



# The Cradle of the Revolution Tour

Bayamo | Sierra Maestra Mountains | Santiago de Cuba | Biran | Holguin

*May 2020 – October 2020*



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3 Night Tour - Bayamo | Sierra Maestra Mountains | Santiago de Cuba | Biran | Holguin



## Tour Highlights

- A visit to Bayamo, the leafy antiquated former capital of Cuba
- A short trek to La Plata, the former HQ of Fidel Castro's revolutionary heroes, situated deep in the Sierra Maestra mountains
- A Visit to Santiago de Cuba, a passionate and revolutionary city, home of the Mausoleum of Fidel Castro
- Explore the streets of Santiago de Cuba in an old American vintage car
- Visit the birthplace of Fidel and Raul Castro at their former farm at Biran

## The Highlights Collection from Captivating Cuba

A collection of organised short tours covering the most popular areas of Cuba, with guaranteed departures on at least a weekly basis. Developed specifically to compliment a stay in Havana or enhance a beach holiday in Cuba or even neighbouring countries, our Highlights Tours are an excellent way to experience this fascinating and unique island.

With numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites, historic towns and cities and spectacular landscapes, the best way to make the most from so many experiences is through one of our organised tours. These hand-crafted, carefully designed itineraries are drawn from our 25 years-experience arranging tailored travel to Cuba.

This tour perfectly ties in with flights to Holguin, as well as excellent flight connections with Canada, Miami and further afield. Our organised tours are led by experienced and professional English-speaking guides, who will not only show you the most important sights but will also immerse you into the fascinating life of Cubans, the political and social environment and what life is really like in Cuba.

We operate all of our tours using small groups to maintain quality and intimacy, and to allow more flexibility for our guide to add some extra elements to the day to day itinerary according to guest interests. Our organised tours include quality, well-located accommodation with breakfast included, as well as lunch, air-conditioned transportation, services of a dedicated English-speaking guide during travel days, a range of activities, and entrances to the places we visit. Best of all, our tours are guaranteed to operate, so we will never cancel a tour due to lack of interest.

For those seeking a private experience, we can also organise our tours on an exclusive basis, on any day of the week just for you.

## Introduction

A three-night tour visiting some of Cuba's most contrasting and revolutionary historical cities, along with a variety of carefully chosen visits en-route. The Cradle of the Revolution Tour allows you the chance to enjoy all the major sights of this vibrant and diverse area of Cuba, and also allow some independence to explore on your own or relax and choose your own activities.

## Itinerary | The Cradle of the Revolution Tour



## Day 1 | Bayamo

On arrival into Holguin Airport, you will be welcomed and then a transfer will take you to the former capital of Cuba, Bayamo, where dinner will be served and there will be the chance to explore the area independently for the rest of the day.

*Overnight in Bayamo.*



### Destination Information | Bayamo

*Antiquated yet dignified, Bayamo, the former capital of Cuba and now the provincial city of Granma Province, embraces the tailormade traveller with its quiescent charms. Historically, it was notably an insurgent stronghold in the Ten Years' War, from 1868-1878; the desperate conflict nearly destroyed the city. Bayamo is unruffled by its conflict-ridden past; this now sedate city's serenity will charm even the most frenzied traveller.*

*The Plaza de la Revolucion, amidst leafy walkways, is seemingly tranquil, the serenity is only broken by imposing bronze statue of Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, the First War of Independence's champion and an impressive marble memorial of Perucho Figueredo, featuring the lyrics of the Cuban national anthem, which he authored.*

*Spot the various plazas and monuments and the cathedral; uncover their historical significances. Photograph a variety of significant Cuban figures in the Museo de Cera, waxwork though they may be, they will wow your audiences when you display your photographed journey.*

*Visit Bayamo and appreciate its elegance and relaxed charm whilst uncovering historically significant features.*

## Day 2 | Bayamo / The Sierra Maestra Mountains

### *Breakfast at accommodation.*

After breakfast there will be a short orientation tour of Bayamo which will focus on the leafy square of Parque Cespedes, named after the 'Father of Cuba', Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, born overlooking the square. In fact, he announced Cuba's first independence from Spanish rule in the same square in 1868!

After the tour you will travel deep into the Sierra Maestra Mountains, passing small farmhouses and villages with wonderful mountain scenery. Later in the morning, you will arrive at Villa Santo Domingo, nestled deep in the mountains with views to Cuba's highest and most sacred mountain, Pico Turquino.

Upon arrival, the jeeps will take you higher into the mountains for a walk deep into the forests to La Plata\*\*, the former HQ of Fidel Castro's revolutionary heroes. You can see the hidden buildings including Fidel's actual house and the radio station from where they launched the Revolution. Continuing the trail, there is an option to visit the tiny mountain community of La Platica.

On your return to the village lunch will be served, then there will be a little time to relax and explore or walk along the river and watch the day draw to a close over the mountains, before taking dinner at the hotel and settling in for the night at the small hotel deep in the Cuban mountains, a serene, relaxing and peaceful location.

### *Overnight in the Sierra Maestra.*

*\*\*A considerable amount of walking and hiking is involved so a decent level of fitness and mobility is required. The La Plata walk is approximately a 6km round trip. The terrain around Comandancia de la Plata can be uneven, rocky and possibly muddy (especially after rain) with some fairly steep climbs. For guests not wanting to take part in this day due to a concern of it being too challenging, it is possible to relax instead at Villa Santo Domingo whilst others take part.*

### Destination Information | The Sierra Maestra Mountains

*The Sierra Maestra is Cuba's largest mountain range. Located in the south east of Cuba a few hour's drive from Santiago De Cuba, it once served as a refuge for the Cuban revolutionaries. Today, these striking, colossal sierras house a spectacular range of colourful birds, many of which can only be seen in Cuba.*

*The panoramic views from the top of these majestic mountains command reverence; the beautiful and tranquil surroundings must be admired.*

*La Plata offers an adventurous and rewarding visit. Venture into the mountains, and attempt to detect Fidel Castro's headquarters, the place where he launched the revolution; its masked by seemingly impenetrable forests. Viva La Revolution!*

*Or simply stroll along the riverbank and through the tropical forests, take cooling dips in river pools and marvel at the peace of the area. Relax with your favourite novel, take beautiful photographs, and let the stress of modern-day life leave you for a while.*

*So, penetrate the revolutionaries' hide out, test your endurance or simply embrace the tranquillity and note the incredible wildlife ... what's not to love in the Sierra Maestra?*



### Day 3 | Santiago de Cuba

#### *Breakfast at accommodation.*

After an early breakfast and the opportunity to walk around the village and take in the mountains, the tour will depart for Santiago de Cuba stopping enroute at the picturesque church of El Cobre. A famous pilgrimage site in Cuba, the small church nestles in some beautiful natural scenery and is rich in Cuba religious folklore.

On arrival into Santiago de Cuba you will visit the Castillo del Morro a historical fortress offering fantastic views across the Caribbean Sea and the impressive Sierra Maestra mountains. Enjoy a traditional Cuban lunch at a restaurant next to the fortress offering stunning views of the coastal scenery.

The afternoon and early evening tour will include a ride in an old American car and a visit to the Moncada Barracks, the location for what many describe as the start of the Revolution and the small museum that depicts Fidel Castro's attack on the barracks on 26th July 1953. The central square, Parque Cespedes, surrounded by historical buildings, including the Ayuntamiento, where Fidel Castro gave his victory speech when the revolution was won in January 1959. Also, Calle Heredia, one of the city's liveliest streets, Padre Pico Street, made famous by the intense games of draughts played by the locals.

In the evening, dinner will be served in the hotel and the remainder of the evening will be free to relax, or perhaps wander independently through the centre of Santiago De Cuba or visit a local music club such as the very famous Casa De La Trova – highly recommended!

### *Overnight in Santiago de Cuba.*



#### ***Destination Information | Santiago de Cuba***

Nestled between the Sierra Maestra mountains and the Caribbean coastline, sits Santiago de Cuba; Cuba's second biggest city. This memorable metropolis is considered the 'Cradle of the Revolution'; the place which sparked the uprising and ultimately, it is where Fidel Castro announced its success. Additionally, Santiago is the final resting place of Castro. For those wishing to pay reverence to the revolutionary leader, his mausoleum, placed next to Cuba's national hero Jose Marti is a much-revered resting place, though visitors must adhere to the respectful code.

Fidel Castro launched an attack on Santiago de Cuba because it was reputed that soldiers would be too busy celebrating the carnival to pose any threat to his men. Today, Santiago de Cuba, hosts Cuba's biggest carnival event; retaining its passionate reputation.

At the end of July, for two weeks, the effervescence of Santiago de Cuba can be witnessed: there's an explosion of colour whilst dynamic dancers cavort along the streets to rhythmic drumbeats. This awe-inspiring carnival is a time for Cubans to remember their history, community and cultures and it is something which shouldn't be missed.

Music and dance appear hereditary here, many musicians, notably from the Buena Vista Social Club were born in Santiago de Cuba. Additionally, it is the place where the traditional son dance, from which the salsa is derived, began.

Avid readers may note that Santiago de Cuba is the birthplace of the poet Jose Maria Heredia and that the Casa Granda Hotel features in Graham Greene's novel, *Our Man in Havana*. Enjoy leafing through the texts, whilst sipping on a Ron Santiago, the signature rum of Santiago de Cuba and known to be even better than the famous Havana Club rum.

Historians will, no doubt, relish the opportunity to visit El Morro. This legendary fortress witnessed heroic battles between marauding pirates and King Philip II's men, as the King battled to defend his territory from attack. This building later imprisoned disorderly and disobedient nobles and military personnel.

The enchanted Baconao National Park, approximately 60 kilometres from Santiago de Cuba, bewitches many. There was once a mythical tree, according to the fable, which enabled a little boy to play music from the snails in the lagoons. When the boy left the village and failed to return, locals insist that the magic remained in the area. Amongst other attractions in this mesmerising National Park is the Great Rock. The energetic traveller will be rewarded with spectacular views, after climbing the 459 steps to the summit. Then, imposing life-sized models of stone dinosaurs, in the Valle de Prehistoric, constructed by local prisoners, surprises many a traveller.

From Santiago de Cuba, adventure to Guantanamo and the villages around the upper bay to explore the marked difference between the bay and much of Cuba. Or, perhaps for a more relaxed excursion, visit the sleepy city of Bayamo, this tranquil setting will relax many a wearied traveller.

Santiago de Cuba dances to its own beat. With its contagious rhythms, joie de vivre and fascinating history, can you really resist experiencing its charm?

## Day 4 | Santiago de Cuba / Biran / Holguin

### *Breakfast at accommodation.*

The early morning will be free to explore Santiago de Cuba on an independent basis and watch the city wake up and fascinating street scenes pass you by in this revolutionary and historic city.

There will be a special visit to the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, a most important site in Cuba and the final resting place of Fidel Castro, one of the world's most recognised leaders. His simple, but powerful mausoleum is constantly guarded and there will be a chance to stay for the impressive changing of the guard ceremony. The cemetery also contains the final resting place of Cuba's national hero Jose Marti, as well as a number of other important revolutionary and historical figures including the Bacardi family.

Leaving Santiago de Cuba, you will head north across the island towards Holguin province. An interesting road that, after leaving the motorway, passes through many pleasant towns and villages before you stop at the tiny village of Biran in the foothills of the Nipe Mountains. Biran is the birthplace of Fidel and Raul Castro who both became iconic world leaders and you will see the house where the brothers were born, which is also the final resting place of their parents.

Lunch today will be served in a small local restaurant close to Biran. After visiting Biran the journey will continue to Holguin, founded in 1545 and now one of the largest cities on the island. There will be a short tour of the colonial centre of the city, famed for its numerous small squares, a focal point for local life.

After visiting Holguin, you will continue to Guardalavaca where you will be transferred to your chosen hotel.

### *Tour concludes.*





## General Information

- This itinerary is a small group tour which departs every Thursday from November 2019, and every Sunday from May 2020
- We intend to add more small group tours for departures on other days of the week for a supplement, please ask
- Guests who wish to make the tour private can do so for a supplement, please talk to us
- The tour has been designed carefully for clients to see a great variety of sights and visits, but also have the chance for independent time away from other guests if preferred.
- It is possible to stay longer in Santiago de Cuba and enjoy time at leisure in the city or elsewhere. Please ask if you would like more information
- The tour operates on a guaranteed basis (based on a minimum of 2 clients booked on the tour)
- Tour prices are based on a minimum of 2 clients. Please ask us for a solo traveller price

## Important Information

- Any timings and order of activities provided are for rough guidance only, and may vary considerably due to local availability, constraints and demand
- As our tours are set up many months in advance, changes can occur to accommodation, restaurants and places to be visited as a result of changes in the local provision of services in Cuba. This is especially apparent in the winter season as Cuba continues to cope and change as a result of unprecedented global demand for the island, as well as a rapidly emerging USA visitor market that is both politically and commercially important to the Cuban Government and Tourism Authorities
- The services of an English-speaking guide are included for the transfers between locations and the tours included in the Highlights Collection
- Please refer to the end of this document for important information on required mobility and fitness required for this tour. Please talk to us if you have any concerns and we can advise you further
- Some experiences, excursions and transfers on this tour (if doing the shared/group tour) may at times be shared with our other customers who are on a different tour/route but have the same services occurring at the same time. This is not applicable if you have booked a private tour.

## Accommodation Included

- Bayamo 1 night at the Royalton Bayamo Hotel on HB basis
- Sierra Maestra 1 night at Hotel Villa Santo Domingo on HB basis
- Santiago de Cuba 1 night at Melia Santiago Hotel on HB basis

## Optional Alternative Accommodation / Upgraded Rooms (Upon Request)

Prices given are additional supplements per person per night

- Santiago de Cuba Standard 'The Level' Room – additional £35pppn; £45 pppn single occupancy  
*The Melia Santiago has a dedicated area of rooms called The Level, where guests can enjoy a range of unique and special services with their stay. These include dedicated assistance, exclusive lounge access, private bar, 24-hour room service, complimentary access to the exclusive cafe and many other benefits.*

Further room upgrades are available upon request, please ask for more information.

## Transportation and Guide Included

- All transportation as required in the itinerary using fully air-conditioned transportation
- The services of English-speaking guide specialising in central Cuba on days 2, 3 and 4 during itinerary/activities described

## Restaurant Lunches Included

- Day 2 – Lunch in the Sierra Maestra Mountains
- Day 3 – A traditional Cuban lunch at a restaurant next to the fortress in Santiago de Cuba
- Day 4 - Lunch at a local restaurant in Biran

## Entrances Included

- Day 2 Entrance to Sierra Maestra National Park, Sierra Maestra
- Day 2 Entrance to La Plata Revolutionary Base, Sierra Maestra
- Day 3 Entrance to El Cobre, Santiago de Cuba
- Day 3 Entrance to Castillo del Morro, Santiago de Cuba
- Day 3 Entrance to Moncada Barracks, Santiago de Cuba
- Day 4 Entrance to Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, Santiago de Cuba
- Day 4 Entrance to Casa de Fidel, Biran

## Tour Extensions

On the last day, it is possible to transfer clients to the beaches of Guardalavaca or further afield for a few days relaxing on the beach, or alternatively to Havana or elsewhere for more exploration time.

## Journey Times

Approximate journey times by road without breaking to give an indication of travel required. Road closures and other local conditions may mean changes, so please treat as a rough guide rather than definitive times.

|       | <b>From</b>      | <b>To</b>        | <b>Hours</b> |
|-------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Day 1 | Holguin Airport  | Bayamo           | 1            |
| Day 2 | Bayamo           | Sierra Maestra   | 2            |
| Day 3 | Sierra Maestra   | Santiago de Cuba | 3.5          |
| Day 4 | Santiago de Cuba | Biran            | 1.5          |
| Day 4 | Biran            | Guardalavaca     | 1            |

## The Cradle of the Revolution Tour on a Private Basis

We are able to organise this tour on a private basis, enabling guests to travel alone with the guide departing on any date that suits. On a private tour, it can also be possible to tailor the tour further if you require. Visits can be added, as can duration, or indeed a specialist interest can be catered for. We would be delighted to assist, please ask us if you would like a quotation.

## Not Included

- Breakfast and lunch on day 1, dinner on day 4
- Tips (discretionary)
- Drinks (soft drinks/alcohol)
- Services of a porter / assistance carrying baggage
- Laundry
- Telephone calls, WIFI / internet
- Local camera / filming fees
- Costs when on 'free time' e.g. taxis arranged locally or optional extras
- Travel insurance / medical insurance

## Important Information

We operate our organised tours using small groups. Maximum group size can be up to 21 guests, but usually with an average of 4 – 8. Fellow passengers on travel days may not be partaking in the same organised tour and may instead only be taking that transfer. Tours run with a minimum of 2 passengers, and once 2 passengers are booked, the tour is guaranteed to operate. We will never cancel a tour due to lack of numbers.

Drivers, local staff at accommodation, attractions/places visited, restaurants/bars and local/specialist guides that you may encounter may not speak English (or languages other than Spanish). Your English-speaking tour guide is there to assist during the times specified only.

Please note that as our organised tours are set up many months in advance, changes can occur to accommodation, restaurants and places visited as a result of changes in the local provision of services in Cuba. This is especially apparent in the winter season as Cuba continues to cope and change as a result of unprecedented global demand for the island, as well as a rapidly emerging USA visitor market that is both politically and commercially important to the Cuban Government and Tourism Authorities. While we do our best to operate our tours as closely to published itineraries as we can, local conditions, demand for services,

delays and availability can change from one day to the next, so tour modifications may be needed with no advance warning.

Occasionally our itineraries change as we make improvements resulting from previous client feedback, guide/local staff comments and our own findings and research. Ultimately, we are trying to provide you with the best possible experience, which may not always be immediately apparent as factors unknown to you such as bureaucracy and local availability can affect an itinerary running smoothly.

Our organised tours are also marketed and sold by travel agents and other tour operators who have their own target markets. Age, nationality, likes/dislikes, lifestyle, and background of our escorted tour guests do vary.

All guests on our organised tours are required to comply with Cuban law and refrain from any illegal activities, bearing in mind your behaviour may impact on others on the tour. Anyone found to be participating in illegal activities will have their place on the tour cancelled immediately, and no refund or compensation provided.

### Mobility, Access and Fitness

Our tour itineraries are generally fast paced and will keep you busy, and a considerable amount of walking is involved (including stairs) so an average/decent level of fitness and mobility is required, and you should be physically fit and also able to carry

your own luggage. Comfortable and supportive walking footwear is recommended.

Where tour accommodation is located in a narrow side street where a larger vehicle/bus cannot access easily, or road rules (which may be sudden/unexpected for reasons such as roadworks or underground infrastructure work) imposed restrict the driver from pulling up outside, you may be required to walk with your own luggage to the closest access point.

Some casa particular bedrooms and their facilities are accessed by narrow stairways, and lifts/elevators may not be available. If you do struggle with stairs it is important that you let us know at the time of booking, so we can make sure we understand your requirements, and can advise and assist accordingly.

Trinidad, Cienfuegos and other cities visited on our tours typically have uneven/high/low kerbs and steps and cobbled streets.

When visiting El Nicho, you may be required to climb steps, walk up-hill and navigate countryside terrain (which may be wet or slippery after rain) so an average/decent level on fitness is required in these locations if you wish to fully participate.

Please ensure you read our booking conditions and Cuba destination advice before booking



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