



The Architectural Treasures of Cuba:

Access Renewed & In Support of the Cuban People

January 21 to 28, 2024 – Sunday to Sunday

Arrangements by Classical Excursions



Join us as we head to the Caribbean and a place that was first discovered in 1492. This promises to be an extraordinary journey reserved for 20 or so discerning architecture, art, design and culture enthusiasts. This trip is perfect for seasoned travelers who are looking for a special chance to explore historic houses, architecture, and the best of Cuban art – and meeting with architects, artists, craftspeople, museum officials, urban planners and more. This itinerary is unique and custom designed by Lani Summerville (CEO and Founder of Classical Excursions), Chas Miller (Director of Travelers Services, Classical Excursions) and a Cuban professional travel planner who splits his time between Miami and Havana. Lani has traveled to the island eleven times and Chas has gone seventeen times – so both are well versed in planning this extraordinary itinerary.

OVERVIEW OF THE DAYS

Day 1 | Sunday · January 21 · Day 1: Arrival to Havana at noon from the Miami. Following lunch, we will do touring, then check-in to the Claxon Boutique Hotel on Avenue Paseo in the Vedado neighborhood of Havana. Welcome dinner that night at a paladar (a restaurant operated privately).

Day 2 to 4 | Monday · January 22 through Wednesday · January 24: Havana touring.

Day 5 | Thursday · January 25: Depart to the south coast city of **Cienfuegos**, with lunch and touring, then continue to **Trinidad** where we will stay for two-nights.

Day 6 | Friday · January 26: Trinidad touring.

Day 7 | Saturday · January 27: return to Havana for lunch and touring. Farewell dinner at a private home.

Day 8 | Sunday · January 28: day for departures.

Plans and Itinerary as of July 2023, and are subject to change.

Havana, which you will also see as **La Habana**, is the capital and largest city in Cuba. It was founded by the Spanish in 1519. It served as a springboard for their conquest of the Americas, becoming a key stopping point for Spanish galleons returning to Spain. Philip II of Spain granted Havana the title of capital in 1607. Walls as well as forts were built to protect the city – including El Morro, La Cabaña and la Punta. However, the city was occupied by the British in the years 1762-1763 as part of the Europe's Seven Years' War. With the signing of the Peace of Paris treaty, the British exchanged Havana for Florida.



The city is known by its districts: Old Havana (Havana Vieja), Centro Havana, Vedado, Cubanacán. It faces the Straits of Florida / Gulf of Mexico, and has a naturally protected harbor making it safe and secure.



Old Havana was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. There were active preservation and restoration programs spearheaded by the late City Historian Eusebio Leal, who held that office from 1967 to 2020 when he passed away. Work continues to this day by the City Historian's office. While hundreds of buildings have been restored, there are thousands in the neighborhoods that are in desperate need of work and repair.

Well known American and international firms of architects, engineers, and landscape designers have worked in Havana included Purdy and Henderson engineering, from 1890 to 1944; Walker and Gillett Architects; Harrison & Abramovitz Architects responsible for the US Embassy Building on the Malacan (and the UN Headquarters Building in NYC), Richard Neutra, Brazilian garden designer Roberto Burl Marx, Maison Jansen (interiors), and others.

At some point in our touring, we will visit **El Morro**, magnificent fortress and lighthouse guarding the narrow entrance to Havana harbor. Great photo opportunity for a vista over the city. (Images below)

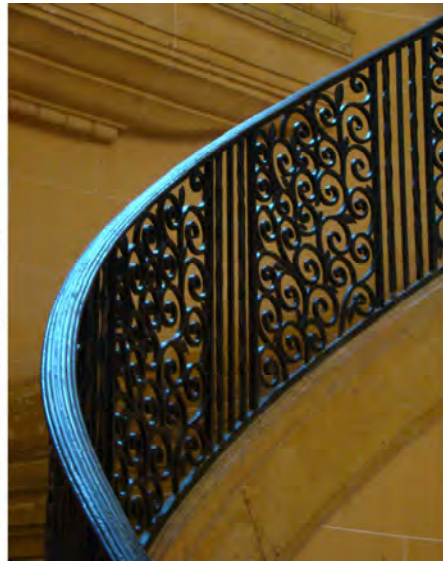


DAYS 1 to 4, plus 7 – **HIGHLIGHTS OF HAVANA:**

Please note that we will not be able to accomplish all of the described touring... but we will include as much as possible as we confirm and finalize the program.

On our first morning, we will have a walking tour of Old Havana (Havana Vieja) with an architect and historian – and will focus on the four main squares: the **Plaza de Armas**, **Plaza de San Francisco de Asis**, **Plaza Vieja** and **Plaza de la Catedral**. Visit to **Castillo de la Real Fuerza**, built between 1558 and 1577, the former residence of the Spanish captains for over 200 years. **Palacio de los Capitanes Generales** (image second right). The palacio currently houses the **Museo de la Ciudad** and was the former residence of the Spanish Captains General. **Palacio del Segundo Cabo**, a former palace incorporating Moorish, baroque and neo-classical elements. **El Templete**, a neoclassical monument marking the location of the founding of San Cristobal de La Habana in 1519. **Hotel Santa Isabel** (image top right), originally completed 1784 and known as the Palace of the Counts of Santovenia – it became a hotel in 1867. **Casa de la Obra Pia**, a typical aristocratic residence built originally in 1665, and rebuilt in 1780, with Baroque decoration, including an intricate portico, which was made in Cádiz, Spain, covers the exterior facade. **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 (image and detail below). See the **Casa de Conde de Lombillo**, this house adjoins the Casa del Marqués de Arcos, was built in the 1740s for the royal treasurer. Visit the **Casa del Conde Bayona** dated 1720, now the Museum of Colonial Art. **Lunch** will be at a local paladar. Visit the **Escuela Taller**, a specialized trade school where the director will explain the operation of this institution where students are introduced to old restoration techniques and placed to work in construction sites throughout old town. Visit the colonial house located in San Ignacio 411, currently housing the **Hostal de Santa Cruz**. This house was built in 1732 by Don Gabriel Beltran of Santa Cruz. During the passage of time it was lived by families and personalities of Havana's high society and still conserves its original charm. And a visit to the **Iglesia del Santo Ángel Custodio**, dating to 1695.



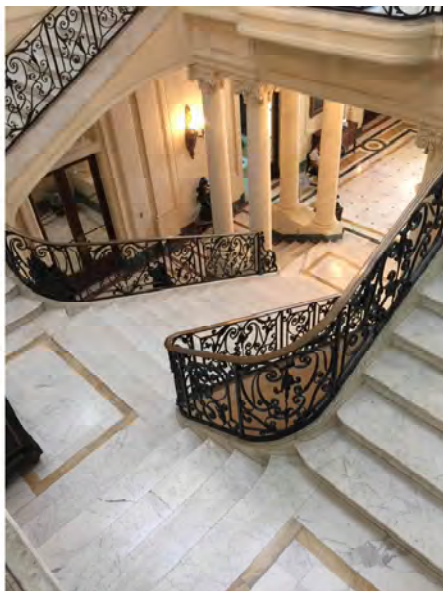


Special visit to the **Catalina Lasa House** (1927, architects Evelio Govantes and Félix Cabarrocas). The exterior is in the Italian Renaissance style, while the interiors are art deco - with marble from Carrara, ornaments and glass overdoor panels from Lalique and sand from the Nile. The extensive grounds were influenced by French landscape architect Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier. There is an amazing trellised porch room done in pale green with black trellis pieces.

Visit the **Colon Cemetery**, one of the most impressive necropolis in the world together with Pere La Chaise and La Recoleta, many of the tombs have elaborate structures and sculptures. One of the most unique, is an amazing Art Deco mausoleum dedicated to Catalina Lasa, designed by Rene Lalique.



The Gomez Mena Mansion, now the **Museum of Decorative Arts**. This is the former residence of the Maria Luisa Gomez Mena viuda de Cagiga, Countess of Revilla de Camargo. It was it was designed in Paris by architects P. Virad and M. Destuque, inspired in French Renaissance and was built between 1924 and 1927 in a neo-classical style. The grounds contain four different elaborate entertaining terraces and areas.



Visit to the **Museo Napoleonico**, which is housed in a mansion designed in the Florentine Renaissance style and completed in 1929, architects were Evelio Govantes and Félix Cabarrocas, who also designed Capitol building and the Catalina Lasa House. The house was built for Orestes Ferrara, an Italian-Cuban politician, and professor at the University of Havana. The Napoleonic collection had nothing to do with this house but have been beautifully installed. The restoration of the building was done by the Office of the City Historian and reopened in 2011. The upper loggias offer stunning views over the city and to the sea.



Driving 10 miles to the southeast of Havana, we arrive in the small town of San Francisco de Paula, for a visit the house of Ernest Hemingway - **Finca Vigía** (images left and below). This is a unique historic house museum visit as you view the interiors through the open windows and doors – never actually entering the house. On the property is the recently restored swimming pool (image below awaiting water), his boat “Pilar” and tower study with distant views of the sea.



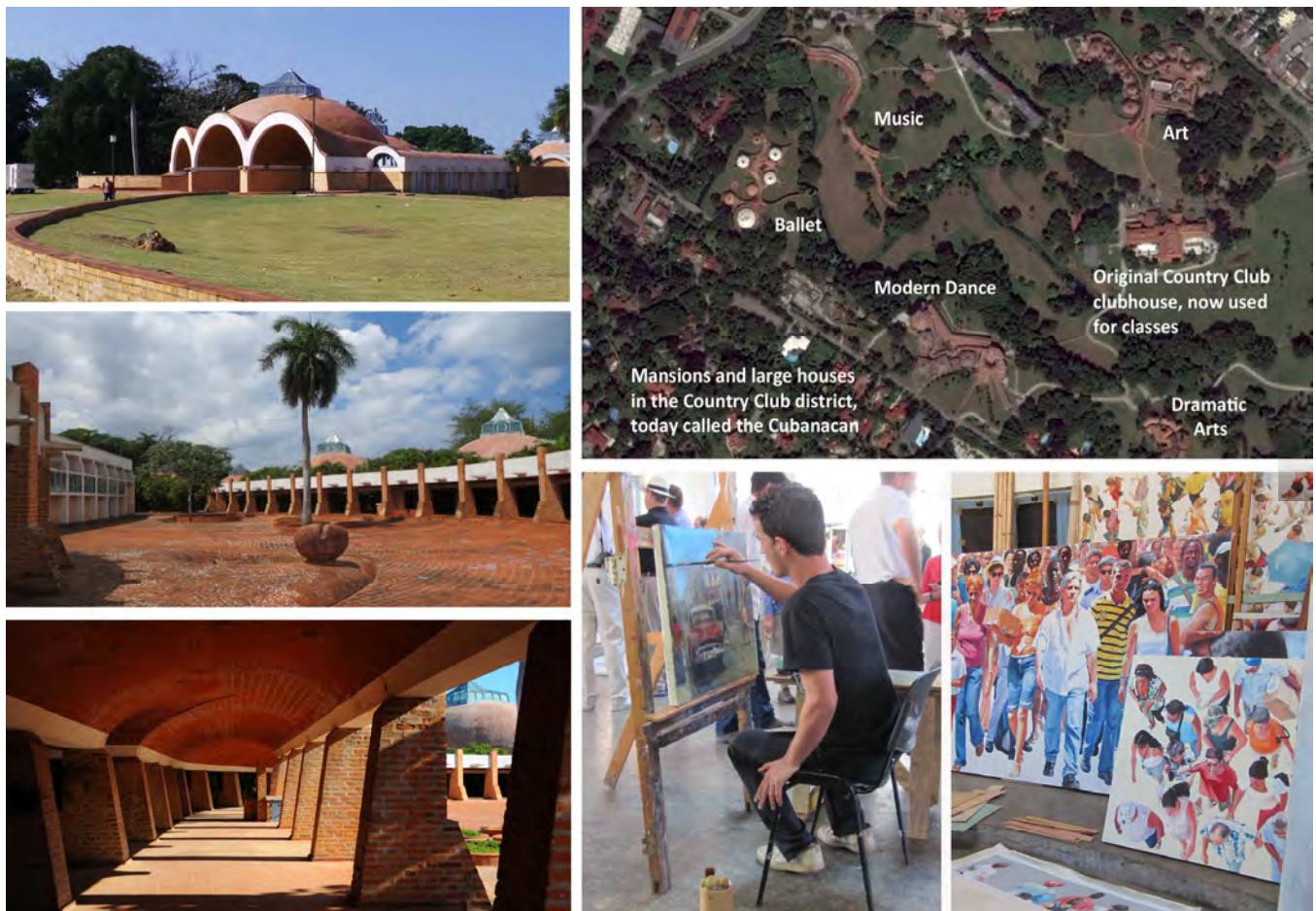
Finca Vigía is unique as there is an American nonprofit based in Boston that helps support the property and preserve the archives. It is the Finca Vigía Foundation > www.fincafoundation.org In 2016 it was announced that the largest ever gift by an American corporate foundation was to benefit the property came from the Caterpillar Foundation, providing a \$500,000 grant for work on the house and the new administration building and conservation center.

We'll have a brief walk through the campus of the **University of**

Havana, seeing the statue of Alma Mater on the main steps, much like that at Columbia University. The vestibule is graced with a mural by Cuban artist Arturo Mendocal and a glorious stained glass. It functions today as a youth center.



Visit the complex of the **National Arts Schools** and specifically **ISA, Instituto Superior de Arte**, where we will join a professor (who is an artist) for a guided visit through the studios and workspaces of Cuba's leading art school - and we'll be viewing the students' artwork. They study painting, printmaking, photography, ceramics, and sculpture in metal/wood/or other materials. The complex of five schools was designed by Vittorio Garatti, Roberto Gottardi (Italians) and Ricardo Porro (Cuban) on the former private country club golf course in western suburb of Cubanacan.



While in the Cubanacan area, we will also drive by a number of social and country clubs, some of which are still in use today – the Tennis Club, Havana Yacht Club, La Concha Beach Club, Circolo Naval (Navy Club), Dog Racing Club, Nautical Club and more.

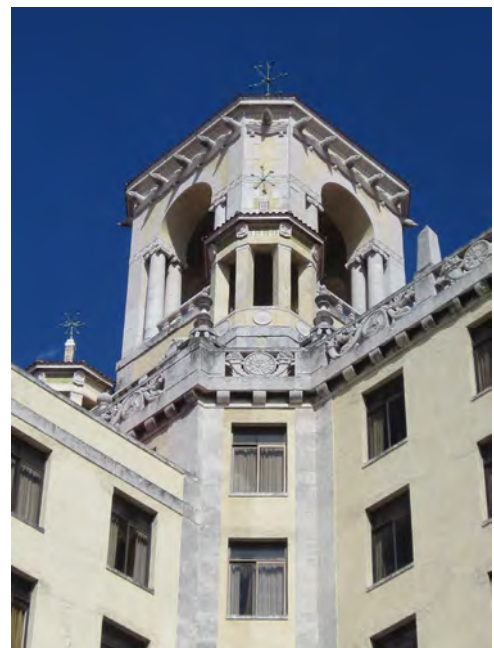


With a focus on 20th Century architecture, we'll start at the **Bacardi Building**, designed in 1930 by architects Esteban Rodríguez-Castells and Rafael Fernández Ruenes. The rich façade of polychrome granite, brick, terracotta and stone. The elaborate decoration of the building crown features a bat, logo of the Bacardi company (images left).

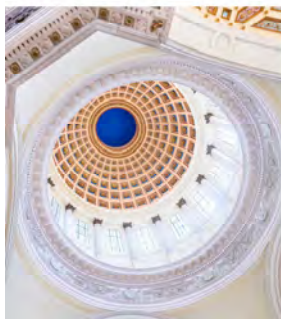
Then a brief stop to the mid-century **Hotel Riviera** (c.1957, architect Igor B. Polevitzky), a true time piece of the international style and largely unchanged lobby interiors.

Another brief stop will be to see the lobby of an apartment building with a great circular atrium - building sign over the door: **O y 21** - indicating the cross streets (image right).

Then we walk down the block to the **Hotel Nacional de Cuba** – which was designed by McKim Mead and White and opened in 1930 – it clearly recalls the firms creation of The Breakers in Palm Beach which was completed in 1926. Here we will enjoy a drink on the terrace and lunch — and there will be a few minutes for cigar shopping as the hotel has one of the best cigar shops in Havana. (three images below)



Another walking tour will include a visit the **Centro Asturiano** (housing the Museo de Arte universal and featuring the most majestic staircase in Cuban architecture) and pass by the **Manzana de Gomez** (the first entire city block built completely for commercial use with two inner diagonal streets that cross the building in all directions, integrating the pedestrian circulation with the outer fabric – now the Kempinski Hotel which opened in 2017). Visit to the **Capitolio Nacional** (images right), a fabulous monumental building, obsequiously similar to the US Capitol, and crowned by a 300.96-foot high dome. The recently renovated gardens are originally the work of the French Landscape architect, Jean-Claude Nicholas Forestier. Visit to the former **Centro Gallego**, built in 1915 by Belgium architect Paul Belau, now housing the **Gran Teatro de La Habana**, home of Alicia Alonso's Ballet Nacional del Cuba.



Walk along the **Paseo de Marti (el Prado)**, a pedestrian promenade, remodeled in 1929, with the inauguration of the Capitol Building and lined with examples of Moorish-influenced architecture. Visit to the interiors of two of the most important residences: Cuba's former president **Jose Miguel Gomez** – now the Alliance Française (above right two images). The mansion has very elaborate interiors and lovely lightwell courtyard. It is fully restored was completed in 2017. And the former **Asociacion de Dependientes del Comercio**, a Venetian neo-classical style building placed in a key corner of the Prado featured in the film *The Buena Vista Social Club*. Visit to the Gran Teatro de La Habana, named now for renown ballerina Alicia Alonso. Designed by the Belgian architect Paul Belau and built by Purdy and Henderson, Engineers in 1914 (image bottom right).



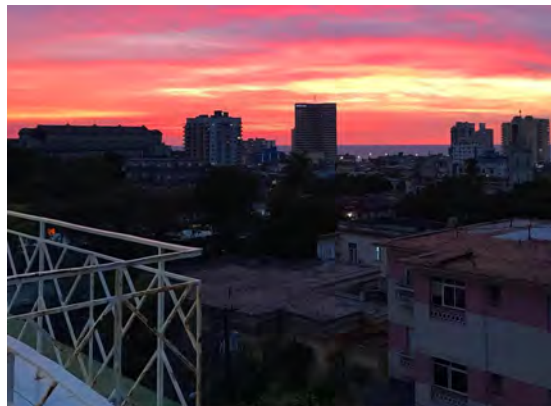
Guided tour of the **Museum of Cuban Art** by curator **Nelson Herrera**. Nelson Herrera is a curator for the Wilfredo Lam Center. He will highlight some of the most important work in the permanent collection of Cuban art in the museum. The museum is dedicated exclusively to Cuban Art, and our tour will take a chronological path from the earliest days of colonialism to the latest generation of Cuban artists.

We will enjoy museum tours with their directors, walking tours with architects and more. A rooftop jazz concert and visits with several artists in their homes and studios. At another point, we'll see private dance performances ranging from traditional Spanish dance to Afro-Cuban dance including performances by some of the lead dancers with the Cuban Spanish Dance company.



Enjoy a meal at **La Guarida** in Centro Habana. One of the most renowned paladares in town, we climb the marble staircases to the third floor of this impressive 1913 building. This paladar, which opened in 1996, was the location for the film *Strawberries and Chocolate*. (two images above left)

One evening we plan to go to the **Ludwig Foundation of Cuba** where we will have a special presentation on the work of the foundation with young Cubans and their art, photography and architecture. The Ludwig Foundation Director will host a drinks reception and buffet dinner on the penthouse terrace – and this will be a great chance to discuss the arts with invited local architects, artists and guests. (image of sunset right)



Another evening, we will plan to go to **La Fábrica de Arte Cubano** – known as **FAC**. This is an art gallery and performance space inside of a former cooking oil factory, and has since gained notoriety as one of Havana's premier nightspots. (two images right)

Our Saturday night farewell dinner back in Havana will be at a private home with a lovely garden courtyard. (image below)



DAY 5 • Thursday • January 25 –
Havana to Cienfuegos,
ending in Trinidad:

After breakfast, we depart to the southern coast town of **Cienfuegos**, a city of neo-classical buildings with a European flair. Lunch on arrival. Visit the **Palacio de Valle**, the former home of trader Celestino Caceres. This architectural jewel originated as a private residence and later passed into the Valle family who added to it in a Mughal style with carved floral motifs, a stunning Carrara marble staircase, cupped arches, bulbous domes and delicate arabesques. The house overlooks Cienfuegos Bay.



We'll visit **Downtown Cienfuegos**, the main square, **Paseo del Prado**, **Cathedral de la Purísima Concepción** and the **Teatro Tomás Terry**. This will be a walking tour guided by an architect and city conservationist. 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. Later investment in a sugar estate enabled him to have materials specially brought over from Europe for his buildings. Cienfuegos has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Late afternoon drive to Trinidad, passing through areas of tropical forests and mountains. On arrival in Trinidad, check-in to our casa hotel for two-nights. Dinner in town. Trinidad is a UNESCO World Heritage Town.



DAY 6 · Friday · January 26 – Trinidad:

Today we'll go to the **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. Visit to **the Museo Lucha Contra los Bandidos**, the former home of the San Francisco de Asis convent. We will have the option to go up the bell tower for a panoramic view of the city. Visit the **Palacio Cantero**, a museum of decorative arts and the Architecture Museum. Free time to shop or explore in Trinidad at your own pace. Lunch, followed by a visit outside of town to **Valle de los Ingenios** (valley of the sugar mills – image bottom), the most important sugar producing region during colonial times and now declared a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site. Visit 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. Return to hotel to freshen up. Dinner in town. Optional: Evening musical performance at **Casa del la Trova** in old town.



DAY 7 · Saturday · January 27 – Return to Havana:

After breakfast we depart back to Havana. Lunch and then more touring in the afternoon. Check-in to the hotel for our last night.

Our farewell dinner back in Havana will be at a private home with a lovely garden courtyard.



DAY 8 · Sunday · January 28 – Departures to the USA:

After breakfast, departure for the airport.

OUR HOTELS:

HAVANA:

Claxon Hotel Boutique is known as a Casas Particular, which is in a former large private home on the most majestic of avenues, the Avenida Paseo in the Vedado area of Havana. It is said “the classic and the contemporary coexist in perfect harmony.” Opened in 2022, it has all the modern amenities for comfort. Breakfast included, room service, free Wi-Fi.

And there is an incredible rooftop where one can enjoy drinks, smoke a good cigar, and relax with the views of Vedado as a backdrop. The Claxon restaurant Fangio Habana offers food that fuses Mediterranean and Caribbean flavors. We will also be using an adjacent new Casa property that opened this year for additional rooms.



TRINIDAD: We will stay at a traditional colonial residence dating to 1810 that once belonged to the city historian. It has been purchased by a local artist and converted into a charming bed and breakfast while being faithful to the local traditional aesthetic. **Lola Casa** is located in the heart of the Spanish colonial historic district you will have easy access on foot to explore beautiful Trinidad. All rooms have private bathrooms, air conditioning and breakfast included.



NOTE ABOUT ACCOMODATIONS: Please note that current U.S. foreign policy does not allow American citizens to use any of the larger hotels, all of which are owned in partnership with the Cuban government. All the major hotels fall under this category, thus U.S. travelers may only use smaller privately owned and operated boutique hotels, Bed and Breakfasts and Airbnb's.



At some point in our time in Havana, we'll enjoy a city drive in the vintage cars that Cuba is known for... it is always a great experience to see a line of classic cars cruising along. This was photographed along the Malecón, which goes along the Straits of Florida.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TRAVEL TO CUBA

FLIGHTS & DOCUMENTS FOR CUBA: We suggest a non-stop flight from Miami (MIA) with **American Airlines** – Flight #2705, departing 10:50am - arriving Havana (HAV) at noon. There are additional departures from Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa, and Houston with American, JetBlue, Southwest, and United – however flight #2705 will be what our day is organized around as a starting point. Please note, as of July 2023 there are no non-stop flights scheduled from any other cities including New York.

CUBAN DOCUMENTS: Not included in the tour rate are fees for Cuban Visa, Cuban Departure Tax, limited Cuban health insurance policy (required for all foreign travelers to Cuba under the age of 80). All these will be handled by the airline or at the airport. Note that if you were born in Cuba, entry requirements are different.

We are traveling under a license “**in support of the Cuban people.**”

MONEY: Please note, **U.S. credit cards and debit cards do not work** in Cuba. Please bring enough cash to last your entire trip. U.S. Dollars can be exchanged into Cuban currency at the airports, hotels, and exchange houses. You cannot get Cuban currency in advance of the trip from U.S. banks.

Inquiries and Reservations: Office@ClassicalExcursions.com

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Updated as of July 2023 | Itinerary subject to change without notice.