



## NATURE & CONSERVATION IN CUBA

**Friday**

**Depart for Miami**

**Day 1**

Travel by individual arrangement to Miami, Florida. Check into the **Miami Airport Hilton Hotel**—or a *hotel of similar quality*—and enjoy dinner on your own tonight.

**Please note:** The program officially begins on Saturday after arrival in Havana, and no scheduled activities will take place on Friday. However, Friday's hotel accommodations are included in the program cost.

**Saturday**

**Miami-Havana**

**Day 2**

Together with your delegation, leave the hotel early this morning for the Miami International Airport (transfer provided by the hotel). Airport check-in is required three hours prior to your scheduled departure time; optional breakfast choices will be available for purchase after check-in.

Meet your local guide when you arrive in Havana and travel amid bicycles, bright yellow *cocotaxis*, and giant *camello* (camel) buses to **lunch at a Havana restaurant**.

Enjoy seeing some city sights during a panoramic bus tour of Havana, including a stop to see Revolution Square and Vedado. The iconic plaza is where Fidel Castro and other political figures address the country, and where many political rallies have taken place.

Late this afternoon, check into your hotel and attend a program orientation.

This evening, enjoy a welcome dinner at one of Havana's finest private restaurants.

**Overnight:** Quinta Avenida Hotel, Havana

### Sunday

### Havana

### Day 3

Today learn more about the **Almendares River Project** while exploring the project with a local representative. The river acts as a water supply for Havana with a final stretch dividing the municipalities of Plaza de la Revolución (Miramar district) and Playa (Vedado district). Part of the river valley forms the Almendares Park or Metropolitan Park of Havana (PMH), a few kilometers upstream from the ocean. Several industrial plants line the river banks (paper mills, gas production plants, breweries, food production plants, construction plants). One of the three major projects by the Havana authorities is to continue the rehabilitation of the PMH (the other two being the restoration of the Old Town and the depollution of the Havana Bay): monitor and control water pollution, reduce and rationalize industrial occupation, maintain the old trees and the vegetation in the park.

A lecture has also been requested with **Rácso Fernández**, a specialist in Cuban archeology who will be able to provide insight into early rupestrian art and the Taíno people's sustainable use of the land during the pre-conquest period.

After lunch at a local restaurant, enjoy a walking tour of **Old Havana**, a two-square-kilometer neighborhood that is the core of the Spanish port city built during colonial times. See the restoration of the colonial core of the city, Havana cultural and business life including visits with entrepreneurs. The area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is undergoing a massive restoration funded by tourism, preserving colonial architecture and renovating housing and services for neighborhood residents. Visit restaurants and eateries, hotels and inns, and artists' studios in Old Havana. Have discussions with Cubans involved in these ventures and see what residents experience when centuries-old buildings are renovated.

For those who choose, attend a Cuban musical performance by musicians at **Café Taverna**.

**Overnight:** Quinta Avenida Hotel, Havana

### Monday

### Havana

### Day 4

Discover the ambience of the **Casa de la Amistad** during a country briefing provided by the non-governmental agency, the **Cuban Institute for Friendship between Peoples (ICAP)**, in collaboration with our logistical partners' team.

Later this morning the delegation will visit the **Antonio Nunez Jimenez Foundation**, a research center dedicated to the legacy of Antonio Nuñez Jiménez, speleologist and geographer, and author of the multi-volume *La cultura de la naturaleza* (Nature's Culture). Attend a lecture focusing on environmental history and learn more about their foundation.

Explore the Cuban cuisine during lunch at a local restaurant.

Travel just outside of Havana this afternoon (approximately 45 minute drive) to the lovely **Escaleras de Jaruco** to visit a local project (*pending confirmation of specific environmental protection projects in the area*). The town is located in the east of Havana, between San José de las Lajas and Santa Cruz del Norte.

During your visit, a meeting has been requested with **Mario Gonzalez Martin**, museum specialist to cover environmental history of the “landscape belt” in Havana as well as the rise of the sugar industry in the region during an exploration of the local area including Escaleras, Central Hershey and Santa Cruz.

As time permits, the group will stop to learn about the work of Cuban-American artist, sculptor and painter **Ana Mendieta**. This is scheduled tentatively for this afternoon at **Escalares de Jaruco Park** (lecture courtesy of your delegation leader and potential invited artist Gerardo Castro). In the summer of 1981, Ana Mendieta returned to Cuba for the first time after a long period of exile to reconnect with her ancestry and identity, leaving her mark at Las Escaleras de Jaruco, a national park outside Havana. Inside the limestone walls of the caves, she carved silhouettes of Taíno (indigenous) divinities, individually naming them Iyare (Mother), Maroya (Moon), Guanaroca (The First Woman), Bacayú (Light of the Day), among others, and collectively gathering them under the title, Rupestrian Sculptures Series.

Dinner is by individual arrangement this evening back in Havana.

**Overnight:** Quinta Avenida Hotel, Havana

## **Tuesday**

## **Havana-Playa Giron**

## **Day 5**

Check out of your Havana hotel and board your bus for the two hour journey southeast of Havana to the **Zapata Swamp Biosphere Reserve** (*Ciénaga de Zapata*). At more than one million acres, the extensive Zapata Swamp is one of the best protected remnants of coastal Caribbean biodiversity. The forests, rivers, lakes, flooded caverns, ponds, and swamp prairies are best known for their bird sanctuary and Cuban crocodile.

Start your morning with a stop at **Las Salinas** bird sanctuary. Las Salinas wildlife sanctuary is part of the larger Zapata Biosphere Reserve (IUCN category VI). The swamp is not only known for its size but also for being the best preserved wetlands in all of the Antilles, designated as a "Wetland of International Importance" by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971.[10] In mid-2001 an additional 4,520 km<sup>2</sup> were declared a Ramsar Site in mid-2001.

Lunch will be provided at a local restaurant.

This afternoon visit the **crocodile farm** before transferring on to your hotel in Playa Giron. The evening is yours to relax and dine at leisure.

**Overnight:** Hotel Playa Larga (or similar)

**Wednesday**

**Playa Giron-Viñales**

**Day 6**

Check out of your Playa Giron hotel early this morning and board your bus for the journey to Viñales. Your stop today will be for exploration of **Las Terrazas**, located in a mountain area of the Candelaria municipality. Discover extraordinarily beautiful landscape on formerly deforested land that has been sustainably reclaimed. See how these mountainside “terraces” have helped prevent erosion, and learn more about why this area was designated as part of a biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 1985.

During your educational visit, understand more about a local community project developed for the restoration of the area in the **heart of the Sierra del Rosario mountain range**. Visit the house, former slave barracks, and area used to process coffee beans at the restored ruins of **Buena Vista**—an old coffee plantation owned by French immigrants. Don't forget to be on the lookout for Cuba's national bird, the Cuban Trogon.

Eat lunch at a local restaurant in Las Terrazas before departing for further exploration of Viñales.

The evening is yours to relax and dine at leisure.

**Overnight:** Los Jasmines or La Ermita Hotel (or similar)

**Thursday**

**Viñales-Guanahacabibes**

**Day 7**

Check out of your Viñales hotel and board your bus for the 2.5 hour journey to the western most tip of Cuba. Your stay for the night will be in **Guanahacabibes Peninsula**. Check into your local hotel and relax over lunch.

This afternoon visit the Guanahacabibes Biosphere Preserve & National Park one of the country's largest natural reserves separated from the rest of the island by white-sand plains where one of Cuba's largest lakeside areas lies. A relatively small area it holds some 100 lakes, as well as the largest and purest fields of silica sand, which is 99.8% pure.

The area is inhabited by 172 species of birds belonging to 42 families, 11 of which are endemic and 84 are migratory. Experts also believe that 4 of the 7 species of marine turtles living on the planet have survived in the Guanahacabibes Peninsula. The coastline also contains preserved coral reefs, with the northern coast being lined by the cays and isles of the western Colorados Archipelago.

The peninsula was one of the last refuges of aboriginals fleeing from the Spanish conquistadors and also holds some 140 archeological sites linked to the life of aborigines, who were known as Guanahatabeyes.

The evening is yours to relax and dine at leisure.

**Overnight:** Hotel Maria la Gorda (or similar)

**Friday**

**Guanahacabibes**

**Day 8**

This morning return to continue your explorations of **Guanahacabibes National Park**.

A meeting has been requested with **Dialvys Rodríguez Hernández** on human adaptability and resource management for the Guanahacabibes Peninsula.

**Overnight:** Hotel Maria la Gorda (or similar)

**Saturday**

**Guanahacabibes-Havana**

**Day 9**

Say farewell to Guanahacabibes this morning and return to Havana (approximately 3.5 hour bus return journey).

After lunch visit the **Jardín Botánico Gardens**. These national gardens are located out by Parque Lenin on the outskirts of Havana, with greenhouses growing everything from arid cacti to tropical flowers. This beautiful oasis from the city houses a Japanese style garden as well as many others.

Share your memories of Cuba with other delegates during an elegant farewell dinner at **Café del Oriente Restaurant**.

**Overnight:** Quinta Avenida Hotel, Havana

**Sunday**

**Depart for Miami**

**Day 10**

Bid farewell to Cuba, and transfer to the airport for departure this morning. Your national guide and local airport representative will be available to help you with the check-in procedures for your departure.

