

## 30 Days | Discover Mexico & Cuba | With Flights

Havana - Vinales - Cienfuegos - Trinidad - Playa del Carmen - Puebla - Oaxaca  
- Palenque - Merida - Valladolid

From **\$10,999** Typically \$11,999 ✈ pp twin share



Return International Economy Class flights from Australia

Small-group tour in Cuba and Mexico

Modern Hotel Accommodation & Traditional Cuban B&B's with Breakfast

2025 Departure Dates NOW AVAILABLE!

## Description



Embark on a transformative journey through the vibrant cultures of Cuba and Mexico with our expertly guided small group tours

Begin your month long adventure in the enchanting streets of Havana, where the rhythm of salsa and the warmth of the Cuban people welcome you with open arms. Dive deep into Cuban culture as you explore historic landmarks, bustling markets, and quaint neighborhoods, all while staying in traditional Cuban B&Bs for an authentic experience.

From Havana, your journey takes you on a whirlwind tour of Cuba's most iconic destinations, from the French-influenced architecture of Cienfuegos to the colonial charm of Trinidad. Explore the World Heritage-listed city of Camaguey, soak up the natural beauty of Baracoa, and dance to the beat of live music in Santiago de Cuba. Along the way, indulge in local cuisine, take part in immersive cultural activities, and connect with the vibrant spirit of the island.

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Read our Latest Travel Blogs at '['Wake Up Here'](#)'

After immersing yourself in the rich tapestry of Cuban life, it's time to hop across the Caribbean to Mexico City, where a world of flavors, history, and adventure awaits. Spend your days exploring ancient ruins, relaxing on sun-kissed beaches, and wandering through colonial cities steeped in tradition.

Highlights include guided tours of Puebla, Oaxaca, and Merida, as well as visits to archaeological sites like Chichén Itzá and Palenque.

Throughout your journey, knowledgeable English-speaking guides will lead



you on unforgettable experiences, from cooking demonstrations with local experts to bicycle taxi tours of winding Cuban streets. Travel in comfort with private air-conditioned coaches or minivans, and enjoy seamless transportation between destinations and included activities.

From the vibrant streets of Havana to the bustling markets of Mexico City, this tour offers a unique opportunity to discover the authentic charm of two of the Caribbean's most captivating destinations. With monthly departures from February to November, there's never been a better time to embark on this unforgettable adventure. So pack your bags and prepare to fall in love with the magic of Cuba and Mexico on this once-in-a-lifetime journey.

## Itinerary

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### Day 1

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#### Australia ✈ Mexico City

Welcome to Mexico City! Check in to your hotel and enjoy the rest of your day at leisure.

**Meals:** Inflight Menu

**Accommodation:** Fiesta Inn Aeropuerto Ciudad de Mexico

## Day 2

### Mexico City ✈ Havana, Cuba

Bienvenido! Welcome to Cuba! You'll be joining a very long list of people who have become enchanted with Havana and who have wanted to experience all that the city has to offer. Your own motivations will be far more positive than many who have taken an interest in the city in the past, however. Havana is a city that has been coveted, again and again, filled to the brim with the wealth and prosperity of the New World. Granted, much of this wealth was in the natural resources of the region which were pillaged and exported back to Spain. The city has been an alluring target for invading forces, namely the Dutch, the British, the French, and various pirates. But this prosperity during colonial times is what gave Havana much of its undeniable visual character - namely its achingly beautiful architecture. Havana is the jewel in the crown of Cuba (and the entire Caribbean in our opinion).

She's a dishevelled beauty, and while this is all part of her charm, the burgeoning tourist trade is allowing more and more of the city to be restored to its former beauty, courtesy of those tremendously timely tourist dollars. The heart of the city (Havana's Old Town) is a UNESCO World Heritage site, helping to solidify Havana's ongoing maintenance efforts. You'll have plenty of time to explore Havana during your tour, although we expect that you'll want to get her know her as soon as possible. Your first evening in Cuba is an ideal time to get acquainted with the city, even if it's just the streets immediately around your accommodation. You will quickly see that many of the things you assumed to be true about Cuba are just as you thought, although these are more than superficial charms. You will wander past enticing doorways with salsa music wafting out, intermingled with the pungently sweet aroma of cigars. Bold characters will march down the street, clad in luridly beautiful colours while having passionate conversations with each other. And everywhere those antique cars prowl the streets, crunching their gears as they sail past you. Havana can be a beautiful sensory overload, and it's a lot to take in on your first day.

Your Private Cuba tour begins with your airport transfer on arrival from Havana's José Martí International Airport to your accommodation in the city. During this first part of your Cuba tour, you will have the chance to meet your guide and discuss the finer details of your tour itinerary before they escort you on an orientation walk of the local area. 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. Tonight, we will organize a special welcome dinner. This will be a great chance for you to get to know your guide and ask any burning questions you have. Your guide can also get to know a little more about you, so they can tailor your tour experience to your interests and expectations.

**A NOTE ABOUT YOUR EVENINGS IN CUBA:** We at Locally Sourced Cuba Tours along with our expert local tour guides would be happy to arrange a wide variety of evening activities for you, during your time in Cuba. Evenings are generally free time, allowing you to explore at your leisure. Although of course, if you become stuck for ideas, we would be delighted to make some suggestions, and your guide will be available to organise tickets, reservations and accompany you out if required. Your guide will have some fantastic ideas and recommendations based on your tastes and preferences.

**Meals:** Welcome Dinner

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 3

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### Havana

Today you will really get to know Havana, and the heart of Havana is its Old Town; the village that essentially gave birth to the modern city. The best way to see this sumptuously beautiful district is on an Old Havana Walking Tour. Your guide will be with you every step of the way, perhaps encouraging you to keep moving when you inadvertently stop and stare at your surroundings every few minutes or so. Like much of the New World, Havana was once a walled fortress, although the growth of the city meant that it would soon need to sprawl beyond these original boundaries. There's an abundance of cultural riches on offer, and you'll walk past the El Capitolio, the Museo de la Revolución, and the Gran Teatro Habana.

This Old Havana Walking Tour also takes in some of the most stunning squares you will ever see – the Plaza de Armas, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza San Francisco de Asis and Plaza Vieja. There is much to see on the walking tour, and you'll think that the beauty of Havana has been squeezed into a relatively compact area. There's a great deal of people watching to be done too, as you get to know the people who make up this vibrant city. On your walking tour of Old Havana, you will also get to visit a Mercado Agropecuario. What better sight than stands filled with tubers, vegetables and fruits? Potatoes, yucca, taro, sweet potatoes and plantains compete with tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, watercress, Swiss chard, onions, peppers, cucumbers, green beans, beets and eggplants. And the fruits—guavas, pineapples, papayas, grapefruits, bananas, oranges, mangoes, watermelon and lemons—reign supreme. Meats are also sold at these markets, mostly fresh pork, mutton and ham.

After an engrossing morning of walking there will be a rather welcome break for lunch at an authentic Cuban Paladar. Here you can enjoy some fantastic Cuban hospitality while you eat at a stunning example of the culinary scene that has flourished throughout the country in recent years. Now you can take a break from walking, and you are no doubt itching to take a ride in one of those classic cars that parade through the streets of the city. This iconic method of transportation is synonymous with Cuba, and it sure gives your legs a rest! On a Convertible Classic Car Tour, you'll be whisked out of Old Havana and will clearly be able to see the contrast with the newer parts of central Havana, Havana Vedado and the faded grandeur of Miramar. We will also take you past the Colon Cemetery, Revolution Square and the iconic Malecon.

It's time for a drinks break at El Floridita, one of Hemingway's favourite bars. There's even a life-sized statue of him at the bar. He enjoyed the daiquiris here, and you can do the same. You will also often find a great band here to enjoy some traditional Cuban music. In the evening you will have some free time to make the most of Havana's lively nightlife. You can choose to do this independently, or your local guide will be available to host you. Your local guide will be able to recommend a range of options and organise tickets and transfers (paid for locally).

**Meals:** Breakfast and Lunch

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 4

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### Havana

Today is a free day to rest or continue to explore Havana with the support of your local guide. There is a range of optional activities your guide can recommend and help to organise that can be paid for locally (transportation and entrance fees). Your guide will have gotten to know you well by now and will have their own recommendations and suggestions to share. When anyone mentions Cuba two of the first things that come to mind are cigars and rum, immortalized by Hemingway. There is a rich, cultural tradition when it comes to producing the world's best cigars and rum, and on this tour you will gain an insight into just why these famous exports are so intertwined with Cuba herself. Today you might choose to visit the Havana Rum Museum. If you think this museum looks palatial, you are correct since it's housed in a converted old palace. Naturally you will have the chance to learn about the rum making process and even do some tastings.

There is the opportunity to upgrade your package at the Havana Rum Museum (paid locally). Ask your guide for more details. Another option is to visit the Partagas Cigar Factory where the mystique behind cigar making will be revealed, allowing you to gain a sense of the significance of these beauties. You will also witness first-hand the amount of effort, care and tradition that goes into making these Cuban treasures (even non-smokers will find this tour very interesting). You might like to take this opportunity to visit Havana's underrated beach – Playas del Este, and spend time getting to know the locals. Though not known to be one of the best beaches in Cuba, Playas del Este will be a pleasant surprise. It begins just 18 kilometres to the east of the capital at the small resort of Bacuranao. Although none of these places has so far witnessed the kind of mega development redolent of Cancún or Varadero, Playas del Este is still a popular tourist drawcard.

All of Havana comes to play and relax on the soft white sands and clear aquamarine waters of the beautiful Atlantic coastline. If you would like to visit the beach, just let your guide know and they will arrange transportation (paid locally). There are also many museums and monuments to check out, dependent on your interests. You might want to be enthralled at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Arte Cubano). This is where the crème de la crème of Cuban art is proudly displayed (and the museum exclusively displays Cuban art). Works are displayed in chronological order starting on the 3rd floor and are surprisingly varied. This ordering allows you to easily take in the development of Cuban art throughout the centuries. Amongst others, you will see the works of Guillermo Collazo, considered to be the first truly great Cuban artist. There is also Rafael Blanco, with his cartoon-like paintings and sketches; along with Raúl Martínez, a master of 1960s Cuban pop art; and the Picasso-like Wifredo Lam. Or you might choose to be rapturously occupied by Havana's Museum of the Revolution, and even the building in which it's housed has a story to tell. This grand building, deliberately impressive in scope, was the Presidential Palace prior to the Cuban Revolution. After the government was overthrown in 1959, the building was home to the Government and the Council of Ministers until 1965, when it hosted Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. In 1974, it became a museum dedicated to the Cuban Revolution, and two years later, it witnessed the approval of the 1976 Constitution. It was awarded national monument status in 2010. Another option is a tour of the El Capitolio Nacional (National Capitol of Cuba), allowing you to explore one of the most emblematic buildings in Havana. This majestic construction, located in the Centro Habana, is similar to that in Washington D.C, but a meter higher, a meter wider, and a meter longer, as well as much more rich in detail. To finish its construction, they needed more than 5000 workers, 3 years, 3 months and 20 days: as well as approximately 17 million American dollars.

If it's souvenirs you are after, Havana's largest arts and crafts market is the Almacenes de San José at the Port of Havana. Built in 1885, this mammoth and ornate warehouse now serves as a cultural centre with art exhibitions, theatrical performances and recreational activities. Its most significant contribution is undoubtedly the handicrafts on sale. Unlike other Latin American countries, Cuba does



not have a strong tradition in producing handicrafts. It is therefore really surprising to see how Cuban artistic handicraft has developed over the last three decades.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 5

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### Havana 🚕 Pinar del Rio province 🚕 Viñales

Welcome to the Pinar del Rio province and the beautiful surroundings of Las Terrazas and Soroa. This region was once lush, then had its natural resources exploited, before returning to its former pristine state as the result of a project spearheaded by Fidel Castro himself in the 1960s. It's now a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. To start the day, we'll take a short detour to the fishing village of Jaimanitas, and this unassuming part of the city has been utterly transformed by the artist Jose Fuster. Fuster has made his entire home, and much of the surrounding neighbourhood, into an artwork using tiles in mosaic forms. This public art installation is lovingly known as Fusterlandia and has now spread to encompass more than 80 homes, all decorated with ornate murals and domes to reflect the personality of each of Fuster's neighbours. There could be no living space more personalised.

In addition to the idiosyncratic homes, Furster has also contributed a chess park with giant boards and tables, a theatre, and public swimming pools. Fuster's art has become a cherished part of Cuban culture and arguably joins the rank of other public artworks such as that of Gaudi in Barcelona or that of Brâncuși in the Romanian city of Targu Jiu - art that has come to almost define a particular part of a city. We have time today for a walk around the Las Terrazas Township to meet the friendly locals and to admire the pretty San Juan Mountain stream. In Las Terrazas there are also art, woodwork and pottery studios that are open to the public. The entire town has become known as a type of artist's retreat. Cafetal Buenavista is Cuba's oldest (now partially restored) coffee plantation, built in 1801 by refugees from Haiti. Much of the property (such as the dormitories that housed the slaves who worked the plantation) is now in ruin, but this adds to its haunting quality. The Cafetal Buenavista can be seen on the Sendero las Delicias hike, which also takes in lush, green landscapes and bright, coloured houses before arriving at the small village of Soroa. Often referred to as The Gate to The Garden of Eden, this picturesque village is the starting point for many hikes to the soaring Sierra del Rosario.

In an effort to accentuate the natural beauty of the Soroa village, the Spanish landowner Thomás Felipe Camacho established some 700 different types of orchids to start an Orchid botanical garden in the area. Incidentally, there are an estimated 20,000 different plant and fern species all around Soroa. We'll also take you to Salto Arco Iris, a magnificent waterfall that forms part of the Rio Manantiades. The great river churns through the rainforest before cascading down a 22-metre drop, creating an enclosed pool. This is an utterly perfect spot for jumping in and cooling off. At the end of the day, you will transfer to Vinales.

As you are arriving into Vinales, there will be time to stop at the Los Jazmines look-out point to admire Vinales and the Pinar del Rio province in all its splendour. In the evening it is time to enjoy Vinales' limited but lively nightlife. Vinales' tranquil natural beauty sits comfortably alongside a lively and jaunty nightlife, which will surely make your stay in Viñales a memorable one. You can choose to explore in the evenings independently, or your local guide will be available to host you. Your local guide will be able to recommend a range of options and organise tickets and transfers (paid for locally).

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 6

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## Viñales

A rich, fertile valley of the Pinar del Rio province is where you will find Viñales. This compact and authentic village is one of the most breathtaking spots in all of Cuba. In the heart of Cuba's prime tobacco growing region, Viñales is deceptively industrious, and many of Cuba's trademark cigars are made from tobacco that is grown here. Upon arrival you will have the chance to have a look around the township and experience the lively music and dance scene that Viñales excels in. In case you were wondering if the town was a type of rural fantasy-fulfilment, allow us to set you straight. That farmer using an oxen and cart to transport his crops would be doing it with this method regardless of whether you were watching or not. Life simply moves at a slower pace here and is unbothered and not particularly influenced by the modernity of the rest of the world... or the rest of Cuba, for that matter. The perfect opportunity to experience an authentic slice of Cuban rural life. With the compact size of Viñales in mind, your guide will take you on a walking or cycling tour of the Vinales township and surrounding farmlands.

As you spend time in the Viñales Valley you will visit the many different plantations of the region: manioc, arrowroot, sweet potato, tobacco, tomato, banana, mango and pineapple. Crossing small private farms, you can see the farmers working with their oxen and their traditional methods of cultivation. The mogotes (rounded hills) are a particular landscape that can only be found in this area. There is also the opportunity to taste delicious sugar cane juice mixed with grapefruit juice, known as guaratón. There will also be a range of optional activities you can choose from and pay for locally, including: **LUNCH AT AN ORGANIC FARM** El Paraíso is a slice of paradise in the Valley of Silence, located in Viñales, Cuba. It's part organic farm or finca and part family-run restaurant owned by Wilfredo and his daughters. **MURAL DE LA PREHISTORIA** Four kilometres west of Viñales you will find the Mural de la Prehistoria, a 120-metre-long painting designed in 1961 by Leovigildo González Morillo, a follower of Mexican artist Diego Rivera.

On a cliff at the foot of the 617- metre-high Sierra de Viñales, the highest portion of the Sierra de los Órganos, this massive mural took 18 people four years to complete. The huge snail, dinosaurs, sea monsters and humans on the cliff symbolize the theory of evolution and are either impressively psychedelic or monumentally horrific, depending on your viewpoint. **TOBACCO FARM AND DRYING HOUSE** That rich red earth that you see is ideally suited to the cultivation of tobacco, and you will learn about the birth of cigars. To learn about the local tobacco-growing process you can visit a tobacco plantation and see a fully operating secadero (drying house) in which tobacco leaves are cured from February to May. The evocative scent that wafts out of the secadero will forever be associated with Cuba. **CUEVAS DEL INDIO** Five kilometres to the north of Viñales is where the Cuevas del Indio (Indian Caves) can be found. Your guide can escort you to this expansive natural hollow, which has well developed for tourists, with lights and an underground boat tour. **GRAN CAVERNA DE SANTO TOMAS** Gran Caverna de Santo Tomas is Cuba's largest cave system and the second largest on the American continent.

There are over 46km of galleries on eight levels, with a 1km section accessible to visitors. There's no artificial lighting, but headlamps are provided for the 90-minute guided tour. Highlights include bats, stalagmites and stalactites, underground pools, interesting rock formations and a replica of an ancient native Indian mural. **HIKE TO LOS AQUATICOS** Your guide can organise a sunrise hike to Los Aquaticos. A kilometre beyond the turn-off to Dos Hermanas and the Mural de la Prehistoria, a dirt road twists up to the mountain community of Los Aquáticos, founded in 1943 by followers of visionary Antoñica Izquierdo, who discovered the healing power of water when the campesinos of this area had no access to conventional medicine. They colonized the mountain slopes and two families still live there. There are sensational views over three of the area's valleys from the top. **COCO SOLO AND**

**PALMARITO MOGOTES TRAIL** The Coco Solo and Palmarito Mogotes Trail starts on a spur road about 100m south of the entrance to La Ermita hotel and progresses for 8km, taking in the Valle del Silencio, the Coco Solo and Palmarito mogotes and the Mural de la Prehistoria.

There are great views and ample opportunities to discover the local flora and fauna including diverse bird life. As you spend time in the Viñales Valley you will visit the many different plantations of the region: manioc, arrowroot, sweet potato, tobacco, tomato, banana, mango and pineapple. Crossing small private farms, you can see the farmers working with their oxen and their traditional methods of cultivation. The mogotes (rounded hills) are a particular landscape that can only be found in this area. There is also the opportunity to taste delicious sugar cane juice mixed with grapefruit juice, known as guaratón. **FABRICA DE TABACOS FRANCISCO DONATIEN** Take a tour of the renowned Fabrica de Tabacos Francisco Donatien Cuban cigar factory in Pinar del Rio, which rolls out some of Cuba's finest: the Trinidad, Cohiba & Vegeros brands. **FABRICA DE BEBIDAS CASA GARAY** At the Fábrica de Bebidas Casa Garay workers use a secret recipe to distil sweet and dry versions of the city's signature liquor, Guayabita del Pinar guava brandy. Multilingual factory tours are topped off with a taste of the brew in the sampling room. **LOS PORTALES** Cave of Los Portales is a Natural Historic Site of great monumental value that summarizes natural, cultural and historical aspects. The cave presents physiogeographic formations of great value, and it was the headquarters of the Western Army commanded by Commander Ernesto Che Guevara, during the October Crisis in 1962.

In the evening it is time to enjoy Vinales' limited but lively nightlife. Vinales' tranquil natural beauty sits comfortably alongside a lively and jaunty nightlife, which will surely make your stay in Viñales a memorable one. You can choose to explore in the evenings independently, or your local guide will be available to host you. Your local guide will be able to recommend a range of options and organise tickets and transfers (paid for locally).

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 7

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### Viñales 🚕 Havana

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At the end of Day Seven you will transfer back to Havana to overnight.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 8

### Havana ➔ Zapata Peninsula

Today you will travel to the beautiful Zapata Peninsula to visit Playa Girón and the infamous Bay of Pigs. The natural beauty of this area is stunning with cave systems, coral formations and an abundance of sea life making it a must for snorkelers, divers and ocean lovers alike. The sandy arc of Playa Girón and Playa Larga nestles peacefully on the eastern side of the infamous Bahía de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs), backed by one of those gloriously old-fashioned Cuban villages where everyone knows everyone else. Notorious as the place where the Cold War almost got hot, the beach is actually named for a French pirate, Gilbert Girón, who met his end here by decapitation in the early 1600s at the hands of embittered locals. In April 1961 it was the scene of another botched raid, the ill-fated, CIA-sponsored invasion that tried to land on these remote sandy beaches in one of modern history's classic David-and-Goliath struggles.

Lest we forget, there are still plenty of propaganda-spouting billboards dotted around rehashing past glories. While visiting the Zapata Peninsula, there will be a range of optional activities available to you, that your guide can help organise (paid for locally) and host you if required. These include: Museum Girón This small museum is located close to the site of the US-backed invasion of anti-Castro exiles that took place in April 1961, and focusses on the resulting battle for supremacy. While the tone may lead towards propaganda – with Cuba still a communist state – the museum is none the less an interesting tale in how a small band of Cuban revolutionaries managed to hold off the might of the United States in what was America's first defeat in Latin America. Exhibits include a fighter plane and tank in the museum grounds. Snorkeling and Diving Not just the site of the 1960s battle, on your Bay of Pigs tour you'll discover that the area also has extraordinary natural beauty both on land and at sea. One of the best ways to explore it further is to head into the warm waves for yourself, since the Bay of Pigs is one of the best places in Cuba to go snorkelling or diving. Guamá Tourist Park This park spans an incredible 10,500 square kilometers within the Zapata Peninsula. It is an area of virgin forest inhabited by a huge range of native species, as your tour will demonstrate. But the highlight has to be traveling by boat along the park's still waterways and its lake, La Laguna del Tesoro, with fish splashing in the water and birds flying elegantly overhead. Keep an eye out for gold too, which is the treasure (*tesoro*) the lake is said to hide.

Criadero de Cocodrilos Crocodile-breeding Facility This facility has successfully saved the native Cuban crocodile from near extinction. Founded in 1962, almost immediately after the Bay of Pigs

invasion, the focus of the center has long been conservation and breeding. Visitors can see crocodiles of all ages, from the very young to full-grown adults, and can have their photograph taken with a still-manageable juvenile. Sendero Enigma de las Rocas hike. On this hike you will admire the rich flora and fauna in the area and at the end of the trail there is a cenote (sinkhole) where you can swim. La Casa de Zunzuncito Here you will hopefully find the Cuban bee hummingbird—the smallest avian species in existence. Bird Watching Excursions We can organise a birding guide to help you explore the Zapata Peninsula. In the area we can find the Zapata Sparrow, Zapata Wren, Cuban Emerald, Bee Hummingbird, Cuban Tropicbird, Cuban Tody and many others. Situated east of Playa Larga and north of Playa Girón, Refugio de Fauna Bermejas is the place to come for birdwatching. The area is home to a whopping 28 birds that can only be found in Cuba. While some of them are elusive, depending on the time of year you visit, it's not uncommon to spot at least 10 to 15 colourful feathered creatures.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 9

### Zapata Peninsula 🚕 Cienfuegos

Cienfuegos is regularly referred to as La Perla del Sur (Pearl of the South) and today this pearl is yours for the taking. Your guide will lead you on a Cienfuegos guided city walk before taking in the grand, crumbling architecture over a cocktail at the very impressive yacht club. Amongst many other marvels, your walk will include observing the Terry Theatre, Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción (a church with supremely beautiful stained glass work), Ferrer's Palace, the former City Hall, Martí Park and the triumphal arch - the only such arch in Cuba (another nod to the French influences in the city). You will also have some time to walk along the boulevard and visit Punta Gorda (the aristocratic quarter of the city in the early 1900s), and Hotel Jagua. In the evening there is plenty to do when the sun goes down, if you don't much feel like an early night. With just over 160,000 residents, Cienfuegos is a city, although not quite a bustling metropolis.

There is a club in the city that was named in loving tribute of Benny Moré, but it might not be what you expect. El Benny Club is more of a cheesy disco (which is not without its charm) than a place to hear traditional Cuban music. You're better off heading to the Cienfuegos Casa de la Música (there is an identically named place in many Cuban cities and it's a safe bet for a good night out) for something that feels more authentically Cuban. Which is not to say that cheesy disco music cannot be Cuban! And as always, please ask your guide if you need any tips about where to go for a fabulous night out.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

## Day 10

### Cienfuegos ➔ Trinidad

Today you will travel to Trinidad, the favourite destination for many a traveller to Cuba. Trinidad was founded in 1514 by Diego Velázquez and is considered a jewel in Cuban colonial architecture. The town is sublimely beautiful and (much like Havana's Old Town) the area has been maintained as a result of its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site. On your guided walk around the town, you will come to understand why the term "living museum" is often utilised when it comes to describing this part of Cuba. It really is like time has stood still here. To live in Trinidad was once symbol of prestige, even given its isolated nature (before highways and mass transit). This prestige came at a cost, and this cost was carried by the efforts of the thousands upon thousands of slaves who worked the sugar plantations at the adjacent Valle de los Ingenios during the early 19th century.

The wealth of the town came from this sugar, and while the town lost some of its sheen in the subsequent decades after the abolition of slavery, it has retained its distinctive grace. While its former key industry is but a distant memory (and this is obviously a good thing), Trinidad has slowly found a new identity, much of which is based upon the number of visitors who are drawn to its narrow streets and preserved colonial architecture. There is also a key drawcard for visitors some 12 kilometers away from the heart of the city. The white sands and placid azure waves of Playa Ancón is the cherry on the top for Trinidad, and if this wasn't enough, some 18 kilometres to the north the dramatic and dense Sierra del Escambray (Escambray Mountains) begin, offering a beguiling change of pace from the town and the beach. On your guided walk of the Trinidad Township you will get to discover just what makes Trinidad so special, including Palacio Cantero, Canchanchara, Palacio Brunet, Plaza Mayor, Museo Romantico, and a pottery workshop among other sights. Y

our time in Trinidad would not be complete without at least one evening sitting on the steps outside the open air Casa de la Música. Every night the area beside the Cathedral in Plaza Mayor comes to life with a live salsa band. There is no cost (although tipping is generally encouraged), the drinks flow freely and inexpensively, and this all takes place under a beautiful, balmy, starry sky.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

## Day 11

### Trinidad

Over the next two days you will have some free time to explore Trinidad independently or with the support of your local guide. Your local guide can help organise a selection of optional activities, which can be paid for locally. Some options include: Explore the Valle de los Ingenios and Manaca Iznaga We can take you to the Valle de los Ingenios. The name of the area translates as the Valley of the Sugar Mills. It was here that the bulk of Cuba's sugar production took place, although this came to an end around the time that slavery was outlawed in Cuba. There are dozens of old sugar mills from the 19th century, along with slave quarters and manor houses, all dotted throughout the valley, which gives you an idea of the scope of the sugar production that once took place in the valley.

You'll get to see Manaca Iznaga, an estate purchased in 1795 by Pedro Iznaga, who became rich by

trafficking in slaves. It's both deeply interesting and somewhat unsettling. Explore the Sierra del Escambray Mountain Range\* It wouldn't be a valley without a border of mountains, and you might choose to venture into these rugged, impressive peaks (Topes de Collantes). These are the Sierra del Escambray mountain range, which run for some 90 kilometres. They're located just 20 kilometres from the centre of Trinidad. There are many ways to explore the Topes de Collantes, depending on your mobility and level of fitness. You will be able to consult with your guide to determine the best option for you. Options include: - La Batata Trail (3km) to Casa de Café, Caves, underground rivers and a small waterfall and swimming pool. Not very physically demanding. - Alfombra Mágico Trail to Finca Codina, a former coffee estate and orchid garden. Not very physically demanding. - Centinelas del Río Melodioso Trail (3km) including coffee plantation, Río Melodioso (Melodic River) and El Rocío waterfall. Not very physically demanding. - Salto Caburní trail (5 km) leads a 200-foot (62-m) waterfall with swimming hole. Medium level of difficulty. Physically demanding. Visit Playa Ancon From the mountains to the sea, you can visit Playa Ancón, and feel that some white sand beneath your feet.

Playa Ancon is one of the most beloved beaches in Cuba, and is considered to be the best on the southern coast. This white beach in the Sancti Spíritus region can be reached in less than 15 minutes in a car, although if you can muster the energy, you might want to ride a bike from Trinidad (which will take about 40 minutes, depending on your pedal power). There are some resorts right on the beach, but the area has certainly not been overdeveloped. But if you're craving an authentic beachside village, then we've got you covered. There is also the option to visit the sleepy old fishing port of Casilda, 6 kilometres due south of Trinidad, which offers a pace of life that is relaxed even by Cuban standards. Explore the Trinidad Art Scene Trinidad also has a burgeoning arts scene. At the Arts & Crafts Market, located in front of the Casade la Trova, you can find souvenirs, handmade textiles and crochet work. You should also visit Taller Alfarero. Handmade pottery has put Trinidad on the map. Taller Alfarero is a large factory where you can view local artists hand making ceramics from a traditional potter's wheel. It is also a great place for you to buy handmade ceramics for a reasonable price.

Casa del Habano also offers one of the best places in Trinidad to buy rum and cigars from. Finally a visit to Galeria La Paulet is one of the best places to buy local art. It has an interesting selection of probing, mainly abstract art that only can be found in Trinidad, Cuba. Catamaran Cruise\* The Marlin Marina Trinidad is located about 15 km south of Trinidad on the Peninsula Ancon. Make sure you arrive at the marina before 09.00 hours (09.00am) to board either a catamaran (60 seats) or a sailing boat (up to 10 places), depending on the number of participants. Soon the town of Trinidad and the small fishing community of Casilda and its bay become smaller as the ship heads off towards Cayo Blanco (not to be confused with other keys with a similar name, such as the one near Varadero). The bar on board is open and drinks are included. The rich seabed of Cuba's waters reveals itself at the coral reef, Las Mulatas, where you can snorkel and explore the underwater treasures. Snorkel equipment is on board and is included. A lunch of seafood is served on the island, Cayo Blanco, and it would be a real punishment not to laze at this pristine beach, after lunch. At the end of the afternoon, you will sail back to the marina.

You might like to hire bicycles and explore the Trinidad Township or head out to the coast. Want to learn to dance, Cuban style? Your guide will be able to arrange lessons at any of the destinations you visit. If you are interested in learning a little more about Cuban cuisine, your guide can help organise an informal cooking lesson at a local Casa Particular. One evening you might wish to sample the delights of Palenque de los Congos Reales. A must for rumba fans, this open patio on Trinidad's music alley has an eclectic menu incorporating salsa, son (Cuban popular music) and trova (traditional poetic singing).

The highlight, however, is the 10PM rumba drums with soulful African rhythms and energetic fire-eating dancers. You might also be perfectly content to simply sit in Trinidad's main plaza and watch the city life unfold around you.

\* Some activities are weather dependent, and might only be available at certain times of the year.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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*\*Some activities are weather dependent, and might only be available at certain times of the year.*

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

## Day 13

### Trinidad 🚐 Remedios 🚐 Santa Clara

In Villa Clara province, Remedios looks like many small towns throughout Cuba. However, that's no poke. Its Spanish colonial charm, quiet streets, and lack of overall tourism make it a charming destination and one of our favorites. But Remedios is not like any other small town in Cuba. On the days leading up to Christmas Eve, street celebrations called Las Parrandas take place. Beginning in 1820, Las Parrandas is one of Cuba's oldest festivals. Here you will have the chance to explore the township and visit the Museo Parrandas Remedianas.

After exploring Remedios, you will travel to Santa Clara. The year 1958 saw one of the final and most brutal battles of the Cuban Revolution. The battle was so intensive and the victory of the revolutionaries so decisive that the despised President Fulgencio Batista fled the country less than 12 hours afterwards, thus handing victory to the rebels. This battle took place in Santa Clara, which is the next destination on your tour. Rather unsurprisingly, there are many tributes to the Cuban Revolution in Santa Clara, and while it's a troubled past, the events here are what led to the ultimate victory in the struggle and led to the formation of post-revolution Cuba. The city is often called The City of the Heroic Guerrilla. The town is extremely significant, and while it's not as visited as Havana or many better-known spots in the city, its place in modern Cuban history cannot be denied. There are also many interesting buildings in rather eclectic architectural styles, and you can visit a really interesting cigar factory and the trendy La Casa de la Ciudad where the progressive young artists in the town can be found.

Contemporary Santa Clara is an important commercial hub and home to one of Cuba's largest universities (giving the whole town a youthful and energetic vibe) but is probably best known as the resting place of Che Guevara. It was Che Guevara who led the revolutionary forces in that final victorious battle. Santa Clara is a beautifully maintained city, and while its existence is hardly a secret, it's not a place that all that many visitors to Cuba get to experience. Its history might be dark, but its present is bright. Naturally we will take you to meet the iconic historical figure of Che Guevara, or at least to his final resting place. The Che Guevara Mausoleum and Memorial was originally intended as a memorial, as Guevara's final resting place was still a mystery when it was constructed. He was executed in Bolivia in 1967 and his body was placed in an unmarked grave beside a military landing strip, where they would remain for 30 years. Upon their discovery, his remains were transferred to Santa Clara and interred in the memorial that bore his name. There is also an interesting museum, and here you will learn about how Guevara played a pivotal role in the demise of the dictator Batista and the rise of Fidel Castro, a turning point in the Cuban revolution. You will also visit the Tren Blindado that was attacked in the decisive moments of the Cuban Revolution before traveling to the centre of Santa Clara for a panoramic walk of the city.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 14

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### Santa Clara → Havana

Today you will travel back to Havana for one more night in Cuba's lively capital city.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 15

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### Playa del Carmen

Enjoy a free day at leisure!

**Accommodation:** Hotel Nautilus or similar, Playa del Carmen

**Meals:** Breakfast

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## Day 16

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### Playa del Carmen → Havana

Head over to Havana today! During your stay in Cuba, you will be staying in Casa Particulares or Cuban B&B's.

Your Private Cuba tour begins with your airport transfer on arrival from Havana's José Martí International Airport to your accommodation in the city. During this first part of your Cuba tour, you will have the chance to meet your guide and discuss the finer details of your tour itinerary before they escort you on an orientation walk of the local area.

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.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** TBA on Booking Confirmation

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## Day 17

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### Havana ✈ Mexico City, Mexico

Today you will depart Cuba for Mexico! Make your way to the airport and check in for your flight.

On arrival, make your way from the airport to the hotel.

Later today will be your opportunity to meet your tour guide and fellow travellers and learn more about your tour. Opt to join the group for a local meal afterwards. Don't forget to see the notice in the lobby (or ask reception) for the official time and place to meet up with the group.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel PF Suites or similar

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## Day 18

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### Mexico City

Enjoy getting to know Mexico City. Take advantage of free time to get out and explore this amazing city and its surroundings. Opt to visit the Frida Kahlo Museum, visit the Juarez neighbourhood, an area teeming with restaurants, bars, parks, and boutique shops. Maybe make a stop at the Palacio Nacional to see Diego Rivera's famous mural, "The History of Mexico". Or eat like a local and join a food tour and get a sense of the vast culinary scene here.

Optional Activities – Museum of Frida Kahlo and National Museum of Anthropology.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel PF Suites or similar

## Day 19

### Mexico City Teotihuacan Puebla

Rise early and explore the ancient city of Teotihuacan on a guided tour. Stand in awe of the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, stroll down the Avenue of the Dead and learn all about the site's importance to Mexico's ancient cultures for thousands of years, at one point being the largest city in the entire Americas. Continue to Puebla and enjoy an orientation walk downtown.

#### Orientation Walk - Puebla

The route will vary for each tour, allowing our tour guides to share their personal favourites. You can expect to see the zócalo, artisans' market and visit the historic buildings within centre of this World Heritage city.

#### Teotihuacán Pyramids Visit - Teotihuacán

Visit the ruins of Teotihuacán northeast of Mexico City. This ruin site dates back to 100BC and has the impressive Avenue of the Dead, Pyramid of the Sun and Pyramid of the Moon. Bring water, wear a hat and solid walking shoes to learn all about this pre-Columbian Mesoamerican city that at its peak was once the largest city in all of the Americas.

#### Meals: Breakfast

#### Accommodation: Hotel Gilfer or similar

## Day 20

### Puebla

Enjoy a free day to explore the city. Opt to visit a ceramics workshop, check out the pyramid of nearby Cholula, sample delicious local specialties, or watch a lucha libre wrestling match at night.

Free Time in Puebla - Take advantage of free time to get out and explore this amazing city and its surroundings.

#### Optional Activities - Cholula Ruins Visit, Cholula 2h-3h, 1-2km

Also known as Tlachihualtepetl, Cholula is a massive archaeological site west of Puebla. Dating from at least 100AD, it's the oldest continuously occupied ceremonial centre in the western hemisphere. Most impressive is the Great Pyramid of Cholula – a tall grass-covered structure which is actually at least four successive pyramids built one on top of the other. The Spanish built a church at the very top in 1594. Visit the museum to learn about the history, explore tunnels, and climb to the top for breathtaking views of nearby volcanoes.

#### Meals: Breakfast

#### Accommodation: Hotel Gilfer or similar

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## Day 21

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### Puebla Oaxaca

Journey south to beautiful Oaxaca and get a feel for the city on an orientation walk, stopping to visit one of its sprawling markets. After, visit the Alebrijes Artisan Community for your responsible travel moment. Meet a local artisan, ask any questions the group may have, and learn more about how the Alebrijes are crafted.

#### Orientation Walk - Oaxaca

All walks will be slightly different, allowing your tour guide to show off their favourite spots. You can expect to see the Santo Domingo Cultural Centre, walk through the zocalo and the famous 20th of November market. Opt to sample some delicious Oaxacan foods along the way such as mole, tlayudas or chapulines.

Alebrijes were created by a Mexican artisan named Pedro Linares who was known for making piñatas and carnival masks. After falling ill and hallucinating crazy figures and creatures inside his mind, the artist decided to bring what he saw to life by creating the small figurines we know as Alebrijes. Often made of a mash-up between animals, these figurines are now made by Oaxacan artisans out of wood and then painted with vibrant pigments and lots of patterns. Learn more about how these figurines integrated themselves into Oaxacan/Mexican folklore and how the craft expanded from originally being made from cardboard to now being carved from Copal wood. Meet a local artisan and speak with them, ask any questions the group may have and to learn more about how the Alebrijes are crafted.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Oaxaca or similar

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## Day 22

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### Oaxaca

Take advantage of free time, and opt to learn how to make mole in a cooking class, shop at nearby artisan villages, Visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mitla, or sample some mezcal at a local distillery - look out for the worm! In the evening enjoy a cooking demonstration with a local expert and taste a variety of regional cuisine.

#### Oaxaca Cooking Demonstration

Attend a cooking demonstration in Oaxaca with a local expert who will be making a variety of authentic regional cuisine. You'll learn about the ingredients and enjoy a tasting with some samples. Please note that this will not be a full meal.

**Optional Activities – Mezcal Factory Tour, Monte Alban Tour and Valley of Mitla Ruins Visit**

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Oaxaca or similar

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## Day 23

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### Oaxaca ✈ Villahermosa 🚕 Palenque

Travel in style and fly to Villahermosa, then transfer to Palenque by land.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Maya Tulipanes or similar

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## Day 24

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### Palenque

Enjoy a guided tour of the Mayan ruins of Palenque, set in the jungle of Chiapas. Opt for a jungle walk in the afternoon. Take advantage of free time and do as much or as little as you would like.

Palenque Ruins Guided Tour – Palenque, 2h-3h

Experience the elegant jungle site of Palenque on a guided tour. See the highlights -- the Temple of the Cross Group, Temple of Inscriptions and the Grand Palace. Howler monkeys sound in the distance as the fog rolls in and out of this mystical site, one of the most important centres for trade and culture during the end of the Classic Maya period.

Optional Activities – Jungle Trail Hike and Roberto Barrios Waterfalls

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Maya Tulipanes or similar

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## Day 25

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### Palenque 🚕 Mérida

Travel to the Yucatán Peninsula, stopping off in the seaside historic city of Campeche. Upon arrival in Mérida, enjoy an orientation walk to get to know the city's layout and attractions.

Orientation Walk - 30m-1h

Enjoy a brief walk with your tour guide. He/she will give you some tips on finding things like supermarkets, main squares, and ATMs. For more specific or in-depth information, an official guided tour is recommended.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Santa Lucia by Kavia or similar

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## Day 26

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### Mérida

Enjoy a free day to explore Mérida and surroundings. Opt to visit the Mayan ruins of Uxmal or explore the main square and historic buildings of Mérida. There's plenty to see and do in Mérida, and we wanted to make sure that you had some time to take it all in. Feel free to relax or try optional activities like visiting the Uxmal ruins, the anthropological museum, and swimming in a nearby cenote. Your tour guide has more ideas if you need them. Just ask!

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Santa Lucia by Kavia or similar

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## Day 27

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### Mérida Valladolid

Explore the ancient Mayan City of Chichén Itzá with a guided tour, then continue on to the quaint city of Valladolid. Opt to cool off with a swim in a nearby cenote, a natural water-filled sinkhole.

#### Chichen Itzá Guided Tour

Join up with a local expert and learn about the history of Chichén Itzá and the beliefs and rituals that defined this ancient Mayan civilization. This dramatic site includes a 30m (98 ft) high temple, known as the Pyramid of Kukulcan, famous for its balustrade of 91 stairs up each of the four sides, a ball court with a grandstand, and towering walls. Visit the highlights of the site including the famous Castillo, the ball court, the cenote, and the Nunnery.

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Fundadores or similar

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## Day 28

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### Valladolid Playa del Carmen

Enjoy the morning to explore this beautiful colonial city of Valladolid. Travel to Playa del Carmen to lounge on Mayan Riviera beaches.

Private Vehicle, drive Valladolid – Playa del Carmen

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Hotel Casa de las Flores or similar

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## Day 29

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### Playa del Carmen Cancun Australia

The final day of your Mexican adventure has arrived. The Cancún airport is approximately 1 hour from Playa del Carmen. There are frequent public buses and shuttles from Playa del Carmen to the airport throughout the day.

Board your flight from Cancun to Australia

**Meals:** Breakfast and Inflight Menu

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## Day 30

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### Australia

Arrive Home in Australia. We hope you had a wonderful time in Cuba and Mexico!

*Please note: The day by day descriptions are intended as an indicative guide only. Travel by nature is unpredictable. Weather patterns, road conditions, public holidays, travel restrictions and many other factors may necessitate itinerary changes that are ultimately for your benefit. It is essential that you are flexible in this regard.*

## Inclusions & Exclusions

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### Inclusions

- Return Economy Class airfare from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane (surcharges apply from other capital cities)
- 27 nights of modern accommodation in hotels & traditional Cuban B&B's on a twin share basis
- Internal economy class airfare from Oaxaca to Palenque
- Internal economy class airfare from Playa del Carmen to Havana
- Airport transfers in Cuba
- Meals as indicated: 27 breakfasts and 2 lunches
- English-speaking tour guides
- Transportation by modern AC coaches
- Sightseeing with entry fees as mentioned
- Service and local taxes

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### Exclusions

- Visas, where required
- Luggage fees on Mexico, Cuba & USA domestic flights – Payable to the airline US\$30 at check-in
- Travel insurance (strongly recommended)
- Meals not mentioned
- All Drinks
- Any additional requests
- Tips and cruise gratuities (Driver, Representative & Guide) optional at an extra \$15 per person per day

**Single Supplement:** The additional supplement for a single traveller is \$4500.

**Looking to arrive early or stay late post-tour:** Call on 1300 893 404 or email us at [info@traveldream.com.au](mailto:info@traveldream.com.au) to inquire.

**Travel Insurance:** We recommend Covermore travel insurance. To quote and book, please click [HERE](#).