
New Year's Trip to Cuba!



**December 27, 2018 – January 3, 2019
Four Nights in Havana, Three Nights in Viñales**

A Cuba Cochinito Tours Experience

December 27 Thursday

Arrival in Cuba (time to be determined)

Afternoon (most likely) arrival at our casa, the Casa Malecon Colonial, a beautiful turn-of-the-century building that has been renovated over the last few years to accommodate many deluxe apartments.

Afternoon free walking exploration of our neighborhood. We're one block from Havana's famous sea wall, the Malecon, and right in the heart of Centro Havana, a densely populated and lively part of town that is not full of tourists. What it is full of is Cubans and Cuban life. I'll happily stroll with you and I'll also encourage you to explore on your own. You won't need to go far to fill all your senses to the brim and even above the brim.

6 pm Visit to the iconic Hotel Nacional and its famous bar, once the headquarters of the American Mafia. With any luck, Karen's Cuban boyfriend, Carlos Rafael, will be serving drinks.

7:00 pm Transport in classic American convertibles to dinner at O'Reilly 360 in Havana Vieja (old Havana).

10:00 pm Return to our casa to relax and get a good night's sleep!



Our B&B, Casa Malecon Colonial



Centro Habana



Hotel Nacional



December 28 Friday

7:00 am Breakfast in our casa

8:00 am Option 1: Half-day bike tour of Havana (Karen and Zulema lead)

- Rio Almendares forest
- Plaza de Revolución
- Havana Vieja
- Malecón

8:00 am Option 2: Half-day driving tour of Havana (Robert leads)

- Fusterlandia
- Rio Almendares forest
- Plaza de Revolucion

1:00 pm Lunch together in the Vedado neighborhood

2:00 pm – 5:00 pm Relax/Free Time

5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Salsa Dance Lesson with my friends Ronier, Kenia and Suset

7:30pm Drinks and dinner with our dance teachers at El Biky in Centro Havana

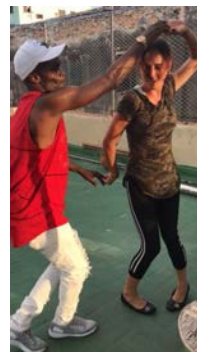
10:00 pm Option to go dancing with Ronier, Kenia, and Suset at Club 1830, one of Havana's hottest dance clubs.



The Almendares River runs through Havana and out to the sea, and a large forested park along the river's banks offers respite from the noise and bustle of the city. Also a space for Santeria religious rituals.



La Plaza de Revolución was, and remains, Fidel's space. It is ground zero for 'el sistema de Castrismo'.



Ronier and Suset demonstrate salsa



Club 1830

December 29 Saturday

9:00 am Breakfast in our Casa

10:00 am Visit to the Museo de Bellas Artes in Havana Vieja. This is one of the best art museums in the world, 400+ years of Cuban art, all of it derivative of European (and later American) art movements, but with Cuban subject matter and a Cuban palette.

12:00 pm Lunch in la Plaza Vieja (old plaza), a beautifully and fully restored plaza that captures what this place looked like 200 years ago

1:30 pm A bicitaxi taxi tour of Havana Vieja. We'll divide up two by two and each pair will get and make their own unique tour of Havana Vieja with their bicitaxi operator. Many opportunities to stop and take a closer look at daily life in this oldest part of the city.

3pm. Meetup for drinks at El Floridita, perhaps Havana's most famous bar, the birthplace of the Daiquiri and one of Ernest Hemingway's favorite watering holes.

4:00pm – 7:00pm Relax/Free Time

7:40 pm Transport to La Fabrica de Arte, Havana's hottest club/art gallery/performance space.

8:00 pm Dinner at Restaurante Tierra inside the FAC

9:30 pm till . . . Experience the magic of La Fabrica de Arte



Miguel Melero, 1836-1907



A bicitaxi



El Floridita



La Fabrica del Arte Cubano is a nightclub, art gallery, and performance space on the site of a former cooking oil factory. It's the most happening scene in Havana, Thursdays thru Sundays.

December 30 Sunday

9:00 am Breakfast in our casa

10:00 am – 1:00 pm Architectural Tour of El Cerro, an historic neighborhood that was the swankiest neighborhood in the city back in the 1800s. At least some of Cerro is today in ruins, and to walk its streets, even for a few blocks, is to feel almost like an archeologist. We'll have an expert guide to help us imagine Cerro's past glory, and to understand what happened to this neighborhood over time. Lunch included.

2:00 – 5:00 pm Relax/Free time

5:30 pm - 7 pm Option to visit a nail salon! Nail salons represent one of several dozen types of businesses that Cubans can privately own. These salons provide women in Cuba a convenient entrepreneurial platform, and thousands of Cuban women have seized the opportunity. The other side, of course, is the demand for manicures and pedicures. Cuban women like to look GOOD.. There is no shortage of demand.

7:30 pm Quick dinner

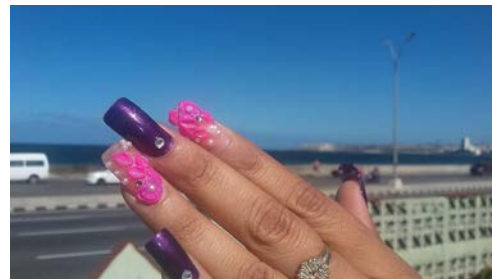
8:30 – 11:30 pm. Dress-up party at Suset's house in the historic suburb of Marianao. Cuban parties welcome all ages and there is great respect and care for elders. People young and old sing the old classic love songs. From dancing to domino, this is a great way to wrap up our stay in Havana.



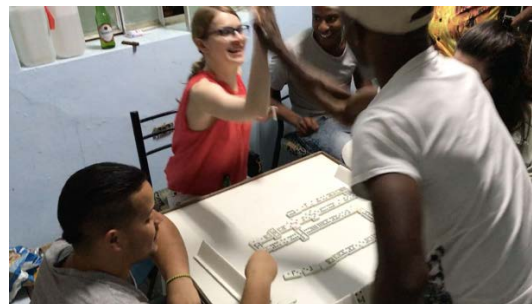
Casa de Marques de Pinar del Rio



Casa de José Melgares



Your hands after visiting the salon?



Playing domino at Suset's house party

December 31 Monday

9:00 am Breakfast in our casa

10:00 am Options to take advantage of one or two more experiences before we leave the city in the afternoon:

- Columbus Cemetery, one of the largest in the world, full of architectural monuments and even more full of stories of the famous families there interred.
- Finca Vigía, the home and compound of Ernest Hemingway on the outskirts of Havana. From the quantity and quality of the many personal affects visible from the windows and doors of the main house, you might think Hemingway left just last week.
- Fusterlandia, for our bike riders who missed this beautiful artistic fantasy created by Jose Fuster, the Gaudi of Cuba
- Your call

3:00 pm Departure to Viñales

5:00 pm Visit to Patio Pelegrin in the tiny town of Puerta de Golpe. The Patio is a magical place—an organic farm, a ceramics workshop, a café and art gallery for tourists like us, a four-generation family compound. This is one place to buy some art. Patio Pelegrin is not supported by the Cuban state. It survives on our donations and its art sales. We will eat dinner here, too.

7:30 pm Arrival at our B&Bs in Viñales. **It's New Year's Eve.** Our accommodations are on a tiny road on the edge of town but someone nearby will surely burn a life-sized doll out in the street at midnight, to celebrate the end of one year and the fresh beginning of another.



Cementerio Colon



Hemingway House interior



Fusterlandia



Patio Pelegrin



The stunning Viñales Valley

January 1 Tuesday

8:00 am Breakfast in our casas

9:00 am Option 1: Horse ride through the beautiful Viñales Valley, including a visit to a tobacco farm where we'll learn all about one of Cuba's most famous crops and products.

9:00 am Option 2: Relaxation and reflection time at your casa, followed by a taxi ride to a tobacco farm where you'll join up with our horse riders for a set of experiences there.

Lunch on the farm

2:00 pm Brief visit to Robert's farm, where we'll pick some vegetables for tonight's dinner.

3:00 – 6:00 pm Relax/Free Time

6:30 pm Visit my friend Pipo's farm and enjoy a bountiful farm-fresh meal cooked by his wife Yuselis. After dinner, drinks, cigars, and conversation under the stars.



My farm!



My good friend Pipo (Jose Luis Yanes)

January 2 Wednesday

8:00 am Breakfast in our casas

9:00 am – 6:00 pm Free time. Choose your activities!

- Guided tour of Viñales botanical garden, full of native medicinal plants
- Strolling the town center, taking advantage of wifi internet in the main plaza
- Pool swimming, lounging pool side at Hotel Jasmines with its spectacular view of the valley
- Lounging on the front porch, drinking coffee, eating fresh fruit with my farmer friends Piti and Marta Rojas
- Zip line experience
- Santo Tomas cave exploration

7:00 pm Farewell Dinner at an organic farm restaurant located on a hilltop just outside of town, La Finca Agroecologica 'El Paraiso'

January 3 Thursday

Breakfast and then Return to Havana's Jose Marti International Airport (Times TBD)

Return to USA