

Historic Milwaukee

Private Architectural Cuba Tour

Fall 2017

Day 1. Hello Cuba!

**Dinner included*

Arrival at "Jose Marti" International Airport in Cuba's capital city.

Meet your Authentic Cuba Travel tour guide and bus driver.

Private transfer to your Hotel Nacional located on the *Malecon*, Havana's evocative 8km-long waterfront boulevard. The hotel was built in 1930 by McKim, Mead and White.

On route we'll enjoy a panoramic visit to the Revolution Square (Plaza de la Revolucion). Conceived by French urbanist Jean Claude Forestier in the 1920s, the gigantic square today is the base of the Cuban government and a place where large-scale political rallies are held.

It is here where Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis celebrated an open air Mass during their visits to Cuba in January 1998, March 2012 and September 2015 respectively. The Square was also visited by US President Barack Obama during his historic visit to Cuba in March 2016.

Private group check-in and welcome cocktail over arrival to the Hotel Nacional.

The hotel's long list of famous guests includes Rita Hayworth, Fred Astaire, Ernest Hemingway, Walt Disney, Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Errol Flynn, Winston Churchill, Ava Gardner, Lucky Luciano, Harry Belafonte, Robert de Niro, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jimmy Carter, Francis Ford Coppola, Muhammad Ali, Danny Glover, Naomi Campbell, Benicio del Toro, Kevin Costner, Jodie Foster, Oliver Stone, Steven Spielberg....

Evening: There's a new wave of private restaurants that has swept the Cuban capital offering exciting cuisine in atmospheric surroundings. This evening we'll enjoy a welcome dinner at *paladar* 'Cafe Laurent', a family-run restaurant located in the penthouse atop a small 1950s apartment building.

Day 2. Exploring Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

**Breakfast & lunch included*

Morning: Visit to the Scale Model of Old Havana for a meeting with architect Miguel Coyula.

The model serves as an excellent introduction to the layout of the city. It is color-coded by age with the historic buildings painted in crimson, pre-Revolution buildings in yellow and the post-revolutionary buildings in ivory. We'll learn how each part of the city has developed historically, and the tough challenges each district faces today.

Mr. Coyula has been a leading figure in urban design, urban policy and community development for over 45 years, garnering design accolades, awards and public leadership roles. An internationally renowned architect, urban planner, and frequent lecturer abroad, he is on the faculty of architecture at ISPJAE (Instituto Superior Jose Antonia Echeverria) at Havana University.

Followed by guided walking tour of UNESCO World Heritage Site, Old Havana.

Visit to the Cathedral Square, named after the masterpiece of Cuban baroque architecture: the Cathedral of Havana built by the Jesuit order.

The Cathedral's baroque facade is simultaneously intimate and imposing, and one of the two towers is visibly larger, creating a pleasing asymmetry.

Visit to Square of Arms, ancient military parade ground for Spanish soldiers and surrounded by impressive buildings such as:

Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the former official residence of the governors (Captains General) of Havana, Cuba. It is home to the Museum of the City of Havana.

Palacio del Segundo Cabo. The seat of the second authority of the island. Today it houses important publishing houses.

Lunch at *paladar* (private family-run restaurant) 'La Moneda Cubana'.

Afternoon: Continue walking tour onto San Francisco Square, named after the Convent of San Francisco, this square was conceived in 1628, with the objective of supplying water to the ships trading with the metropolis.

Visit to Plaza Vieja, the only civic square of colonial times. Notice it doesn't have a church or government building around. Here we will visit important institutions for visual arts.

Free time in the famous handicraft market of Old Havana, located inside the *Almacenes de Depósito San José*, an old warehouse on the harbour side where you can purchase all sorts of crafts and souvenirs by local artisans.

Evening: Attend one of the most traditional and popular ceremonies in Cuba, The Fire of the Cannon of 9 O'clock at the colonial Fortress of San Carlos de La Cabana where Che Guevara established his headquarters after the Revolution came to power in 1959.

Day 3. Eclecticism & Art Deco

**Breakfast & lunch included*

Morning: Guided by Architect Anibal del Prado, we will visit Havana's Parque Central and surrounding buildings.

Visit to the Capitolio Nacional, designed by Cuban Architects Govantes and Cabarroca and built by the American construction company Purdy & Henderson. This monumental building is one of Cuba's most outstanding architectural patrimonies. The dome is 300.96 ft. high (7 inches higher than the highest capitol building in the US).

Visit to the former Centro Gallego, an exponent of German neo-baroque architecture style in Havana, built in 1915 by Belgian architect Paul Belau.

Centro Asturiano, inaugurated in 1927 designed by Spanish Architect Manuel del Busto features solid heavy façades constructed in Capellania Stones with clear influence of Spanish Renaissance. It houses the most majestic staircase of Cuban Architecture. Since 2001 the building houses the new Museum of Fine Arts.

Manzana de Gomez, first entire city block built in Cuba in the beginnings of the 20th century completely for commercial use with two inner diagonal streets that cross the building in all directions integrating the pedestrian circulation with the outer fabric.

Bacardi Building, designed in 1930 by Cuban architects Esteban Rodriguez Castells, Rafael Fernandez Ruenes and Jose Menendez Menendez, located in Las Murallas district.

The rich façade design is based on polychrome granite imported from Bavaria and Norway as well as coloured brick, terracotta and Capellania stone.

The elaborate decoration of the building crown features a bat, logo of the Bacardi Company.

Lunch at *paladar* (private family-run restaurant) 'La California'.

Afternoon: Walking tour along the Paseo del Prado, a pedestrian promenade remodelled in 1929 with the inauguration of Havana's Capitol Building.

Here we'll visit residential buildings along the boulevard with clear influence from European and American architecture, such as the Telegrafo Hotel, the residence of Cuba's former president Jose Miguel Gomez Residence, and the former Asociacion de Dependientes del Comercio –a Venetian neo-renaissance style building placed in a key corner of the Prado featured in the film Buena Vista Social Club.

Evening: Enjoy a performance of the world famous “Buena Vista Social Club” at the classy Habana Cafe cabaret. (Optional – Not included in tour cost)

Day 4. Modernism and some of Havana's overlooked Art Deco Architecture

**Breakfast, lunch & dinner included*

Morning: Meeting with Architect Pedro Vazquez, founding member of Cuba's National Union of Architects and Engineers, for a guided panoramic motor coach tour of Modern Havana.

We will visit places such as:

Pabellón Cuba a Miesian post-revolution exhibition hall built in 1963.

Hotel Habana Libre, the former Havana Hilton, built in 1958 by Welton Becket and Associates. It features an exterior mosaic mural by Amelia Pelaez.

Coppelia built in 1966. This popular ice cream parlor composed of flying saucer pods was designed by Mario Girona.

Hotel Riviera (Polevitzky, Johnson and Associates, 1957) built by Meyer Lansky and the flashiest of the 1950s casino hotels.

We'll also see important examples of Art- Deco style architecture such as:

Lopez Serrano Building, with its strong reminiscence of American Skyscrapers, resembling a miniature Empire State Building with the bottom 70 floors chopped off, the López Serrano building is Vedado's most distinctive art deco architecture example. It was built in 1932 by Mira & Roisch Architecture Firm, it was the highest residential building in Havana for many years.

The House of Catalina Laza built in the 1920's by Juan Pedro Baro. This beautiful mansion features Art Deco interiors by Rene Lalique and gardens by J.F.C. Forestier.

The house has a fascinating love story. Married socialite Catalina Lasa fell in love with landowner and widower Juan Pedro Baró in 1905. Cuba had no divorce laws at the time, so the lovers escaped to Paris to continue their affair. On their return, Baro built this outstanding mansion for the beautiful Catalina Laza.

Lunch at at one of Havana's most popular restaurants: El Aljibe. This eatery serves the best Creole food in Cuba!

Afternoon: Departure to Cienfuegos, in Central Cuba.

Cienfuegos is the first, and an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble representing the new ideas of modernity, hygiene and order in urban planning as developed in Latin America from the 19th century.

Upon arrival we check in at the Jagua Hotel. With a magnificent location in the well-known residential area of Punta Gorda, in Southern Cienfuegos, the Jagua Hotel rises over the waters of Cienfuegos Bay.

Dinner at the hotel.

Day 5. Cienfuegos city

**Breakfast, lunch& dinner included*

Morning: Guided by Cienfuegos City Historian, Architect Iran Millan Cuetara, we will embark on a walking tour of UNESCO World Heritage Site, Cienfuegos Historical Center.

We will visit neoclassical buildings around Paseo del Prado and the main Square Jose Marti such as:

The Casa de la Cultura, home of another wealthy sugar baron, stunning mansion in neoclassical style.

The Tomas Terry Theatre completed in 1895.

The Cathedral built with the donation of wealthy families like the Lebrancs, the Albis, the Terrys. Inside you find the reproductions of the 12 Apostles in stained glass imported from Paris. Also the original machinery of the clock tower was built in France. Still in place and working.

We'll also visit the elegant art gallery Galería de Arte Maroya.

Lunch at *paladar* (private family-run restaurant) 'Finca del Mar'.

Afternoon: Visit to Palacio de Valle. The eclectic building was erected at a cost of a million and half pesos. French, Arabic, Italian and Cuban artisans worked with marble, alabaster, brass, glass and ceramic imported from Spain, Italy and United States. The entrance is primitive Gothic style and leads to a dining room of Mudejar influence, which imitates the famous Patio of the Lions, of Alhambra, in Granada.

Dinner at the hotel.

Day 6. Trinidad de Cuba

**Breakfast, lunch & dinner included*

Morning: Day trip to UNESCO World Heritage Site, Trinidad's Historical Center. Trinidad is an outstanding example of a colonial city. It has maintained its historic core, featuring the highest percentage of surviving antique buildings and public squares and bringing together architectural, historic and cultural elements of great value.

Nancy Benitez, a local architect and restoration specialist, will take us on a guided walking tour around this historic city known for its cobble-stoned streets, pastel colored homes and small-town feel.

Visit to the Architecture Museum (Casa de los Sanchez Iznaga), housing the most representative samples of the city's architectural development in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Next we'll visit the Museo Municipal de Historia located in the beautiful Neo Classical *Cantero Palace*. In addition to antiques and 19th-century furnishings, there are bits and pieces of slave history, and exhibits of revolutionary Cuba. For many visitors, though, the highlight is to climb up the narrow wooden stairs to the tower, which offers terrific bird's-eye views of Trinidad and the surrounding area.

We will also stop at a mirador (lookout) over the Sugar Mill Valley, designated by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1988.

Trinidad is well known for its pottery makers. We meet with a family that has been passing the tradition for generations: the Santanders.

Lunch at Trinidad's famous *paladar* 'El Dorado' (private family-run restaurant).

Afternoon: Free time to wander the streets of Trinidad's historical centre.

Return to your hotel in Cienfuegos.

Dinner at the hotel.

Evening is free to enjoy the hotel amenities, and the lively streets of Cienfuegos. How about live Cuban popular music at Casa de la Música – a great opportunity to dance with Cubans and your tour companions.

Day 7. Cienfuegos – Havana

**Breakfast, lunch & dinner included*

Morning: Check out of your hotel and transfer back to Havana city. Over arrival in Havana we will visit the Jaimanitas neighborhood.

We are now entering Fusterlandia, the studio, residence and wild kingdom of José Rodríguez Fuster, one of the most important Cuban ceramists and painters today.

Fuster has turned an entire neighborhood in western Havana into a giant art installation that involves locals and their actual homes as part of the exhibit. He's engaged and trained many neighborhood residents as artisans, especially youth. This is art for and by the people on an epic scale!

Lunch hosted by Jose Fuster.

Afternoon: Visit to Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), the country's top art academy. School departments include Music, Modern Dance, Drama, and Visual Arts.

The schools were designed and built by architects Cuban Ricardo Porro and the Italians Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti from 1961 to 1965, in the former affluent neighborhood of Country Club Park (today known as Cubanacán), specifically on the grounds of the Havana Country Club golf course.

Today the buildings are considered Cuba's best example of post-Revolutionary architecture but at the time they were thought too sensual and avant-garde. The project was halted, though the school did open. The complex fell into ruin and amazingly, in 2001 the Cuban government approached the three architects and asked them to complete the project. Restoration was completed in 2009.

Check in at the Hotel Nacional.

Evening: Farewell dinner at one of Havana's very best *paladares*: La Fontana.

Day 8. Good Bye Cuba!

**Breakfast included*

Transfer to Havana International Airport for departure.

GROUND COSTS:

In a group of 15 to 19 travelers (Land package only, double room occupancy): **\$3,200 USD**

Prices are per person based on double room occupancy. All taxes included.

Single Room Supplement (optional): **\$899 USD**

Services Included:

- *4 nights at Hotel Nacional with breakfast included.*
- *3 nights at Hotel Jagua with breakfast and dinner included.*
- *18 Meals: 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 5 dinners.*
- *Luxury air-conditioned coach transportation and professional driver.*
- *All activities, speakers, meetings and meals as described in itinerary except those noted as "optional" or "not included in cost."*
- *An expert Cuban English speaking guide and translator throughout the program.*
- *Official Asistur Cuban health insurance coverage.*

Services Not Included:

- *International airfare to and from Cuba.*
- *Activities listed as "optional" or "not included in cost" in itinerary.*
- *Gratuities for Cuban tour guide, bus driver, chambermaids, restaurant staff, porters, etc.*
- *Cuban airport departure tax of 25.00 Cuban convertible pesos.*
- *Optional travel interruption and cancellation insurance.*