

Day 1 • Wednesday, June 25 • Catching the Cuba craze!
Arrive at Havana's José Martí International airport (HAV).

Enroute to your boutique accommodations savor the sights and sounds of one of the oldest and most stunning cities in the New World.

At your lodging, enjoy a welcome cocktail, freshen up, and get comfortable. Group welcome dinner at Paladar Café Laurent, a hidden gastronomical gem, in Havana's Vedado neighborhood. This restaurant has consistent great reviews, spectacular city vistas, fine dining, and excellent service.

Later tonight, meet the musicians of the renowned Buena Vista Social Club, and enjoy a performance of their world-renowned pre-Revolution symphonics that have tilted the world music scene since 1996. Overnight at the Grand Aston Hotel.

Day 2 • Thursday, June 26 • Romancing Old Havana + Hemingway farm
Greet the day with tasty breakfast at your boutique accommodations.

Hola, La Habana Vieja. "In terms of beauty, only Venice and Paris surpassed Havana," penned Ernest Hemingway. He was alluding to Havana's incredible architecture, arts, and, of course, the joie de vivre the city's engaging people. Old Havana's four ancient plazas are full of color and personality, with a mix of palatial buildings, monuments, museums, galleries, churches, lively entertainment, restaurants, and bars. Together, the four plazas of Old Havana contain the most extensive collection of Spanish colonial-era architecture in Latin America. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, restoration and care of Old Havana's wonders is assigned to the Office of the Historian of Havana – Cuba Explorer's island sponsor.

You'll witness Cathedral Square, the most beautiful 18th-century colonial plaza in Latin America. Its centerpiece is the baroque masterpiece Cathedral de San Cristóbal de La Habana was erected in 1748 by the Jesuit order.

Next, we'll visit Plaza de Armas [Square of Arms], an ancient military parade ground for Spanish soldiers, surrounded by such impressive buildings as Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the former seat of colonial government. Today the edifice, dating from 1776, houses the Museum of the City.

We will continue onto San Francisco Square, one of the oldest plazas in the historical quarter. The plaza is christened after the magnificent Iglesia y Monasterio de San Francisco de Asís; its construction began in 1608. The basilica is another striking example of Cuban baroque architecture.

And, finally, we'll visit Plaza Vieja, the only civic square of colonial times. In contrast to the churches and government buildings of the other plazas, only opulent aristocratic 17th-century mansions surround the 'Old Square.'

Let's imbibe at two of the most famous bars in Cuba, La Bodeguita del Medio and El Floridita, both frequent watering holes of Ernest Hemingway.

Now we explore Havana's famed arts, and crafts mall known as Centro Cultural Antiguos Almacenes de Depósito San José. This marvelous restoration of dilapidated dock warehouse has resulted in a gigantic market exhibiting the wares of hundreds of Cuban artists and craftspersons. An authentic Cuban shopping experience!

We have a special lunch arranged for you at Ajiaco paladar. It's TripAdvisor's highest-rated restaurant for genuine Cuba food. Off the beaten path in the sleepy romantic coastal fishing village of Cojímar – the setting for Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea," Ajiaco is noted for fantastic service, atmosphere, and scrumptious traditional Cuba cuisine. Local organic gardens supply all of Ajiaco's menu ingredients. The result is every dish exudes delightfully fresh aromatic flavors you'll never forget.

Now we're off to visit Finca Vigía [Lookout Farm] where literary bard Ernest Hemingway spent twenty-one of his most productive years becoming a titan of English literature. Claimed by both the United States and Cuba as their native son, it was Hemingway himself who declared the island to be his true home. His house remains just as it was when he lived in it. You'll see his eclectic personal objects, thousands of books, manuscripts, and photographs, as well as some animal trophies, bagged on his frequent safaris.

Return to your boutique accommodations to freshen up.

Dinner is served at the private restaurant Mojito-Mojito. Ideally situated in Plaza Vieja, its friendly staff, quaint atmosphere, and delicious food ranks it tops on TripAdvisor. The restaurant's slogan, "A single mojito is not enough." We agree.

Behold a most dramatic ceremony – El Cañonazo – the Firing of the 9 PM Cannon at the magnificent Fortress of San Carlos de la Cabaña. Its construction began in the 16th-century. Later, Ché Guevara established his headquarters in its vaults after the 1959 Revolution. El Cañonazo is an enchanting reenactment dating back to 1519 when the city of Havana was enclosed by a tall, thick rock wall to ward off attacks from pirates and the English. The firing of the 9 PM cannon signaled the closing of the city gates each evening. If you were outside at the time, you were in "vedado" or the forbidden zone. Today Vedado is the cultural hub of upper-crust modern Havana. Overnight at the Grand Aston Hotel.

Day 3 • Friday, June 27 • Cuban cigar and Afro-Cuban culture, art + 1950s American cars

Greet the day with tasty breakfast at your boutique accommodations.

Visit to a cigar factory, where you will discover the international renown of the manufacturing of Cuban cigars and their long tradition of excellence. This will be an

excellent opportunity to approach to the singular and inseparable artistic production accompanying the fascinating world of cigar smokers. Shopping opportunities in authorized Habanos dealers will also be possible.

Visit the Afro-Cuban influenced Callejón de Hamel, one of the shortest but most mesmerizing streets in Havana. See Afro-Cuban religion of Santería, a fusion of African belief systems (multiple saint worship) and Catholicism, portrayed in art, music, and dance. Vibrant murals adorn alley walls in tribute to the culture and religious beliefs of the neighborhood.

Barcelona in Havana. We'll visit a whimsical Jaimanitas neighborhood known as Fusterlandia. José Fuster is one of Cuba's most important ceramists and painters. He's known as the Picasso of the Caribbean, and his work acclaimed internationally. His artistic mission is the rehabilitation and adornment of his village. Fuster, together with local youth, has mosaiced over 80 houses with ornate murals to suit the personality of each inhabitant. Nowadays, Fuster's art is a cherished part of Cuban culture. His masterpieces join the ranks of Antoni Gaudí in Barcelona and Brancusi in the Romanian city of Târgu Jiu. Fuster funds his community project through the sale of his paintings and ceramics.

Seafood lunch at Fusterlandia.

Get ready for an American vintage cars tour of Havana. Hail back to picture postcard days of the 1950s. You will tool the most important sites of Havana in classic US automobiles lovingly restored and maintained by their owners. An excellent time to reminisce with your guide about Cuba's pre-revolution era and subsequent developments. We will stop at the Hotel Nacional, and at the Revolution Square.

Return to your boutique accommodations to freshen up.

Dinner not included in tour cost. It's an occasion to sample Havana's stellar private eateries and taste the diversity of the island's distinctive cuisines. We'll provide suggestions for restaurants most popular with Cubans and our travelers.

Evening entertainment suggestion. Shake your booty to the best Afrojazz, Cubajazz, and Sonjazz at Club La Zorra y El Cuervo [The Fox and the Raven] featuring astonishing performances by up and coming island ensembles. It's a popular haunt for Cubans and foreign visitors alike. Overnight at the Grand Aston Hotel.

Day 4 • Saturday, June 28 •

Greet the day with tasty breakfast at your accommodations.

For those going on to the Jardines Aggressor, transfer to the Park Central Hotel in Old Havana. Our bus to the Aggressor awaits us. Return transfer to Havana Airport included for the other guests.