

Your Day-by-Day Itinerary

With the long-awaited dawn of a new era of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Grand Circle Foundation is proud to introduce a new 13-day journey revealing the sweep of this once-forbidden Caribbean island's scenic landscapes, colonial charm, and cultural diversity. Witness the winding lanes of colonial gem Camaguey, the magic of Spanish-influenced Remedios—and the electricity of Havana, a vibrant city with a revolutionary past and a bright future. And immerse yourself in Cuban culture during stops at schools, homes, farms, and artist workshops—while dining in family-run paladares and casas particulares. Join us on this new People-to-People program and experience the wonders of Cuba on the brink of historic transformation.

Day 1 Arrive Miami

After arriving in Miami today and transferring to your hotel, meet with members of your group for a Welcome Briefing and what to expect for your charter flight to Camaguey tomorrow (***Please note: No meals are included while you are in Miami.***)

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Day 2 Camaguey

This morning we fly to Camaguey, Cuba. Upon arrival, we'll be met by our Cuban Trip Leader. Then, we begin a walking tour of Camaguey. Founded as a port town in 1514—and the sixth of Cuba's original seven *villas*—within 14 years Camaguey was moved inland. The labyrinthine streets and narrow squares were originally meant to confuse marauding pirates (the notorious privateer Sir Henry Morgan once sacked Camaguey), and during our stay, we'll view the city's lovely mix of colonial homes and plazas in its well-preserved historical center, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. To get our bearings, we'll first view a scale model of the city at General Ignacio Agramonte Revolution Square. After a visit to the home and studio of Joel Jover and his wife Ileana Sanchez, two of Cuba's most prodigious contemporary painters, we'll walk to our hotel, where we'll have lunch before a Welcome Briefing and checking in.

Then, we'll enjoy a brief orientation walk of the area before dining together at Restaurante 1800, a noted *paladar* (one of Cuba's new wave of privately owned restaurants) looking out on a lovely 18th-century cobblestone plaza.

Lunch, Dinner

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Day 3 Camaguey

After breakfast, we'll take advantage of the local transport—bicitaxis—to help us better navigate the twisting lanes of Camaguey, making several stops on our Cuban version of bicycle rickshaws to mingle with locals at markets and shops. And since Camaguey is home to one of Cuba's most vibrant artistic and cultural scenes, we'll make several stops at local galleries and studios to admire the artistic works of this “city of *tinajones*,” the famous large red pots found outside homes, which are a symbol of the city. Our discoveries include the life-like bronze sculptures by Cuban artist Martha Jiménez featuring locals at work and rest, and a visit to the remarkable

leather-sculpted works of an artist known as “Pepe.” And after witnessing the elegant colonial beauty of Plaza San Juan de Dios, we’ll also visit the workshop of two noted local artists—Magdiel and Eduardo Rosales. Then, you can explore the plazas and squares at your own pace to enjoy lunch on your own. Afterward, we’ll visit the Jose White Conservatory, a renowned historic music school on the outskirts of the city.

This evening, we’ll eat at Meson del Principe, one of the many small family-run restaurants known as *paladares* that feature authentic home cooking in an intimate setting.

Breakfast, Dinner

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Day 4 Camaguey • King Ranch excursion

We begin our day with a visit to the En Dedans Dance Company. *En Dedans*, a French term meaning “inward,” features dance movements in which the leg moves in a circular direction from back to front, and we’ll be treated to a private rehearsal of this unique merging of contemporary dance with neoclassical ballet. Afterward, we’ll have an opportunity to make earthenware pots at the Casanova Pottery Studio, home of the prominent local artist Carlos Alberto Casanova. Then, we’ll journey outside the city to visit King Ranch, whose origins are in the famous Texas ranch of the same name. We’ll enjoy a private lunch at the ranch’s dining room, tour the grounds by horse-drawn cart, and witness a calf-roping demonstration while engaging with Cuban cowboys who have called this place home for generations. At the local village that services the ranch, we’ll meet with some young students at the village school to learn about rural life and education, visit a village home, and stop by the small local store. Then, we’ll return to Camaguey, with dinner on your own this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch

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Day 5 Camaguey • Remedios

We depart Camaguey this morning for an overland journey to Remedios, arriving in time for an included lunch at La Cava, a restaurant in the charming town's main square. One of Cuba's oldest settlements, Remedios was founded in 1513. The tranquil town's colonial core is Plaza Martí, a compact central square that is home to a late 18th-century church, Iglesia de San Juan Bautista, whose interior features a baroque altar clad in gold, and a clearly pregnant Madonna statue that is said to be the only sculpture of its kind in Cuba. Remedios is also renowned for hosting *Las Parrandas*, a lively series of street parties and religious carnivals that take place throughout the holiday season—and we'll learn much more about *Las Parrandas* during a visit to the workshop of someone who specializes in producing the colorful *carrozas*, or floats, that are an integral part of this longstanding annual tradition.

After our workshop tour, we'll check in to our hotel and have some time to freshen up before dining at Casa La Paloma, one of the town's charming *casas particulares* that is also a *paladar*, located in a restored colonial home adjacent to the bustling town square.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 6 Remedios • Explore Caibarién

After breakfast, we'll journey outside Remedios to explore Caibarién, a small coastal town noted for its fishing fleet, fresh crabs, and sandy beaches. First, we'll visit the *Museo de Agroindustria Azucarero*, a local museum focusing on the histories of slave culture, the sugar industry, and the pre-diesel locomotives that once transported sugar cane to local factories. We'll also visit the home of a local beekeeper

to learn about his hives and the production of honey, and stop by the town's print shop, which still utilizes equipment from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After an included lunch at a local *paladar*, En Familiar, we'll return to Remedios and spend some time at the "Driver's Bar," where we'll meet with members of an old car club. Then, we'll enjoy some time at leisure in Remedios.

Dinner is on your own this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch

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Day 7 Remedios • Explore Santa Clara

After breakfast, our Cuban discoveries continue with a visit to nearby Santa Clara, the Cuban city whose liberation in December 1958 by Ernesto "Che" Guevara marked the end of the Batista regime. Santa Clara maintains deep ties to Che, as we'll discover when we see the monument dedicated to the revolutionary hero whose remains were recovered from Bolivia and reburied in a mausoleum here in 1997. Next, we'll visit the historic boxcar museum, site where "Che" Guevara and his small band of revolutionaries derailed a train filled with heavily armed government troops at the Battle of Santa Clara on December 29, 1958. After our visit, we'll enjoy lunch at a local *paladar*, where we'll have an opportunity to learn about the difficulties and successes these young entrepreneurs have faced with their private restaurant.

After lunch, we'll drive to the town of Camajuani, where we'll visit the Tabacuba tobacco factory, where we'll meet some of the workers and see them roll cigars by hand. Then, we'll return to Remedios for some free time before gathering together for dinner at El Piramide, a popular *paladar* specializing in local seafood.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 8 Remedios • Matanzas

This morning, we leave Remedios for Matanzas, a provincial capital noted for its culture, Afro-Cuban folklore, and hillside setting overlooking the Bay of Matanzas. Known as the “Athens of Cuba,” Matanzas maintains a proud cultural legacy of prominent poets, writers, artists, and musicians. En route, we’ll stop in Jovellanos, a town in Matanzas province, for a visit to Finca Luna. There, we’ll enjoy a traditional family-style Cuban lunch featuring many ingredients produced right at the farm. We’ll also tour the farm and get to interact with the owners and some of the farm staff. After lunch, we’ll continue to Matanzas, where we’ll stop to visit the oldest continuously utilized baseball diamond in the Western Hemisphere—Palmeras de Junco. And while we’re here, we’ll learn about the country’s unquenchable passion for baseball by meeting with a local ball player who is a member of the Cuban Hall of Fame. Then, since Matanzas is the birthplace of *Regla de Ocha*—the African-rooted religion better known as Santería—we’ll visit a local Santería practitioner in her home.

Later this afternoon, we’ll check in to our hotel in Varadero, and then gather for dinner at one of the restaurants at our hotel.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 9 Matanzas • Havana

This morning is at leisure to explore on your own or to relax and take advantages of the facilities of our hotel. Then, after a light lunch at the hotel, we begin our overland journey to Havana, the vibrant Cuban capital. Upon our arrival, we’ll make a brief stop at Plaza de la Revolucion, the vast city square that has witnessed so much Cuban

history, before checking into the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, an historic hotel overlooking the harbor with views of Havana's picturesque sea wall, the *Malecón*, and El Morro Fortress. Later this evening, we'll have dinner together at Rio Mar, a *paladar* situated on Havana Bay. After our meal, we can speak with the owners about the difficulties in starting a private business in Cuba.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 10 Havana

Our first full day in Havana begins with an information lecture and discussion at our hotel about the Revolution and its effects on the Cuban arts, followed by a visit with the Malpaso dance company, one of the many dance companies based in Havana—but one of the few private dance companies in Cuba. After watching a private rehearsal, we'll enjoy a discussion with the talented members of the company. Then, we'll head to “El Solar,” a community project dedicated to restoring one of Centro Habana's poor neighborhoods. After learning about the project with the community leader and meeting some neighborhood members, we'll enjoy a light lunch at La California, a *paladar* associated with the project in a restored 19th-century nearby colonial building.

Then, we'll return to our hotel and learn about the current Cuban jazz movement from members of the William Roblejo's Trio jazz band, followed by dinner at La Moraleja, a *paladar* in Havana's Vedado neighborhood.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 11 Havana

After breakfast, we'll have a discussion with Jorge Mario, a Cuban economist who lives in Havana. Then, we'll learn about something equally serious but far more fun—the game of dominoes, a national pastime in Cuba. After a brief introduction to the rules of the game at Club Melen, a private restaurant located in the Miramar section of Havana, we'll try our luck with some local Cubans, some of whom will join us for a light lunch after our matches. Later this afternoon, we'll visit La Cabaña, an 18th-century hilltop fortress complex at the entrance to the Bay of Havana, before returning to our hotel for some free time. Dinner is on your own this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch

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Day 12 Havana

Today begins with a discussion about the history of Cuban music led by Alberto Faya, a professor, researcher, and award-winning musician. Then, we'll walk through the historic streets of *Habana Vieja* (Old Havana). Lovingly restored to its full historic splendor, the entire neighborhood of Old Havana has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After our walking tour, you'll have free time to explore the colonial streets of Old Havana with lunch on your own—perhaps check out the fare at Sloppy Joe's, the legendary hang-out of Ernest Hemingway that first gained popularity with U.S. tourists during the Prohibition years of the 1920s and early 1930s. Until the Cuban Revolution, the iconic bar was frequented by many celebrities, including Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, and Nat King Cole. Or you can visit one of the many local *paladares* and cafés featuring live bands playing *son* music.

Early this evening, we'll enjoy a musical performance by Choro Vocal Luna, the only all-female choir in Cuba. After they sing, we'll have the opportunity to interact with some of the choir members. Then, for our final night in Cuba we'll enjoy dinner at Starbien, a *paladar* situated in a restored colonial mansion tucked into the residential neighborhood of Vedado.

Breakfast, Dinner

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Day 13 Return to U.S.

Today, we board our flight back to Miami.

***Please note:** This is a representative itinerary. Features are subject to change as availability is controlled by the Cuban government. While this is the itinerary that we strive to follow, due to local circumstances (such as moveable holidays, museum/site closing days, and weather conditions), it is important for you to understand that we may not always be able to follow this plan in the exact order. The sequence of places visited may vary.*

Breakfast

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