

Cuba: Nature and Adventure for Students

15 days and 14 nights in the safest and most cultured country in the Americas!

VISIT HAVANA, VINALES, PINAR DEL RIO, CIENFUEGOS, TRINIDAD | WWW.HELLOCUBA.CA

DAY 1 – SATURDAY – HELLO CUBA

- Arrival at Havana's José Martí International Airport.
- Group welcomed by your CubaNatura Guide and Bus Driver.
- Transfer to **Hotel Saint Johns**, located in Havana's cultural center: Vedado near the Malecón seawall.
- Private group check-in with assistance from your guide.
- Take a refreshing swim in one of two hotel pools.

DAY 2 – SUNDAY – DISCOVERING HAVANA

Guided walking tour of Old Havana, an UNESCO **World Heritage Site** to experience four of its five historic plazas.

Cathedral Square, the most beautiful and private 18th century colonial plaza on the island. Named after the masterpiece of Cuban baroque architecture: the **Cathedral of Havana** built by the Jesuit order.

Square of Arms, an ancient military parade ground for Spanish soldiers, surrounded by impressive buildings such as:

- **Palacio de los Capitanes Generales**, former seat of colonial government. Today the building houses the Museum of the City.
- **Palacio del Segundo Cabo**, seat of the second authority of the island. Today it houses important publishing concerns.
- **Museo de Artesania** at **Castillo de la Real Fuerza**, the second oldest fortress built by the Spaniards in the West Indies. Today it displays treasures of artistic ceramics by the most prestigious Cuban artists

from the middle of the last century to present. The institution is host to the Ceramic Biennial.

We continue onto **San Francisco Square**, one of the oldest in the historical quarter.

And later to **Plaza Vieja**, the only civic square of colonial times. Absent are churches and government buildings. Here we'll visit an important center for the visual arts.

Visit to the **Museum of Natural Sciences**.

We spend time in Rumba performance at **Callejón de Hammel**, an alley in which the façades of all the buildings display murals inspired by AfroCuban religions themes. We'll meet alley artist **Salvador Gonzales** and visit his studio.

Tonight we have a Cuban band playing for us! We learn how to perform and dance to Salsa, Son, Rumba and other popular Cuban rhythms from **Grupo Dulce María**.

DAY 3 – MONDAY – NATURE IN LAS TERRAZAS

Morning departure to **Las Terrazas**, in **Sierra del Rosario Mountains** where we'll start our morning tour in the rural town of **Rancho Curujey** for an explanation of the area.

From our mountain vantage point we can view village that lies above the shores of **San Juan Lake**.

We visit the rural school **Republica Oriental del Uruguay** for primary and secondary children and talk with teachers and students from the community.

We'll also visit the home studios of local artists and artisans.

Later we'll explore the ruins of a **French Coffee Plantation** built in 1801.

Continue to **La Moka**, an ecological hotel with trees growing up through its balconies and ceiling.

You can take a swim in the warm cascading waters of the San Juan River.

Continue on bus ride to Viñales.

Check-in at **Los Jasmines Resort**.

DAY 4 – TUESDAY – PINAR DEL RIO

In the morning we will meet with students at the **Federico Engels High School** in Pinar del Rio. One of only fourteen of its kind in Cuba, this vocational boarding school recruits Cuba's brightest young minds. The students that attend show great promise in the fields of mathematics and science, but are encouraged to pursue a range of academic studies. Ninety-five percent of the graduates from these high schools go on to attend university.

Lunch in the high school cafeteria or in a local eatery.

After lunch we will participate in a friendly sports game, volunteer experience and cultural activities with our new friends.

Late afternoon return to our hotel.

DAY 5 – WEDNESDAY – PINAR DEL RIO/VINALES

The morning will begin with a hiking excursion to Viñales Valley, in the **Sierra de Los Organos** region famed for containing some of the most spectacular scenery in Cuba as well as the most interesting and varied geological formations on the island. The valley is particularly well-known for its impressive freestanding rock formations called **Mogotes**.

Visit local agricultural cooperative called **Moncada** for a discussion and a chance to work with youth in the area.

After lunch we will visit the **Cueva del Indio**, used by the **Guanahatabey Amerindians** as a burial site in ancient time, and as refuge from the Spaniards for both Indians and Black slaves alike. We'll take a short boat ride on the subterranean river running through the cave.

Visit to **Mural de la Prehistoria**, a huge painting on the side of a Mogote.

Explore Viñales Village at your leisure: its open-air craft market, Parque Marti, town church, and other interesting sites of this charming colonial hamlet.

Visit Carmen and Caridad Miranda's botanical and herb garden, called the **Viñales Botanical Garden**. The two widows maintain a garden full of fruits, orchids and medicinal plants.

Free evening to enjoy the amenities of your hotel.

DAY 6 – THURSDAY – PINAR DEL RIO/VINALES

Free day to hike, horse-back ride and other outdoor activities around the hotel (all activities are optional and to be arranged in site with tour desk with the assistance of your tour guide).

DAY 7 – FRIDAY – CIENFUEGOS

Morning departure to **Cienfuegos**, The Pearl of the South as it is also known for its wealth of buildings of the late 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Cienfuegos was founded by French immigrants at the beginning of the 19th century.

We tour the main sights of Cienfuegos including its neoclassical buildings, museums, historic landmarks and galleries.

Late afternoon check in at the **Guajimico Resort**, a beach-front hotel with direct access to the warm waters of the Caribbean sea.

DAY 8 – SATURDAY – CIENFUEGOS

Full day work and cultural exchange with high school students in the Cienfuegos countryside.

Lunch in the high school cafeteria or in a local eatery

After lunch we will participate in a friendly sports game and cultural activities.

In the late afternoon we will visit the **La Virgen Caves** and trek to **Sendero Los Corrales**.

Free evening.

DAY 9 – SUNDAY – CIENFUEGOS

Morning activities will include snorkeling and riding a catamaran at a beautiful Caribbean beach.

Afternoon visit to La Virgen Caves and trekking to Sendero Los Corrales.

Free evening.

DAY 10 – MONDAY – CIENFUEGOS

Full day work and cultural exchange with high school students in the Cienfuegos countryside.

Free evening.

DAY 11 – TUESDAY – CIENFUEGOS

Enjoy horse-back riding to a beautiful secluded beach.

Lunch in Hacienda de la Vega.

DAY 12 – WEDNESDAY – CIENFUEGOS/TRINIDAD

Morning departure to [Trinidad](#).

Today we walk around one of the oldest cities founded by the Spaniards in the West Indies, Trinidad declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

We stop at a mirador (lookout) over the Sugar Mill Valley, also an UNESCO.

World Heritage Site, where the sugar barons had their countryside mansions and mills.

Trinidad is well known for its pottery makers. We meet with a family that has been passing the tradition for generations: the Santanders.

Free time to wander the streets of historical center or enjoy the beach.

Check in at [Costa Sur hotel](#), and take a swim in the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea.

In the evening we will enjoy live Cuban Music on steps of [Casa de la Música](#) – a great opportunity to dance with Cubans!

DAY 13 – THURSDAY – TRINIDAD

Full day work and cultural exchange with high school students in the Trinidad countryside.

In the evening we will watch an Afrocuban Performance at Las Ruinas.

DAY 14 – FRIDAY – TRINIDAD

Free day to enjoy the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea, or explore historic sites of Trinidad. Snorkel equipment rental fee not included in tour price.

DAY 15 – SATURDAY – TRINIDAD/HAVANA

Check out of hotel for transfer to Havana's José Martí International Airport.

SERVICES INCLUDED

- All breakfasts included and served from 7:00 am to 10:00 am daily.
- Some lunches and dinners as noted in this program's itinerary.

- Clean comfortable safe hotels. Two double beds, daily maid service. Showers and toilet en suite and many enjoyable amenities.
- Modern luxury air-conditioned coach and professional driver for all activities in the program.
- Group in and out airport transfers in Cuba.
- Expert Cuban multilingual guide and translator throughout the program.
- All activities, services, entrance fees and venues unless noted as "not included" or "optional."
- Custom tour website for your school's student/parent orientation and tour administration. See "Schools to Cuba" at www.HelloCuba.ca for examples.

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED

- Cuban airport departure tax 25.00 CUC.
- Gratuities for guide, bus driver, hotel restaurant staff, chambermaids, porters and taxis.
- Lunches and dinners unless noted in this itinerary as "included." *Your guide will assist you in finding eateries that meet all tastes and budgets.*
- Return air to and from Cuba. Contact us for air costs from your city. *We can help with economical tickets!*
- Substitute teacher costs, if any, to cover teacher tour leaders while in Cuba.
- Overweight luggage charges.
- Optional extended medical coverage for students and teachers. Please note: provincial medical services cover nearly all medical issues that may arise while in Cuba.
- Optional travel cancellation/interruption insurance. Please see our terms and conditions regarding cancellation at www.HelloCuba.ca

COSTS AND SERVICES FOR THIS CUBA TOUR

All Cuban-side costs must be paid in the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). Cuban pricing is guaranteed through October 2007. For precise Canadian dollar prices reflecting today's exchange rate please go to <http://www.HelloCuba.ca/nature>

When your schedule a Cuba tours with us we can ensure Canadian costs. Hotel services are based on double-room occupancy. Triple rooms and private homestays are not possible.

