

THE KEY TO THE NEW WORLD HAVANA & WESTERN CUBA

THURSDAY 5 – MONDAY 16 MARCH 2020 (12 DAYS)

LECTURER: JULIET BARCLAY

£4570

- **In depth analysis of Cuba's colonial & modern history**
- **Well-paced & thorough exploration of Havana and its many facets**
- **Visits to Havana's art collections & colonial palaces**
- **Opportunity to explore the spectacular Valley of Viñales & colonial Trinidad**
- **Excellent & well-situated 5* hotel in Havana**



Havana, Capitolio Nacional

OVERVIEW

Cuba's history explores exceptional levels of daring, folly, courage, ambition and colour. No other Caribbean island possesses such a sense of its past, due to the survival of the first sixteenth century Spanish settlements. Havana, "Key to the New World and Bastion of the West Indies", became the strategic jewel of the Spanish crown, the gathering point for the treasure fleets which sailed from the Americas to Spain.

Following on from Columbus' 1492 landing, in 1509 King Ferdinand permitted Christopher's son, Diego, to explore the island. Settlements were established on the south coast, including San Cristóbal de La Habana and Trinidad de Cuba. Four years later Havana was relocated to one of the world's great natural harbours. By then, staggering wealth poured eastwards across the Atlantic. This drew the attention of Spain's European rivals and their licensed privateers made frequent attacks on Cuban cities. Havana's remarkable fortifications and some fine domestic buildings date from this period, designed as a form of 'tropical baroque'. Britain captured Havana in 1762, ending Spain's trade monopoly; foreign merchants and slave traders then taking hold. Subsequently, the city was enhanced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a colourful display of architectural eclecticism.

Cuba, however, is not just Havana: Trinidad may be one of the most intact Spanish colonial towns in the Americas, its wealth and status brought about by the 'Sugar Boom'. In contrast, the Jurassic-like limestone hillocks of the Valley of Viñales are an amazing natural wonder. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 has also left a mixed legacy of achievements and obstacles and an in-depth analysis of its recent history will not be overlooked.

This tour will be led by Juliet Barclay. Juliet worked for the Office of the City Historian of Havana (OHCH), the principal Cuban heritage body and she has written extensively on Havana and Cuba. Now based in London, she regularly visits Cuba to advise and collaborate with the OHCH.

We shall stay in one of the best hotels in Havana, the newly opened **5* Iberostar Grand Packard**. Situated at the end of Paseo del Prado at the edge of *Old Havana*, there is a restaurant and rooftop swimming pool. Whilst in Trinidad we shall stay in a very centrally located **private colonial house**. These are known as *casas particulares*; the Cuban equivalent of a 'B&B'. They include breakfast and en-suite amenities yet offer an 'inside view' of domestic life in an atmospheric setting and consequently are the best way to unravel the complexities of living in modern day Cuba - with all the challenges it entails. The **3* Hotel Horizontes Los Jazmines** is a rural yet basic hotel which enjoys spectacular views overlooking the Valley of Viñales. *NB: all the hotels are rated locally and have the facilities that you would expect. However, be aware that Cuba's accommodation rating system (indeed its infrastructure as a communist country) is entirely different from those in the UK & Europe.*

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Thursday 5 March – We fly from Gatwick, arriving Havana late afternoon and transfer to our hotel for two nights, the **5* Iberostar Grand Packard** in the heart of **Havana**, where later in the early evening we have our first group dinner. A variety of alcoholic drinks, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Friday 6 March – We begin in **Old Havana** at the city's **Cathedral**. We then visit the **Fortezza de la Real Fuerza** containing model naval relics. **El Templete** outlines the early years of Spain's newest colony, followed by a visit to the Franciscan **Iglesia y Convento de San Francisco de Asís**. After a group lunch we visit the **Museo de la Ciudad**, which provides an essential overview of Havana's colonial past. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Saturday 7 March – We drive south-eastwards from Havana across the island to coastal **Cienfuegos**. Founded by French settlers, we visit its delightful **Italianate Theatre**. After a group lunch overlooking the Caribbean Sea, we journey along the coast to the remarkable colonial town of **Trinidad**. Here we stay in the Casa Particular, **Casa Toña**, in the historic centre for two nights. We dine later in the evening in Trinidad.

Day 4: Sunday 8 March – Today we explore **Trinidad** - a veritable Spanish colonial ‘Pompeii’, visiting the main church, **Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad** and an Afro-Cuban ‘**Santería**’ Church. The **Museo Histórico Municipal** offers an insight into aristocratic living made possible by the ‘Sugar Boom’. After a group lunch we drive into the surrounding countryside amongst stunning scenery, where the **Valley of the Sugar Mills** will allow us (at two separate sites) to reflect on the Slave Trade. We return to Trinidad where the evening will be free.

Day 5: Monday 9 March – We depart Trinidad and return towards the outskirts of **Cienfuegos** to visit the **Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos**, an eleven-acre site and the most complete collection of tropical plant species on Cuba. Following a group lunch in Cienfuegos we drive back to Havana for a four-night stay at the **5* Iberostar Grand Packard** arriving late afternoon. The evening will be free.

Day 6: Tuesday 10 March – We continue our exploration of colonial **Havana** at the nearby **Castillo de los Tres Santos Reyes del Morro** and its neighbour, the **Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña**. They help sketch in both Havana’s efforts to protect its wealth, and the capture of the city by the British in 1762. Following our group lunch, we visit **Plaza de la Revolución**, dedicated to the twin heroes of Cuba’s struggles: José Martí and Che Guevara. We also visit to the **Cemetery of Colon**, the city cemetery graced with extraordinary memorials. The evening will be free.

Day 7: Wednesday 11 March – We visit the **Gran Teatro**, home of Cuba’s National Ballet. We continue with the stately **Centro Asturiano** housing a surprising collection of Antiquities and Old Master paintings. We end our morning at the **Palacio de Bellas Artes**, the best collection of the island’s art, whose twentieth century section is a revelation. We have a group lunch and the afternoon and evening will be free.

Day 8: Thursday 12 March – Twentieth century Havana and its **Art Deco** architecture will come as a surprise as we drive along the iconic seafront, the **Malecón**, to explore the buildings and spaces of **Vedado**, Western Havana. We visit the newly restored **Museo de Artes Decorativas** displaying a dazzling collection in a splendid mansion. The **Callejón de Hamel** is a vibrant display of Afro-Cuban Street Art whilst the **Museo de la Danza** is dedicated to the National Cuban Ballet. Following a group lunch, we will enjoy a chauffeur-driven ride in a convoy of **Classic Cuban Cars**. On our return to our hotel the remainder of the afternoon and evening will be free.

Day 9: Friday 13 March – Today we drive towards the tip of western Cuba and the stunning **Valley of Viñales**. En route, we stop at the **Jaimanitas** in Havana’s western suburbs to visit **Fusterlandia**, the home studio of Cuban artist José Fuster. We pause at **Las Terrazas** for a group lunch and visit nearby **Soroa’s Orchid Garden**. We continue to Viñales arriving late-afternoon for a two-night stay at **Hotel Los Jazmines**. The evening will be free.

Day 10: Saturday 14 March – We drive the short distance to the village of **Viñales** where we visit the lush **Jardín Botánico de Caridad**. We also visit a tobacco plantation, key to understanding local life. We continue to lunch at the **Paladar Finca de Raquel**, set amidst the dramatic Jurassic-like panorama of the valley. We return to the hotel via a gentle and scenic drive and our final group dinner take place overlooking the Viñales Valley.

Day 11 & 12: Sunday 15 March and Monday 16 March – We depart for **Pinar del Río** to visit a **Cigar Workshop** where some of the best cigars in the world are made. We travel back to Havana for our final lunch at the iconic **Paladar La Guarida** - no interior is more representative of the city’s ‘pulse’. After some free time in Havana, we continue to the airport for our evening flight, arriving at Gatwick on Monday morning.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £4570

Without Flights £3870

Deposit £750

Single Supplement (Double for Sole Use) £495

Optional Upgrades Premium Economy from £650 & Business Class on request from £1275 (*subject to availability*)

Hotels 6 nights with breakfast (5, 6 & 9 – 13 March) **5* Iberostar Grand Packard, Havana**, 2 nights in **private house** accommodation in **Trinidad**, 2 nights at the **Hotel La Ermita, Viñales**

Flights Virgin Atlantic

Outward: **VS63** Depart London Gatwick **0910**, arrive Havana **1445**

Return: **VS64** Depart Havana **1735**, arrive London Gatwick **0655**

Price includes 6 dinners & 9 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities & services of Juliet Barclay, Tour Manager James Hill & a local guide.

Not included Travel to/from Gatwick, 4 dinners & 1 lunch, Visa (from £15)



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