

Join OLLI Staff Krista Hamel and Cathi Cody-Hudson and Kurt Mehta, of the Cuban American Friendship Society in Burlington, for an exciting journey to...

Cuba: The People, Arts and Culture

Dates: January 9 – 16, 2016

Number of participants: 18; 3 trip guides

Itinerary

Take advantage of this special moment in history to explore a place that has remained isolated for decades. For those who want to experience Cuba before the inevitable changes that increased tourism and foreign involvement are bound to bring, there is simply no better time than NOW. Explore the true essence of Cuba through this People-to-People exchange as you delve into the daily lives of naturalists, historians, and artists while seeing this nation through the eyes of its people. Journey through the history-infused, cobblestone streets of Old Havana. There you will spend time in the Museum of the Revolution, the headquarters of the Cuban government for 40 years learning from local Cuban guides about the rich history that is Havana. In Havana you will also have the opportunity to visit the Fine Arts Museum of Cuba containing Cuban art collections from the colonial times up to contemporary generations. Visit Ernest Hemingway's home in Cuba where he wrote some of his most famous books all while discussing the impact this author still has on the Cuban people. Spend time with civil society Cuban musicians in the colonial city of Cienfuegos. Explore Trinidad, a UNESCO world heritage city with amazing colonial architecture and learn first-hand about the Cuban peoples attempt to preserve this historical gem. There you will spend time at the Nicho Waterfall where you will have the chance to learn from local Cuban people about the role the natural environment plays in Cuban cultural and society. The unique opportunity to visit one of Cuba's organic tobacco plantations for a taste of iconic Cuban culture through the eyes of the farmers that farm the land. You'll get the chance to talk to Cuban farmers about their life and experiences. On our way back to Havana, visit the Che Guevara Museum and Mausoleum where you get to interact with Cubans who live and breathe the history of Che in Cuban and Latin America. Enjoy your Cuban transport by private air-conditioned bus.

Price of Trip: \$4,995 per person, double occupancy. \$400 single supplement. Note: if you are a single person who would like to request a roommate to avoid the single supplement, please choose that option on the registration form. We will do our best to fulfill this request but cannot guarantee it.

Price Includes:

- Round trip airfare from Montreal to Cuba
- Educational seminars at the University of Havana (Center for Marti Studies)
- Opportunity to meet and talk with local Cubans on issues of music, culture, society and agriculture.
- 5 nights at Hotel Presidente (Habana) – phone # 011537551801; Address Calle Calzada No. 110, Esquina Avda de los Presidentes Plaza de la Revolucion, Havana; website N/A
- 1 night at Hotel Jagua, Cienfuegos – phone # 011537551003; Address – Calle 37 No. 1 e/) y 2, Punta Gorda, Cienfuegos, website: <http://hoteljagua.com/>
- Visiting with local Cuban musicians
- 1 night at Hotel Ancon, Trinidad – phone # 0115372040575; Address – Carretera Maria Aguilar, Playa Ancon, Trinidad; website: hotelancon-cuba.com
- All ground transportation and transfers in Cuba
- Academic Visas
- All breakfasts (at hotels) in Cuba
- All group lunches in Cuba
- 3 group dinners in Cuba
- Tour guide and translator
- Health insurance in Cuba
- Regular tips

Price does not include:

- Ground travel between Burlington and Montreal. We will be arranging a coach bus to transport participants for an additional cost. This is optional.
- Meals during travel to Cuba and return
- Meals not described above
- Additional Tips for excellent service
- 25 Cuban Dollar exit tax
- Flight and/or Full Trip Insurance
- Any additional excursions or cultural immersions during the trip

Requirements for trip:

Please read the following requirements regarding the trip and make sure this trip is a good match for you:

Reasonable degree of physical fitness and stamina in a tropical climate are required: there will be considerable walking excursions on uneven pavement and cobblestones, from three blocks up to two miles at a time at a 2 mph pace, in addition to a full schedule of activities. Participants must be able to walk unassisted or opt out of the

activities that involve a lot of walking. Participants must be able to move without assistance.

Other physical requirements are as follows:

- Ability to climb a few flights of stairs (many do not have railings).
- Ability to handle own luggage.
- Ability to handle the stress that can come with international travel in a developing country.
- Enjoyment of group travel, group decision making process, and flexibility with schedules. Ability to handle the stress and long days that can come with travel.

We highly suggest purchasing trip insurance because of strict cancellation policy (detailed on registration form).

*We please ask that you pack very lightly into one rolling carry-on bag. Weather will be in the mid 70's to low 80's in this part of Cuba at this time of year. We will send a packing list of essentials once the trip is a go.

Itinerary (Please note, Cuba is a developing country and exact days and times are always subject to change):

Please note that exact order of each day may change, but the below itinerary covers each of the daily excursions on this people to people trip. All transfers in Cuba are done on air-conditioned buses and all hotel rooms have air conditioning, television, phones and access to a private safe for any valuables. However, all travelers should recognize that despite its vibrancy, Cuba still faces economic challenges. This means that there can be occasional losses of electricity, difficulties with water pressure and other minor problems that can crop up in developing countries. Please plan accordingly and recognize that part of the wonder of Cuba is allowing ourselves to go on "Cuba time."

Jan 09 Saturday Depart from Montreal to Cuba

Arrival in Havana, transfer, and check-in at Hotel Presidente. Welcome dinner at el Torre Restaurant, a restaurant overlooking Havana.

Jan 10 Sunday Havana

After breakfast at the hotel, we will take a 2-hour walking tour of Old Havana led by local Cubans. There we will have the opportunity to talk with Cubans on the street, learn from them about their experiences as vendors, musicians, or otherwise. You'll also learn about and experience the colonial architecture, cobblestone streets and 1950's cars! Next we will have lunch at the Paladar La Moneda Cubana (provided). These

privately owned restaurants allow you to meet Cuban families as they are often run out of people's homes. Later our local Cuban guide will let us visit the Christopher Columbus Cemetery to explore the largest necropolis in Latin America. You will end the day with an open dinner (not included). There will also be the opportunity to wander around Havana on your own – immersed in the sights, sounds, smells and culture that make Havana so vibrant.

Note: The Old Havana Walking tour last several hours and requires walking on uneven cobblestone streets.

Jan 11 Monday Havana

After breakfast at the hotel, we will go to the Center for Marti Studies for a conversation about the history of Cuba/USA relations and how changes are impacting Cuba today. This educational seminar will allow you to learn about the history of US/Cuba relations from the perspective of the Cuban people. In partnership with the Center for Marti Studies, you'll next visit the Museum of the Revolution, the headquarters for the Cuban government for 40 years during the Batista regime. This educational experience will expose you to the Cuban-people's view of pre-revolutionary Cuba. We will have lunch in Paladar Divino (provided) another privately owned Cuban restaurant where you'll get the chance to talk to more local Cuban people and families. This particular privately owned restaurant, offers international and Cuban-inspired menu, with seafood a highlight. Later, we will enjoy the Canon firing ceremony in Old Havana where soldiers dress up in 18th century uniforms and fire a cannon over the bay. This tradition marks the closing of the doors of the former wall that surrounded the city back in the day. Our local Cuban guide will be there to discuss the cultural and historical significance this history still has on the Cuban people today. End the day with dinner at the Divina Pastora (provided) another private restaurant owned and operated by a Cuban family.

Jan 12 Tuesday Havana

After breakfast at the hotel, we will visit Las Terrazas UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the pioneering eco-village of Las Terrazas which dates back to a reforestation project in 1968. We'll meet Cuban people who live there and are firm believers in local agriculture, sustainable harvesting practices and sustainable living. Today it's a burgeoning activity center and the site of the earliest surviving coffee plantations in Cuba. You will have the opportunity to learn about this process and see first hand how eco-tourism and eco-living go together in Cuba. There will be time to talk with Cubans who work and live here to learn about their experiences. Later we will eat lunch at en la Casa del Campesino (provided) another privately held restaurant geared toward showing us how Cuban farmworkers live and eat. After lunch, we will visit the Hemingway House/Museum, and Finca Vigia (the "look-out house"), which is located in the small, working-class town of San Francisco de Paula. There, Hemingway wrote two of his most celebrated novels: *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. *A Movable Feast* was written

there as well. Finca Vigía has made both the World Monuments Fund list of 100 Most Endangered sites, and The National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered Places. Told through the eyes of the Cuban experiences with Hemingway, this visit will give you the chance to see how the Cuban people respect and revere this famous American author. In the evening, you will have an open dinner of your choice which means another opportunity to dine at a family restaurant and meet another Cuban family (not included).

Jan 13 Wednesday Cienfuegos

After Breakfast at the hotel we'll head to the Fine Arts Museum of Cuba, home of Cuban art collections from the colonial times up to contemporary generations. Local Cuban guides will walk you through the progression of art in Cuba and discuss the important role art plays in modern Cuban life. Following that, we will board our transfer bus to drive across a portion of the Island to the wonderful city of Cienfuegos. This 3.5 hour trip (with planned stop) takes us through the heart of Western Cuba to the southern coast. We'll check into Hotel Jagua o La Union in Cienfuegos and then spend some time exploring the beautifully restored parks where you'll have the chance to interact with Cubans relaxing in the park. Finally, we'll have the chance to enjoy a Choral performance by the Cienfuego Chorus and meet the artists themselves. Here, you'll get to learn first hand how much music and art are a part of the Cuban culture. Lunch is included today in Cienfuegos. Open Dinner (not included)

Jan 14 Thursday Trinidad

In the morning we will transfer by bus to Trinidad, a UNESCO world heritage city with amazing colonial architecture. We will also visit Nicho Waterfall (with optional walk) and have lunch (provided). At this waterfall park, local Cuban guides will lead you through the role the natural environment plays in Cuba. Cuba has more national park per capita than any country in Latin America – so you'll learn first hand from Cubans why this is so important to their culture. Later we will check in at the Hotel Ancon in Trinidad. There you'll have the opportunity to explore what many consider to be the best preserved colonial town in Cuba: 1950s cars and horse drawn carriages navigate the narrow, twisting cobblestone streets where you'll be able to immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of a by-gone era. We'll meet with Cubans living in Trinidad, visit their art studios and talk to them about what it means to be a Cuban living in such a wonderful city.

Note: Travel time between Cienfuegos and Trinidad is approximately 1.5 hours (note that there is a planned stop)

Jan 15 Friday Santa Clara and Havana

After breakfast at the hotel, we will travel by bus to the town of Santa Clara where we will visit the Che Guevara Memorial and Museum to learn about the famous revolutionary's life and beliefs. Local Cuban guides will walk us through the significance of "el Che" in Cuban culture and history. From his impact on public education to agriculture, we will learn from Cubans just how big a role this global icon still plays in their lives today. Finally, there will be the chance to visit a tobacco farm and talk with farmers about their lives as Cuban farmers in a changing global world. We'll eat lunch (provided) and continue back to Havana.

We will return to Havana for final sendoff event (dinner included) at a local Paladar owned and operated by a local family of Cubans. Overnight lodging at the Hotel Presidente.

Note: Travel Time between Trinidad and Havana is approximately 4.5 hours (note there is a planned stop).

Jan 16 Saturday Departure – Transfer to Havana for Montreal departure

After breakfast at the hotel we will check out and take a bus to the Havana airport for departure to Montreal.