



Proposal from  
**INTERCHANGE**

Quality tours since 1973

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## Our Proposal Programme

### OPTION 2

#### PROPOSED PROGRAMME TO CUBA

*Visiting: Havana - Cienfuegos - Trinidad - Varadero*

#### Discovering Cuba

Cuba is gifted with unspoiled Spanish colonial heritage architecture, and a resilient people passionate about music and dance. It's friendly, safe and vibrant, and caught in a time warp since 1959 when the charismatic Fidel Castro took power.

Nowhere else in the Caribbean is there such an intoxicating combination of endless palm fringed beaches, colonial heritage, Latin American culture, spectacular scenery, rich animal and bird life and some of the friendliest people, whose passion for music and dance is legendary. The unique backdrop to this tropical paradise is the fact that Cuba is still strongly socialist and this combination ensures an unforgettable experience.

Rugged conifer-covered mountains rolling down to fertile plains and miles of white sandy beaches. Plantations of sugar cane and tobacco stretching into the distance dominated by the tall swaying palm trees.

Mile upon mile of deserted roads reaching into the island, their tranquillity only disturbed by the clip of horses hooves as they pull their heavy load or the roar of a 1950's American car whose engine is kept running by hope rather than spare parts.

Weathered campesinos sitting in a creaking old rocking chair, surveying the scene, all the time puffing on a titanic Havana cigar.

Glorious cities with their fading and crumbling facades. Streets alive with people all seeming to be there without purpose, just watching the world go by or discussing the latest baseball game, an obsession with most Cubans. The sound of salsa permanently in the air with young people gathering along the Malecon, at the weekend in Havana, to celebrate their passion for music and rum.

***Cuba is like nowhere else in the Caribbean. Cuba is Cuba.***



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## Itinerary and Optional Activities

### DAY 1 | ARRIVAL / HAVANA

Group arrival into Havana International Airport.

Assistance provided by a local rep bearing the group's logo; he will introduce the English-speaking guide who will meet and escort the group to the waiting 44 seat air-conditioned coach for a transfer to the hotel in Havana. This transfer will take approximately 35 hrs min. Welcome cocktail upon checking in at the hotel.

Evening at leisure.

**Overnight stay at 5\* Melia Habana Hotel, B&B.**

### DAY 2 | TOUR OF HAVANA

The decaying, genteel colonial facades of old Havana are happily now being preserved as UNESCO has recognised the city as a World Heritage Site.

A network of narrow streets, overlooked by balconies decorated with intricate patterns of wrought ironwork, cross the old city opening out into small squares fringed by grand houses and glorious churches unable to hide their Spanish heritage. Peep through the doorways of the old houses and often you will see intimate little courtyards, dark and cool in the sultry heat.

Joining the old city to modern Havana is the Malecon Promenade, which stretches along the sea front from Morro Castle. Many of the old American cars, lovingly looked after by their owners, can be seen driving along the Malecon. Pure ingenuity keeps these fascinating old cars on the road. A tunnel under the Almandares River takes the Malecon into the garden suburb of Miramar with tree-lined boulevards, luxurious mansions, embassies and boutiques.

**09h00.** After hotel breakfast, the group will meet in the lobby and depart for a half day excursion to Havana, the old and modern parts including:

- Once in Old Havana, explore old Havana with its narrow cobblestone streets flanked by old colonial buildings dating back as far as the 16th century. Visit Havana Cathedral built in 1704 and one of the finest examples of Cuban baroque style, walk about the four classical plazas: Plaza Vieja, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de Armas, Plaza de San Francisco de Asis, all located within walking distance in the old quarter of the city.
- Visit to Havana's Rum Museum "Havana Club Rum Foundation" and learn about the introduction of sugar in Cuba, the evolution of the industry and the processes involved in the making of Havana Club Rum (rum tasting at the end)
- Lunch will be served at Café Taberna Restaurant
- Transfer back to the hotel and free time at leisure.

**20h00** Transfer to Tropicana for dinner and the famous Tropicana Cabaret Show

**23h00** Transfer back to the hotel.

**Overnight stay at 5\* Melia Habana Hotel, B&B.**



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## Itinerary and Optional Activities

(continued)

### DAY 3 | TOUR TO SOROA / LAS TERRAZAS

Hotel breakfast.

**08h30.** You will meet in the lobby to depart to **Soroa** and its world famous orchid garden and picturesque waterfall, then you visit community of **Las Terrazas** in eastern Pinar del Río, near the border of the Province of Havana (60 km away). It originated as a reforestation project in 1968. The surrounding mountains had been denuded by fire and shortsighted agricultural techniques. A reservoir was created in 1971, and alongside it a model community was built taking its name from the hillside terraces planted with pines. The scheme was so successful that in 1985 this area was declared the "Reserva" Sierra del Rosario, Cuba's first UNESCO-sanctioned biosphere reserve. In 1990 an upmarket tourist resort was built just above the community to provide employment for the 850 inhabitants and in 1994 a hotel, La Moka, was opened and all the present workers are from Las Terrazas.

Included in this tour are a welcome cocktail at Rancho Curujey, a visit as a compact group to the ruins of the 19th-century Buena Vista coffee plantation, pottery and textile workshops, the village's primary school, and to Rio San Juan with free time for swimming and rowing if interested. Cuban Lunch at the rustic CASA DEL CAMPESINO a local restaurant inside the village. Transfer back to the hotel in Havana.

**Overnight stay at 5\* Melia Habana hotel, B&B.**

### DAY 4 | HAVANA / CIENFUEGOS

Hotel breakfast. Check out and settle of accounts.

**09h00.** Depart the hotel by bus to visit Finca La Vigía, an attractive little estate centered around the white-washed nineteenth-century villa where Ernest Hemingway lived for twenty years until 1960, today housing the Museo de Hemingway. This is where he wrote his most famous novels; objects include drinks, magazines, guns, etc strewn around the place, even the dining-room table set for guests.

This visit is an insight into the writer's lifestyle and personality from the numerous animal heads on the walls to the thousands of books lining the shelves in most of the rooms, including the bathroom.

After this visit the group will depart to Cienfuegos, known as the Pearl of the South, Cienfuegos was founded by French settlers from Louisiana in 1819 and is located on a beautiful bay on the southern coast of Cuba. Take a short tour of the town centre, including the square, where the main attraction is the ornate Tomas Terry Theatre, built by a rich sugar mill owner, which contains a marble lobby and frescoes. Visit to Palacio del Valle. Lunch will be served at Club Cienfuegos. Transfer to the hotel.

Dinner will be served at the hotel (drinks not included)

**Overnight stay in Cienfuegos, 4\* Jagua Hotel, Half Board.**

### DAY 5 | CIENFUEGOS / TRINIDAD

Hotel breakfast. Check out and settle of accounts.

**08h30.** Depart Cienfuegos and transfer to Trinidad (1 hour coach journey) in Sancti Spiritus province.



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## Itinerary and Optional Activities

(continued)

### DAY 5 | CIENFUEGOS / TRINIDAD (continued)

The city is unique in Cuba because it is exceptionally well preserved and its colonial architecture is a feast for the eyes.

The richness of the architecture reflects the fact that once it was a wealthy city known for its trade in gold, sugar and slaves. The lovely cobblestone streets and the beautifully painted houses are a living museum and the 20th century has left the city untouched. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the museums housing historic collections are fascinating in their own right, as many are old colonial mansions. Visit to the Palacio Cantero (also called Brunet's), a unique refreshing cocktail will be served at La Canchánchara.

Lunch will be served at Plaza Mayor with buffet + 1 drink.

Dinner will be served at the hotel, free drinks.

**Overnight stay in Sancti Spiritus, 4\* Hotel Brisas Trinidad del Mar, All Inclusive basis.**

### DAY 6 | TRINIDAD / SANTA CLARA / VARADERO

Hotel breakfast. Check out and settle of accounts.

**09h00.** You will depart for a local scenic area tour including a visit to Sugar Mills Valley to see a former working sugar plantation, the Manaca-Iznaga estate and visit the former slave watch Iznaga Tower with panoramic views over the estate and from where a bell was rung to mark the start and end of the working day. Tour continues to Varadero beach resort driving past Santa Clara to visit the Armoured Train Museum and stop Che Memorial.

Lunch will be served on the way at La Granjita.

**Overnight stay at 4\* Melia Las Antillas, All Inclusive basis.**

### DAY 7 | VARADERO

Varadero has to be seen to be believed. Just two hours from Havana, its white sandy beaches, lapped by a blue translucent sea, stretch for miles along a narrow peninsula that reaches out into the Florida Straits. The resort appeals to both those who just want to relax and to the sports enthusiast, who can play tennis, go sailing and fishing or even try scuba diving.

Wherever you stay in Varadero you will be close to the beach and the relaxed nightlife creates a perfect ambience in the resort with restaurants, cabarets and nightclubs.

Day at leisure on All Inclusive basis.

**Overnight stay at 4\* Melia Las Antillas, All Inclusive basis.**

### DAY 8 | VARADERO / DEPARTURE

Hotel breakfast. Check out and settle of accounts.

**Transfer back to the airport for departure flight.**



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## Costs

### **Included in our cost :**

Accommodation at the hotels specified in the above programme  
Transfer on arrival and departure in Cuba  
Transportation by air-conditioned vehicle throughout the programme  
English speaking guide in connection with the programme of excursions/sightseeing.

### **Not included in our cost :**

- International flights to/from Cuba
- Airport tax (currently 25.00 CUC per person) payable locally on departure from Cuba
- Cuba tourist card – required for entry to Cuba. These should be obtained from the Cuban Embassy before travel – airlines do not normally allow you on the plane without one
- Travel insurance – it is a requirement that you have travel insurance which covers medical expenses in Cuba – you are required to have documentary proof (on paper) as this may be requested at the point of entry in Cuba
- Tips for guides, driver, etc
- Porterage
- Lunches & dinners - unless specified in the programme
- Drinks with meals – unless specified in the programme
- Services of the guide when the group are “at leisure”. Eg Varadero.
- Items of a personal nature, laundry, gifts, etc

**NB. All prices are quoted subject to availability at the time of booking.**



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## General Information

For over five centuries Cuba's history of extremes has been created by its geographical position. Cuba, the largest of the Caribbean islands, was first inhabited by Indigenous peoples known as the Taíno and Ciboney. On 27 October 1492, Christopher Columbus sighted the island during his first voyage of discovery and claimed it for Spain. Cuba subsequently became a Spanish colony to be ruled by the Spanish governor in Havana, though in 1762 this city was briefly held by Britain before being returned in exchange for Florida. A series of rebellions during the 19th century failed to end Spanish rule, but increased tensions between Spain and the United States, resulting in the Spanish-American War, led finally to Spanish withdrawal, and in 1902, Cuba gained formal independence.

American trade dominated Cuba during the first half of the 20th century, aided by US government policy measures assuring influence over the island. This continued until 1959, when Dictator Fulgencio Batista was ousted by revolutionaries (the major group was led by Fidel Castro). The banishing of American corporate holdings led to breaking of relations with Castro's government by the US. This position on Cuba was heavily reinforced by Castro's Soviet support and his loud anti-Americanism. Cuba has since been an isolated island dominated by Castro's dictatorship.

Castro remained in power from 1959 to 2008, first as Prime Minister then from 1976 as President of Cuba. Raúl Castro was elected President at the 2008 National Assembly session on 24 February 2008.

With the advent of Perestroika and the subsequent dissolution of Soviet Communism, Cuba was plunged into a period of severe hunger and hardship in which social unrest was only defused by the sanction of mass migration. The United States kept up the pressure with the iniquitous terms of the Helms Burton Act, which attempts to prevent any company anywhere in the world from doing business with Cuba. Current Cuban – American relations are thawing out with the election of a new US President and many hope for a gradual easing of relations.

### NOTES:

#### ACCOMMODATION

Unless otherwise stated, accommodation in hotels is standard and rooms are generally available from noon to be vacated by 10am. Official ratings differ worldwide, and the rating system we have adopted reflects our personal opinion of quality of accommodation, food and services. In certain destinations, water and electricity services struggle to keep up with the demands of a growing tourist industry and natural climatic conditions may cause further disruption. Hotels do everything possible to provide an efficient service but guests should be aware of the possibility of power cuts and / or water supply restrictions.

General refurbishment is necessary to maintain hotel standards and as hotels and resorts are constantly developing little notice is often given of such work, but we will endeavour to notify you of any activity as soon as we are informed.

#### CLIMATE AND TEMPERATURES

Peak holiday months for visits to Cuba range from December through March although July and August are popular with Canadians and Europeans. The quietest months are May, June, September, October and mid November to mid December. The south, particularly in Santiago Province, is much hotter than the north, around Havana. In July and August, average temperatures reach 28°C (82°F), in December to March 22°C (72°F). It can be very humid between May and October, with some heavy rain. The dry season runs from November through April. Cuba has an average of 6 hours sunshine per day, the hottest time of the year is in July and August, and humidity runs at a more or less constant average of 74%.

Please note **HURRICANES** can occur from late August to early November, but Cuba is very well prepared.



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