

Cuba Discovery Tour

Day 1 • Arrive Cuba / Welcome dinner

- Depart to Cuba via your own arranged flight.

You should plan to arrive in Cuba by mid-afternoon of your first tour day. Your guide will have your flight information and be monitoring your flight arrival in case there is a delay. Your first tour activity will be the Welcome Dinner.

- On airport arrival proceed through Cuban Immigration. Your carry-ons will be scanned.
- Collect your bags and go through Customs.
- You will meet at the airport, after Customs, by our representative holding a "Cuba Explorer" sign.
- Transfer to your hotel with free time to settle in and get oriented.
- Check into your hotel in Old Havana, on one of the four main historic plazas of Habana Vieja. Enjoy a rooftop view overlooking Havana Harbor. You will be in a prime location to wander and discover.
- At 7:00 pm meet in the lobby of your hotel to depart for dinner. Your guide will let you know if there is a change. You may wish to dress accordingly.
- Enjoy a wonderful Welcome Dinner at Atelier, a private restaurant in a home built in 1928. When President Barack and Michelle Obama visited Cuba the First Lady hosted lunch at the paladar for Cuban businesswomen. (Included)
- Your hotel is a short and easy walk to Plaza Vieja (Old Square). It will be active with live music and refreshments from several fun venues. (Optional) Enjoy.

Day 2 • Tour Old Habana / Craft market / Cigar shopping / Vintage American car ride / Photo gallery / Floridita / Cannon firing

- Breakfast in your hotel. (Included)
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- Stroll Old Habana.

Hola, La Habana Vieja [Hello, Old Havana], “In terms of beauty, only Venice and Paris surpassed Havana,” penned Ernest Hemingway. He was alluding to Havana’s incredible architecture, art, and, of course, the joie de vivre by the city’s engaging people. Old Havana’s four colonial plazas are full of color and personality, with a mix of palatial buildings, monuments, museums, galleries, churches, lively entertainment, restaurants, and bars. Together, the four plazas of Old Havana contain the most extensive collection of Spanish colonial-era architecture in Latin America. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, restoration and care of Old Havana’s wonders lies with the Office of the Historian of Havana.

Plaza de San Francisco [San Francisco Square] is one of the oldest plazas in the historical quarter. It was christened after the magnificent Iglesia y Monasterio de San Francisco de Asís, Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, with its construction beginning in 1548. The basilica is a striking example of Cuban baroque architecture.

Cathedral Square is the most beautiful 18th-century colonial plaza in Latin America. Its centerpiece is the baroque masterpiece Catedral de San Cristóbal de La Habana erected in 1748 by the Jesuit order and showcases towers of unequal height. Christopher Columbus’ remains laid in the cathedral between 1796 and 1898 before they were taken to Seville Cathedral, Spain. The Cathedral of Havana celebrates mass on Sundays at 10:30 am and Thursdays at 6:00 pm.

According to legend, one of Ernest Hemingway’s favorite drinks was the Mojito, which he drank often at one of his frequented bars, La Bodeguita del Medio, near Cathedral Square in Old Havana.

Plaza de Armas [Square of Arms] was a military parade ground for Spanish soldiers and is surrounded by such impressive buildings as Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the former seat of the colonial government. Dating from 1776 it now houses the Museum of the City.

Ernest Hemingway lived at the Hotel Ambos Mundos for several years in the 1930s. He rented room number 511 on the upper floor of the hotel for \$1.50 per night until mid-1939, before moving to Finca Vigía. It was there that he began his work on *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), finished his book *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), and started his novels *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) and *To Have and Have Not* (1937). The room where the Nobel Prize winner in Literature stayed is now a small museum, showcasing several of his personal belongings, and is open for visiting during the day.

Plaza Vieja [Old Square] was the only civic square of colonial times. In contrast to the churches and government buildings of the other plazas, only opulent aristocratic 17th-century mansions surround the 'Old Square.' Today, with its small cafes, it is a buzz for nightlife.

- Visit Taller Experimental de Grafica (Experimental Graphics Workshop), Cuba's oldest print making studio.

Paraphrased from Smithsonian Magazine: *“Lithography arrived in Cuba to protect the integrity of the country’s cigar industry. By the early 1800s, Cuban cigar exports had a prestige that made them valuable throughout the world, and they wanted to protect the Cuban industry from counterfeiters. Using lithography, they could make seals and rings that both decorated their products and distinguished them from those of competitors. Cuba imported thousands of lithographic limestones from Germany in the 1800s. In the 1950s, shortly before the Revolution, aluminum replaced lithography, and the stones fell into disuse.*

Campeños (farmers) used the stones to make walking paths through muddy fields. During the Cuban Missile Crisis Habaneros (people from Havana) laid the lithographic stones and other rocks around the city to serve as barricades against an invasion.

Cuban lithography would have died but for the few artists who lobbied the new Revolutionary government to protect the stones. In 1962, as minister of industry and in the name of art, Che Guevara signed a mandate to provide materials, space, and machines to Cuban lithographers. The Taller Experimental Graphics Workshop was born.

As you stroll the historic cobblestone streets of Old Havana you will experience the sensations Ernest Hemingway felt amongst centuries old architecture.

- Available time to shop at the Old San Jose Warehouse, a large craft market offering some of the most recognizable souvenirs of Cuba. There are garish-colored paintings by local artists, guayaberas (short-sleeve, open-neck Cuban shirts), sculptures, leather, jewelry, and various trinkets & gadgets bearing the image of Che Guevara. The metal-framed maritime warehouse is retro and Art Deco. It is worth the visit alone.
- Stop at a premium cigar shop in the Castle of the Three Magi Kings of Morro (El Moro), by the lighthouse which was built in 1845. The official shop has a broad selection of cigars, rum, and coffee. You will have an opportunity select your Habanos with the friendly advice of a Cuban aficionado.

Perched on the promontory on the opposite side of the harbor from Old Havana, El Moro can be seen for miles as it dominates the entrance to the harbor. It was built in 1589 as a guard fortress. At night the Spanish would place a heavy chain over the water across the harbor entrance. The fortress was captured by the British in 1762 during a surprise land attack. Spain regained Havana 11 months later in exchange for Florida.

- Lunch at El Rum Rum de la Habana, a private restaurant with wonderful seafood in the heart of Old Havana. You will enjoy live music and friendly staff. (Included)
 - You will have the opportunity to caravan in iconic 1950's Vintage American cars and cruise the Malecon (a broad esplanade, roadway, and seawall) and stop for photos. It is a step back in time nostalgic experience. (Included)
 - Visit the Galería Raúl Corrales. This boutique gallery displays the photography works of Raul Corrales, Fidel Castro's official photographer from 1959 to 1961. He was one of the best of a small group that became known as Cuba's "epic revolutionary photographers". His photos of Castro, Ché Guevara, the guerrillas, and peasants before, during and after the Cuban Revolution established him. Among his early subjects was Ernest Hemingway, who lived in Cuba for almost twenty years.
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Your visit will be hosted by Claudia Corrales, granddaughter of Raúl Corrales. An accomplished photographer in her own right, Claudia serves as a resource person for National Geographic Photographic Expeditions in Cuba. Gallery Limited Edition prints of Raul Corrales' works are available and come with the Gallery Stamp and a Certificate of Authenticity. Also, available are works by other contemporary Cuban photographers.

- Optional drop-in (but a must) at the Floridita, perhaps the most famous bar in Cuba. It's the cradle of the Daiquiri and homage to Nobel Prize winner, Ernest Hemingway. In 1932 the American novelist fished swordfish off the north coast of Cuba. The same year, he settled at the Ambos Mundos hotel in Old Havana, just a few hundred yards from Floridita. There he began the final version of his work, "For Whom the Bells Toll". One morning, Hemingway was walking on Obispo Street, where both the Floridita and the Ambos Mundos are located. Hemingway came into the bar to go to the toilet. The drinks everyone was having attracted him. He tasted one and said: "That's good, but I prefer mine without sugar and double rum". Since then, Hemingway came each morning to the Floridita at about ten o'clock to settle on his corner stool at the bar, where his driver brought the morning newspapers, and have his daiquiri.

Hemingway shared the Floridita with his friends the Duke of Windsor, Gene Tunney, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, Gary Cooper, Spanish bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguin, Ava Gardner, Tennessee Williams, Katharine Hepburn, Errol Flynn, and Spencer Tracy. Even when Ernest Hemingway lived in the Finca Vigía and no longer in the Hotel Ambos Mundos, he drove from his home to the bar just to drink his beloved daiquiri. According to legend, after 2, 3, 4 daiquiris he came up with the idea for his book "For Whom the Bell Tolls".

Enjoy live music, have a daiquiri, and take your picture with the life-sized bronze statue of Ernest Hemingway sitting at the writer's original 'regular place'.

- Return to your hotel.
 - Dinner. (Not Included) This is a perfect evening to explore Old Havana's paladars within easy walking distance of your hotel.
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- Attend El Canonazo, a Havana tradition which first started hundreds of years ago. At 9 o'clock, a cannon was fired from the colonial Fortress of San Carlos de Cabana to indicate the gates of the Old City were about to close. A large chain was then raised from the water and put across the entrance to the Harbor to keep pirates from sailing in. You will go to the fort for the ceremony where the tradition continues, other than the chain which is no longer used. (Included)

Day 3 • Valley of magnificent mogotes / Balcony of the valley / Goat farm / Wine & cheese at sunset

- Breakfast in your hotel. (Included)
- Morning departure west to the rural agricultural province of Pinar del Río.
- Brief stop at Las Barrigonas, a clean, staff friendly rest stop with fresh squeezed fruit juices, one of the best Pina Coladas, a snack grill and gift shop.
- Drive through the picturesque Viñales National Park, many consider the most beautiful nature spot on the island, in the heart of Cuba's prime tobacco growing region. The small town of Vinales, population 29,000, sits in the center of a flat valley surrounded by stunning formations known as mogotes.

The small rural community of Vinales has less of an opportunity of donations for need than Havana. You may wish to give gifts there. We will be glad to give you guidance.

- Lunch at private restaurant Balcón del Valle (Balcony of the Valley) and you will see why when you get there, one of the most spectacular views of the entire trip. You will have the opportunity to visit the kitchen, chat with the cooks preparing the food over a charcoal fire; it is rustic and wonderful. (Included)

You will be joined for lunch by a friend, Cesar, whose family has lived for multi-generations in the Valley. He will tell his story of life in rural Cuba and serve as your local host while in Vinales.

- Lodging check-in.
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- Stroll main street Vinales with your local host who will accompany you as he introduces you to his hometown.
 - Drop by the open-air craft market.
 - Visit a family farm which supplies organic vegetables and produces the goat cheese used by paladars in town. There is a lake stocked with fish, including tilapia. You will see the baby goats and the goats for milking. After viewing the cheese making process you will head to the veranda for wine and hand-crafted cheese to enjoy while watching the sunset on the mogotes. (Included)
 - Dinner at Cubar, on the main street. Acclaimed by many as the best paladar in Vinales. It has a classy aura with fresh flowers on the bar, candles on the tables and extra virgin olive oil to dress your salad. The menu choices infuse Cuban and Spanish tastes. (Included)
- Evening to enjoy the small-town nightlife.

Day 4 • Valley by horse / Tobacco rum honey coffee / Tour Viñales

- Breakfast in your Vinales lodging. (Included)
 - Your morning horseback/ horse drawn cart ride will be in the National Park, surrounded by the mogotes formed during the Jurassic period. You will be accompanied by your local host and an experienced campesino as you trek amongst fields where oxen still plow. A demonstration of cigar rolling is first up, and during the leisurely ride you will stop to see honey and coffee production. The morning excursion delivers a real memory maker. (Included)
 - Your lunch will be at a family-owned farm. Walking the grounds you will see fruit trees, orchids, vegetables and herbs. This is an outstanding photo opportunity. (Included)
 - See an elementary school in the small cooperative of Chile, and then visit a family with children in their extremely modest home. Donations of school supplies, clothes, and toiletries are welcome and appreciated.
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- Return to your lodging to freshen & relax.
- Motorcoach tour the Vinales Valley and see the mogotes, up close. They are irregularly shaped steep-sided hills that can rise as high as 985 feet and have bases as much as a mile in length. The mogotes were once underwater and during the Jurassic Age, about 200 million years ago, they were the first formations to emerge from the Atlantic Ocean during the creation of Cuba. Many consider this the most beautiful nature spot on the island.
- Dinner. (Not included) There are a number of small paladares on the main street. In addition to Cubar, favorites are 3J Bar de Tapas (Tres Jotas) and El Olivo.

Day 5 • Havana return / Hemingway's home / Art studio / Internationally famous Tropicana

- Breakfast in your Vinales lodging. (Included)
 - Depart Vinales.
 - To be efficient on time, a lunch of freshly made cold sandwiches will be enjoyed while traveling on board your motorcoach. The day before, let our local host know the kind of sandwich you want. You will have 4 choices: ham & cheese, cheese & ham, ham, or cheese!! (Included)
 - Visit Ernest Hemingway's Finca Vigía, known as the Lookout Farm in English. His home is in San Francisco de Paula, 8 miles southeast of Havana. Like his Key West home, it is now a museum. The building was constructed on a hill in 1886 by a Catalan architect. The name 'Vigía' comes from the surveillance barracks of the Spanish Army that previously occupied the land. From the back veranda and the adjacent tower, Hemingway enjoyed an excellent view of downtown Havana.
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He lived in the Cuban house longer than any of his other homes, from mid-1939 to 1960, first renting it and then purchasing it in December 1940 after marrying his third wife, Martha Gellhorn. During his time at Finca Vigía, Hemingway wrote much of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a novel set during the Spanish Civil War, and portions of *A Moveable Feast*. While living there he also penned *The Old Man and the Sea*, which tells the story of a fisherman from the nearby town of Cojimar who worked the waters off Havana. He accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature at the home.

Docents and curators affectionately look after original furniture, artwork, personal memorabilia, & other objects collected by the author. Of special importance is Hemingway's library containing thousands of irreplaceable letters & telegrams, photographs, scrapbooks, manuscripts, & galley proofs. His boat Pilar made famous from Papa's Marlin fishing and hunting German submarines off the northern coast of the island is on the grounds.

You will have a bit of time for a refreshment, visit the souvenir shop and enjoy live music on the grounds of the finca where Papa penned some of his greatest works.

- Visit the Studio and Workshop of Beatriz Santacana, located in the trendy neighborhood of Ambassador Residences, Miramar. Her work depicts everyday people as the main characters. In a unique exhibition of her ceramic sculptures, paintings, and drawings you will have a relaxing visit in her spectacular studio.
 - Check into your Habana boutique hotel, in the heart of Havana near the city's Old Havana district.
 - Dinner at Ivan Chefs Justo, a private restaurant with wonderful décor and ambiance. Chef Ivan studied in Montreal and was once Fidel Castro's chef. The restaurant has a series of levels, and an eclectic collection of trinkets, photos, and knickknacks like from your grandmother's house. Highly recommended on TripAdvisor. The restaurant has hosted the likes of Mick Jagger and Chef Guy Fieri. Learn why two chairs are hung upside down from rafters. (Included)
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- **OPTIONAL EXCURSION:** The Tropicana is a Cuban international icon. The cabaret dates to 1939 and served as the center of Cuba's jet-set nightlife during the 1940s and 1950s. It's a glimpse of pre-revolution Cuba, where Carmen Miranda, Josephine Baker, Nat King Cole, and others dazzled wealthy guests with Latin dance numbers performed by women with 10-pound headdresses. It is located on a tropical six-acre garden estate in the Miramar neighborhood, the most glamorous section of Havana during the 1950s.

The Tropicana helped spread Cuban culture globally and the performers created the showgirl-era. The lavish costumes and vibrant dance styles quickly spread from Cuba to Las Vegas, New York, and Paris.

A full orchestra, loud colors, sultry rhythms, contortionists & acrobats provide a stunning production of more than 200 singers and dancers that will entertain you under the stars. There is a dress code of 'casual elegance' at the Tropicana. Women should not wear shorts, and men are asked to wear long pants (not jeans), a collared shirt and closed shoes. (Included- transport, premium seating, cola & rum) *(This is an optional excursion and details on booking will be sent to you when you register.)*

Day 6 • Hemingway by the Sea / Organic garden / Private cooking lesson / Panoramic view / Last night in Habana

- Breakfast in your hotel. (Included)
 - Travel a short distance to Cojimar, a charming fishing village east of Havana. This quaint coastal enclave held a special place in Ernest Hemingway's heart, as it was his favorite fishing port in Cuba and served as the inspiration for his iconic 1952 novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. The novel itself achieved great acclaim, earning the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. In a generous gesture, he donated the Nobel medal to the Cuban people, emphasizing his deep connection to the island.
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As you arrive at Cojimar's harbor, you'll find yourself standing where Hemingway would bring his legendary boat Pilar to drink with the locals at La Terraza. Papa (as Hemingway was affectionately known) and Cojimar native Gregorio Fuentes, his trusted companion, would sail on daring expeditions—whether in pursuit of marlins or even on covert missions to track German submarines during World War II.

At the water's edge, a metal bust of Hemingway stands, a tribute lovingly donated by the local fishermen. Capture this poignant moment with photos against the backdrop of the 17th-century Spanish Lookout Fort, which has witnessed centuries of maritime history.

But there's more to Cojimar than historical landmarks. La Terraza, a rustic fisherman's bar nestled along the Bay of Cojimar, played a pivotal role in Hemingway's life. Here, he would dock his beloved boat, Pilar, and spend countless afternoons in the company of the local fishermen. Among them was Fuentes, who some believe served as the real-life inspiration for the novel's central character—Santiago, the old man of the sea.

And then there's the intriguing connection to Manolo, the young boy in Hemingway's tale. Some say that Manolo was modeled after the young son of La Terraza's owner, aptly named Manolito.

- Explore the charming organic garden tended by brothers Jesus and Julio. Here, they unveil the art of cultivating herbs, vegetables, and fruits, most destined for the private restaurant where you'll soon be and to the local senior center. You'll see Mangos, their golden skins ripe with tropical sweetness, Bananas, curving gracefully from sturdy stalks, Plantains, versatile and awaiting transformation into dishes, Squash, in the sun-kissed soil, Avocado trees, their leaves casting dappled shade, Coffee plants, their glossy leaves promising a rich brew, and if fortune smiles, perhaps even a glimpse of the Cuban Emerald Hummingbird, a tiny marvel flitting amidst the foliage.

The organic garden, nestled within a quiet residential neighborhood, serves as both a vital supplier for the local restaurant and a source of produce for the family. Witness firsthand how sustainable practices flourish, bridging the gap between nature's bounty and culinary creativity.

And here's a thoughtful touch: If you have donations you wish to give this would be a good place. The brothers give part of their garden harvest to the local school and a senior center, and they will see the gifts are properly distributed.

- **UNIQUE: Lunch. (Included)** In this picturesque fishing village, just a few blocks from the bay, you'll find yourself at the paladar El Ajiaco, where a culinary experience awaits. It wears its humble charm with pride, a place where flavors matter more than frills. Food networks from around the world have sought out its unassuming warmth, and even notable celebrities like Kevin Bacon and Sigourney Weaver have stepped through its doors.

Your cooking and mojito-making lessons take center stage. Imagine working side by side with humorous and talented chefs, shaping dishes that celebrate Cuba's flavors: Lobster, succulent and brimming with ocean essence, Ropa Vieja, the tender shredded beef stewed in aromatic spices, and Ajiaco soup, a hearty blend of root vegetables and herbs. But there's more—the barkeep beckons. You'll craft a special Cuban mojito, balancing mint, lime, honey, and rum. Sip it slowly, savoring the moment.

This experience isn't just about food; it's about connecting with Cuba's soul, one delicious bite at a time.

- In route back to Havana, take a brief photo stop on a hill in Casablanca, a small hamlet which traces its origins to 1762. Here, shipbuilders toiled, shaping vessels that would sail across oceans. These sturdy ships served the mighty Spanish galleons, laden with spoils from South America, destined for the royal court of Spain.

Atop the hill, overlooking the Bay of Havana, stands the 66-foot-tall Christ of Havana - Cristo de La Habana. A colossal figure that carries a tale of its own—a promise made by President Fulgencio Batista's wife. After an assassination attempt on the US-backed leader in 1957, she vowed this monument, a symbol of faith and protection.

Irony dances in the details: On Christmas Day 1958, the statue emerged from its shroud, bathed in sunlight, just one week before the dictator fled as the Revolution surged. Yet, there stood the Christ, created in Italy, its 67 white marble blocks blessed by Pope Pius XII himself.

So, as you gaze at the panoramic view of the city, remember the echoes of a tumultuous era. The Christ of Havana stands as a silent witness—a beacon of hope, resilience, and the enduring spirit of Cuba.

- Return to your hotel.
- Dinner. (Not Included) With all the great food you have experienced, this is your chance to visit a privately owned restaurant you may have heard about. Your guide will be of assistance.
- Independent option: Enjoy the evening at Fabrica de Arte Cubano, Cuban Art Factory (F.A.C.), a former cooking oil plant, built in 1910, has become world-famous. The mixed-use arts space has several bars, live theater, jazz, contemporary dance, concerts, DJs, and rotating art exhibitions. Note: F.A.C. is open Thursday – Sunday, 8:00 pm – 3:00 am.
- Your last night in Cuba. Disfruta de la noche (enjoy the night)!

Day 7 • Havana / Departure

If you wish to extend your stay for the weekend, we can arrange an extension at your hotel and provide Sunday transport to the airport. The weekend would be Independent Time for you to explore Havana on your own. This is optional and information on booking will be sent to you when you register for the tour.

- Breakfast in your hotel. (Included)
 - Transfer to José Martí International Airport in Havana for flight home. (Included)
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- Airlines recommend you be at your departure airport 3 hours before takeoff. Please prepare accordingly. Your guide will meet you in the lobby of your hotel.
 - After you clear Cuban Immigration, you will be screened and your carry on will be scanned. In the departure hall there is a duty-free shop, places to buy snacks and drinks, as well as souvenirs. You may log in for a free half hour of Wi-Fi.
 - When you arrive at your U.S. entry airport you will need to clear U.S. Immigration and U.S. Customs. If asked by an Immigration Officer about your trip to Cuba, note that you were on a sanctioned Support of the Cuban People tour. If asked what you did, tell the truth, and explain it was an opportunity to directly engage and support the Cuban people, to learn about their life and country. To be clear: you were not on a vacation.
 - Memories of a wonderful visit to the Pearl of the Antilles: Cuba! (Included)
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