



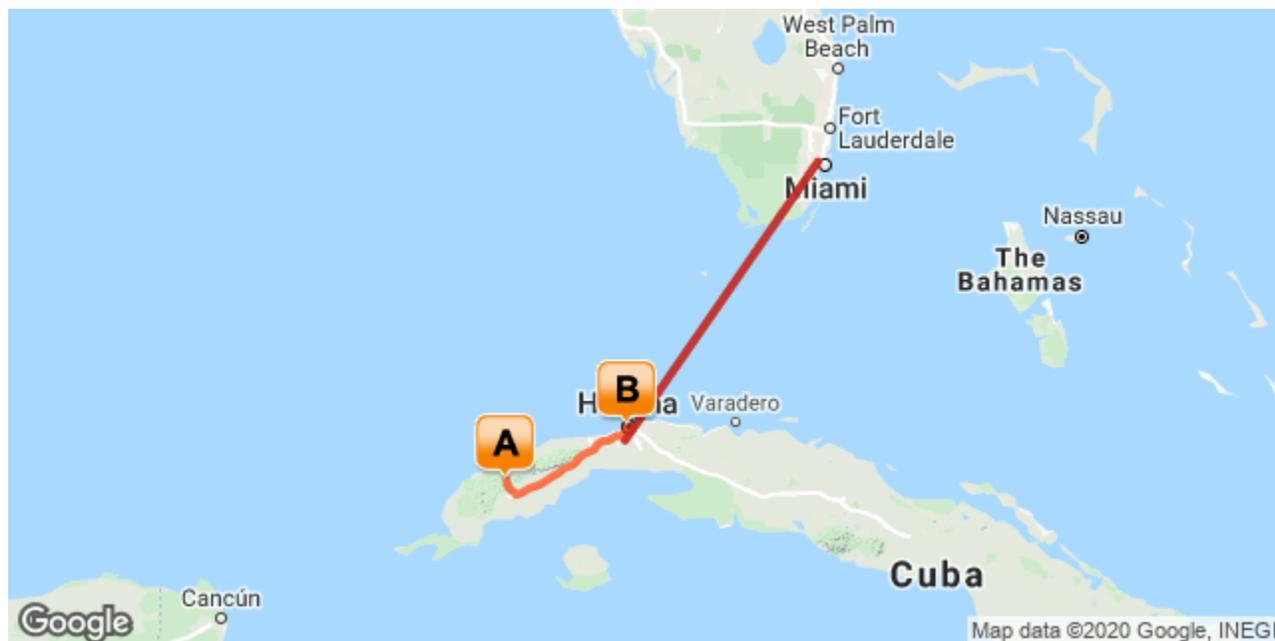
Back in Time in the Countryside ~ Vinales Valley, Las Terrazas & Havana Adventure



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Vinales - Havana

5 Days / 4 Nights



Introduction

Back in Time in the Countryside ~ Vinales Valley, Las Terrazas & Havana Adventure

A private, guided, small group journey in support of the Cuban People.

5 days, 4 nights

Join TREE Institute International on a unique and customized, private, small group tour and experience the contrasting beauty of the countryside of western Cuba and bustling city of Havana. There can be no better way to see this intriguing city and western region of Cuba than with a small group of friends and family you know.

Share a true exchange of culture and the environment. This exceptional program will include visiting the magical UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Biospheres of Vinales Valley, Pinar del Rio, and well as many historic and cultural sites of remarkable Havana. While there, you will learn about the gardens, environment, art, music, architecture and historical areas while having an opportunity to personally interface with the people of this region. Words cannot properly explain the beauty and unique experience of this trip. It is off the beaten path and very few get the opportunity to visit and see this part of the world.

Plus, we do more than just tour these regions, we bring donations to the people and communities we visit, in support of the Cuban people.

For additional information on this trip, please complete the Trip information request form found in the "DOCUMENTS" section or call our office at 866.355.8733

TREE Institute International is a non-profit, charitable organization (501-c-3) that organizes and showcases adventure, cultural, education, and conference trips to places where TREE conducts the work of its mission including Cuba, Colombia, Argentina and Haiti. TREE has been taking groups trips to Cuba since 2003. TREE Institute offers Cuba trips that are in compliance with the US Treasury Department. Upcoming trips are licensed under the new OFAC Regulations published June 5, 2019.

Price

Prices start at just \$1799.00 per person including airfare from Fort Lauderdale or Miami, FL.

The final price will be based on the number of participants and accommodations chosen.

An optional night before the trip in Miami or Ft. Lauderdale can be arranged. See optional extension on the website.

For additional information on this trip, please complete the Trip information request form found in the "DOCUMENTS" section or call our office at 866.355.8733

Included

- Round trip airfare from Fort Lauderdale or Miami (Airport to be determined by TREE closer to departure date) and Havana,
- Visa
- Documentation
- About 3 weeks prior to the trip, we will hold a toll -free conference call to go over questions and provide information on where to meet and any "last minute" details.
- 4 nights of hotel accommodations
- Medical insurance while in Cuba
- English speaking guide
- Entry fees
- Bottled water daily
- Breakfast & lunch daily
- Van transportation
- A full-time schedule of activities
- SURPRISES!

Excluded

- Alcoholic drinks
- Tips for guides
- Hotel incidentals such as laundry and phone calls.

Terms and Conditions

- This trip is being offered as a sample trip, so the actual terms and conditions will be finalized and based on the dates you wish to travel.
- The final price will be based on the number of participants.
- The final price will be determined on which of the two accommodations offered you choose and is based on availability.
- All participants must stay in the same accommodations.
- To reserve a spot a deposit of \$700.00 must be paid.
- Itinerary subject to change.
- **All participants must have a valid US passport with an expiration date no sooner than 6 months after the RETURN DATE of the trip.**

Day 1:

Day Itinerary

Upon arrival, your guide will be waiting for departure to the lush botanical province of Pinar del Río and Vinales Valley. Check into your hotel located on the canyon rim. After settling in, gather for a welcome cocktail and introduction and information by your guide. Enjoy a local dinner and entertainment. Savor the spectacular scenery from your hotel. Dinner will be at a Cuban owned restaurant called “paladar” along with entertainment. Learn how Cubans can have their own businesses and the challenges they encounter. (L, D)

Vinales

The naturally beautiful valley of Vinales is a popular UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Pinar del Río Province of Cuba known for its distinctive limestone hills, endless tobacco farms and traditional Cuban culture. The majority of the area’s inhabitants live in the tiny eponymous agricultural village which, despite its small size, features a number of well-established tourist facilities including shops, restaurants, and hotels. The village is centred around a main plaza which is home to a lovely little art gallery, a charming church, a Saturday morning farmer’s market and daily cultural events. The Vinales Valley offers a truly authentic experience of rural Cuba as well as an ideal natural environment for a range of outdoor activities including, among others: birdwatching, rock climbing, cycling, hiking, horse riding, spelunking and swimming in natural pools.



Day 2:

Day Itinerary

Early morning sunrise viewing from the hotel should not be missed. After breakfast at the hotel, depart for a full day excursion to this area of Pinar del Rio province - renowned for its scenic beauty, fertile tobacco plantations, and unusual mogotes (enormous flat top limestone outcroppings) and mountains that contain huge caves and underground river networks.

Walk through Vinales National Park (designated as a UNESCO biosphere) that boasts some of the most breath-taking scenery in the entire country. Stop at a typical tobacco farm to learn about the daily life of Cuban families in this region, as well as how they grow and harvest tobacco for the cigar industry. Your guide will be explaining the significance of the country's traditions in the development of these locations.

Explore La Cueva del Indio, part of it by boat and will have a quick photo stop at the country's largest painted Mural. Your next stop will be a visit to a private botanical garden and home owned by the same family for over 100 years. Optional horseback trip or birding (nature walk) will be available after we return, time permitting, or get some pool and relaxation time while overlooking the beautiful Vinales Valley.

Dinner will be at a private home of a young Cuban family. Learn about the changes that are happening for the people as they are now allowed to start their own enterprises. Then dance with the Cubans at their local Casa de Musica.

(B, L, D)

Activities

Vinales Valley National Park

The Valle de Viñales was declared a National Park in 2001 and is one of the most visited tourist destinations on the island of Cuba. The park offers some of the best hiking, caving, rock climbing, and scenery on the island.

Day 3:

Day Itinerary

After breakfast at the hotel and early checkout, we depart for our extensive visit to the Soroa Orchid Garden developed and nurtured by the University of Pinar del Rio. This incredible garden built on the side of a mountain is truly a labor of love with its handmade stone walls and huge orchid collection. Then enter the mountain range of Las Terrazas UNESCO Biosphere with beautiful lake and forest. Meet the local families who care for the orchids and bring them much needed donations.

Experience one of the best authentic lunches in Cuba at a private farm. Enjoy local artists and musicians from this special enclave.

Enter the bustling city of Havana and check into our Havana casa. Gather for Dinner, then a special evening of surprise entertainment, followed by a walk-up Obispo Street. (B, L, D)

Activities

Las Terrazas

Las Terrazas is a small community that was originally founded as an eco-village in 1968. Today it has evolved into a burgeoning and vibrant community with many artists, workshops and open studios, as well as a well-visited activity centre. Las Terrazas is now a protected National Biosphere Reserve, located on the site of Cuba's earliest coffee plantation. Nestled in 5 000 hectares of forest nature reserve in the Sierra del Rosario Mountains, the area is rich in plant and animal life. Numerous footpaths and trails crisscrossing the lush area make the profusion of lakes and waterfalls accessible.



Soroa

Situated in Cuba's Artemisa Region southwest of Havana, Soroa is a mountain resort town known for its incredible natural beauty featuring lush landscapes, majestic mountains, and meandering rivers. Dubbed the 'Rainbow of Cuba', it is listed as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is home to the El Salto del Arco Iris, a magnificent waterfall and the Soroa Orchidarium, a world famous orchid garden boasting the largest collection of orchids in the world. Visitors can look forward to exploring this scenic area by bike, discovering the Castillo de las Nubes Medieval-style castle, visit the nearby town of La Rosita and view the coffee plantations.



Havana

As the capital of Cuba, Havana is a remarkably vast, sprawling metropolis. The city's compelling history is reflected in the astonishing diversity of its architecture, its multicultural inhabitants, and its exotic and eclectic cuisine. The Old Town remains a remarkably well-preserved colonial centre. It is characterised by an exquisite hotchpotch of architectural styles, of opulence and decay, socialism and capitalism, the past and the present. Imperial mansions have been converted into modern tenement buildings, government agencies find homes in eighteenth-century convents and the nostalgic classic American cars for which the city is known share Havana's lively streets with the latest models of BMW and Mercedes. While the UNESCO-funded restoration programme has introduced a modicum of modernity into the city, Havana has managed to retain its wonderfully quirky cultural heritage, its unique character, and its undeniable charm.



Day 4:

Day Itinerary

After Breakfast, walk with the Cuba people through the UNESCO heritage city of Old Havana. Visit the famous squares to include Plaza Vieja, San Francisco Square, Plaza des Armas, and Cathedral Square. There will be an extensive walking tour through cobblestone streets to view the magnificent architecture and many courtyard gardens. Enjoy lunch on the square visit the famous El Morro Fort with amazing harbor vistas, we will then venture to the San Jose arts and crafts

market. The market is home to hundreds of artisans who show off their art, crafts and jewelry in a building right on the Havana Bay. Surprise before dinner at a private home. (B, L, D)

Activities

Old Havana

Old Havana is the central area of the original city of Havana. The city walls of the original city are the modern boundaries of Old Havana. Founded in 1519 by the Spanish, Havana features superb architectural structures, with many treasures from the city's long and colorful history. The old center of the sprawling metropolis retains a fascinating mix of historic buildings, museums, galleries, churches and lively plazas.

Plaza Vieja (Old Square) Originally named Plaza Nueva, Plaza Vieja was created in 1559. The square was originally use for military exercises and later as an open-air market. Today Plaza Nueva features bars restaurants, a microbrewery, a beautiful fountain and more.

Morro Castle

Designed by Juan Bautista Antonelli, Morro Castle was built in the late 16th century. Perched on a natural rocky elevation at the port entrance, it was built to protect the mouth of Havana Harbor. Captured by the British in 1762, the castle was damaged and underwent restoration work after it was returned to the Spanish under treaty terms. The castle features a lighthouse, an exhibition on the lighthouses of Cuba, an archaeology exhibition, a moat, barracks, cannons, dungeons, church and the office of the harbor master.

Day 5:

Day Itinerary

After breakfast at the hotel, check out and enjoy a panoramic tour of the Malecon and stop at w the Historic Hotel Nacional, for a private tour of the building and grounds. The hotel offers breathtaking views overlooking the famous Malecon and Atlantic Ocean. We continue our drive through the residential area of Miramar, home to many international embassies on our way to Fusterlandia Mosaic City. Fuster is known as the “Picasso” of Cuba. Learn how he kept his neighborhood full of hope and energy during the Special Period. After lunch, head to airport. Say Farewell to “our amigos” in Cuba until next time! (B, L)

Activities

Hotel Nacional

The Hotel Nacional de Cuba is considered a symbol of history, culture and Cuban identity. The guns that made up the old Santa Clara Battery are on exhibition in the gardens. With an ideal location in the middle of Vedado, the center of Havana, the hotel is situated on a hill just a few meters away from the sea, and offers superb views of Havana Harbor, the seawall and the city. The hotel's rooms, suites and Presidential Suite are conveniently prepared and equipped for maximum comfort, with magnificent views of the city.



Fusterlandia

Located just twenty minutes outside of the city centre of Havana lies Fusterlandia - a hidden wonderland of mosaic tile and recycled art created by the famed Jose Fuster. The Cuban artist reclaimed his impoverished neighbourhood as a dreamy folk-art kingdom, encompassing bus stops, fountains, benches and gateways in vibrant colours and childlike shapes. **End of Itinerary**

Travel Information



Cuba's turbulent past and defiant political stance have imbued it with an undeniable mystique - but beyond its historical intrigue, there's plenty more to discover and enjoy about this unique travel destination. The island is like one of its ubiquitous vintage cars - shabby but chic, erratic and unpredictable, and ultimately loveable. Fine cigars, salsa dancing, Afro-Latin beats - all these things and many more contribute to Cuba's one-of-a-kind flavour. Highlights include the glittering capital city, Havana, where you can dance the night away in salsa clubs, or marvel at the crumbling beauty of colonial buildings on a stroll through town; the laid-back little town of Vinales, surrounded by tropical landscapes studded with bulbous limestone karsts; the terracotta buildings of historical Trinidad; and picture-perfect beaches at Varadero, and on the islets of Cayo Guillermo and Cayo Largo del Sur.

Entry Requirements

Visa: A Cuban Visa is required and only for specific dates of the Tour, which will be provided as part of your package.

Passport: A valid passport valid for 6 months after the end of the trip date is required. If you need to renew your passport in short order, it can be done through <http://www.rushmypassport.com/?gclid=CPq-sp6Z5LYCFYyi4AodZBgAvQ> (877) 503-9838. Information regarding getting passports and passport renewal expedited is also available at travel.state.gov on the Internet. The process takes 2-4 weeks. Before leaving the U.S., make a copy of

your passport's data page and put it in your checked luggage. Leave your passport in the hotel room safe deposit box and carry the photocopy.

Banking and Currency

Currency:

- As of January 1, 2020, Cuba is only accepting dollars. Although most services are included in the program, there is some independent time to pursue individual activities.
- We recommend bringing small denomination of US dollars for incidentals and souvenirs. and gratuities
- CREDIT CARDS AND TRAVELER'S CHECKS DRAWN ON US BANKS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.

How much money should I bring with me?

How much money you choose to bring is an individual matter. Items made by the people are permissible to purchase and bring back under this license which includes, art, sculpture, jewelry, crafts, woven products, linens, books, CD's, etc. that are all made in Cuba. These will be an additional expense and you will want to purchase these items!

Please consider your purchasing habits and plan accordingly. The artwork ranges from \$10 - \$2,000 and more. Many good pieces of art are in the \$200- \$300 range. We cover the tips for baggage handling, meals that are provided, and local musicians at meals. We do not cover your guide, driver, or chambermaid gratuities, bar gratuities, meals and entertainment you purchase.

We recommend you bring a minimum of \$100.00 US per person per day. it is better to have more than less when there is no means to get more cash.

FYI - Cubans working in the tourism sector have the advantage of earning hard currency and often are economically better off than doctors, State scientists, engineers, and educators. It is not unusual for a bartender to be trained as one of these professionals.

Cubans expect a tip for services as this is often more valuable than their State salaries.

Gratuities are always your personal expression of appreciation for good service.

A tipping and cost guide is noted below:

- Chambermaid tip \$1 per day
- Tips for bartenders - wait staff 10%
- Public Restrooms (always staffed) .50
- Cost of Drinks \$3-7 average per drink
- Lunch on your own \$10 - 15
- Dinner on your own \$25 – 40.00
- Taxies \$7.00
- Tropicana Show \$85-95.00
- Other Shows** \$10 – 30.00
- Guide tip \$10 per person/per day
- Driver tip \$5 per person/per day
- ** When available, other shows include baseball game, ballet, Buena Vista Social
- Club, and other famous entertainers.

Banking

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 08h30-12h00 and 13h30-16h00, Sat 08h30-12h00. Hours may vary and banks may be open all day in larger cities.

MasterCard and Visa credit cards are increasingly accepted, provided they are **not issued by a US bank, or a bank with links to the USA**, but hefty fees are often added. ATMs are fairly common but not ubiquitous. However, cash can be obtained in banks and Cadeecas with non-US Visa credit and Visa debit cards.

Travellers cheques in US Dollar, Pounds Sterling and other major currencies are accepted; US Dollar cheques issued by US banks are not accepted but American Express travellers cheques issued by non-US banks can be exchanged, though not everywhere. It is recommended to take cheques in a currency other than US Dollars.

Travel, Transport and Getting Around

Perhaps one of the most important parts of planning a trip to Cuba involves figuring out exactly how you'll get around once you're there. TREE provides all transportation to and from scheduled itinerary activities. We cannot be responsible if you are late for our scheduled meeting time.

Taxis We suggest using taxis to get around if you have to travel independently. There are certainly plenty available for hire, but should you choose this particular mode of transportation, take into account the following so that you do so safely. First and foremost, avoid taking rides with unlicensed taxis. They are often driven by thieves who are out to pick up and rob passengers. Be particularly careful of fare amount when hiring a taxi, especially in Havana. If possible, ask someone who is native or at least familiar with the system how much the fare should be prior to heading to your destination. This way you will know beforehand how much the driver should be charging you and can avoid being scammed out of an exorbitant fee by a dishonest driver. If you can't confer with a local, insist that the meter be used to remove any doubt.

One of the more unique types of transportation in Cuba is the "Co-Co" taxi, a three-wheeled vehicle that is generally yellow in color and contains a flimsy hood. These are basically just glorified motorcycles that have been modified to carry passengers. Because they can reach speeds of up to 40 mph and lack any sort of safety features, including seatbelts, "Co-Co" taxis can be pretty dangerous. They are, nevertheless quite popular with tourists so if you choose to ride on one, be aware of the risk.

Health and Medical Information

Health, Inoculations, Medications, and Treatments:

As of this writing, no inoculations are required for entry into Cuba. To obtain a current listing of any further information, call the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) free at 1-888-232-3299. The CDC reports no risk of malaria in Cuba. We advise you to pack a kit with an ample supply of your medications and basic first aid items, insect repellent, sunscreen, etc. Replacing medications may be very difficult on the island as many items are in short supply or non-existent. These items along with travel shampoo and soaps can be donated to a needy organization when we leave Havana. In general, be aware of the general discomforts of travel – change in diet, sunburn, dehydration, etc.

Medical insurance is included for treatments while in the country. However, we are not responsible for any prior medical problems and/or conditions and nor can we be responsible for any treatment there. The requests for

information regarding personal medications taken and pre-existing conditions is for the Cuban medical staff in the event of an emergency. We keep all records confidential.

The island is very unique and full of history, but not ADA compliant. Broken pavement, ground holes, old stairwells, and other potential walking hazards exist. Wear comfortable shoes and be aware of your surroundings. Participants are responsible for being in sufficient good health to undertake the trip. Travelers are expected to be able to climb 2 flights of stairs, walk a ¼ mile, and stand for 15-20 minutes at a time.

Visitors are sometimes susceptible to “traveler’s diarrhea” caused by unfamiliar bacteria. Be sure to bring along medication for this, just in case. We strongly recommend you drink only bottled water. Packaged drinks are fine. Ice at most reputable places is filtered water. If there is any doubt as to your physical fitness to travel, a consultation should be sought with your doctor. While Cubans go out of their way to assist travelers, there are few allowances for handicapped access. In case you need medical treatment, hospitals and clinics are conveniently located. At the larger hotels, medical staff is available on site.

Safety Notices

Security:

Cuba has less street crime than any world capital, but there is always one in the bunch! So, take your usual precautions. Undercover state police can be found anywhere there are foreigners. They are instructed to leave visitors in peace but will question any Cuban who seems to be in close contact with a visitor. It is best to avoid “jineteros” or street hustlers offering cheap cigars or anything else to sell you on the street. Many hotels have safety deposit boxes at the front desk or in the rooms for your valuables and documents. Be very careful with your passport, money, and camera, as you would in any foreign country.

Food, Drink and Cuisine Advice

Tap water is not safe to drink. Bottled water is ubiquitous, but boiling water is recommended to limit plastic waste. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products (with the exception of some cheap ice creams) are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood and fruit are generally considered safe to eat.

Surprisingly for an island so rich in marine life, fish and seafood rarely top the menu - most seafood is exported. The cuisine is a mix of Spanish and Afro-Caribbean, heavily reliant on rice, beans, chicken and pork. Depending on the season, fresh vegetables may be hard to come by - as a rule, the hotter the month, the more limited the selection. Furthermore, flavors are limited by the lack of available herbs and spices and many visitors are surprised that Cubans shun spicy food of all kinds. Food preparation relies heavily on the frying pan and deep fat fryer. Some of the best cooking, and often an illegal lobster or two, is found in *paladares* (small, private restaurants). In state-run establishments, service can be painfully slow and sometimes even surly.

A 10% tip on restaurant bills is common.

Climate and Weather

Climate and Clothing: The climate is generally warm and tropical. The rainy season lasts from May to November and the dry season from December to April. Midwinter can sometimes be cool in Havana resulting from cold fronts. Cuba lies within the hurricane belt, but the season is strongest between August and October. It is advisable to pack lightly and simply. Cuba has a very casual atmosphere. We require that you bring a pair of closed-toed, non-skid shoes. We suggest packing a light rain jacket, comfortable clothing, and sun hat. Remember to pack memory sticks and batteries for

cameras. There will be soaps, shampoos, and hairdryers provided in most hotels. Cubans are informal in general. It is customary for men to wear long pants (jeans and chinos - ok) in the evening, and three quarter length slacks for the women are fine. Women should pack one casual dress/skirt and gentlemen bring one pair of long pants for the night. Jackets and ties are not necessary. Jeans are fine. In order to minimize risk, it is recommended that visitors avoid conspicuous displays of wealth and that they dress and behave conservatively. Don't bring any valuable jewelry. While it is safe, it is not appropriate to display wealth. Do not leave your belongings unattended. Weather forecasts are available on weather.com.

Clothing and Dress Recommendations

Cuba is a sub-tropical country so pack for summer. shorts, short-sleeved cotton dresses and shirts are the order of the day. But, bear in mind that Cuban men would never wear shorts in the City! A night out at *Tropicana* or *La Guarida* restaurant needs something smart if not overly formal.

If you are coming in the winter don't assume that it will be hot all the time, especially in the evenings. Bring some warm clothing (long sleeves, a sweater or fleece), since there is nothing more frustrating than being frozen to death in a tropical country! Lightweight rain gear is suggested.

Electricity and Plug Standards

Electric Current: The electric current in Cuba is 110 volts AC: 60Hz. Some of the newer hotels are 220 volts and would require a voltage adaptor and round prong Caribbean converter or plug. Plan to bring a transformer that converts 110 to 220 if you have special needs.

General Guidance

US Customs: You may bring back anything made by the people, which includes art, sculpture, jewelry, crafts, woven goods, linens, crochet, books, and CD's. Licensed travelers are now allowed to bring back up to \$100.00 cigars/rum and a total of \$300.00 of products made by the government (coffee, chocolates and perfumes). This was changed in January 2015.

For specific information on Cuba sanctions, visit the website: www.treas.gov/ofac.

Packing NOT ALLOWED: Leisure drugs, walkie talkies, drones, GPS or satellite telephones. Possible prison sentences! Please do not pack the following items in your checked luggage: money, sunglasses, electronics, cameras, cigarettes, cigars, expensive sneakers, CD's, expensive jewelry, and watches. You can bring a backpack/large bag on board the plane. We recommend leaving the fashion show home! TSA locks are highly recommended.

Photography/Cameras: Cuba is a haven for photographers. Do not expect to be able to purchase batteries, memory cards, or film in Cuba - Come prepared! Have your photographic equipment in good working order, extra batteries along with the charger, and have extra photo cards. Some museums require an additional fee for taking pictures that you will be required to pay upon entry if you wish to take pictures. It is forbidden in Cuba to photograph military or police installations, personnel, ports, rail, or airport facilities. When photographing local residents, be courteous and ask permission. Never leave your camera equipment unattended.
