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## Cuba: People to People Nature & Culture January 19 – 28, 2017

Explore Cuba on our popular people-to-people cultural adventure in partnership with International Expeditions. Travel through stunning geography as we make a wide loop through rural regions before spending time in Havana. Meet Cuban ornithologists, biologists, artists, dancers, teachers, and more.

Discover the countryside and historic sections of Santa Clara, Trinidad, and Havana. Explore the Zapata wetlands, Vinales Valley, Sierra de Escambray, and Bay of Pigs. Meet locals, their families, and friends in villages. Learn first-hand how Cubans look to their future and how they interpret their past.



Explore a wonderful variety of habitats, from tropical and montane forests to mangroves that support over 25 endemic birds, plus a number of regional Caribbean specialties. This is a legal tour conducted with our permitted partner, International Expeditions.

### Tour Highlights

- Meet with biologists to learn more about parks and the pristine reefs and wetlands of Cayo Coco, searching for the island's 158 species, while surrounded by stunning turquoise water
- Explore Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and mingle with local artisans and musicians
- Off-road into Topes de Collantes National Park with a local naturalist in search of birds like Red-legged Thrush, Western Stripe-headed Tanager, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Trogon, and West Indian Woodpecker
- Hike with a local farmer in search of the diminutive Bee Hummingbird near the Bay of Pigs
- Learn about Cuba's exciting Korimakao Project, home to Cuba's finest musicians, dancers, and artists who travel around the country
- Visit Hemingway's home, Finca Vigía, preserved to look as it did when he left in 1960



- Drive through the scenic Vinales Valley before enjoying lunch with a local family on their organic farm, and a walk with a local naturalist to seek out endemic species of the region
- Walk the lush orchid gardens of Soroa with staff from the University of Pinar del Rio, famous for orchids, but also a birding hotspot
- Spend a full day exploring Old and New Havana



### Tour Summary

10-Day / 9-Night Cuban People to People & Birding Tour with Dodie Logue  
 \$4790 from Miami  
 Airport is Miami International (MIA)

### Important Travel Information

International Expeditions, Inc. has prepared an itinerary that follows the guidelines set forth by the United States Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control to engage, organize, and conduct people-to-people travel to Cuba. This is an opportunity to engage with the people of Cuba in the most authentic way possible — through the eyes of its people.



For years, legal travel to Cuba has been almost impossible for Americans, making this island of salsa, Colonial architecture, and Caribbean beauty a forbidden fruit for the adventurous. The U.S. Government is in the midst of changing regulations to travel to Cuba but at this time anyone traveling to Cuba must adhere to a people-to-people program. The Cuban companies that manage travel for U.S. companies currently require that all members in a group arrive and depart at the same time, as well as participate in all activities as a group. International Expeditions, world leader in engaging and authentic nature travel, has a general license by the U.S. Department of Treasury to provide people-to-people Cuba travel for U.S. citizens.

A visit to Cuba is an adventure, and takes a flexible attitude and an open mind. Plans can be changed by the Cuban authorities at any moment; during our four years of Cuba trips, we have had changes in routing and in our hotels, but all result in new opportunity and have not been detrimental to our tours.

Due to permit requirements, special registration and payment procedures apply. Naturalist Journeys takes your tour application, but your payments (including deposit) are made to International Expeditions. If needed, Naturalist Journeys can forward deposits with documents to International Expeditions, and they will then bill you

for remaining payments under their terms and conditions. Space on these tours is very competitive; it is important to apply as soon as you know you want to go. The Naturalist Journeys office can accept your application by fax, email scan, or mail. Please request this application form from our office. Prices should stay firm, but if Cuban authorities announce changes, International Expeditions reserves that if there is an unexpected jump in price above 5%, you will have the option to forego travel if you so choose or that fee would be added. This has not happened to date, other than with the air travel portion of the journey.

## ITINERARY

### Thurs., Jan. 19 Cuba Tour Begins! Miami / Santa Clara / Cayo Coco

We board our charter flight to Santa Clara early this morning. We then have time to visit this historic city that dates back to 1689. We see the city's interesting squares en route to a stop at the most notable site in Santa Clara, the Che Guevara memorial. Guevara captured the city on December 28, 1959, causing Batista to flee the country on New Year's Eve. Lunch today is at the Restaurant Los Caneyes; here we learn about

Cuba's culinary training from individuals who are currently learning to be chefs, with hopes of opening a private restaurant in the future.



*similar (B,L,D)*



After lunch, we head east, then turn north to the Atlantic Coast where we cross a 17 mile-long causeway to the offshore island of Cayo Coco, named for the White Ibis which is locally known as the coco. Until recently, this island was largely uninhabited and, together with its neighbors Cayo Guillermo and Cayo Paredon Grande, it supports a wide variety of plant and animal life. The calcareous coastal deposits are blanketed with semi-deciduous forests, coastal scrub, and mangroves. The briny lagoons protected by the islands are home to tremendous flocks of flamingos and other waders. There are 158 bird species here, including Roseate Spoonbill, several endemics, Cuban Black Hawk, and Northern Caracara — wow!

*Accommodations at the Hotel Villa Cojimar, Hotel Tryp Cayo Coco or*

### Fri., Jan. 20 Cayo Coco, Cayo Paredon Grande & Cayo Guillermo



Though Cayo Coco attracts many visitors for some of the finest beaches and jade-colored water in all of Cuba, our purpose is to interact with local environmentalists, learning from each other and observing wildlife together. We meet our new Cuban friends at the Cuban Center for Coastal Ecosystem Studies to discuss conservation efforts on these islands and to share our perspectives on similar conservation issues in the USA.

Next we move west to a protected area within El Baga National Park, where we join with other naturalists exploring Cayo Coco and neighboring islands.

In addition to finding Greater Flamingo, we search for Oriente Warbler, Cuban Gnatcatcher, and the only breeding population of Thick-billed Vireo on Cayo Paredon Grande. We also seek out other elusive species like Bahama Mockingbird on Cayo Guillermo before returning to our hotel, with time to visit local artists in their studios.

Our local contacts give us background information on the area, and we experience the special nature of the region, first-hand.



*Accommodations at the Hotel Villa Cojimar, Hotel Tryp Cayo Coco, or similar (B,L,D)*

### **Sat., Jan. 21 Cayo Coco / Trinidad**

This morning we drive southwest, crossing the island towards the Caribbean side and stopping at the historic city of Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our lunch is in a paladar, a privately owned, family-run restaurant. We sit down with locals and their families to discuss daily life and enjoy a few laughs before being invited into their homes.

In the architectural jewel of Trinidad, we experience the community like a local, visiting with shop owners and sampling local fare as we walk through the colonial heart of the city. Our guide provides an in-depth look at the architecture and history of the city.

At Casa del Alfarero Santander, an artisan workshop, we meet local artists and learn about traditional pottery techniques. Stroll through town and enjoy the chance to visit a music club to mingle with locals and enjoy authentic Cuban music.

*Accommodations at Trinidad del Mar, Hotel Ancon, Hotel Los Helechos in the mountains of Topes de Collantes, or similar (B,L,D)*



### **Sun., Jan. 22 Topes de Collantes / Trinidad**

This morning we enjoy a spectacular drive into the Sierra de Escambray, following a ridgeline with views into Topes de Collantes National Park. A local naturalist leads us on a nature walk to find prolific birdlife, including Red-legged Thrush, Western Stripe-headed Tanager, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Trogon, and West Indian Woodpecker, as we share stories about our favorite sightings.





Today we also make time to relax over a cup of coffee, chatting with our guide and other Cubans; visit a modern art museum, seeing pieces by important Cuban artists; and meet a local farmer, joining him for a lunch of traditional roast pig while learning about day-to-day farm life.



This evening, dinner is at our hotel, with time to relax and tally up our growing Cuban bird list.

*Accommodations at Trinidad del Mar, Hotel Ancon, Hotel Los Helechos in the mountains of Topes de Collantes, or similar (B,L,D)*



**Mon., Jan. 23 Bay of Pigs / Zapata Wetlands**



We travel today to the Bay of Pigs, which borders the Zapata Peninsula, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve encompassing Cuba's most important wetland area. Join Orlando Ramirez, a local farmer, and his friends for a walk to observe the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird.

On a nature and birding walk with Orlando, we look for more endemic bird species, including Bare-faced Screech Owl and Cuban Pygmy Owl. From our hotel near the Bay of Pigs, we discuss the importance of the Zapata Wetlands with a local environmentalist.

*Accommodations at Hotel Playa Larga or similar (B,L,D)*

**Tues., Jan. 24 Bay of Pigs / Boca de Guama / Soroa**



There are around 900 species of flora, 171 species of birds (18 endemics), 31 species of reptiles, and many mammal species on the Zapata peninsula.

Our new Cuban friends join us on an early morning natural history exchange and search for more endemic bird species like the Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Crow, Cuban Tody, and the beautiful Cuban Parrot. The national bird, the Cuban Trogon, is common here, as are Cuban Vireo, Cuban Emerald, and Cuban Tody. Our birding takes in the beautiful highlights, and is paced to be fun for our non-birding travelers, too.

Next is an exclusive stop for International Expeditions travelers; we continue our day at the Korimakao Project, where we

meet Hilda Tamayo, one of the directors. The project houses some of Cuba's finest musicians, dancers, and artists, here to refine their skills before traveling to remote villages to perform and teach. We present art supplies to Ms. Tamayo and staff before having an open discussion on the transformative power of art in the lives of ordinary Cubans. Dancers-in-residence have appreciated our gifts of leg-warmers on past journeys.



In the early afternoon we set out toward the western part of Cuba, stopping for lunch at a private restaurant where fresh ingredients are grown at a farm or on the premises. Pay homage to Ernest

Hemingway at his former home, Finca Vigía, preserved as it was on the day he left, and discuss his life with Cuban Hemingway experts who work and research here.



In the afternoon, we set out toward the western part of Cuba, traveling to the mountains of Soroa in Pinar del Río Province. Travel time gives you a glimpse into rural life, Cuban billboards, classic cars, and more.

*Accommodations at Villa Soroa or similar (B,L,D)*

**Wed., Jan. 25 Soroa & the Spectacular Vinales Valley**



This morning we drive west to the scenic Vinales Valley for a boating excursion into one of the huge limestone caves running through a mogote — limestone karst outcroppings. While the entire drive is scenic, the valley is particularly photogenic.



At lunch we sample the vegetables grown at an organic farm and meet the family responsible for the land. On last year's tour, this meal was a favorite for all!

Afterwards, we walk an easy trail with a local resident in hopes of seeing the Great Lizard Cuckoo, and the more elusive Cuban Solitaire, an endemic species that is often hard to find. This species has beautiful vocalizations and likes the steep cliffs and lush vegetation of the region's mogotes, a new landform type to many of us that certainly marvels.

We also enjoy some time in the town of Vinales to browse a bodega, where locals shop with their ration books.



Our final stop today is just outside of Vinales, on our return to Soroa, to visit a local tobacco farmer and his family to learn more about the fine tobacco grown in this area and the many steps it takes to make the highest quality Cuban cigars.

*Accommodations at Villa Soroa or similar (B,L,D)*



**Thurs., Jan. 26 Soroa / Havana**

Today is a busy, but rewarding day. We meet botanists from the University of Pinar del Río early this morning for a walk through a forest area surrounding our hotel, located in the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve.

Then, after breakfast, we visit the lush orchid gardens of Soroa with local gardeners and our new friends from the university. Here we look for Great Lizard Cuckoo, Cuban Emerald, Cuban Oriole, and Cuban Grassquit.

Also in the mountains of the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve, and not far from Soroa, is the very interesting planned eco-community of Las Terrazas. We visit the community and learn about life here from local residents.



Once in Havana, we drive along the oceanfront Malecon Avenue, seeing Revolution Square before checking into our hotel.

*Accommodations at the Melia Cohiba or similar (B,L,D)*

### Fri., Jan. 27 Havana Old & New



We begin our day with a walk through the squares of Old Havana. Some parks and plazas are famous for book sellers lining the park, while others are known for art and music. See Hotel Ambos Mundos, where Hemingway kept a room for years. The hotel served as a refuge for writing such works as *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and as a base for frequenting his favorite bars.

Next, we walk through the historic streets and squares of Old Havana, with numerous stops and visits with local artists in their studios.

Pay a visit to the Havana Library's children's librarian to present children's books in Spanish.

Visit Arte Corte, a social project unlike any other, with the original purpose of training people in the neighborhood to become hairdressers and barbers, but transformed into a masterpiece of community regeneration. The project has improved the neighborhood and is supporting social centers



like a senior home and a children's park.

This evening dinner is at the famed Buena Vista Social Club with an option to stay for a performance after dinner.

*Accommodations at the Melia Cohiba or similar (B,L,D)*



**Sat., Jan. 28 Havana / Miami**

Today is a bit unpredictable, as the air company does not guarantee flight times very far in advance. Depending on our flight time back to Miami, we make the best use of the day.

If we succeed in getting later flights (which we request), we can enjoy another activity in Havana and then head to the airport mid-day or even late in the day to check in. Dinner is at your leisure, either at the airport or upon return.

Plan to stay the night of January 28 in Miami, a cost we include due to the uncertainty of flight times. You can then start fresh the next day, January 29 for flights home. We have blocked a set of rooms if you wish to use them. Again, we recommend you overnight tonight, and travel home January 29. Travel to Cuba takes a flexible attitude, but we think it is well worth it. (B,L)



**TRAVEL PLANNING**

**Miami Arrival Options: Please note! You must arrive *before* the tour start date to make an early morning flight to Cuba. Below are the arrival options.**



## PLANNING TIME IN MIAMI AHEAD OF CUBA TOUR

### **Tues., Jan. 17 Two Days Early: Everglades Tour Option – Our Recommendation**

Make the most out of being in Miami! Opt for a one-day, add-on tour to the Everglades with a local guide. This is a good way to make sure you are on time for the charter flight to Cuba, while getting to know the group and enjoying some extra birding or photography. This Everglades outing is Wednesday, January 18, so plan to arrive Tuesday, January 17.

### **Wed., Jan. 18 One Day Early: Pre-Tour Meeting Only Option – Alternate**

Plan to arrive in Miami in time to get settled and ready for a 7:00 PM pre-tour meeting on Wednesday, January 18, the night before our flight to Cuba on Thursday, January 19. Take the shuttle from the airport to the hotel, or if you are staying elsewhere, come over to the Cambria Suites Blue Lagoon for the pre-tour meeting. We have added a simple buffet dinner to the meeting to make it easy for all, compliments of Naturalist Journeys. We have forms for you to fill out, luggage tags for the next day's flight to Cuba, and a question and answer session on what to expect.

### **Please Note!**

The above options (Everglades Outing and/or Pre-Tour Meeting Night) are not included in the tour price. We offer rooms (pre-booked by Naturalist Journeys) at the Cambria Suites Blue Lagoon at a special group rate — please let us know if you plan to use them. These rooms, and the Everglades tour, are billed as extra services ahead of your tour. However, upon returning from Cuba, due to the uncertainty of our return flight, a night at the Cambria Suites in Miami is included in the tour price.

If you want additional birding time in Miami to see the local specialties, a local guide is available. Please ask for details.



Please note that while permits are being relaxed for flights to Cuba, and commercial service may be in place by our tour dates, each flight is jammed, so rebooking is highly unlikely! *It is prudent to get to Miami early, with time to spare in case you face delays.*

### PLAN AHEAD!

Protect yourself with [Allianz Travel Insurance](#). Our office can help you with a quote.

Offset your carbon footprint using one of the many online programs. Show us the receipt and we'll take 50% - up to \$50.00 - of your carbon offset fee off your final payment.

### COST OF THE JOURNEY

Cost of the journey is \$4790.00 per person, double occupancy, single occupancy \$5690.

Plus Charter Air from Miami of \$725 (includes your Visa fees; subject to change), arranged and billed to you by International Expeditions. The tour price is based on a group of 15 travelers, with fewer participants a small group surcharge may apply. The group is limited to 16 persons.

To join this journey, participants must apply (please request special application form by email), and once their application is accepted as part of the Cuba people-to-people we can confirm you. Two forms must be completed and will be sent upon request, one is your Visa form. Please send the registration form to Naturalist Journeys/Caligo Ventures, with your deposit of \$600.00 made out to Naturalist Journeys (send a check or phone with credit card information).

Travel to Cuba requires flexibility. Although our program logistics are requested over a year in advance, activities and accommodations can change at the last minute due to government oversight or hotel management. The right mindset ahead of time will help ensure your enjoyment. Remember, Cuba is not up to U.S. standards on many things such as quality of hotels, food, etc. In due time these things will improve, but until such time your expectations should be in line with current Cuban policy, standards, etc.

*Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.*



### Photo Credits:

*Pg. 1: Trinidad, Greg Smith [www.flickr.com/slobirdr](http://www.flickr.com/slobirdr) (GS); Bare-legged Screech Owl, Peg Abbott, (PA). Pg. 2: Woman on cart, PA; Cuban Green Woodpecker, Bud Ferguson (BF), map, Wikipedia. Pg. 3: Monument to Che, PA, Beach scenic, PA; Greater Flamingo, BF; Pg. 4: Cuban Gnatcatcher, PA; Trinidad scenic and countryside lunch, PA. Pg. 5: Topes de Collantes hiking trail, PA; West Indian Woodpecker, Lynn Feryus (LF); Red-legged Thrush, BF. West Indian Woodpecker, LF. Pg. 6: Playa Larga & group birding, PA; Cuban Pygmy Owl, BF. Pg. 7: Cuban Tody, PA; Korimakao dancer, PA; Festive lunch, PA; Pg. 8. Sign, old car, and Vinales Region scenic, PA. Pg. 9: Organic Farm, Farm welcome, scenic, Tobacco farm, PA; Great Lizard Cuckoo BF. Pg. 10: Orchid garden scenic, PA; Havana Scenic, LF, Havana Malecon, PA. Pg. 11: The Buena Vista Social Club, Charlie Boyd; Havana buildings, old car, library, PA. Pg. 12: Cuban Emerald, Jonathan Sequeira; Pg. 13 Havana Revolution Square, PA; Cuban Parrot, GS.*