Over the course of centuries, Cuba’s culture has been shaped by its natural riches, resulting in a blend of Indigenous, European, and African influences. Discover how these identities live on today as you journey to the country’s capital and its heartland. Learn how Old Havana is preserving its one-of-a-kind architectural heritage, and see a show at the iconic Buena Vista Social Club. Delve into the natural beauty of Viñales and the Zapata Peninsula, exploring forests and farmlands, wetlands and rocky coastlines, and even an ancient limestone cave. Most importantly, meet with local Cuban people like farmers, artists, conservationists, and entrepreneurs to gain firsthand insight into their daily lives, and the ways Cuba’s natural and cultural history impact them.

WHY CUBA? With its beautiful beaches and turquoise waters, lush national parks and mountain scenery, and rich historical significance, Cuba offers a full spectrum of natural and cultural wonders to experience.
What to expect: This trip features long touring days with travel via motor coach, ship, zodiac, all-terrain vehicle, or train. Travelers are required to board transportation without assistance as well as stand and walk over uneven terrain for extended periods of time. Some tours may include optional higher-intensity activities and travel at higher altitudes with steep ascents and descents. Outings last four to six hours most days. This program is suitable for travelers who are able to comfortably walk four to six miles, or 6,900–9,200 steps, each day.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the many historical influences that have shaped Cuba as you explore colonial Old Havana on foot.
- Learn about the island’s urban agricultural initiatives and organic farming at Alamar Organoponic Gardens.
- Visit Las Terrazas, a UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve and self-sustained ecological community that began as a reforestation project and is now a model of sustainability and ecotourism.
- Hike among the distinctive limestone formations known as mogotes and take a boat ride through an underground cave system in Viñales Valley.
- Venture to the Zapata Peninsula to seek out endemic flora and fauna in the national park, go snorkeling, and learn about the famous events of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

ACTIVITY LEVEL 3

What to expect: This trip features long touring days with travel via motor coach, ship, zodiac, all-terrain vehicle, or train. Travelers are required to board transportation without assistance as well as stand and walk over uneven terrain for extended periods of time. Some tours may include optional higher-intensity activities and travel at higher altitudes with steep ascents and descents. Outings last four to six hours most days. This program is suitable for travelers who are able to comfortably walk four to six miles, or 6,900–9,200 steps, each day.
DAY 1, DEC. 2 - OLD HAVANA
Upon arrival at the José Martí International Airport, you will be met by your guide and driver, and transferred to your hotel. You will be able to check-in and change money. You will have the remainder of the afternoon to explore your surroundings before your welcome dinner at a paladar. Overnight at Casa Particular. (D)

DAY 2, DEC. 3 - OLD HAVANA
Explore Old Havana’s cobblestone streets, visiting the Plaza de Armas, Plaza de San Francisco de Asís, Plaza de la Catedral, and Plaza Vieja. In the afternoon visit Organopónico Vivero Alamar, an incredible urban garden located outside of central Havana, widely considered one of the most successful organic farms in the city. After the economic collapse in the early 1990s, Cuba was forced to develop new methods to feed its population without the support of the Soviet Union. Now, the country is filled with more than 7,000 urban allotments of “organopónicos,” which cover approximately 81,000 acres. During the tour, learn about the advances Cuba has made with respect to organic farming. Overnight at Casa Particular. (BLD)

DAY 3, DEC. 4 - VIÑALES
Travel to Soroa. En route, visit Sierra del Rosario, a mountain range with 25,000 hectares of evergreen forest in the Artemisa and Pinar del Río provinces. It is home to Las Terrazas, a self-sustained community named after the reforestation project initiated in 1967. While at Las Terrazas, learn about the community’s history, enjoy delicious coffee from their plantation, and visit an artist’s studio. Then, visit the Soroa Orchid Garden, a garden built in the 1940s by Spanish lawyer Tomás Felipe Camacho to honor his wife and daughter. It is now considered a National Heritage Site the
Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve, and it houses more than 20,000 plants, with 700 species of orchids, including more than 200 autochthonous ones. The garden is under the care of the University of Pinar del Río, which hosts a botanical research center and orchid workshops on site. Take a short walk across the street from the orchidarium to see the beautiful Soroa Waterfall, also known as Salto del Arcoíris or Rainbow Falls, and marvel at its vegetation and natural pools. Continue on to Viñales for dinner and overnight. **Overnight at Casa Particular. (BLD)**

**DAY 4, DEC. 5 – VIÑALES**

This morning, visit Cueva del Indio, a limestone cave set adjacent to hills covered in lush vegetation. Here, we will board a boat and marvel at an underground magical world of stalagmites, stalactites, and folklore as we enjoy a short cruise through this cavernous wonderland. The cave is an ancient indigenous dwelling rediscovered in 1920. This afternoon, hike the mogotes, unusual geologic formations in the area, and visit a tobacco farm. Dinner this evening is at a paladar called the Agro Ecológico in the hills surrounding Viñales. Arrive early to meet the owners and learn how they juggle family, the farm, a paladar operation, and life in Cuba, and then savor the dishes made with the farm’s fresh produce. **Overnight at Casa Particular. (BLD)**

**DAY 5, DEC. 6 – ZAPATA**

Today, travel to the Zapata Peninsula, which is home to the Bay of Pigs as well as the largest wetlands in the Caribbean. Seventy percent of the area is a Biosphere Reserve and Cuba’s largest national park. The Zapata area consists of scrub, mangrove swamp, and coastline, and over 200 bird species have been recorded here. This is one of the most remote regions of Cuba; yet intrepid wildlife watchers will reap the benefits: not only incredible diversity of birds, but endemic reptile and plant species can be seen on the mangrove-lined waterways here. Zapata’s wetlands give rise to more than 1000 species of plants and 37 species of reptiles, including the endemic Cuban crocodile. Upon arrival, embark on a short excursion crossing the Tesoro Lagoon to visit the Taína Village, where Cuban sculptor Rita Longa has depicted the way of life, skills, and habits of the native Cuban inhabitants through the creation of life sized statues. After lunch at a local restaurant, receive an introduction and welcome to Zapata National Park. Afterwards, continue with a visit to the town of Palpite to interact with the artistic community here part of the Korimaka project. **Overnight at Casa Enrique or similar. (BLD)**

**DAY 6, DEC. 7 – ZAPATA**

After breakfast, visit the town of Playa Girón and its museum to learn about the events of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Have lunch at Caleta Buena, a beautiful inlet in the heart of the bay. After lunch, enjoy snorkeling to explore the marine biodiversity of the area. Later, return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. There is an opportunity for an optional stop at Cueva de los Peces for additional snorkeling. Dinner this evening at a local paladar. **Overnight at Casa Enrique or similar. (BLD)**
DAY 7, DEC. 8 - ZAPATA

Today, learn about the Zapata National Park with a lecture about the ecosystem of the Zapata wetland. Next, visit Criadero de Cocodrilos, a crocodile breeding facility. Overnight at Casa Enrique or similar. (BLD)

DAY 8, DEC. 9 - OLD HAVANA

This morning, return to Havana. Have lunch on your own and enjoy time at leisure in Old Havana. This evening, attend the farewell dinner before a Buena Vista Social Club show. Overnight at Casa Particular. (BD)

DAY 9, DEC. 10 - DEPARTURE

This morning, you will be transferred to the Havana airport for your flight home. (B)

ACCOMMODATIONS

Please note: The accommodations for this program are in casas particulares, the Cuban equivalent of a bed and breakfast. These small properties can be found throughout the island, each with its own unique charm and character, and they provide a great opportunity for interaction with local residents. Be aware that rooms and facilities are basic, but all have private bathrooms.

PRICING

$3,745 per person

Price is based on double occupancy with 10 participants. Single occupancy offered at additional cost of $475 per person.

Your price includes:

- 8 nights’ accommodations
- 22 meals (8 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 8 dinners)
- Non-alcoholic beverages with meals; exempt two alcoholic beverages at farewell dinner
- Sightseeing and activities as described, including entrance fees
- Full time guide for duration of program
- All tips and gratuities
- Private vehicle transportation throughout program
- Luggage handling, one bag per person
- Bottled water on the bus
- Carbon offset

Price does not include: international airfare, trip cancellation insurance, drinks purchased on own, or items of a personal nature.

Holbrook Travel can assist with making your flight arrangements upon request. Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended and will be sent to you by Cal Discoveries Travel with your reservation confirmation. To research further please visit travelinsure.com/calalumni