

EASTERN CUBA

DETAILED ITINERARY

MUSIC TO REVOLUTION - THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURE

Aug 09/23



Eastern Cuba has historically been the most remote part of the island, yet it has inspired rebellion, revolution, the arts, music and dance. On our journey, we visit 4 stunning colonial cities, traverse the island's highest mountain range, hike and boat in the most diverse national park in the Caribbean, and visit 3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Learn about Cuba's history as we visit the colonial gems of Santiago de Cuba (1515), Bayamo (1513), Baracoa (1511), and Gibara (1817) on foot, horse and carriage, and bicycle-taxi.

Learn about Fidel Castro's Revolution and the man himself, as it is impossible to understand Cuba and the Revolution without understanding Castro. Visit important revolution sites and the birthplace of Fidel Castro, and his brother Raul, in Birán.

Enjoy a local cooking lesson in delicious authentic Cuban cuisine and visit the Humboldt National Park (UNESCO), close to one of the most eastern points on the island of Cuba. Visit this virtually

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 15 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Havana • All meals included • Cuban medical insurance included
- Explore the colonial gems of Santiago, Bayamo, Baracoa and Gibara • Learn about Fidel Castro and his Revolution and visit his final resting place • Learn about Cuba's famous Cine Pobre Film Festival in Gibara • Hike and boat in Humboldt National Park (UNESCO) • Enjoy an authentic Cuban cooking lesson and learn about local delicacies • See the cross left by Christopher Columbus in Baracoa's cathedral • Visit San Pedro de la Roca Castle (UNESCO) • Visit to a local cacao farm & Cuban cigar factory • Stay at the famous Hotel Nacional de Cuba

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Jan 28 - Feb 11, 2024 - **\$4895 USD**

Feb 18 - Mar 03, 2024 - **\$4895 USD**

Activity Level: 2

Comfort Level: Some long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable, well-located hotels with private bathrooms throughout.

ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS



untouched part of Cuba to enjoy colonial architecture, natural beauty, learn about Cuban society, politics and experience the warmth and charm of the island of Cuba and its people!

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN HAVANA

Upon arrival in Havana, you are met and transferred to our centrally located hotel. The remainder of the day is free to explore on your own or just relax.

In the evening, we have our introductory meeting, dinner is at your leisure at the hotel.

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 2 TO SANCTI SPIRITUS, CITY TOUR

After breakfast, we depart Havana for Sancti Spiritus, a colonial city founded in 1514, and is the fourth village among the first seven founded by the Spaniards in Cuba, as well as the only one with a Latin name.

Once we arrive, we will enjoy a city tour through the labyrinth of laneways and streets of the colonial center. After our walking tour, we continue on to Camaguey where we will enjoy some free time and dinner at the hotel.

Overnight in Camaguey.

DAY 3 TO GIBARA VIA CAMAGUEY (UNESCO)

Today we depart for Gibara with a stop in the UNESCO designated city of Camaguey. We will enjoy a city tour, while traveling in bicycle taxis. Our exploration ends in Plaza San Juan de Dios where we will have lunch in one of the city's best and most historic restaurants.

After lunch, we depart for the fishing village of Gibara for leisure time and dinner.

Overnight in Gibara.

DAY 4 GIBARA SITES

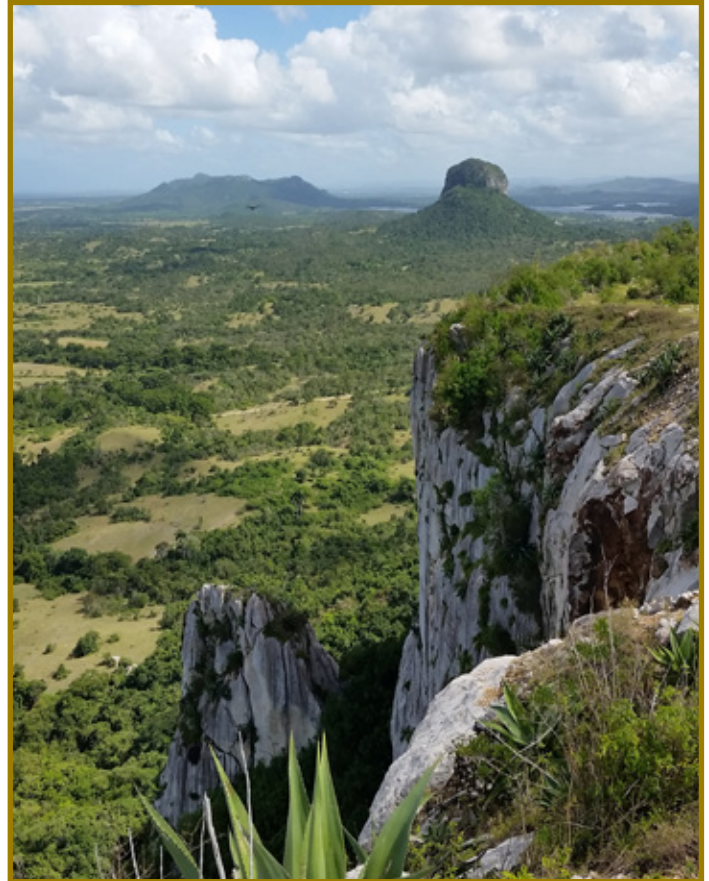
After breakfast we will enjoy a visit to a local cigar factory, where we will see the process of making fine Cuban cigars. We continue our exploration of the village of Gibara with a local historian, who will discuss the importance of Gibara to Cuba, the famous Cine Pobre Film Festival, and the important sites and fortification system of the city. After lunch in a local paladar (family run restaurant), we make a visit to a local art museum.

The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure.

Overnight in Gibara.



**San Pedro
de la Roca**



Baracoa



DAY 5 JEEP ADVENTURE TO LOCAL HOME, COLUMBUS' LANDING IN THE NEW WORLD IN 1492

Today we need jeeps to really get off the beaten path as we visit the home of Rosita and her husband where we can see their home, farm, and share some snacks and coffee with them. We also visit 3 significant sites related to Christopher Columbus, where he landed in the New World in 1492.

Overnight in Gibara.

DAY 6 TO BARACOA VIA BIRÁN

Today after breakfast, we make our way to Baracoa via Moa & Birán.

Our first stop is Birán (Fidel Castro's birth place) and the farm estate of the Castro family. This farm was also the first farm that was nationalized after the revolution. Enjoy the guided tour of the birthplace of both Fidel and his brother Raul, gaining further insight into who Fidel was and how he developed his revolutionary ideas.

After lunch, we transfer to Baracoa and check in to our hotel, and enjoy some free time before dinner.

Overnight in Baracoa.

DAY 7 BARACOA, YUMURI RIVER

After breakfast, we begin our day with a visit to the Yumurí River which winds its way through 54 kilometres, including a steep 220 metres canyon with walls 200 metres high and is rich in biodiversity. The beauty of the environment that surrounds the river attracts both visitors and locals, and is home to many birds and amphibians.

After our river visit, we depart for a cacao farm.

We will have a guided tour to experience the entire chocolate making process right from the pods the region harvests, and of course, enjoy some samples!

After lunch at another local finca, we transfer to Baracoa, where we will have a walking tour including the cathedral and main square. As you enter the cathedral, if you look to the left you will see a wooden cross, which is the only existing item left by Christopher Columbus in the Americas, when he



landed here on 27th November, 1492..

This evening, we visit the infamous Casa de la Trova. The troubadour music scene has been prominent in the country for the last half-century. In fact, many members of the Buena Vista Social Club formed part of the movement.

Overnight in Baracoa.

DAY 8 HUMBOLDT NATIONAL PARK

We enjoy another excursion from Baracoa today as we

take a dirt road to journey to Humboldt National Park. Humboldt has the distinction of being the most diverse park in the Caribbean, and home to the world's smallest hummingbird and the world's smallest frog. We explore the park during our hike, followed by lunch in the park.

In the afternoon, we enjoy a boat journey exploring the park from the water's edge. We can also keep an eye out for manatees, which call the park's natural bay home.

We return to Baracoa for dinner and overnight.

DAY 9 TO SANTIAGO DE CUBA TRAVERSING THE SIERRA MAESTRA MTNS, GUANTANAMO BAY

This morning we depart Baracoa and traverse the Sierra Maestra Mountains on our way to Santiago, with stops at a beautiful lookout known as "La Gobernadora", with 360-degree vistas over the Sierra Maestra Mountain Range, Guantanamo Bay and US Base.

Overnight in Santiago de Cuba.

DAY 10 SANTA IFIGENIA CEMETERY & COLONIAL SANTIAGO

Today we visit one of Cuba's most impressive sites, the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery. Some of Cuba's most famous heroes, politicians, musicians and wealthy aristocrats are buried here, including the leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro. The crypts are often massive and opulent. Our visit to the cemetery will coincide with the changing of the guard that takes place at the monument of Cuba's national hero and founder, Jose Marti.

We also explore Santiago's colonial past, up until Cuban independence from Spain and a short occupation by the U.S. Our day's explorations will take us to Santiago's most impressive colonial sites, including Cespedes Square (cathedral, Casa De Diego Velazquez) and San Juan Hill (site of the battle, and present day memorial

Yumuri



of the Spanish American War 1895-1898).

We return to Santiago for some free time before we drive to dinner at a local paladar.

Overnight In Santiago de Cuba.

DAY 11 FIDEL CASTRO'S REVOLUTION, EL MORRO, GRANJITA SIBONEY TO MONCADA BARRACKS

Today we learn about Fidel Castro's Revolution, which is generally regarded to have begun on July 26, 1953. This is when Castro and a small group of rebels attacked the Moncada military barracks outside of Santiago de Cuba in an attempt to overthrow the Batista government. The attack failed and Castro was captured, tried, convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

While incarcerated, Castro renamed his group the "26th of July Movement" and continued to coordinate its activities through correspondence. He and his compatriots were ultimately released in 1955 under an amnesty deal with the Batista government. Fidel traveled with Raul to Mexico, where they met the infamous Che

Guevara, and continued to plan their revolution.

On November 25, 1956, Fidel, Raul, Che and 80 insurgents left Mexico aboard the ship Granma and landed in Orient province, Eastern Cuba. After being met by force, the surviving rebels fled to the Sierra Maestra Mountains to hide from Batista's forces. The revolution gained support, particularly in Eastern Cuba and gradually had successful campaigns, including the rebel attack on Santa Clara, led by Che Guevara in December 1958. Cienfuegos finally led the revolutionary army into Havana, seizing power on Dec 31, 1958. Batista fled Cuba and Fidel Castro ruled Cuba for almost 5 decades until he relinquished power to his brother Raul due to poor health in 2008.

We start our revolutionary day with a drive to Granjita Siboney Museum, the farmhouse used as the starting point for the failed assault on Moncado barracks. We depart from Granjita Siboney in vintage cars, just as the rebels did in 1953, for our drive to Moncado barracks. Feel free to shoot as much as you want (with your camera that is) at the barracks, which today has the dual roles of



Taino Healing Ceremony

revolutionary museum and school. The exterior of the barracks still bears the bullet holes from the 1953 assault. Lunch on the private island of Cayo Granma, accessible by catamaran.

We take a short drive to the impressive San Pedro de la Roca Castle. Built in 1638, this fortress has guarded the entrance to Santiago de Cuba Bay from pirates, as well as the English and French. Enjoy a (typically) beautiful sunset, gazing out over the sea, land and mountains. San Pedro de la Roca Castle was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997, cited as the best preserved and most complete example of Spanish-American military architecture.

Overnight in Santiago de Cuba.

DAY 12 TO CAMAGUEY (UNESCO) VIA BAYAMO, EL COBRE

Today we depart for Camaguey (UNESCO). On our way we make a stop at the impressive El Cobre, the most important shrine for Cubans, and most famous

church in the country. It is lodged in the foothills of the Sierra Maestra near the old copper mines that give it its name. The triple-domed church with the mouthful name of El Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre, built in 1927, rises on Maboia Hill and is photogenically framed by green forest. The faithful come from across Cuba on pilgrimages to pay their respects to (and ask for protection from) a black Madonna, the Virgen de la Caridad (Virgin of Charity).

We continue our journey to Camaguey, with a few stops for rest and lunch.

Overnight in Camaguey.

DAY 13 TO HAVANA, VIA CIEGO DE AVILA & SANTA CLARA

Today we make our way back to Havana via Ciego de Avila and historic Santa Clara (site of Che Guevara’s Revolution).

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 14 COLONIAL HAVANA, FARMERS MARKET, COLUMBUS CEMETERY

This morning we start our day with a city tour and a visit to a farmer's market to learn about both the local diet and dual currency (including some of differences between CUC and CUP).

Afterwards we continue to the colonial center of Havana for a walking tour and lunch.

From here, we depart for the Columbus Cemetery (Cemetario de Colon). Colon Cemetery is one of the most important historical cemeteries in the world and is generally held to be the most important in Latin America in historical and architectural terms, second only to La Recoleta in Buenos Aires. Prior to the opening of the Colon Cemetery, Havana's dead were laid to rest in the crypts of local church catacombs and then, beginning in 1806, at Havana's newly opened

Espada Cemetery. When locals realized there would be a need for a larger space for their community's dead (due to an 1868 cholera outbreak), planning then began for the Colon Cemetery. The 140 acre cemetery is noted for its many elaborately sculpted memorials. It is estimated that today the cemetery has more than 500 major mausoleums.

After our visit we transfer back to the hotel and you will have an afternoon of free time to explore the city, before our elegant farewell dinner in one of the most historic squares of Old Havana.

Overnight in Havana.

DAY 15 DEPART HAVANA

Our Cuban adventure concludes with a transfer to Havana Airport.





Humboldt
National Park





QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), bus driver, national guides, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

All of our tours are kept flexible so that we can take advantage of opportunities to meet and speak with local people. We visit museums, national parks and reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of Cuban history, politics, culture and nature.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

We travel by comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles, by boat, and by foot.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We always stay in good accommodations — both hotels and lodges, where rooms have a private bath or shower. We choose our accommodation based on local charm and location.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

All of our programs are run when the weather is optimal for travel. Our departures are scheduled throughout the dry season when the temperatures are at their lowest.

The average temperature during the dry season is 75°F (23°C) with maximums of 85°F (29°C) and minimums of 65°F (18°C). It can be cooler in the mountains, especially at night.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Comprehensive insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note however that included in the tour price is the mandatory Cuban Medical Insurance. Cuban Medical insurance coverage is required by the Cuban government..

10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

You will receive a suggested packing list with your final documents, approximately one month prior to your departure.

11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included starting with dinner on day 1, and finishing with breakfast on day 13. We eat a variety of local foods delivered in a wide range of settings. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share, allowing you to sample new foods and decide what you enjoy best.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please contact our office for additional information.

