

# Captivating Cuba

January 17 - 27, 2024 • 11 Days • \$3975

NOTE: This Adventure is currently FULL. Standby requests are accepted by clicking the CONTACT US button to the right.

Cuba is an incredible experience - truly unlike anyplace we've ever been!

Physically, the country is beautiful - lovely agricultural scenes, pristine forests, and colorful birdlife. But what makes Cuba unique is the rare opportunity to see inside a self-contradictory culture that is both Caribbean, with its relational, island-based, laid back way of life, and Communist, with the opposite emphasis on a controlled economy and society.

Fascinating interactions with people combined with efforts to understand a complicated and reactionary economy expose us to a way of thinking quite different from our American free enterprise and democratic norm. Yet, Cuba, like many places on the planet, is beginning to change. It is currently like a museum into the past, but it is modernizing...slowly opening up to a market-based society in phases. Visiting Cuba now provides the opportunity to understand this change and the impact modernization will begin to have in this corner of the world.

We are excited to return to this island nation just a few miles off the coast of Florida, yet light years removed from the rest of North America culturally, economically, and politically. Join us for this journey of discovery into Cuba!

[Contact Us](#)

[Tour Type: Classic Curated, High Adventure](#)

- [Highlights](#)
- [Reviews](#)

- **Havana** - with a walk from massive 18<sup>th</sup> century San Carlos de la Cabaña through historic Havana preceded by a memorable city tour in a convoy of the everlasting, convertible classic cars for which Cuba has become famous
- **Viñales National Park** - quality walking and bird-watching through a verdant valley of tobacco farms and geologically unique mogotes-limestone mounds which pop up from the valley floor
- **Zapata National Park** - spread out along the infamous Bay of Pigs (failed 1961 CIA-funded coup) and offering a trio of interesting nature walks and further opportunity to rub shoulders with small town life in Caribbean Cuban
- **Topes de Collantes National Park** - home to our favorite walking trail in Cuba, a remote pathway through bird-rich rainforest along a lovely stream punctuated by a pair of picturesque waterfalls
- **Trinidad** - Cuba's third oldest city with a delightful field-stone-paved historic center offering fertile opportunities for unscripted strolling and spontaneous musical

performances, as well as colorful corners for a cup of coffee or a meal.

### **Including:**

- Airport to hotel group transfers on first day
- All land travel as outlined by motorcoach
- Accommodations in a blend of hotels and casa particulares (private homes)\*\*
- 20 meals: all breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 7 dinners as denoted (BLD)
- 10 walks routes included
- 2 optional walk routes available (see Optional Excursions below)
- Walking fees for those collecting IVV walking credit
- WAI guide service throughout (2 guides)
- Cultural & historical expertise of national guide throughout
- Local guide assistance in several national parks and reserves
- All tipping for national and local guides, coach drivers, and group meals
- Pricing is based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available for a supplement of \$1050. We also provide a roommate matching service.

### **Activities/Visits to:**

- Classic Car tour
- San Carlos de la Cabaña Fortress
- Havana walking tour
- Fusterlandia
- Soroa Orchid Garden
- Viñales National Park
- Viñales tobacco farm visit
- Ciénaga de Zapata National Park
- Museo Girón - Bay of Pigs
- Cenote swimming experience
- Walking tour of Cienfuegos
- Palacio de Valle - Cienfuegos
- Coffee farm lunch
- Topes de Collantes National Park
- Walking tour of Trinidad
- Trinidad Architectural Museum
- Valle de los Ingenios sugar mill visit
- Che Guevara Mausoleum
- More fun and educational stops than we can list!

### **Optional Excursions:**

- Malecon & More Havana Walk - DAY 1
- Museum of the Revolution - DAY 1
- Salsa dance lessons - DAY 9
- Cubano National Park Walk - DAY 9

*\*\* The Cuban government allows private citizens to rent rooms in their homes to tourist. Our stay in these private homes falls under our Support for the Cuban People (SCP) license. Of the 10 nights on this trip, 3 will be in hotels and 7 will be in casa particulares. The group*

*will be split up into homes as close together as possible. All rooms will have private facilities en suite and air conditioning. Breakfast is usually served in the individual homes.*

*"Wow! Riding in the 6×6 truck was totally awesome and a huge surprise. Best walk ever and the waterfalls were an added bonus. The tobacco farm was really cool as well. Trip of a lifetime."*

-Sherry S, Colorado Springs, CO

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*"I learned a lot and know I need to learn more to understand the Cuban society. Thank you for the opportunity to experience this."*

-Shirley L, Post Falls, ID

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*"I learn something new every day and rethink a lot of my view[s] of the world."*

-Carol R, Chesapeake, VA

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*"Loved the bird life, friendliness of the people, and the colorfulness of the country. I think I might even want to repeat this trip!"*

-Jean O, Vancouver, WA

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*"Great locations, capable tour guides who have figured out all the important details about getting there, what to bring, etc., etc. Lots of value added that we wouldn't have found or done on our own."*

-Jean L; Davis, CA

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*"Excellent, well organized walking (sightseeing) guides."*

-Phil K; Sunnyvale, CA

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*"WAI [Walking Adventures International] well organized; good communication, great hotels*

*and restaurants; quick adaptation to sudden events; really flexible approach to touring."*

-Karen S; Portland, OR

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*"The quality of your tours - Best bang for your buck."*

-Carol Y; Fairborn, OH

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*"Trustworthy company with consistent quality of tours, guides - overall experience."*

-Lee P; Rockville, MD

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*"Well planned and executed - Every major highlight or points of interest are included - Walking with interesting folks - Learning history, cultural, geographical...etc."*

-Craig & Jane W; Pittsburg, CA

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*"Walkers make great traveling companions and WAI [Walking Adventures International] guides do all the preparatory work to make it a great experience."*

-John F; Anchorage, AK

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*"Extremely organized and something for everyone, super walks, information and great fellowship."*

-Rowena M; Bedford, IN

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*"Good information ahead of time, enjoyable fellow travelers with same goals and enjoyment of walking and other activities, well informed always, lots of variety in walks and activities and freedom to opt out of walks if necessary."*

-Gail R; Vancouver, WA

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*"Well planned tours, good combination of walking and sight-seeing... I feel like we're traveling with friends."*

-Jane M; Matthews, NC

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- [360.260.9393](tel:360.260.9393)
- [Email Us](#)



## Adventure Pace

**Tour Pace:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Walk Challenge:** 1 2 3 4 5

[About Adventure Pace](#)

## Adventure Pace

How much Adventure do you want? Here are a few features to help gauge the following factors on each tour.

**Tour Pace:** On a scale of 1 (slowest pace) to 5 (fastest pace), we've rated the following factors: number of 1-night hotels; driving miles per day; fullness of schedule; mid-tour airline flights; high elevation setting; and average amount of walking per day.

**Walk Challenge:** This number represents an average walk difficulty rating for the tour using a scale of 1 (easiest) to 5 (hardest).

[Contact Us](#)

## Important Info



### Group Size

24 traveler maximum



### **Accommodations**

Accommodations in hotels (3 nights) and casa particulares/B&Bs (7 nights)



### **Meals**

20 meals: all breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 7 dinners. Letters BLD indicate which meals are included.



### **Airfare**

Not Included. The official starting point is the José Martí International Airport in Havana (airport code HAV). The official finish point is our hotel in Havana, Cuba.



### **Transportation**

Included. We use motorcoaches seating 40+.



### **Traveler Age**

Our travelers usually range from 50–75 years of age. All ages welcome!

## **Your WAI Guides**



### **Ruth & Scott Burk**

Ruth and Scott have spent much of their free time over the last two decades exploring the world, while successfully instilling wanderlust in their two adult children.

Ruth now operates her own business as a writer consultant for high tech companies, and Scott recently retired from a career as an air traffic control manager for the Portland, Oregon airport.

Ruth and Scott led our 2020 Adventures in Cuba and are excited about returning to share this intriguing Caribbean island with others!

## **Your Cuban Guide**





### **Will Caballero**

Our knowledgeable, creative, and lighthearted local guide Will assisted the WAI Team on our first 2 departures to Cuba in 2020, offering cultural insights, local history and a wonderful sense of humor! We look forward to having Will join us on our 2024 return to Cuba!

## **Itinerary**

*Click on each day for more details. (BLD) refers to meals included – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.*

[Day 1-January 17: Arrive Havana, Cuba \(D\)](#)

*OPTIONAL Malecon & More Havana Walk – 7 km, rated 1A*

We rendezvous in sunny Havana today for one of the most unusual walking adventures we've yet experienced. We look forward to sharing an unforgettable array of activities with the Cuban people through a cornucopia of cultural connections and excursions into the unspoiled natural wonders of this Caribbean island that seems to be working their way through a late-19th to mid-20th century time warp.

**Optional Excursion: Malecon & More Havana Walk** Travelers who opt to arrive early (on January 16) are invited to join us this morning for a walk along sections of the 7-kilometer-long Malecon (esplanade) that borders the Atlantic.

*The route takes us into Centro Havana for an optional visit to the Museum of the Revolution (about \$10 per person) to see the communist revolution from the Cuban government point of view. We finish with a stroll down the Paseo del Prado to Central Park and the Capitolio. Originally the home of the Cuban Congress, it's currently under renovation to serve as the new home for Cuba's National Assembly. Estimated price: \$50*

Later this evening, we join travelers arriving today for a Welcome Orientation and dinner.

#### [Day 2-January 18: Activities in Havana \(BL\)](#)

*Walk #1: Historic Havana Walk - 7 km, rated 1B*

Our day begins with a memorable tour of the city by convertible classic car. Perhaps the most iconic images of Cuba are these wonderfully restored automobiles from the 50s and 60s.

Our vintage vehicles deposit us at the entrance to San Carlos de la Cabaña Fortress on the opposite side of Havana Bay to start today's walk. This late 18th century behemoth is the third largest fortress in the Americas and sits atop the cliff overlooking Havana, offering outstanding views of the harbor and the city, and contributing an intriguing piece of Cuba's history.

From La Cabaña, our trail descends to the fishing community of Casa Blanca to ride the local pedestrian ferry across the harbor. We disembark in Habana Vieja - Old Havana - to continue our walk through the oldest parts of the city, dating back to 1514!

Of primary interest are Havana's lovely squares - four of which are featured on our walk. Lunch in Old Havana is followed by free time to explore this fascinating combination of wonderful architectural restoration and rampant decay, overlaid with a vibrant cultural vibe that continues into the night.

The late afternoon and evening are free to relax and wander the area near our hotel.

#### [Day 3-January 19: Havana - Viñales \(BL\)](#)

*Walk #2: Viñales Viewpoint to Valley Walk - 3 km, rated 2B*

Jaimanitas is a small fishing village south of Havana better known as "Fusterlandia" in honor of its most famous son, Cuban artist José Fuster. Inspired by Picasso and the modernistic images of Antoni Gaudi, Fuster transformed his home and neighborhood with a whimsical array of colorful tiles.

A short stop at Fusterlandia prepares us for color of a more natural sort at the Soroa Orchid

Garden. Created by Spaniard Tomás Felipe Camacho in the 1940s to honor his deceased daughter, this Eden-like hillside is covered with over 20,000 plants, including 700 species of orchids (of the more than 35,000 worldwide!).

Our day ends with more scenic driving into the very different landscapes of Viñales Valley and Viñales National Park. From the viewpoint overlooking the valley, our walk of the day descends through forest and field, passing tobacco farms and other agricultural pursuits, and winding its way around the signature geological wonders of the valley – mogotes. These unique limestone mounds pop up from the valley floor reaching heights of over 1000 feet.

We spend the next two evenings in the town of Viñales in casa particulares, private guesthouses, enjoying the hospitality of the burgeoning private sector of tourism in Cuba.

#### [Day 4-January 20: Activities in Viñales National Park \(BD\)](#)

*Walk #3: Viñales Mogotes & Prehistoric Mural Walk – 7 km, rated 1B*

*Walk #4: Viñales Tobacco Farm Walk – 4 km, rated 1B*

A hearty homemade breakfast prepares us for a day of exploration in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Viñales National Park.

Our first walk nearly circumnavigates one of the valley's larger mogotes, passing farmers at work in the fields (probably behind a pair of oxen) and offering possible sightings of some of Cuba's 28 endemic bird species.

The reward at walk's end is some of Cuba's best piña coladas before we return to Viñales and our guesthouses for a mid-day break and a chance to explore this interesting town.

Later this afternoon, we head for a different part of the valley and a walk to a remote tobacco farm. Here, we learn the time-honored techniques of tobacco farming and unique aspects of a state-controlled agricultural sector.

Dinner this evening is at a picturesque organic farm offering sweeping views over the valley from a rambling hilltop farmhouse.

#### [Day 5-January 21: Viñales – Playa Larga \(BD\)](#)

*Walk #5: Ciénaga de Zapata Walk – 6 km, rated 1A*

We leave western Cuba this morning for a lengthy but interesting drive to the Bay of Pigs, stopping en route for a no-host lunch.

Our home for the next two nights is Playa Larga, a serene seaside village on the shores of Bahía de Cochinos, known to Americans as the infamous Bay of Pigs. Our private guesthouses for the next two evenings allow us the delightful opportunity to stroll the village and the dreamy, palm-lined Caribbean beach.

Political reminders of the unsuccessful, American-backed 1961 invasion by Cuban exiles are strewn throughout this part of Cuba, but today's beautiful beaches and natural setting bely the violence and political turmoil of this chapter of the Cuban story.

The optional afternoon activity from Playa Larga is an expedition on our coach through Zapata National Park. At the far end, we stroll along a narrow access road bordered on both sides by a remote lagoon where we hope to find flamingos and other wetland birds.

#### [Day 6-January 22: Activities from Playa Larga \(BD\)](#)

*Walk #6: Challenge Walk — Gran Park Natural Montemar Walk - 2 km, rated 2C*

Early risers are invited to join us this morning on a unique trail through a completely different eco system. The walk is relatively level but takes us over challenging sections of fossilized coral to a pair of remote cenotes (water-filled sinkholes) nestled away in Gran Parque Natural Montemar.

After a late breakfast back in Playa Larga, and a bit of laid-back Caribbean down time, we drive along the coast to Museo Girón for insight into the Bay of Pigs Invasion from the Cuban point of view.

Cenotes are a geological phenomenon of Cuba's Caribbean coast and this afternoon offers the opportunity to swim in one, or in turquoise waters of the Caribbean across the road.

Those who opt out of the swimming opportunity will return to our guesthouses where we rendezvous this evening for dinner together.

#### [Day 7-January 23: Playa Larga - Cienfuegos \(BD\)](#)

*Walk #7: Zapata National Park Walk - 5 km, rated 1A*

*Walk #8: Cienfuegos Bay Walk - 5 km, rated 1A*

Our third optional Bay of Pigs walk requires another early morning start (bird activity is much better in the early morning). We visit our final corner of Zapata National Park on an early morning trail in the company of an informative park ranger.

This is an easy route through a type of subtropical forest we've not yet seen. It's a showcase for Cuba's colorful endemic birds and it's likely that we'll see several species, possibly even the world's smallest bird - the bee hummingbird.

After rendezvousing with travelers who opted out of the "up with the birds" walk, we depart for Cienfuegos, a city with a UNESCO-listed colonial core set on one of Cuba's larger bays.

Following time for lunch, we start today's second walk from Parque José Martí, lined with an impressive grouping of restored 19th centuries monuments, including Tomas Terry Theatre, Museo Histórico, and Cuba's only triumphal arch, evidence that Cienfuegos is Cuba's solitary French-founded city.



Our route takes us along the Malecon (waterfront esplanade), with nearly non-stop views of the harbor, to Punta Gorda, a narrow spit of land poking south into Cienfuegos Bay. We finish with a break for refreshment on the terrace of Palacio de Valle, an eclectic blend of Gothic, Venetian and Neo-Moorish motifs funded by one of Cuba's wealthiest sugar magnates in the early 20th century.

#### [Day 8-January 24: Cienfuegos - Trinidad \(BLD\)](#)

*Walk #9: Topes de Collantes Walk - 5 km, rated 2B*

Today's drive takes us into the mountains of Topes de Collantes National Park. Coffee is Cuba's second major export crop, after tobacco, and we stop en route to the National Park at a humble coffee farmhouse to have lunch served by the family.

The simplicity of the kitchen and home, set on a hillside along a mountain stream, and the hospitality of our hosts, make this one of the more memorable stops on our journey through Cuba.

The walk of the day is in the national park, and features a pair of delightful waterfalls, a rich variety of vegetation, and more opportunities to enjoy Cuba's aviary abundance.

As we descend through Topes de Collantes to Trinidad, we take in some of the loveliest panoramas of our trip. Trinidad is Cuba's third oldest town, and after checking into our private guesthouses, we stroll into the oldest parts of town for tonight's dinner in yet another UNESCO World Heritage setting.

#### [Day 9-January 25: Activities from Trinidad \(B\)](#)

*Walk #10: Historic Trinidad Walk - 2 km, rated 1B*

*OPTIONAL Cubano National Park Walk - 4 km, rated 2B*

Trinidad was one of our favorite place to explore when planning this Cuban adventure. Today is set aside to experience the town in a number of ways. We start with a guided walk, enjoying several stops along the way and delving deeper into the 500-year-old story of Trinidad.

After a late-morning finish, the balance of the day is free. We strongly encourage travelers to allow time for unscripted strolling: musicians play spontaneously in many corners of the old town; shops and markets offer a plethora of colorful distractions; quiet corners to sip a coffee and people watch abound.

To offer more structure to your afternoon and evening, the following options are also available (pricing to be announced where applicable):

- Salsa Cubano, also known as Casino to distinguish it from other salsa styles, has been an integral part of the daily Cuban social scene and culture since the 1950s. Today is your chance to join us for a fun instructor-led lesson - come feel the rhythm of the

music as you learn the steps and experience the joy and spontaneity of this vibrant form of dance. Estimated price: \$15 per person

- Enjoy a complimentary walk through Cuban neighborhoods as we make our way to a local pottery shop run by five generations of Trinidad potters. Here we'll have the opportunity to purchase some traditional Cuban pottery.
- Join us for the Cubano National Park Walk, as we stroll along a lovely forest stream and keep our eyes open for colorful bird sightings. Our trail ends at an enchanting waterfall-fed cavern with the opportunity to take a quick dip, swimming right under the waterfall. Estimated price: \$20 per person
- Ancón Beach - Enjoy some hang-loose time on the white sands of one of Cuba's stunning Caribbean beaches! Just a 10-minute taxi drive from Trinidad, it's the perfect place for an afternoon of swimming, lounging and relaxation.

#### [Day 10-January 26: Trinidad - Havana \(BD\)](#)

Valle de los Ingenios, or the Valley of the Sugar Mills, is just east of Trinidad and was combined with Trinidad in UNESCO's 1988 World Heritage Listing.

The valley is a living museum, with over 50 former sugar plantations, and provides tremendous insight into the dominant role played by sugar, and by extension, slavery, in Cuba's history and economy.

Further north, a stop in Santa Clara at the Che Guevara Mausoleum introduces us to the life and times of perhaps the most famous, or infamous depending on your point of view, Cuban revolutionary leader. Argentinian by birth, medical doctor by profession, and Marxist revolutionary in his political views, Che's image has become a nearly universal symbol of countercultural rebellion in popular culture, and is one more key to understanding the Cuban conundrum.

We finish the day back in Havana in the same hotel, looking forward to a farewell dinner and one final time to share and reminisce.

#### [Day 11-January 27: Depart Cuba \(B\)](#)

We return home from Havana today with much to ponder. Cuba has challenged and delighted us.

What a special opportunity to connect with a culture that has been virtually off-limits to Americans for nearly 60 years. We return home enriched and fascinated by this island at the junction of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean, North America and Latin America, Capitalism and Communism.

## **Before You Book**

*Click on each heading for more details.*

[How Do I Lock in My Place on This Adventure?](#)

To register, a **non-refundable** \$300 deposit is required to hold your spot. A final payment is due 90 days before departure and is **non-refundable** after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us 2 to 3 weeks in advance.

Once this tour has a viable number of participants, an “Adventure Advice” email will be sent with critical information on flight arrangements as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review this Adventure Advice email.

Please follow this link to read our full [General Tour Conditions](#).

### [What is a Classic Curated Tour?](#)

With help from local experts and walking guides, these itineraries are hand-crafted with the help of trusted in-country partners to tailor itineraries to WAI specifications.

When planning Classic Curated Tours, our objective is to capture the essence of a destination—the history, culture, and natural wonders unique to that part of the world. We then build activities and walks that take us inside these characteristics.

Yes, these tours are educational, but they are also interactive and immersive; walking gets us off the bus and penetrates local cultures to not only see but touch, smell, and feel these special spaces.

Along the way, local walking guides amplify the experience by sharing insights into the magic of that particular location.

### [What is a High Adventure Tour?](#)

“High Adventure” is a tag we add to tours to warn travelers of possible additional challenges. These challenges could stem from a variety of sources including:

- A high percentage of 1-night hotels
- More time driving than usual or challenging traffic settings (e.g. India)
- Walks routes that are more challenging on average (e.g. Appalachian Trail, Swiss & French Alps)
- More walking per day than usual (e.g. Hiking the Camino de Santiago)
- Walks and/or travel at high altitude (e.g. Peru; Colorado)
- A greater number of mid-tour flights (e.g. Chile)
- Cultural factors that can be stressors (lack of public toilets; extra caution required regarding food and gastro-intestinal challenges – e.g. India, Hiking the Camino de Santiago)

In the case of Cuba, the “high adventure” tag is generated by spending several nights in local homes (casa particulares or bed and breakfasts), the lack of public services taken for granted in many modernized countries (public toilets, potable water from the tap), possible interruptions of power, and a generally less-developed and more primitive way of life.

Travelers should read the itinerary and **Before You Book** sections carefully before committing to a High Adventure tour.

### Walk Ratings

We generally walk at a pace of 2 to 3 miles per hour. Walks that are oriented more towards education may take longer due to stops for guide commentary. Nature walks, on the other hand, generally continue at a steadier pace because we're stopping less to talk. In most cases, we are not "strolling." We are walking at a relaxed but steady pace. Your experience will be significantly affected by your level of physical fitness. If not walking regularly at home, we strongly recommend that you make a priority of "training" beforehand to both enjoy the trip and avoid medical issues due to overexertion.

If you have questions about your ability to participate, please contact our office at [fun@walkingadventures.com](mailto:fun@walkingadventures.com).

We have adopted a walk difficulty rating system which contains a numeric indicator for trail incline and an alpha indicator for trail terrain. The explanation for this system is presented on the table below:

#### **INCLINE**

1. Minimal hills or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: <200 feet.
2. Some moderate hills and stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 200-1000 feet.
3. Some significant hill or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 1000-2000 feet.

#### **TERRAIN**

- A. Almost entirely on pavement.
- B. A significant part of the route is on well-groomed trails with very few obstacles.
- C. A significant part of the route is on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky / rooted paths or soft sand).

### How Is Airfare Arranged?

The official starting point for this adventure is the José Martí International Airport in Havana (airport code HAV). The official finish point is our hotel in Havana, Cuba.

The arrival transfer is included in the tour price. Travelers can easily arrange a taxi from our last hotel in Havana for the outbound flight.

We recommend that you contact Laura Pfahler, the travel agent we work with, to help book your flight arrangements. In this age of airfare complications and airport uncertainty, using a travel agent is a good investment! More details about flight arrangements and travel agent contact information will be provided in an Adventure Advice PDF by email after you register for the Adventure. Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving these flight



details from us!

- Laura Pfahler: 503.434.6401 or [llp@wtpdx.com](mailto:llp@wtpdx.com)

### Cuba Visas

This information was current as of 2023 and will be updated as we prepare to depart for our January 2024 tour. We are not currently aware of changes to the information below.

- Entry into Cuba requires a tourist visa or pink Tourist Card. This is easy to obtain and most airlines sell them at the gate of your departing flight on the day of travel. They can also be purchased online ahead of time through Cuba Travel Services ([www.cubatravelservices.com](http://www.cubatravelservices.com)), but we suggest checking with your airline of choice to confirm what their specific policy is regarding purchasing the Cuba visa. Cost is between \$75 and \$100.
- Travel restrictions imposed by the US government in early June 2019 do not affect our group's ability to travel to Cuba. WAI is visiting Cuba under the Support for the Cuban People (SCP) license, which was not restricted. Travelers will receive, and be asked to carry, an affidavit affirming the license under which we travel.
- Walking Adventures will continue to monitor travel requirements as our departure dates near. In the unlikely event our trip is not possible due to additional restrictions, travelers will receive a full refund of all money paid to WAI for the trip.
- More information will be provided about the visa application after you have registered.

### Guesthouses versus Hotels

Staying in private guesthouses is a unique aspect of a visit to Cuba. Hotels are owned and operated by the government. Guesthouses, or casa particulares, are privately owned, usually home-based, and generally open 1 to 4 rooms of their home for guests. This is a booming element of the tourism industry and Cuban economy.

One of our objectives is to structure the trip in such a way that most of the money we spend in Cuba is channeled to private individuals and businesses. Staying in guesthouses accomplishes this, and also avoids possible US government restrictions that have the same objective.

We plan to be in hotels for 3 nights and in private guesthouses for 7 nights.

You can expect your room to be clean; each room has its own private bathroom; all rooms should have air conditioning; some rooms will be on second or third floors but hosts are normally willing to help with luggage; breakfast is served in the home in which you stay and generally is lovingly prepared with lots of fresh fruit, baked goods, and an egg or two (which were in short supply when we visited). You won't go hungry!

### Visiting a Developing Country

Cuba is an enigma, to put it mildly. It is safe; crime is rare; gangs are not tolerated; drugs have a very low profile or are non-existent. Yet Cubans are accustomed to making do with

much less than the average American. Expectations for life are remarkably simple.

What we would call poverty seems the norm and people use well-established support networks to live and cope. Varying degrees of this minimalist lifestyle will be visible and will impact us.

Expect to experience scenes of poverty, of overworked horses or draft animals, of conditions that seem blatantly unsafe, and other norms of Cuban lifestyle that would be stunningly out of place in the USA. One of the primary benefits of travel is seeing life through the eyes of a different culture and from differing points of view. This is exceedingly true of a trip in Cuba. Sometimes this can be uncomfortable. Usually it is thought-provoking.

### [NON-USA Medical Insurance required](#)

This information was current as of 2023 tour and will be updated as we prepare for our January 2024 tour. We are not currently aware of changes to the information below.

- **Every traveler must be covered by non-USA travel-related personal medical insurance.** This insurance must cover personal injury, medical expenses, air ambulance, repatriation costs, evacuation expenses and all other expenses.
- By registering for the tour, the traveler agrees to obtain and verify that he/she has sufficient personal medical insurance coverage for the trip.
- This non-USA travel-related personal medical insurance should be automatically included in the purchase of your airline ticket (often listed as an additional fee or tax), but you should confirm this with your airline of choice before purchasing your ticket.

### [Travel Insurance](#)

WAI believes strongly in the importance of travel insurance for financial and medical protection from any number of unforeseen circumstances that can arise before departure or during your Adventure. Many travel insurance providers are available for you to consider. Laura Pfahler and Sharon Mitchell of World Travel Inc. are travel agents who provides air travel and insurance services to many WAI travelers.

Laura Pfahler: 503-434-6401 or [llp@wtpdx.com](mailto:llp@wtpdx.com)

Sharon Mitchell: 971-261-2091 or [smitchell@wtpdx.com](mailto:smitchell@wtpdx.com)

Check out [Insurance Tips](#) from World Travel for a short introduction to travel insurance. (NOTE: WAI receives no commission or financial remuneration from World Travel Inc.).

Be aware that [some travel insurance policies contain time-sensitive provisions](#) (i.e. some benefits, such as coverage of pre-existing conditions, are available only if the policy is purchased within a certain number of days of the purchase of the travel package). In addition, remember that airfare is not covered by any travel insurance policy you may have purchased for the tour.

As always, do some shopping to ensure you are getting the best value. Using the [SquareMouth.com](https://www.squaremouth.com) website can be a good way to compare pricing.

Other options include:

- Allianz
- Betins
- Travel Guard
- Travel Insured International

WAI bears no responsibility for travel insurance benefits advertised by various credit card companies. If you are relying on this type of benefit for insurance, we advise you to verify coverage types and limits and that your purchase does in fact qualify you for this insurance.

*NOTE: We suggest purchasing from a reputable, well-established insurance company (avoid buying insurance from an unknown company found only online). Travelers interested in purchasing “cancel for any reason” insurance coverage should be careful to check pricing and terms BEFORE they register for a tour. Recent changes in the international travel landscape has caused changes in the policies of some insurance companies, and made the purchase of this particular type of policy even more time-sensitive.*

#### [What if WAI Cancels the Tour](#)

Walking Adventures International reserves the right to cancel this tour departure with fewer than 12 participants, in which case registered participants will receive a 100% refund of payments received.

This refund policy contains one exclusion. Many suppliers require non-refundable deposits as a condition of booking services. Though it is rare, unforeseen circumstances can force us to cancel a tour. In cases where supplier’s non-refundable policies are imposed, WAI attempts to retrieve as much of these deposits as possible but cannot guarantee a 100% refund. In cases where full refunds cannot be obtained for a cancelled tour, we will do our best to transfer unrefunded money as traveler credits to be applied to a future tour to that destination.

#### [Wellness Policies for This Tour](#)

As of the date of this writing (May 22, 2023) Cuba has dropped all COVID-19-related restrictions.

WAI has also relaxed our policies and currently requires no mitigation procedures ([WAI Wellness on Tour Policy](#)).

Our approach to wellness on tour has traditionally been to encourage travelers to:

- Focus on health before the tour so you start healthy.

- Pace yourself while on tour; travel is inherently stimulating and can produce adrenalin boosts that mask energy drain. Guard your energy reserves and consider the length of the trip and whether to opt out of some activities and/or walks.
- Be self-aware. If you feel yourself tiring or feel a bug coming on, take precautions to block it (e.g. extra rest, extra doses of vitamin C, etc).
- If you feel a bug coming on or if you take ill, distance yourself from others when possible.
- If you feel ill, isolate yourself towards the back of the bus and away from others and please wear a mask.

### [What Happens Next?](#)

Once a viable number of travelers have registered, an “Adventure Advice” email will be sent with critical information on flight arrangements as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review this Adventure Advice email.

A final payment is due 90 days before departure (October 19, 2023) and is non-refundable after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us two to three weeks in advance. Please see our [General Tour Conditions](#) for the full terms and conditions for participation in this Adventure.

Around 2 weeks before departure, you will receive a final email packet with details of the program, including hotel names and contact information, a list of fellow travelers, and a more detailed daily schedule.

Settle in with a cup of your favorite hot beverage and take a few minutes to peruse the itinerary. Imagine yourself on this rich journey of discovery in Captivating Cuba and consider if it’s the right adventure for you. We believe it’s one of the most impactful adventures we’ve offered, and after you explore it with us, we think you’ll agree that walking is the best way to experience this unique corner of the world.