban guide.



## DAY 4: HAVANA (B)

While tourism is vital for the Cuban economy, the country also has profited from its two most famous exports – rum and cigars. On Day Four of your 10 Day Private Cuba Tour you will get up close and personal with these well-known indulgences.

Your guide will pick you up from your accommodation and take you to the Partagas Cigar Factory to learn more about the cultural significance of Cuba's cigars. You'll then visit the Havana Rum Museum, housed in a grand former palace. There are plenty of tastings for the curious, and you can even buy some to take away with you. But if you don't fancy drinking, you'll still get a lot out of this visit.

Not interested in rum or cigars? That's OK. We can arrange a number of other activities this morning including a 'Farm to Table Cooking Experience' or a visit to Havana's local beach – Playas del Este.

After lunch, you have the choice of three different activities for the afternoon. Our first choice is to pay a visit to the Museo de la Revolucion, housed in Batista's presidential palace. While inside you'll see exhibits dedicated to the revolutionary period, behind the building you'll find the Granma yacht which brought Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and his brother Raul (the current Cuban president) to Cuba for the revolution from Mexico. The engine of the U2 American spy plane shot down during the Cuban Missile Crisis is also on display.

Alternatively, your guide can take you to the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes – or Museum of Fine Arts. Established in 1913, the museum displays art from the colonial period of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries right up to more contemporary times.

Finally, you might prefer to visit Hemingway's former residence, Finca Vigia. On the outskirts of the capital, the farm was the Nobel Prize winning American author's home for three decades, and has recently been extensively renovated by the Cuban government. A key part of the author's life, it was here that he wrote both *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Next it will be time to explore Havana's art scene with a visit to Callejon de Hamel, a brightly coloured alleyway in central Havana where many of the city's established and emerging artists work. Your 10 Day Private Cuba Tour allows you to visit various studios and watch the artists at work, and hear them talk about how their country's history has influenced their work.

In the evening, one option is for your guide to arrange tickets and transfers to the Tropicana Cabaret (cost not included in your tour), Cuba's oldest and most prestigious cabaret, set over lush tropical gardens in Havana's Marianao neighbourhood. This iconic venue has been delighting crowds since 1939.



## DAY 5: CIENFUEGOS VIA BAY OF PIGS (B)



The US government back in the early 1960s wasn't too happy when Fidel Castro became President of a communist regime and tried to alter the country's future. The Playa Girón (Spanish for Bay of Pigs) is the location where an army of anti-Castro Cuban exiles with CIA backing gathered, ready to take the country back. They were not successful, as you'll learn when you visit the local museum dedicated to the historical events that took place here, and Castro (now Fidel's brother Raul, remains President).

If the day is warm (and most of them are), you might want to take a dip in the crystal clear oceans of Playa Giron. The water is warm and clear, and the impressive underwater visibility coupled with the abundant underwater life make this a top spot for snorkelling.

Once you've (reluctantly) left the water, it's time to make your way to the city of Cienfuegos.

Cienfuegos was where a number of French migrants made their home in Cuba, both those coming directly from France and others from the then primarily French territories in Louisiana. As a result, Cienfuegos has an obviously French influence, rather than the Spanish influences of most of the rest of the island, and some parts of the city bear a striking resemblance to Paris. The city is also wonderfully well-preserved compared to other Cuban cities, since it was generally bypassed by pirates in favour of larger and more important targets further along the coast.

Your 10 Day Private Cuba Tour includes an exploration of the wide streets and promenade with your guide. Your guided city walk will include the Terry Theater, Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, Ferrer's Palace, former City Hall, Marti Park and the triumphal arch. You'll end the day at the ocean where you'll enjoy a cocktail at the city's Palacio de Valle - a lavish Yacht Club.



## DAY 6: TRINIDAD VIA SANTA CLARA (B)

Santa Clara was the site of the vicious last battle of the Cuban Revolution. Extensively damaged, buildings were replaced in an eclectic style, making for a truly unique cityscape as well as a place of profound beauty.

Given the town's importance to the success of the revolution, it is no surprise the communist authorities decided that the city should become the final resting place of Che Guevara. Bizarrely for such a famous man – whose face is seen on tee-shirts throughout the world – his body was only discovered in 1997, in Bolivia, where he had gone to further the revolutionary cause. Shipped to his adopted home (Guevara was born in Argentina) his purpose built mausoleum and museum is a fitting, if lovingly austere, tribute to one of the heroes of the revolution.

After Santa Clara, your 10 Day Private Cuba Tour will take you to the sun-drenched streets of Trinidad, a living museum stuck in the time of Cuba's first War of Independence when local sugar plantations were devastated by fire. Modern intrusions are a rare sight and it's possible to imagine yourself transported back to that time. Here you have almost two full days to explore Trinidad and its surroundings.

After your guided township walk, your guide will make a number of suggestions regarding the best optional activities to do at the time of your visit. Time seems to have stood still in Trinidad, and you will have plenty of time to fully enjoy this experience. Taking part in a tour of the township, you will see the Cantero, Canchanchara, Palacio Brunet, Plaza Mayor, Museo Romantico, and a pottery workshop among other sights.

You'll return to Plaza Mayor later, since this is where you'll find Trinidad's Casa de la Musica, somewhere to keep salsa dancing until your feet hurt. If you're a bit shy to give salsa a go at first in front of the locals, then consider enjoying a reasonably priced mojito (or two) first to give you some much needed courage!



## DAY 7: TRINIDAD (B)

During your full day in Trinidad you will have the opportunity to choose two out of three options. If you fancy spending some more time on the beach, you can choose to visit Playa Ancon beach, either by taxi or by bicycle. This beautiful ribbon of white sand on the Sancti Spiritus iridescent Caribbean shoreline is often touted, with good reason, to be the finest arc of beach on Cuba's southern coast. It is a fantastic place to slip into your swimming costume and take to the azure blue waters.

Alternatively, you might opt for our cultural exploration of the Valley of the Sugar Mills, a valley near Trinidad that was once the focal point of Cuba's sugar production. The panoramic views of the Valle de Los Ingenios, as it is known in Spanish, lead to dozens of disused sugar mills in the area, including plantation houses, slave quarters and even wonderful towers. It's an eerie experience to walk amongst the remains and imagine what life was like here when Cuba was the world's largest producer of the sweet stuff, powered almost entirely by slave labour brought across the Atlantic Ocean from West Africa.

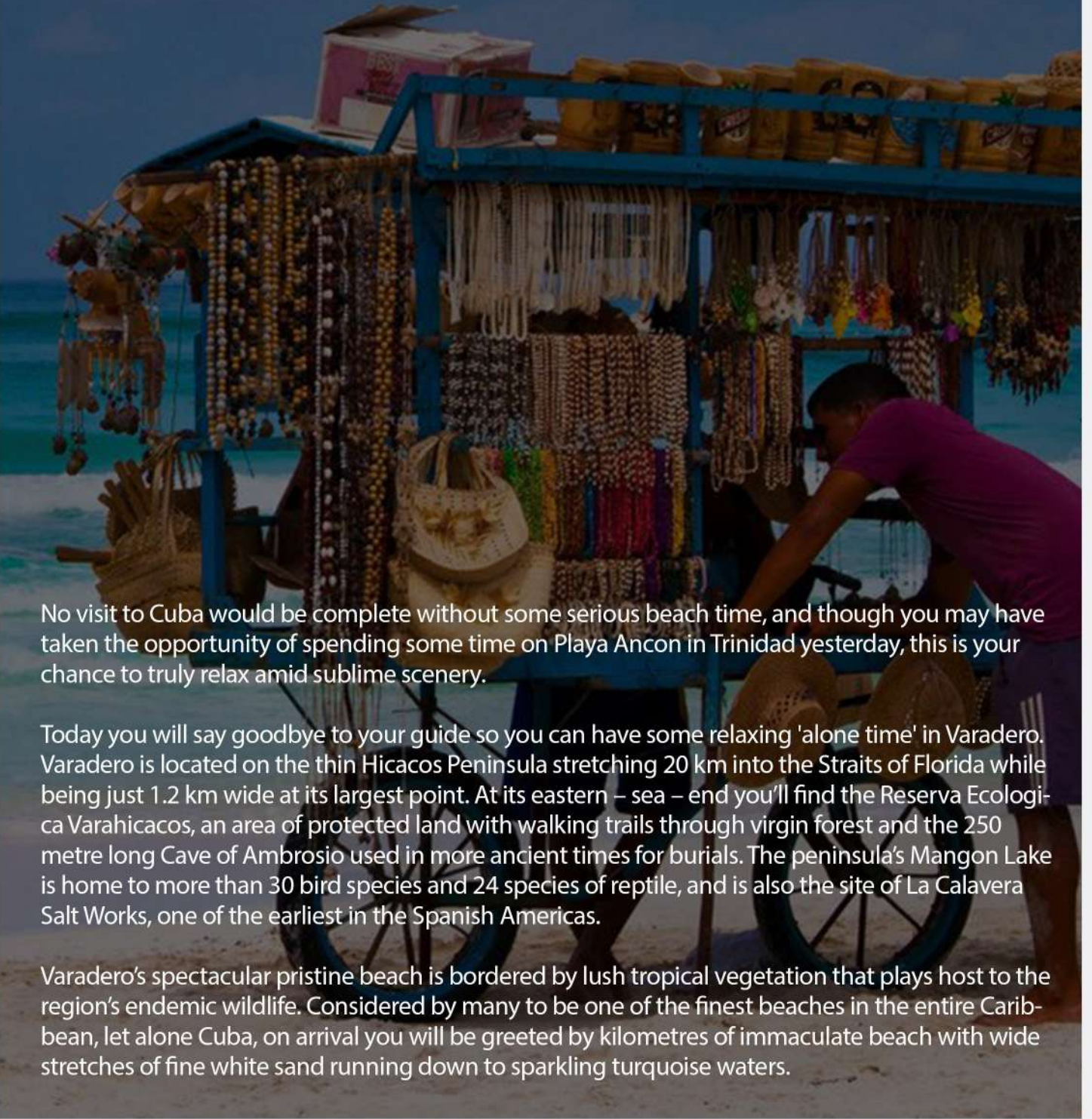
As slavery was made illegal and the former slave workers freed, many spread out across Cuba, giving the country its distinctive Afro-Caribbean culture which has been mixed with the country's Spanish heritage to create the Cuba as we know and love it today.

The final option for today's 10 Day Private Cuba Tour is our Salto del Caburni waterfall trek. The waterfall trek to Salto del Caburni is one of Cuba's most popular outdoor excursions. At a relatively easy 7 km round trip, it will get you up close and personal with the amazing scenery of Parque Natural Topes de Collantes. It winds its way downhill through lush tropical forest, rock outcrops and canyon-like cliff faces for 3.5 km. There you'll come across the fantastic meandering path of the 70m high waterfall complete with a natural swimming pool at its base where you can relax and cool off before the return trip. There are also other waterfall excursions in the area that you can take advantage of, that are less physically demanding.

Back in Trinidad, your guide will take you for an evening of fantastic Cuban entertainment. The Palenque de los Congos Reales is a performance space, bar and nightclub that is a must for music and dance fans. Formed from an open patio in Trinidad's 'music alley', it has a lively range of arts on show that include salsa, son (Cuban pop music), and trova (a traditional form of poetical singing), and that's before the rumba drumming begins at 10 pm!



## DAY 8 & 9: VARADERO BEACH STAY (B)



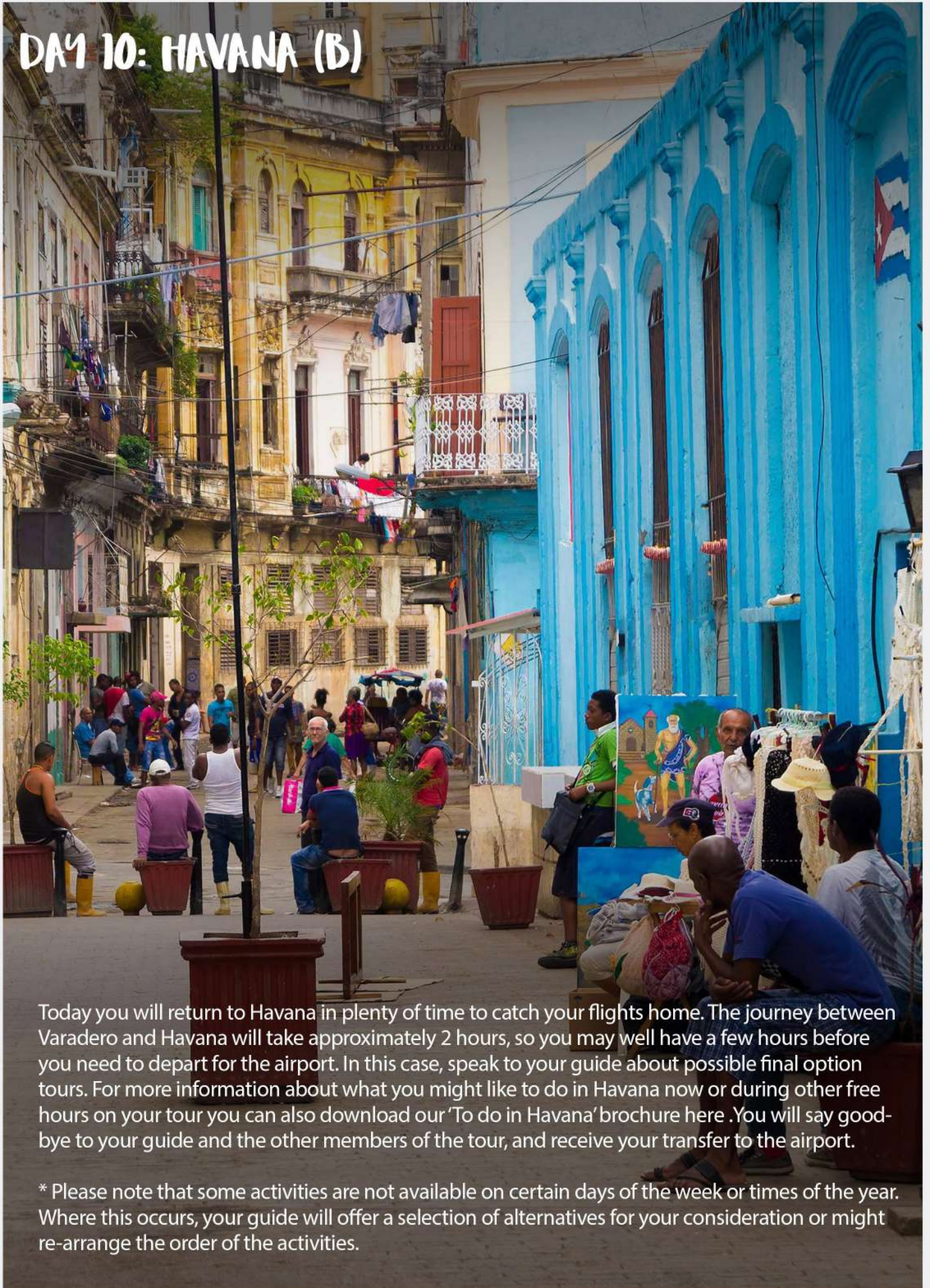
No visit to Cuba would be complete without some serious beach time, and though you may have taken the opportunity of spending some time on Playa Ancon in Trinidad yesterday, this is your chance to truly relax amid sublime scenery.

Today you will say goodbye to your guide so you can have some relaxing 'alone time' in Varadero. Varadero is located on the thin Hicacos Peninsula stretching 20 km into the Straits of Florida while being just 1.2 km wide at its largest point. At its eastern – sea – end you'll find the Reserva Ecológica Varahicacos, an area of protected land with walking trails through virgin forest and the 250 metre long Cave of Ambrosio used in more ancient times for burials. The peninsula's Mangon Lake is home to more than 30 bird species and 24 species of reptile, and is also the site of La Calavera Salt Works, one of the earliest in the Spanish Americas.

Varadero's spectacular pristine beach is bordered by lush tropical vegetation that plays host to the region's endemic wildlife. Considered by many to be one of the finest beaches in the entire Caribbean, let alone Cuba, on arrival you will be greeted by kilometres of immaculate beach with wide stretches of fine white sand running down to sparkling turquoise waters.



## DAY 10: HAVANA (B)



Today you will return to Havana in plenty of time to catch your flights home. The journey between Varadero and Havana will take approximately 2 hours, so you may well have a few hours before you need to depart for the airport. In this case, speak to your guide about possible final option tours. For more information about what you might like to do in Havana now or during other free hours on your tour you can also download our 'To do in Havana' brochure [here](#). You will say goodbye to your guide and the other members of the tour, and receive your transfer to the airport.

\* Please note that some activities are not available on certain days of the week or times of the year. Where this occurs, your guide will offer a selection of alternatives for your consideration or might re-arrange the order of the activities.





## **YOUR EVENINGS IN HAVANA**

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For your evenings, we leave the itinerary flexible. Your guide will be able to organise you transfers and tickets to the best of Havana's nightlife including the Tropicana Cabaret, world-famous Buena Vista Social Club at La Taberna, Parisien Cabaret at Hotel Nacional, Cannon Shooting Ceremony, Gran Teatro Habana, and Vixen and Crow Jazz Café to name just a few.

## **A NOTE ABOUT OUR RESTAURANT CHOICES FOR YOUR TOUR**

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We like to include a range of different restaurants (paladares) that showcase the best of Havana's burgeoning private restaurant scene. Your guide will also help select the best restaurants for the tour based on consultation about your tastes and dietary requirements. Some of our favourite restaurants include Mercaderes, Café Laurent, O'Reilly 304, Alta Habana, Vista Mar, El Cocinero and El Atelier.



## NOT QUITE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

Please note that it is possible to modify the activities and excursions included as part of this tour. Take a look at our 'To do in Havana' brochure for more ideas before the trip begins, or talk to your guide at any point during the tour.

## AIRPORT TRANSFERS:

Your 10 Day Private Cuba Tour includes being picked up at Havana's José Martí International Airport and delivered to your accommodation in the city. Your transfer back to the airport on your departure is also included.

## ACCOMMODATION ON TOUR

Choose from historic hotels, beautiful resorts and authentic Casa Particulares .

This tour is priced to stay in upgraded Casa's/ B&B's. The superior Casa's we have hand selected are more expensive than the standard Casa's you will find in Cuba. They are run more like your traditional B&B's but still offer a unique cultural experience. While they shouldn't be compared to modern Western hotels, the rooms will have air-conditioning, private en suite facilities, hot and cold water and have generally been recently renovated to a beautiful standard.

Cuba's accommodation is very special. Until recent regulatory changes, it wasn't possible to stay anywhere but a government owned and run hotel. But all that has now changed and a growing number of casas particulares, bed and breakfasts owned and run by ordinary families rather than the government, are opening up.

This change allows visitors to stay in a more welcoming environment than most hotels are able to offer. You'll have privacy while still being able to interact with the locals as much as you want. You will truly be made to feel welcome, and might just forget that you're a paying guest and not a long lost member of the family.

You can learn more about staying in upgraded boutique Casa's/ B&B's/ Guesthouses here.

## Not sold on staying at a Casa?

That's OK, we can certainly look to upgrade your accommodation to a 4\* or 5\* property, depending on your budget.

It is worth noting some accommodation providers are to be found in older buildings without elevators. If you believe that your physical capabilities will make it difficult to climb stairs, simply let us know. We will be able to find you a suitable alternative.



# VIVA CUBA



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