



Soul of Cuba: Educational Seminar for Students of Music, Art & Culture

Tentative Itinerary

DAY 1:

Student will make their own arrangements to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Plan to arrive before 5:00PM EST so we can check you into Hotel Morrison FLL Airport in Dania, FL. Around 6:30PM, we will meet for dinner in a local restaurant.

DAY 2:

This morning, we will rise early and meet in the lobby by 4:30AM for a 5:00AM arrival at the airport. Our flight on Jet Blue leaves at 7:25AM, arriving in Havana at 8:45AM. After clearing customs and boarding an air-conditioned coach bus, the group will arrive at our homestays around 11:00AM. Here we will meet Lily (our wonderful Hostess) and her family, drop off our baggage, and head out for lunch at Castropol. Just two blocks from our homes on Havana's beautiful and iconic waterfront boulevard, the Malecón, Castropol serves some wonderful brick oven pizza.

After lunch we will check into our rooms, leaving time for showers. Then we will meet for a short walking tour of our neighborhood, so you can begin getting acquainted with your surroundings. At 5:00PM, we will arrive at el Museo de Los Orisha for our first Santería ceremony.

Around 7:00PM we will return to our homes for a home-cooked meal, after which will have a short song class with Ernesto Gatell, a world-famous rumba and orisha singer. Anyone who isn't too exhausted is welcome to join Professor Schweitzer for an 11:00PM performance by Interactivo, a Havana-based group that fuses Funk, Rock, Salsa, and Jazz. It's a great show, I promise!



DAY 3:

This morning, we'll have a 10:00-11:15AM dance class with members of Raices Profundo, one of the most well-known Afro-Cuban dance troupes in Cuba. Here you will learn the basic moves for the orisha, Eleguá and Changó. After dancing you will get lunch on your own, and then meet us at the Museum of the Revolution at 2:00PM for a guided tour of the museum. (Only a few blocks from our guest homes, you can actually see the façade of the former Presidential Palace while standing right outside our homes). After the museum, we will make our way to Patio EGREM (5:00PM) where will enjoy a performance by one of the best Son-groups in Havana, Arsenio Rodriguez y su grupo. Dinner will be at 7:30PM back at the homestay.

DAY 4:

This morning, we'll have another 10:00-11:15AM dance class with members of Raices Profundo - this time focusing on the orishas Ochún and Yemayá. After freshening up, we will make our way over to Chinatown for lunch, followed by a tour of some authentic Cuban homes and get a sense of how Cubans have creatively adapted to housing demands in the Post-Revolutionary period. At the conclusion of this short tour, several classic American Convertibles from the 1950s will pull up to our houses and whisk us away for a 2.5-hour tour of Havana's most notable destinations, including the Plaza of the Revolution, the Forest of Havana, the Colon Cemetery, and an outdoor museum displaying missiles and other hardware from the 1961 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Dinner will be served back at our homestays around 6PM. In the evening, we will head to the Hotel Lincoln, where [Septeto Nacional Cubano](#) holds a weekly performance. Septeto Nacional is one of the most well-known and important Son groups in Cuba. A seven-piece group now, it started as a sextet in 1927 and played the World Exposition in Sevilla (Spain) in 1933. Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the group consisting of trumpet, guitars, bass, percussion (claves, bongos, maracas) and vocals, has been playing continuously.



DAY 5:

We will again start the day with dance class, this time salsa dancing in our homestay! After the dance class you will make your way in small groups to Havana Vieja (the old town). Here you will tour Havana's four main squares (Plaza de Catedral, Plaza de San Francisco, Plaza de Armas, and Plaza Viejo). During this time you will get lunch on your own, and complete various ethnographic assignments. At 3:00PM, you will meet us in Plaza de San Francisco, to participate/observe a carnival-like procession to celebrate The Day of Kings (a Christian holiday that recognizes the 12th day of Christmas, also known as the Epiphany). Afterwards, we will return to the Homestays for some rest.

After a 7:30PM dinner, we will leave our houses for a 10:00PM show at the [Tropicana](#), the world famous Vegas-style stage show. An outdoor venue, the Tropicana features five stages and hundreds of musicians and dancers! It will be among the most memorable moments of your Cuban experience! After the formal show, you'll be offered the opportunity to show off your newly learned salsa moves!

DAY 6:

After a delicious breakfast, we will have a second salsa class. We will then depart via bicycle taxi (11:30AM), and wander through the streets of Centro Havana on our way to the [world-famous Callejón Jamel](#), an alley known for its extensive murals and fascinating art, most of which have been inspired by Afro-Cuban culture and religions. Here we will have a chance to meet some local artists and then enjoy a portion of the rumba that draws large crowds of Cubans and foreigners every Sunday at noon.

After the Rumba (1:00PM), we will walk a short distance and enjoy lunch at [Bicky's](#), one of Havana's most successful (and delicious) new private restaurants. Next, we will be joined by several Cuban tour guides (2:00PM) who will take us on a one-mile walking tour of the Vedado community, where we will see and learn about the Park of the Martyrs and the University of Havana, enjoy ice cream at the Coppelia ice cream park (ice cream is a national obsession among Cubans), and the opulent Hotel Nacional – known for both its beauty and for its connection to American mobsters such as Al Capone.

After enjoying some refreshing mojitos (one of Cuba's national drinks) at the Hotel Nacional, we will hop in taxis and head back to our homestays where we will have down time until dinner. This evening, we will go Salsa Dancing, at Club 1830, a beautiful venue located on Havana's oceanfront. Here our instructors will join us, and hopefully get you all dancing like Cubans!



DAY 7/8:

These are our last two days in Havana and there is still so much to do. During these days, we may visit several artists' communities, tour a Tobacco Factory, and visit Hemmingway's home ([Finca La Vigía](#)) on the outskirts of Havana. No trip to Havana is complete without a visit to the largest craft market in Cuba, as well! In the evenings we have several concert venues to choose from (see below). It is way too early to know what the best options are. But, we'll be sure to have fantastic options both nights! We can be flexible these days. If we are lucky, we will also have the opportunity to witness another Afro-Cuban religious ceremony. And, during one of these evenings, we will take a short bus ride to the La Cabaña Fort, high on the cliffs overlooking Havana's large natural harbor to enjoy the "[cañonazo](#)," a theatrical show during which actors dressed in full 18th-century military regalia reenact the firing of a cannon over Havana harbor – a ritual that used to signify the closing of the city gates. Our excursion to the fort will be led by one of our local established and knowledgeable guides.

Possible Concerts: Buena Vista Social Club at Hotel Cohiba; Jazz Café in Vedado; or [Havana's premier Jazz Club, La Zorra y el Cuervo](#).

DAY 9:

Today, we will rise early and board an air-conditioned coach for the start of our two-day excursion to Trinidad de Cuba. Our first stop, about 4 hours into the trip, will be Cienfuegos, known for its beautiful colonial buildings and even more beautiful bay, called by some "the pearl of the South." During our short stay here, we will tour the town center (Parque José Martí) and the Moorish-inspired [Palacio de Valle](#). The Palacio was built in 1917 on a dramatic piece of land that juts into the bay and is comprised of an outrageous jumble of tiles and turrets, crenellated edges and scalloped arches. In the mid-afternoon, we will leave Cienfuegos and make our way to Trinidad, a dramatic drive with towering mountains to our left and ocean views to our right.

[Trinidad is a beautiful colonial city](#) situated on the edge of the 2nd largest mountain range in Cuba and overlooking the Caribbean. Founded in 1514, it is the third oldest-settlement in Cuba. Full of wonderful restaurants and several music venues (most notably, Casa de Music, Casa de Trova, and El Palenque de Los Congos Reales), everything is easily accessible within 2-4 blocks of our homestays. Music is audible from our homestays 365 nights a year. Students will have



this night to independently explore Trinidad and have dinner at their personally selected restaurants.

DAY 10:

This morning begins with a tour of Trinidad's old town led by our local guide Yuder Ignacio. Following the tour we will enjoy the 3-hour horseback ride that skirts the edge of Trinidad's sugar cane fields and ultimately ends up deep within a tropical mountain rainforest. Along the way, there will be opportunities to stop and drink locally grown and roasted coffee and (for the bravest among us) to hop into a crystal clear, refreshing mountainside swimming hole. In the afternoon, we will hop into local to tour the beautiful countryside and learn about Cuba's sugar history, while visiting plantations, mills, and historic mansions. After concluding these two tours, we will return to Trinidad where students can independently experience the historic downtown where shopping is abundant, the food is wonderful, and the music is ever-present.

DAY 11:

Today we leave Cuba. After breakfast in our homestays, we leave for the Santa Clara airport at 8:30AM. A two-hour drive, we arrive by 10:30AM for our 1:30PM flight to Fort Lauderdale. Here you will make your way through customs and proceed to your individual flights to your hometown.