



Common Ground Education & Travel Services

U.S. People to People Exchanges

Cuba Today: A program of People to People Exploration with Obsidian Arts

October 20 to 27, 2012

Saturday **October 20**

9:00 am Check in with Gulfstream International Charters, Miami International Airport.
1:00 pm Depart on Sky King flight 5K-25
2:00 pm Arrive Havana. Meet guide and drivers from Havanatur and transfer to Hotel Presidente. Check in.
Evening Orientation and welcome dinner at El Patio Restaurant in Old Havana overlooking Cathedral Square. The group will be joined by Prof. Tony Diaz, economist and professor of tourism at the University of Havana. Opportunity to exchange views on the impact of tourism in Cuba and the perceptions of the Cuban people in this regard.

Sunday **October 21**

Morning Breakfast at the hotel.
Travel to Regla, a small fishing and stevedore town across Havana Bay for a visit to one of Cuba's most important churches, the Church of the Black Virgin. For those who wish, a chance to attend services while others in the group can wander the streets of the town or visit the Museum of Regla with artifacts and relics of the town's past. Opportunities to talk with townspeople and exchange views on Cuba and on their own lives and histories.
Mid morning Return to Old Havana for a guided walking tour of the Old City. Again, participants are urged to talk Old Havana residents who usually are more than glad to talk with visitors, to take photographs and to record their impressions and conversations.
Mid day Break for lunch at *La Mina*, a restaurant serving traditional Cuban food (not included).
Afternoon Continue walking tour of Old Havana, ending either at the Museum of Fine Arts or at a concert in the chapel of San Francisco de Assis. The Chapel regularly hosts concerts on Sunday afternoons, usually with some of the finest classical musicians in Cuba. Your guide will help you make contact with the musicians and concert attendees for an exchange of views.
Evening Drive to the Morro Castle for dinner (not included) and the opportunity to explore the several small museums and exhibits in the restored fort, and then for the traditional *cañonazo* ceremony in a crowd of local Cubans as well as visitors from all over the globe. We suggest going up on the battlements to watch, which are both the best seats and also where most of the local people go to watch. Interestingly, the ceremony remains a perennial family outing event in Cuba and most of the spectators will be Cuban.

Monday **October 22**

Morning Breakfast at the hotel.
Drive modern Havana by bus with highlights of the Plaza of the Revolution, Colón Cemetery, the Malecón, seawall, and the neighborhoods of Vedado, Miramar and Siboney. Stop at the Scale Model of the City of Havana created and maintained by planners and architects of the Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital, an NGO that is the watchdog for development in the city. Meet with some of the staff who will tell you of the history of the model and of the city.
Mid day Drive to the neighborhood of Jaimanitas where the artist Fuster and his neighbors have decorated their houses with whimsical ceramic tiles, and where Fuster also conducts a project in the arts for children with disabilities. Fuster and his family will prepare lunch for the group (direct payment, not included). After lunch, talk with neighbors about Fuster and the neighborhood project.
Afternoon Visit a Farmers' Market, talking to both sellers and shoppers about the impact of dependency on imported food and the difficulties experienced with transportation of food stuffs to market.
Evening Meet at the hotel over dinner with economist and social scientist Esteban Morales and his wife to go over the ongoing economic reforms and opportunities for self employment and small businesses that are now in place.

Tuesday	October 23
Morning	Breakfast at the hotel. Depart for Pinar del Rio for the day, with the first stop Las Terrazas Community, a self-governing town within the Cuban system that has dedicated itself to ecotourism and to preserving the nearby biosphere and nature reserve. Town leaders and community members will show the group their town and answer questions.
Mid day	Lunch at Palenque de los Cimarron (included).
Afternoon	Continue to the capital of the province, Pinar del Rio, for a visit to the project run by artist Jesús Carrete for children with Downs Syndrome. Meet the children and young adults.
Afternoon	Return to Havana by way of a tobacco farm with the opportunity to talk with farmers about production in state run versus cooperative farms, both of which are forms of farming in the province and in Cuba.
Evening	Return to Havana and the hotel. Evening at leisure.
Wednesday	October 24
Morning	Breakfast at the hotel. Visit to the Museum of the Revolution.
Mid morning	Visit to the Alamar Organopico Farm. Alamar is a housing project on the outskirts of the city built in the 1960s and 70s. Since its inception it has gone through various phases and at present has several community organizing groups as well as the community farm you will visit. Opportunity to meet with local people. Mid day Lunch at the restaurant run by the Farm. (Direct payment, not included).
Afternoon	Continue to La Coronela to Las Americas Intensive Gardens. This small farm is part of the system of Credit & Service Cooperatives (CCS), in which a ½ hectare (about 1¼ acres) is allotted to a family for vegetable production using intensive farming techniques and the rearing of small livestock
Evening	Optional: Evening at Tropicana Nightclub, Havana's prototypical open air spectacular on which so many Las Vegas shows were later modeled. Again, many of the attendees will be Cuban and we encourage group participants to mingle and talk with the Cuban attendees.
Thursday	October 25
Morning	Breakfast at the hotel. Depart for Matanzas Province. Visit the Evangelical Theological Seminary atop a hill overlooking Matanzas Bay at the entry to the City. The seminary prepares ministers from all over Cuba for protestant churches in Cuba and in Latin America and also runs a local community center and several community organizing projects.
Mid day	Continue into the city itself for a visit to Ediciones Vigía a privately run publishing house that produces handmade books of high artistic quality and employs a number of local women. From there continue to Varadero for a late lunch and the opportunity to meet with local workers and service people to hear their perspective on the opportunities and challenges presented by Cuba's burgeoning tourism industry.
Evening	Return to Havana.
Friday	October 26
Morning	Breakfast at the hotel.
Mid day	A day on your own to explore Havana's neighborhoods, visit museums and talk with local people.
Evening	Farewell party at El Templete restaurant.
Saturday	October 27
Morning	Breakfast at the hotel.
Mid day	Check out of hotel and transfer to the airport. Check in for flight, pay 25CUC airport departure tax, pass through Cuban Immigration and board your flight for home.
3:00 pm	Depart on Sky King flight 5K-253, arriving Miami at approximately 4:00 pm. End of trip.