

Son Caminos

Cultural Pathways to Cuba

Nov 9-19, 2019

Havana | Matanzas | Varadero

Please note: This itinerary is **subject to change** and will be updated as we get closer to our travel dates, particularly to take advantage of events organized to celebrate **Havana 500**.



Day 1
9 NOV
Saturday

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 paladar (privately owned restaurant)

We've planned our first meal at "The Garden of Miracles" to set a auspicious tone for the adventures to come! We'll meet each other in a patio with vine covered trellises, 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.

3:30 Check in at Hotel Victoria, Vedado

You'll have some down time to settle in and rest before gathering for a Group Orientation and the Welcome Dinner.

6:00 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, and end with a toast to a fabulous trip!

7:30 Welcome Dinner

An unforgettable place to continue your introduction to Havana is the **San Cristobal Paladar** -- one of the most noted restaurants in the city, serving fine *comida criolla*. Housed in a turn of the century mansion in Centro Habana, the home was thoughtfully renovated to maintain the spectacular tiles and other original elements, including a large altar in the front room. The walls are filled with an intriguing collection of old and new photographs, diverse paintings, clocks, and memorabilia. The staff is very friendly and proud to talk about their experience hosting the Obamas during their state visit.



Meals included: Lunch and Dinner

Day 2
10 NOV
Sunday

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 Capital, 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, galleries and public sculptures.

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 Montegudo Garcia, who'll share her unique story of how she established a farm to table creperie in the heart of La Habana Vieja

3:30 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!

5:00 Free Time for Dinner & Exploration

For history buffs and those who like pageantry, and for an amazing view of the city from the other side of the bay, consider going to the **Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña**. At 9:00 pm you can witness the **Cañonazo** ceremony, which enacts the nightly firing of the cannon over the harbor warning the populace that the doors surrounding the city would be closed.

For a "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.

We'll keep you posted on music and performance options.



Photo by David Garten

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 3
11 NOV
Monday

Havana

9:00 Walking Tour of Centro Habana with Néstor Martí.

Néstor has worked for the Office of the City Historian as a photographer documenting the restoration efforts in Old Havana. His architectural and patrimonial photography is a homage to the city. Nestor will lead us on a fascinating walk through Havana's most populous neighborhood, highlighting its rich architectural history.

11:00 Drive through modern Habana

We'll provide an architectural tour by bus to give you a greater sense of the city, its more modern neighborhoods and impressive examples of architectural styles.



12:30 Lunch at Casa de Amistad—



The building that houses La Casa de Amistad is a prime example of the stately mansions in Vedado, and comes with a fascinating history of love and scandal. We'll learn the intriguing story of this luxurious building featuring art deco interiors by Rene Lalique. While you're there, find out about the entertainment schedule for evenings and weekends. You might want to return on your own! The venue hosts a variety of music and dance events, including Cuban rock and reggae.

2:00 Visit Choco's Studio in Habana Vieja

We'll visit the studio of Eduardo Roca Salazar, known as *Choco*—painter, engraver, sculptor, and winner of the National Prize in Visual Arts in 2017.

3:00 Workshop at Taller de Grafica, Habana Vieja

Down a little alley in Cathedral Square, you'll find a thriving art space: gallery/graphics workshop/print studio—a cooperative of artists who create etchings, wood engravings, lithographs, and more. We'll meet the founder and artists, and participate in a hands-on workshop.

5:00 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. The very fine paladar, *Doña Eutemia*, is right next to the Taller de Grafica, but you'll need reservations. Let us know if you want us to make them.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 4
12 NOV
Tuesday

Havana

10:00 **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, featuring works by Wilfredo Lam, and Amalia Peláez. Our guided tour will highlight the special exhibits up for the Havana 500 anniversary.



12:30 **Lunch at Gran Teatro Alicia Alonso**

We'll walk from the museum through *Parque Central* to arrive at the grandeur of the *Gran Teatro Alicia Alonso*, named after the premier Cuban prima ballerina who founded the Cuban National Ballet. This neobaroque building faces the city's central park, taking up the block between El Capitolio and the historic Hotel Inglaterra. Return on your own for a tour to learn more about its fascinating history dating back to 1838. The *Gran Teatro* is an exquisite sight when lit up at night! Attending a show in this theatre is a glorious experience! We'll keep an eye on the schedule for performances while we're there.



Photo by David Garten

2:00 **Tour of El Capitolio--**

Next door to the *Gran Teatro* is the national capitol building, *el Capitolio*. This magnificent building housed the Congress until the 1959 revolution. Restoration work on it began in 2013 and will be completed for the Havana 500 Celebration. It again houses the Cuban National Assembly.

When you enter you face the world's third largest indoor statue, "The Statue of the Republic"—an enormous bronze woman standing in a tunic, with a helmet, shield, and lance, inspired by Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Embedded in the floor in the center of the main hall is a replica 25 [carat](#) diamond, which marks Kilometer Zero for Cuba. Distances between Havana and all sites in Cuba are calculated from this point. It is considered the very center of the city.



The dome is the last element of the Capitolio to be restored. The work will be completed for the Havana 500 celebration.

3:30 Afternoon and Evening Free

You'll have lots of options for activities in the area: Return to the *Gran Teatro* for a tour: walk to *La Floridita*, Hemingway's choice for *daiquiris*: or go to the poolside bar at the *Saratoga Hotel* for *mojitos* and a spectacular view of the city at sunset. If you're interested in taking a dance class, let us know beforehand, and we'll help make the arrangements.

In the evening, hit the dance floor at **La Casa de la Música** in Miramar to the music of some of the top bands in the country playing *timba* (Cuban salsa).

Meals Included: *Breakfast & Lunch*

Day 5
13 NOV
Wednesday

Matanzas/Varadero

9:00 Leave for Matanzas

10:30 Tour Castillo de San Severino & Performance by AfroCuba de Matanzas

The San Severino Castle was originally built as a fortress, and later served as a slave port and prison. It now houses the Museum of the Slaves' Route. Our visit there will culminate with a performance by one of Cuba's premier folkloric groups, AfroCuba de Matanzas, bringing to life some of the museum's exhibits.

1:00 Lunch at a local paladar in Matanzas—

2:30 Ediciones Vigia Workshop



and make extraordinary souvenirs.

Attend a workshop with the artists from **Ediciones Vigía**, an independent publishing collective, whose individual hand-made books each represent a work of art



4:00 Matanzas City Tour

Staff from the City Historian's Office will enrich our experience in Matanzas through a brief city tour with historical background.

5:00 Leave for Varadero & Hotel Check In

7:00 Dinner is included in your hotel stay. Evening Free

Take in the colors of a tropical sunset over Varadero Beach, explore the town, or lounge with *mojitos* by the pool. The evening is yours to enjoy!

Meals Included: Breakfast & Dinner (at the hotel)

Day 6
14 NOV
Thursday

Matanzas

9:00 Day free in Varadero

The beach or the town? Both offer their charms!
... Find fun souvenirs at the town's craft market.



12:00 Lunch on your own at hotel included

6:00 Dinner at *El Chiquirrín*, Matanzas

8:00



Music and Dance Performance of Danzón at Sala de Conciertos Jose White, Matanzas

The official national dance of Cuba, the *danzón* is an elegant fusion of European and African elements. It was considered scandalous when it was first played in 1879 in the hall where we'll attend an exclusive performance by musicians and dancers proud of keeping alive their cultural heritage

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch (at the hotel), & Dinner

Day 7
15 NOV
Friday

Matanzas—Return to Havana

9:00 Morning free to enjoy Varadero

12:00 Lunch at hotel in Varadero

1:00 Check out & Leave for Havana

3:00 Visit Organic Farm, Organopónico Vivero Alamar

On the way back from Matanzas, we'll stop for a tour of one of Havana's largest and most successful urban gardens.

Cubans were forced to turn to organic farming as a necessity after the fall of the Soviet Union drastically hurt the import of oil and fertilizer. Today Cuba is a leader in sustainable organic farming and more than half the food eaten in Havana is grown locally.

Miguel Salcines López, current president and one of the founders of



the farm cooperative, is an international leader and passionate advocate of organic agriculture.



(Check out his TEDxHavana talk, “*The Kama Sutra of Food*”). His daughter, who leads tours of the farm, captivates

visitors with her knowledge and playful sense of humor.

5:00 Check In at Hotel Victoria

6:00 Evening free in Havana

You’ll have lots of options for exciting activities. Of course we’ll keep you posted!

Meals Included: Breakfast & Lunch

Day 8
16 NOV
Saturday

Havana

9:30 Meet with Filmmaker Gloria Rolando

Gloria Rolando’s films document 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 body of work. Her latest film, *Dialogo con mi Abuela* is based on taped conversations with her grandmother, the film tells the story of her grandmother, addressing the lives of Afrocubans in the generation after slavery ended.



12:00 **Lunch *La Moneda Cubana*, La Habana Vieja**

2:00 **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



vene
rate
d by
the
lucu
mís
(Cu
ban
Yor
uba)
as
Yem
ayá
—
the
oris
ha

of the ocean who represents the primal mother who gives birth to all living beings. You're likely to see families who go to the temple to present their new babies and ask for blessings.

OR—Participate in Havana 500 activity TBA. We'll stay flexible on the schedule to be able to incorporate Havana 500 celebration events.

6:00 **Havana 500 Celebration Activities TBA**

Enjoy the 500th anniversary celebration!

We'll make reservations for dinner (at your cost) for those who want to celebrate together. We'll also check & keep you informed of entertainment options.

Day 9
17 NOV
Sunday

Havana

10:00 Studio Visit with Photographer, Leysis Quesada,

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. She'll share her photographs and tell their stories.



12:00 Free afternoon to explore Havana.

We'll keep you posted on activities related to the celebration

If you're still looking for souvenirs, **Almacenes San Jose** in Habana Vieja is an interesting option.

7:00 Farewell Dinner at Le Chansonier

Our journey winds down in an art filled Vedado mansion. We'll reflect on the rich experiences we've shared and give thanks as we look forward to our return home with greater appreciation for the beauty and challenges Cuba presents.

Meals Included: Breakfast & Dinner

Day 10
18 NOV
Monday

Departure

Transfer to the airport for your safe journey home!

Meal Included: Breakfast

Total Meals: 20 (B-9; L-7; D-4)

About Your Travel Facilitator, Maria "Mari" Marques :

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.*

Follow us on Instagram @soncaminos



Photo by David Garten

This journey is powered by  AltruVistas