



HOW TO TRAVEL TO CUBA IN 2015 WITH TOUR OPERATOR MEMBERS OF USTOA

NEW YORK – January 15, 2015 – With the loosening of travel restrictions to Cuba as part of President Obama’s plans to normalize diplomatic relations between the two countries, interest in visiting this untouched island nation has skyrocketed. American travelers might be surprised to learn that they can travel to Cuba now as more than a dozen tour operator members of the [United States Tour Operators Association \(USTOA\)](#) already offer “people to people” cultural immersion trips.

“Can Americans jump on a plane today to visit Cuba? The short answer is ‘no,’ at least not for some time until commercial flights begin and the infrastructure is in place,” said Terry Dale, president and CEO of USTOA. “But, U.S. travelers can visit Cuba today through the existing cultural programs offered by tour operators, such as the members of USTOA.”

In fact, Cuba was named one of the top emerging destinations for 2015 in a survey by active members of USTOA conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) in the fall. Ranking second behind Myanmar, Cuba’s appearance on the list was driven by increased demand for the people to people exploration, according to Dale.

“This is the first time Cuba has debuted on USTOA’s list of top emerging destinations, and given the continually growing demand to visit the culturally rich nation, our tour operator members plan to enhance and expand their already popular itineraries to offer more extensive, immersive programs to Cuba,” he continued.

USTOA tour operator members offer a variety of tours to Cuba, many of which expand beyond Havana and its immediate surroundings to include other cities and the countryside, providing a rich and diverse experience. Examples of these “live like a local” experiences include the opportunity to dine at a family owned paladar, a small specialty restaurant with its own organic farm; take native dance lessons; meet with local children at an afterschool program; ride an antique sugar cane steam train, and engage in enriching discussions with local residents about the architecture, history, culture and more.

Following is a sampling of itineraries from members that provide travelers with the rare opportunity to experience the colorful history and lively culture of this captivating nation:

Globus is offering three itineraries to Cuba in 2015, two of which are new. The nine-day “Eastern Cuba’s Hidden Gems” tour includes a wide range of immersive educational activities, including a farm-to-table cooking demonstration, interactive dance lesson, and a scenic cruise of Santiago Bay. Guests will also visit a traditional print shop, a mechanical music-organ factory, Fidel Castro’s boyhood home at Birán, and a cocoa farm, among many other sites. Available on select dates between April and October 2015, prices start at \$2,719, land only. www.globusjourneys.com

With an interactive lecture on the instruments used to produce the distinctive “sounds of Cuba,” a visit to a working cigar factory, a steam ride train through the countryside with stops to experience the lives of local farmers and a meeting with the owners of one of Havana’s paladars, **Collette’s** “Rediscover Cuba-A Cultural Exploration” is a truly educational journey. Available February through May 2015, prices for this seven-night itinerary start at \$3,979 per person, land only, based on double occupancy. www.gocollette.com

Alexander + Roberts' "Undiscovered Cuba" small group journey showcases smaller towns rarely visited by American travelers. On it, guests meet renowned artist, Jose Fuster, known as the Picasso of the Caribbean, meet with local students and professors to learn about their school's efforts to preserve the rich architectural heritage of Old Havana, browse local farmers markets, and dine at private, family-owned paladars. This extraordinary 13-day journey is available February 8, March 8 and 29, April 26, May 17, June 7, and July 19, 2015. Prices start at \$5,795 per person, land only, based on double occupancy. www.alexanderroberts.com

For 2015, **Tauk** is enhancing its popular eight-day Cuba itinerary by adding five additional days and expanding beyond Havana and its surroundings. The 13-day "Cuba: Connecting with People & Culture" itinerary includes three nights in Havana, two nights in Cayo Santa María, three nights in Camaguey, one night in Holguin and two nights in Santiago de Cuba. Trip highlights include an architectural walking tour with a local expert in Habana Vieja (old Havana), a musical performance by a children's group in Caibarien, and discussions with many local artisans, restaurateurs, fisherman, and historians. Available January through early June 2015, prices start at \$7,465 per person, double occupancy, plus airfare. www.tauk.com

The nine-day "Havana Highlights" tour from **Explorica Inc.** unearths the country's vibrant culture with open dialogues with the artists of the brilliantly painted streets of Callejón de Hamel, the farmers of the organopónicos urban organic food project and sustainable farms, and other distinguished citizens. Guests also visit the Cuban National Circus School, a rural neighborhood health clinic and an afterschool program for kids. Available year-round, prices start at \$2,897. www.explorica.com

Mayflower Tours' "Cuba Experience 2015" includes visits to a cigar factory, ceramic studio & gallery, botanical gardens, a craft market and more. Guests will also travel in style in a fleet of antique cars, ride a historic sugar cane steam train, take a salsa lesson and enjoy a performance by the Cienfuegos Choir. Available April 5, May 10 and May 17, prices for this engaging nine-day journey start at \$4,199 per person twin. www.mayflowertours.com

Travelers on **Gate 1 Travel's** nine-day "Cuba, Face to Face" journey will explore Trinidad, one of the best preserved cities in the Caribbean, with a local historian, experience traditional Cuban music at the Museo de Artes Decorativas, learn about Old Havana's restoration projects firsthand from local city planner and architects and witness Havana's urban garden farming movement, among many other people to people activities and cultural exchanges. Available on a variety of departure dates through February 2016, prices start at \$3,399 per person. www.gate1travel.com

In 2015, **Abercrombie & Kent** is adding a second, more immersive itinerary to its people to people educational exchange programs to Cuba. Highlights of the 13-day "Cuba: Across the Island: People to People" journey include a meeting with residents of a small community nearly destroyed by Hurricane Sandy who are creating art from objects washed ashore to support charitable causes, a cooking demonstration at a paladar, a performance at the Neon Puppet Theater in Holguin, and a rodeo at King Ranch. Available on select dates October through December 2015, prices start at \$7,495 per person, double occupancy. www.abercrombiekent.com

International Expeditions' "Complete Cuba" itinerary, available January 29, February 5, 12 and 26, March 19 and 26, April 2, 16 and 30, May 7, and June 4, 2015, immerses guests into the daily lives of Cuban people, including musicians, artists, naturalists and local birders. Guests will discuss Hemingway's life and work with a local expert at his former home, Finca Vigía, explore the Bay of Pigs, and stop by a local library, among other activities. Prices for this extraordinary journey start at \$3,998. www.IEtravel.com

A private cooking demonstration, a tour of the Sugar Museum, and interactions with school children, educators, farmers, entrepreneurs, artists and musicians are a handful of the local experiences travelers will be involved in while traveling on the seven or 10-day "Cuba: Community, Culture & Cuisine" escorted

tour with **Travcoa**. Available February 3 and 19, March 19, April 7 and 23, and May 7, prices for the seven-day tour start at \$5,395 and prices for the 10-day tour start at \$7,395. www.travcoa.com

Latour offers three eight-night journeys to Cuba, including the popular “Shalom Cuba” itinerary on which travelers have the opportunity to meet with Jewish Cubans and visit their local synagogues and institutions. Highlights in and around Havana include visits to El Patronato Jewish Community Center, the Centro Hebreo Sefaradi (the Sephardic Community Center and synagogue), the orthodox Adath Israel Synagogue, Cuba’s only kosher butcher, Temple Shevet Achim (Cuba’s first synagogue), and the Guanabacoa museum and Jewish Cemetery. Prices start at \$4,299 per person, double occupancy. www.latour.com

For questions and more information on USTOA, visit www.ustoa.com, call 212-599-6599, or email information@ustoa.com

About USTOA:

Representing more than \$12.5 billion in revenue, the member companies of U.S. Tour Operators Association provide tours, packages and custom arrangements that allow 7.6 million travelers annually unparalleled access, insider knowledge, peace-of-mind, value and freedom to enjoy destinations and experiences across the entire globe. Each member company has met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the USTOA’s Travelers Assistance Program, which protects consumer payments up to \$1 million if the company goes out of business.

As a voice for the tour operator industry for 40 years, USTOA also provides education and assistance for consumers and travel agents.

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