

Son Caminos

Cultural Pathways to Cuba

May 17-26, 2019

Havana | Las Terrazas | Los Viñales

Please note: *This itinerary is subject to change and will be updated as we get closer to our travel dates.*

Day 1
*17 May,
Friday*

Havana

11:00 **Arrival in Havana Airport**

Recommended arrival by 11:00 am for a group transfer.

1:00 **Lunch at El Jardín de los Milagros**

For our first meal in a *paladar* (privately owned restaurant), we'll eat in a patio with vine covered trellises and meet each other, while sharing a tasty Cuban lunch. Tour the hydroponic garden and the bee hives on the roof where the owners grow herbs and vegetables for the restaurant.

3:00 **Check in at Casa & Group Orientation**

AltruVistas staff and your Cuban guide will share tips to ensure your journey is fun and safe. We'll review and agree on processes that will help the group travel experience flow more smoothly. We'll end with a toast to a fabulous trip, then have some down time to settle in before we meet up later in the evening for dinner and music.

7:30 **Welcome Dinner & Music**

We'll dine together at one of the many excellent *paladares*.

Meals included: Lunch and Dinner

Day 2
*18 May,
Saturday*

Havana

9:00 **History and Architecture Talk with Miguel Coyula**

Enjoy a brilliant fast paced overview of the development of Havana with noted architect and urban planner, Miguel Coyula. Learn about the historic development of the Capitol, the Master Plan for

Restoration of Old Havana through the salvaging of neglected buildings, tourism for restoration investment, and the accompanying social services for local residents

11:00 Tour of Habana Vieja

Habana Vieja --the old city, is rich with 500 years of architectural heritage, and was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. We'll walk the cobbled streets and plazas to explore the principal colonial squares while learning about the remarkable restoration efforts led by the city historian's office. A thriving neighborhood, the area includes an impressive and eclectic concentration of museums and galleries.

1:30 Lunch & Talk at Oasis Nelva

After our stroll through the old city, we'll be ready for the delicious fresh Cuban style lemonade that awaits us at *Oasis Nelva*. We'll dine at this Cuban Creperie founded by Carmen Monteagudo Garcia, who'll share her unique story of how she established a farm to table creperie in the heart of La Habana Vieja

2:30 Mojito Mini Mixology Workshop

What better place to learn to make a good *mojito* than at Oasis Nevla where the spearmint is fresh and the *sabor* is strong!

3:30 Dance Class

Music and dance permeate the Cuban experience! This dance class will help you learn or refine your steps so you're ready to get on the dance floor when the spirit strikes!

5:00 Free Time for Dinner & Exploration

We'll keep you posted on the music options, which promise to be quite exciting! Our visit coincides with the **Cubadisco Festival**—the biggest Cuban music festival on the island, with performances at multiple venues throughout the city.

If you want the "*classic option*," go for music and scenery to the historical **Hotel Nacional**. Luminaries, such as the band Orquesta Aragón play regularly at one of their clubs, **Salon 1930**. On a break from the music, stroll to the tables facing the ocean to take in the waves and all the activity on the famous *malecón* seawall below. (Let us know if you want us to make you show reservations).

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 3
19 May,
Sunday

Havana

9:00 Meet with Filmmaker Gloria Rolando

Gloria Rolando's documentaries focus on the history of the African diaspora in the Caribbean in a series she calls "Histories and Images of Our People." She will meet with us to show and discuss her latest film, *Dialogo con mi Abuela*, based on taped conversations with her grandmother. Through the story of her grandmother, Rolando addresses the lives of Afro Cubans in the generation after slavery ended.

11:00 Ferry to Regla, Visit Virgen de Regla Church

We'll cross the bay on a ferry from La Habana Vieja to Regla. to visit the church that houses the much beloved Black Madonna, who is also venerated by the *lucumis* (Cuban Yoruba) as *Yemayá*—the *orisha* of the ocean.

12:00 Museo Municipal de Regla Tour & Folkloric Show

Our guided tour of the Regla museum will cover Afro Cuban history and cultural traditions and end with a folkloric music and dance performance .

1:30 Lunch in La Habana Vieja at local paladar

3:00 Free Afternoon & Evening

Another opportunity to further explore the city's restaurants and cultural scene on your own. One option is to stay in Old Havana and browse for souvenirs at the large Almacenes San Jose arts and crafts market.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 4
20 May,
Monday

Las Terrazas—Casas in Viñales

9:00 Leave for Las Terrazas

10:00 Sierra del Rosario Unesco Biosphere Reserve

After the excitement and stimulation of Havana, we will turn west, heading to the Cuban countryside. We'll first stop in the unique sustainable community of *Las Terrazas*, nestled in the Sierra del Rosario Unesco Biosphere Reserve. Named after the terraces created to reforest the area, the recovered forest now provides some of the most magnificent natural views in Cuba.

Our day will include a guided tour, with opportunities for hiking, bird watching and swimming in the lakes and rivers with clear, natural pools and waterfalls.

1:00 Lunch at *El Romero*

Specializing in vegetarian cuisine, *El Romero* provides an inventive twist on traditional Cuban food, with organic farm to table ingredients.

2:00 Cafécito at *Café María*

We'll end lunch as Cubans do, with some rich Cuban coffee! Fortunately some of the best coffee you're likely to find in Cuba is right next door, at *Café María*. You'll struggle to choose among the variety of specialty coffee drink options, all available with or without liquor. Sip it while sitting at one of the terraces, enjoying the stunning views.

3:00 Local Artist Studio Visits

Art always flourishes in beautiful nature and Las Terrazas has an impressive community of artists for us to visit! One of these artists is *Ariel Pinelli*, a painter who also makes his own paper from recycled material and uses it to create beautiful greeting cards layered with natural dyes. As a special touch, the cards come in hand-folded envelopes embossed with the name *Las Terrazas*. These light sustainable one of a kind art pieces make lovely inexpensive souvenir gifts!

4:00 Performance, *The Music of Polo Montañez*

We'll end the days' program with a performance of the music of Las Terrazas' most famous resident, Polo Montañez. Montañez is an internationally recognized composer and singer of Cuban country music who died tragically in a car accident in 2002. Today his band mates and friends continue to keep his music and memory alive sharing the traditional music fostered by the tobacco farmers of this region.

5:00 Leave for Viñales & Settle in at Casas

7:00 Dinner and Evening Free

Explore the charming town of Viñales, have dinner at one of the local *paladares*, and take in some music at one of the cultural centers.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 5
21 May,
Tuesday

Los Viñales.

Viñales Valley, Cuba's renowned tobacco growing region is surrounded by enormous rock formations that afford some of the most amazing scenic views on the island.

9:00 Soroa Orchid Garden

We'll begin our morning with the delicate beauty of orchids with a guided visit to Soroa Orchid Garden, home to over 20,000 plants and 700 species, 250 of which are native to Cuba. ?

12:00 Patio Pelegrín Workshop and Lunch

Pelegrin's Courtyard is filled with Cuban fruits, orchids and birds. A model of urban agriculture, it is also a gallery and thriving cultural center for all ages. We'll tour the gallery and the farm before participating in one of their special arts workshops. Using the pod from the *flamboyant* tree, we'll each create a papier mâché art piece as a keepsake.

We'll enjoy a traditional home cooked meal at the Patio Peregrín, and once again celebrate with music and dance.

4:00 Return to Viñales

5:00 Evening Free

Explore the charming town of Viñales, have dinner at one of the local *paladares*, and take in some music at one of the cultural centers.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 5
22 May,
Wednesday

Los Viñales.

9:00 Vega de Tabaco Tour

Our day will start with a visit to a tobacco farm where we'll follow the process from the tiny seeds we can cup in our palms to fresh cigars rolled with expert hands.

11:00 Tour Viñales Valley

We'll take a guided walk around the beautiful valley to learn about its unique geography.

12:30 Lunch & Afternoon Free in Viñales

After lunch on your own, shop for souvenirs at the street crafts fair, or

engage in other activities in the valley, such as visiting the Mural de la Prehistoria, or hiking to a waterhole.

6:00 Tour El Paraíso Organic Farm

Wilfredo converted land filled with thorny weeds into a highly productive farm that now feeds his family and the many visitors who come to eat at their restaurant. We'll tour the organic farm before enjoying its bountiful harvest in a genuine farm to table dining experience.

7:00 Sunset Dining Experience at El Paraíso Restaurant

Our dinner will begin with the "anti stress cocktail", made with 5 plants grown on the farm, optionally enhanced by rum to your liking. We'll enjoy a generous family-style dinner before witnessing one of Cubas' most magnificent panoramas as the sun sets over the Valley of Silence.

9:00 Evening free in Viñales

Check out the Polo Montañez Cultural Center in the Central Park, or explore the many other venues for live music in this thriving town.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Dinner

Day 7
23 May,
Thursday

Viñales | Havana

9:00 Check Out & Depart for Havana

11:00 Studio Visit & Workshop With Artist Sandra Dooley

A self-taught artist, *Sandra Dooley*, developed her "passion for making collages out of recycled stuff" after receiving bags of remnants of fabrics, buttons and scrap lace from her grandmother. She incorporates these materials in her paintings to create highly textured collages. Her works have been exhibited in Cuba, Canada and the prestigious International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In this workshop, we'll explore Sandra's techniques by making a collage together.

1:00-2:30 Lunch at El Laurel

We will dine at this waterfront gem overlooking the Marina Hemingway.

3:00 Havana Compás Dance

Havana Compás Dance fuses the essence of Spanish dance with Afro-

Cuban rhythms, creating a unique style, rich in layers of percussion, and played with instruments, the body, and chairs. We'll be treated to one of their exciting performances at their studio.

5:00 Casa Check-in

5:30 Dinner on Your Own & Evening Free

We'll check & keep you informed of entertainment options.

This weekend there will still be shows for the **Cubadisco Festival**. We'll continue to keep you posted.

This might be a good night to *visit the **Fabrica de Arte Cubano (FAC)***—an abandoned factory turned into a large cultural space and nightclub with multiple galleries and performance spaces. FAC presents art exhibitions, theater and dance shows, film screenings and music concerts.

OR check out **La Casa de la Música** in Miramar for some of the top bands in the country playing timba (Cuban salsa).

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 8
24 May,
Friday

Havana

10:00 Studio Visit with Leysis Quesada, Photographer

Leysis Quesada's work is centered on her daughter, her family, friends, and the daily lives of those closest to her, providing revealing insights about daily life in Cuba. We will meet her in her studio where we can see her photographs and learn about her work.

12:00 Lunch at local paladar

2:00 Tour the Museo de Bellas Artes

Arguably the best gallery in the Caribbean, the *National Fine Arts Museum* houses the most comprehensive collection of Cuban art in the world. Our guided tour will focus on post colonial art to the present.

4:00 Late Afternoon & Evening Free

After your museum visit, take a stroll through *Parque Central* to see the grandeur of the *Gran Teatro Alicia Alonso*, named after the Cuban prima ballerina. As you cross the park, you might overhear one of the animated discussions about *la pelota* among those who gather daily at the "esquina caliente" (hot corner) to debate baseball.

Next door to the *Gran Teatro* is the national capitol building, el *Capitolio*-- Havana's most ambitious and grandiose building. Constructed after the post-WWI sugar boom, the building has been recently restored and houses the Statue of the Republic--the figure of a young woman standing, dressed in a tunic, with a helmet, shield, and lance. This is the third largest indoor statue in the world.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 9
25 May,
Saturday

Havana

9:00 Proyecto Cultural Muraleando Tour & Workshop

Muraleando literally means mural making. The project was initiated by visionary artists as a way to clean up and beautify their neighborhood, involving community members in painting murals, and recycling garbage and other waste to create mosaics, sculptures and other art pieces. *Muraleando* has become a cultural center filled with fanciful celebrations of Cuban life that spill beyond the compound to beautify the entire neighborhood. The project transforms lives through its many offerings of free art classes for children, youth and adults, and won the National Community Culture Award in 2014.

We'll tour the center, participate in one of their arts workshops, and hear a performance by the community band, which will soon have us dancing.

12:00 Lunch on your own & Free Afternoon

Enjoy lunch at *Muraleando*, supporting the community center, or wait and eat at a *paladar* in the city center when we drop you off for a free afternoon of independent exploration on your last day.

7:00 Farewell Dinner

We'll return to *El Jardín de los Milagros* to celebrate the end of our journey with music and fine food. We'll reflect on the rich experiences we've shared and give thanks as we look forward to our return home with a greater appreciation of the beauty and challenges Cuba presents.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 10
26, May
Sunday

Departure

Transfer to the airport for your safe journey home!

Meal Included: Breakfast

About Your Travel Facilitator, Maria “Mari” Marques :

Mari Marques was born in the beautiful colonial city of Camagüey, Cuba. She came to the United States in the early years of the Cuban revolution as a child refugee--part of US Operation Peter Pan. To better understand the forces that shaped her life, she studied Political Science, earning a Master's Degree from Yale University. Mari was among the first groups of Cubans to return to the island when travel for exiles was re-established in the late 1970's. These trips served to deepen inspiration and commitment for her primary love: Cuban music and arts.

Mari has studied Cuban folkloric and popular dance for over 30 years, traveling to Cuba on multiple occasions to study music and dance. She also has spent those years promoting Cuban culture and arts in the San Francisco bay area, including working for the groundbreaking Cuban band, Conjunto Céspedes. She is currently the manager of Oakland-based Cuban singer and Afro-Cuban folklorist, Bobi Céspedes.

Following a successful career as an organizational development consultant, Mari now leads unique, experiential, small-group travel experiences to Cuba. Her early visits, multiple homecomings, and solid academic foundation have built Mari's deep comprehension and network of relationships in Cuba. She brings her skills as a coach and group facilitator, and her knowledge and passionate love of Cuba and its arts to create cultural pathways for understanding, and building bridges of joyful connection between the people of her two home countries.

*The name **Son Caminos** is inspired by the song from
Conjunto Céspedes praising the beauties of Cuba.*

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