

Cuba: From Colonial Splendor to Revolutionary Utopia

December 8-16, 2013 (including travel days)

We are organizing an “anniversary” tour to Cuba, that mysterious island which is so near, yet for so long has been so far. Ten and more years ago we, along with our travel partners, offered six trips, and so with this trip we propose a return and perhaps a reunion for some of those early intrepid souls! Taking advantage of direct charter flights from the US, this journey will begin and end in Miami, and will offer a sort of “tale” of these two cities inextricably linked in recent history. Participants will travel on their own to Miami where we gather at an airport hotel (a group rate will be available and participants will make their own bookings).



Havana, Plaza de la Catedral (1777)

The next day we will fly to Havana as a group. During our 59 minute flight the clock will seemingly be turned back to 1959, the year of the revolution, and we will be plunged into a different world: absent will be the familiar trappings of our 21st century globalized and homogenous world and evident will be a city whose streets are not clogged with traffic with the exception of specimens of the chrome-encrusted Detroit-produced behemoths of the 1950s. Awaiting us is the largest and best preserved Spanish Colonial city in the world!

The 700-mile long island nation of Cuba possesses an intensely rich and layered

architectural heritage made so first by its historically important role in the Spanish Colonial world and then by a continuing vital role in trade and tourism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When the 1959 revolution ended these trends, the island’s heritage



remained preserved in a richly layered time warp that is still intact today. The architectural contributions of the revolution are relatively limited but unusual and farsighted, and the social and economic situations remain a unique, if sobering, contrast to much of the rest of the world. Most recently, there has been a more focused effort to preserve and restore the colonial heritage for its obvious tourism potential.

Our seven nights in Cuba will focus on Havana, along with a two-night foray to Cienfuegos, a well preserved nineteenth century, neoclassical city. From there we will visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Trinidad, a town whose splendor

and wealth came from the sugar industry. There will be a balance of structured time and free time for participants to explore on their own. The sites will also range richly from the colonial period to the many well-preserved Havana buildings from the fifties, a period when more Cadillac automobiles were sold in that city than in any other!

The study-seminar will be conducted under the auspices of Cuba Cultural Travel, an organization that has specialized in travel to Cuba since 1998. Stephen Harby has worked with them on five previous tours over the past decade or more, and they are considered the pioneers in travel to Cuba. In 2011, the U.S. Government passed an executive order making it easier for Americans to visit Cuba. The federal government has issued licenses to a select number of tour companies to operate what are known as “People to People Cultural Exchanges” and Cuba Cultural Travel is one of them. This tour has been crafted by Cuba Cultural Travel and Stephen Harby, architect, watercolor painter, and leader of five prior tours to Cuba as well as to countless other exotic destinations. Within the context of the mandated “people-to-people” contact we have placed a particular focus on architecture and the built environment and will be meeting with many locals whose areas of expertise lie in those fields. In addition, key figures in the visual and performing arts will meet with us.

Our base in Havana will be the five star Parque Central, well located on the park of that name between Havana Vieja. So please join what will be a select group having this unique opportunity to experience Cuba under the “bell jar” of embargo and revolution—a state that will never be able to be experienced again.



Havana, The Malecon (sea front) with Castillo de San Salvador and Castillo del Morro (below)

Itinerary

Day 1—Sunday, December 8, 2013.
Miami

Travelers arrive in Miami independently. A group room rate will be made available at the Crowne Plaza Airport Hotel, (located 5 minutes from MIA. Crowne Plaza offers free shuttles to and from the Miami airport on the second floor (departure). There are signs indicating where hotel shuttles pick up passengers, and shuttles come every 20 minutes. Cabs are also available if you prefer not to wait. A no host dinner will be organized at a nearby restaurant for those whose flights allow them to reach the hotel by 6:00 pm.

Crowne Plaza Miami International Airport. 950 NW Lejeune Road, Miami, Florida 33126, Tel: (305) 446 9000

(The Miami Art Basel Fair is on December 5-8, so some might wish to come early for that).

Day 2: Monday, December 9, Havana:
Arrival Day

At 8:00 am we will transfer as a group from our hotel to check in for our charter

flight to Havana, where we will arrive by early afternoon.

START OF SERVICE

8:30 am Check into ABC Charter flight #AA9426 operated by American Airlines. The check-in counter is at concourse D on the second level. Enter through Door 1, and go to the American Airlines check-in counter.

11:30 am Depart Miami for Havana. Flight duration is 1 hour.



12:30 pm Arrive in Havana. Clear customs and immigration, a process that takes about 1 hour.

Upon arrival in Havana, your Cuba Tour guide will welcome the group at the airport.

2:00 pm Lunch at La Torre with panoramic views of Havana from the top of this 36-story landmark building. When it was completed in 1956, concrete structures taller than 18 stories were considered unfeasible, and it marked the beginning of Havana's era of tall-building construction

3:30 pm Visit the Hotel Nacional de Cuba. This historic landmark located on the Malecón was designed by the famous New York firm McKim, Mead and White and features an eclectic mix of architectural styles. It opened in 1930, when Cuba was a prime travel destination for Americans. Among its first illustrious guests were Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich, Marlon Brando, and Ernest Hemingway.

4:00 pm En route to the hotel, we stop at Plaza de la Revolucion. The center of government, this area contains most of the major ministries and is commonly used for massive rallies.



Havana Vieja, Plaza del Cristo, view of Capitolio (below)

4:30 pm Check into Hotel Parque Central. This five star hotel is considered the finest hotel in Havana and perfectly located between Colonial Havana Vieja and nineteenth century Centro and enjoys views of the nearby Parque Central, particularly from its roof-top pool terrace. It will be our home for the next three nights and for the final two. The balance of the afternoon is free to explore the neighborhood, unpack or have a swim.

7:00 pm Visit to Castillo del Morro and to la Cabaña fortress to attend the cannon ceremony as we look out over the harbor and twinkling lights of Havana. This ceremony formerly signaled the closing of the harbor entrance which was achieved by raising a chain across the narrow mouth of the channel.

Dinner will be at Doña Carmela, a paladar (private family run restaurant) nearby

9:30 pm Return to the hotel. (L,D)

Day 3—Tuesday, December 10, Havana: Colonial Period

Breakfast is served at the restaurant in the lobby level from 7am to 10am and is included.

9:00 am Lecture at the hotel by Miguel Coyula on architecture and urban planning.

10:30 am Walking tour of Havana Vieja. This is the original settlement of the city adjacent to the well protected harbor (note the narrow entrance guarded by two forts) Havana Vieja has recently been intensively restored, and it is still a work in progress. Eusebio Leal, the City Historian, realized the strong potential of this part of the city for restoration into hotels, museums, restaurants and shops to cater to the growing tourist market. He established a governmental corporation, Habaguanex, that would do everything from design to restoration to operation of the facilities, and in return for providing a portion of the profits to the country would have both autonomy and a monopoly in the area. We will see





Havana, Capitolio (1927), Catedral de San Cristobal de Havana (1777), below, left, and Plaza de la Revolucion, Ministry of the Interior with image of Che Guevara (1958) below, right.

the five major squares, many projects in progress and the remarkable scale model that has been constructed of the district. Make sure to wear comfortable walking shoes!

We will walk down Obispo Street, a pedestrian promenade, stopping at some of the most significant buildings like the Art Deco style La Moderna Poesia, the Ambos Mundos Hotel (where Ernest Hemingway stayed and where his room is preserved as a sort of shrine along with his typewriter), and the banks of the former Havana Wall Street. Here is a



summary of some of the things we will see:

- *Plaza Vieja. This plaza is the oldest plaza in Havana, dating from the 16th century. It served as a market plaza surrounded by aristocrat residences and apartment buildings. It has recently been restored.*
- *Convento de Santa Clara, which has been restored as the center of preservation and restoration arts.*
- *Plaza de la Catedral and the Catedral de San Cristobal de La Habana with its two mismatched towers framing a baroque façade and a main altar made of Carrara marble inlaid with gold, silver, onyx and carved wood.*
- *Castillo de la Real Fuerza, (1558 – 1577), and the former residence of the Spanish captains for over 200 years.*
- *Taller de Grafica Experimental. We will be welcomed by the Director Luis Lara. The Taller is more than Havana's printmaking workshop. It is a studio, a school and most of all, an art institution that preserves and develops the sophisticated art of print making with relative freedom of spirit and form.*

12:30 pm Lunch at paladar Los Mercaderes, following which we will

resume our walking to see among many possibilities, the following:

- *Plaza de Armas (established 1580's), a scenic tree-lined plaza formerly at the center of influence in Cuba. It is surrounded by many of the most historic structures in Havana as well as important monuments.*
- *Palacio de los Capitanes Generales (1780's). The palacio currently houses the Museo de la Ciudad.*
- *Palacio del Segundo Cabo, a former palace incorporating Moorish, baroque and neo-classical elements.*
- *Plaza de San Francisco, a cobbled plaza punctuated at the center by the Fuente de los Leones and surrounded by buildings dating from the 18th century, dominated by the baroque Iglesia & Convento de San Francisco (1730's).*

3:00 pm Walk back to the hotel at leisure (20-min walk).

4:30 pm Depart for a tour of the Vedado Neighborhood visiting the most iconic buildings of Havana's modernist movement. We will stop at the Habana Libre hotel, The Coppelia Ice Cream parlor, The Pabellon Cuba and the Riviera hotel.

7:00 pm Dinner at Rio Mar.

9:30 pm Return to the hotel.

Optional: Tropicana. (B,L,D)

Day 4—Wednesday, December 11, Havana: Eclectic Architecture/Urbanism

9:30 am Attend a private dance performance of the Compañía Irene Rodríguez (flamenco). Irene Rodriguez, considered by many to be the finest



flamenco dancer in Cuba, will introduce us to the dancers and discuss the cultivation of artistic talent in Cuba.

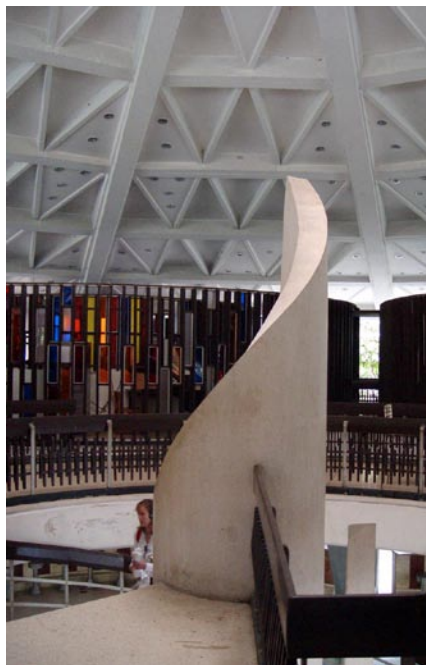
10:30 am Architecture walking tour guided by Maria Elena Martin, architect, professor and co-author of the Guide to Havana's Architecture. We will venture outward into Centro, the first concentric ring of development that radiated outward beyond the Colonial core in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

She will show us:

- *Centro Asturiano (Manuel de Busto, 1918)*—recently renovated to house the Fine Arts Museum and retaining the most majestic staircase in Cuban architecture.
- *Manzana de Gomez*; it was one of the city's first enclosed commercial arcades.
- *Capitolio Nacional (1928)*, a fabulous monumental building, obsequiously similar to the US Capitol, and crowned by a 300-foot high dome. The recently renovated gardens are the work of the famous French landscape architect, Claude Nicholas Forestier.
- former *Centro Gallego, (Paul Belau, 1915)*, currently housing the Gran Teatro de La Habana, home of Alicia Alonso's Ballet Nacional del Cuba.
- *Parque Central and surrounding buildings including the Hotel Plaza (1908)* a remodel and expansion of the Pedroso family residence.
- *Paseo de Marti or el Prado, (Raul Otero, 1926)* a pedestrian promenade remodeled upon the inauguration of Havana's Capitol Building and lined with examples of Moorish-influenced architecture.

Here we may pause and visit to several interiors which may include:

- *Palacio de los Matrimonios (Luis Dedirot, 1914)*, once home of Cuba's former president Jose Miguel Gomez, and the former *Asociacion de Dependientes del Comercio*, a Venetian neo-classical style building placed in a key corner of



Coppelia Ice Cream Parlor (Mario Girona, 1966), Centro Gallego, (Belau, 1915), below.

the Prado featured in the film The Buena Vista Social Club.

- *Sevilla Hotel, remodeled in 1923 by the American firm of Schultze & Weaver.*

12:00 pm Lunch at Castropol.

2:00 pm Lecture on Cuban Music by Prof. Alberto Faya. Alberto Faya is a singer and guitarist who has written



countless musical pieces for Cuban and international TV and radio. He will give us an overview of the rich melange of influences that make up Cuban music, with the assistance of a jazz trio comprised of his son David and his band mates.

3:30 pm Guided visit of the Museo de Bellas Artes (Museum of Cuban Art) led by curator Nelson Herrera. Nelson Herrera is a curator for the Wilfredo Lam Center. He will highlight some of the most important work in the permanent collection of Cuban art in the museum. The museum is dedicated exclusively to Cuban Art, and our tour will take a chronological path from the earliest days of colonialism to the latest generation of Cuban artists.

4:30 pm Visit the Bacardi Building, erected in 1930 and remaining today one of the most fabulous examples of art deco in Cuba.

Return to the hotel. Remainder of the evening and dinner on your own. A list of evening entertainment options as well as Paladares (small informal restaurants operated in private homes) will be provided, including a possible ballet, opera or symphonic performance at the Gran Teatro (performance schedules permitting).

(B,L)

Day 5—Thursday, December 12, Cienfuegos

8:00 am Hotel check out and depart for Cienfuegos

12:00 pm Visit to Castillo del Valle.

12:30 pm Lunch at paladar El Lagarto.

2:30 pm Afternoon walking tour of the old town, guided by architect and city historian Iran Millan Cuetara.

Visit to Downtown Cienfuegos, the main square, Paseo del Prado and the Terry

Thomas Theatre. These outstanding buildings, completed in 1895, were built with the wealth made by a sugar baron from Venezuela who arrived in Cuba without money and made his fortune by buying sick slaves for a low price, nursing them back to health and reselling them. Later investment in a sugar estate enabled him to have materials specially brought over from Europe for his buildings.

3:30 pm Visit a local Casa de Abuelos, a home for the elderly. Meet some of the participants and volunteers.

4:00 pm Check into Hotel La Union in Cienfuegos.

7:00 pm Attend a private performance by the choral group Cantores de Cienfuegos, founded in 1962. Five decades later, the new generation of singers has maintained the group's reputation, and their repertoire has evolved to include different styles and periods, from Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, as well as contemporary works and folk songs from different countries. Cantores de Cienfuegos, under the direction of Mileydy Oropesa, has received countless prizes and distinctions within Cuba and internationally.

8:00 pm Dinner at paladar El Bouyon.



Cienfuegos: Buildings facing Park Jose Martí; Trinidad: house at tres cruces (watercolor by Stephen Harby_ below left; interior of Palacio Cantero, below right.

9:30 pm Return to the hotel (B,L,D)

Day 6—Friday, December 13. Cienfuegos and Trinidad de Cuba

9:00 am Drive to Trinidad.

10:30 am We will visit a rich collection of cultural and historical sites including:

- *Casa de los Sanchez Iznaga, currently housing the architecture museum with representative samples of the city's*

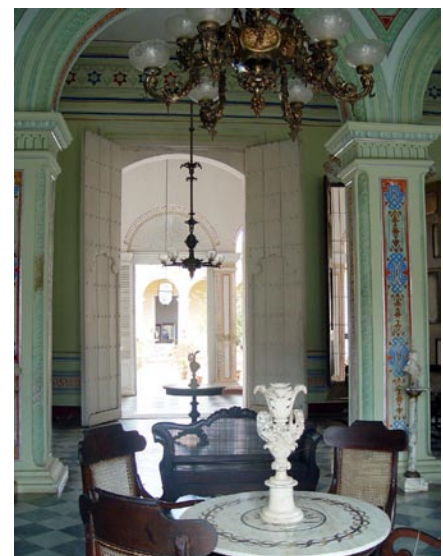
architectural development in the 18th and 19th centuries.

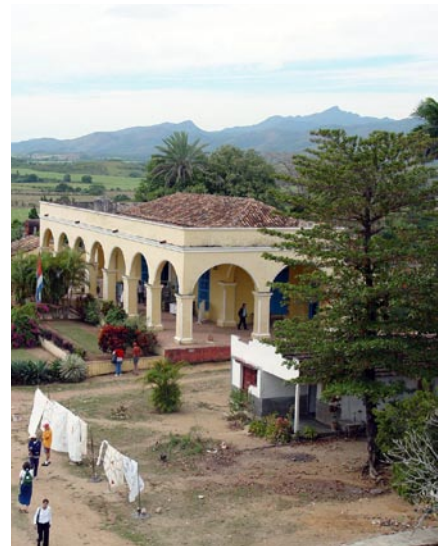
- *Museo Lucha contra los bandidos, the former home of the San Francisco de Asis convent.*
- *Palacio Cantero, a museum of decorative arts.*

1:00 pm Lunch at Los Conspiradores.

2:30-3:30 pm Free time to explore Trinidad at your own pace.

4:00 pm Visit to Valle de los Ingenios (valley of the sugar mills), the most





Trinidad: aerial view of central square (above right); Valle de los Ingenios, Manaca Iznaga sugar plantation (above right); typical urban scenes in Trinidad (below).

important sugar producing region during colonial times and now declared a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site.

We continue to Manaca Iznaga sugar plantation, a quaint village hacienda famous for its splendid tower, built in 1835-45 by Alejo Maria del Carmen e Iznaga, once one of the wealthiest sugar barons in Cuba. The tower is 43.5 m high with 7 levels and the views from the top are panoramic.

5:30 pm Return Cienfuegos. Remainder of evening and dinner on your own. Overnight at Hotel La Union. (B,L)

Day 7—Saturday, December 14, Havana

9:00 am Depart Cienfuegos (4 hour drive to Havana).

1:00 pm Lunch at the whimsical house and studio of artist Jose Fuster who has made a major contribution to rebuilding and decorating the fishing town of Jaimanitas in the outskirts of Havana, where he lives. Jaimanitas is now a unique work of public art where Fuster has decorated over 80 houses with colorful ornate murals and domes.

2:30 pm Drive around the perimeter of the Cuban Art Schools. All buildings are visible from the street. Would there be a possibility to enter the schools, we will incorporate the visit to the itinerary

3:00 pm Visit the Colon Cemetery, one of the most impressive necropolis in the world together with Pere La Chaise and La Recoleta.

4:30 pm Check into Hotel Parque Central.

7:00 pm Visit the home of art dealer Milagros Borges.

8:00 pm Dinner at El Beduino.

9:30 pm Return to the hotel (B,L,D)

Day 8—Sunday, December 15, Havana.

10:00 am Visit La Finca Vigía. formerly the home of Ernest Hemingway.



11:00 pm Visit the Iglesia de Santa Maria del Rosario, built between 1760 and 1766 in the baroque style, known for its beautiful and ornate interior.

12:00 pm Visit the town of Cojimar.

Lunch at El Ajiaco.

2:00 pm Return to the hotel. Remainder of the afternoon on your own to explore Havana at your own pace.

8:00 pm Farewell dinner at La Guarida with a special live performance. This restaurant, located within a typical decaying Havana apartment house, was the setting of the 1993 film *Fresa y Chocolate (Strawberries and Chocolate)* by director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.

(B,L,D)



Ceramic Tile Art at Studio of artist Jose Fuster, National Art Schools, School of Art, (Porro, 1961-5), (Below)

Day 9—Monday, December 16, Havana: Departure Day

We will bid farewell to Cuba with a stop in Parque Lenin to see the unusual architecture of:

- *Las Ruinas restaurant (Joaquin Galvan, 1971), a curious combination of Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra and Paul Rudolph located in Parque Lenin.*

Then we will proceed to the nearby airport for our return charter flight. Return is scheduled for late afternoon at Miami. Those planning connections should make generous allowance for delays, customs clearance and transfer to domestic terminals. Hefe is the schedule to be confirmed in early November, 2013. (B, L)

9:30 am Check out of hotel. Bus departs for Havana airport via Parque Lenin.

10:30 am Stop in at Las Ruinas.

11:30 am Check in for flight.

END OF SERVICE

and lunch on your own.

1:30 pm Depart Havana for Miami on ABC Charter Flight #AA9427 operated by American Airlines.

2:30 pm Arrive at Miami International Airport. Clear customs and catch any connecting flights you may have.

Adios e buen viaje!

Note: The details of this program are provided to give an idea of the scope and can change on short notice subject to the schedules and avialability of the individuals and sites involved.

