Glorious Cuba
Art, Culture, History and Emotion

Specially prepared for
LLAIC - Lifelong Learners: an Independent Collaborative

January 18 - 26, 2016

This trip will be conducted under a General License –
Humanitarian Projects (section 515.575)
MONDAY JANUARY 18 – BOSTON - MIAMI
Arrive in Miami for overnight stay at airport hotel (if applicable).

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19 – MIAMI - HAVANA
(The flight is a charter authorized by the US DOT and OFAC. Please be in Miami no later than 3 hours prior to the final published departure time.)

Depart Miami on your scheduled charter flight, leaving at 8:30am and arriving Havana Jose Marti airport at 9:30am. Please be at the counter no later than 3 hours prior to the flight departure. (Flight times are not final and are subject to change.)

In Havana, you will be met by a Ross Travel Consultants Cuban representative and tour guide.

Drive through the once fashionable residential area of Miramar, which retains its pre-revolution air of exclusivity. The beautiful houses are now used for embassies, commercial offices, and tourist development.
Drive through Revolution Square, the administrative and political center of Cuba.

Continue to the hotel for check in.
Our hotel, MELIA COHIBA, is one of the best 5-star hotels in Havana, overlooking the famed Malecon, 3 miles from Old Havana. All 462 rooms have 2 double beds, air-conditioning, satellite TV, in room movies, internet access, safe deposit box, mini bar and hair dryer. Facilities and services include an outdoor pool, meeting rooms, gift shop, sauna, Jacuzzi, fitness center, beauty salon, 1 buffet restaurant and 4 a la carte restaurants, 4 bars and 24-hour room service.
www.solmelia.com/hotels/cuba/havana/melia-cohiba

Dinner tonight is on your own; ask your tour guide to recommend a paladar, a privately own restaurant located in a residential area, in someone’s home, an experience not to miss….

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20 – TRINIDAD (B,L,D)
Depart to the Bay of Pigs (Playa Giron), about a 2-hour drive. A force of U.S.-backed, anti-Castro Cuban exiles attempted to overthrow the Castro regime here in the Battle of the Bay of Pigs. Visit the Museum of Playa Giron.

The Bay of Pigs Invasion, known in Latin America as La Batalla de Girón, was an unsuccessful military invasion of Cuba by the paramilitary group Brigade 2506 in April 1961. A counter-revolutionary militia trained and funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Brigade 2506 fronted the armed wing of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (DRF) and intended to overthrow the revolutionary leftist government of President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado.

Launched from Guatemala, the invading force was defeated within three days by the Cuban armed forces under the command of Prime Minister Fidel Castro. Fourteen
hundred paramilitaries, divided into five infantry battalions and one paratrooper battalion set out from Guatemala to Cuba by boat on April 13. On April 15, eight CIA-supplied B-26 bombers attacked Cuban air fields before returning to the U.S., and on the night of April 16, the main invasion landed at Playa Girón beach in the Bay of Pigs. Initially overwhelming a local revolutionary militia, the Cuban Army's counter-offensive was then led by Captain José Ramón Fernández, before Castro decided to take personal control of the operation. On April 20, the invaders finally surrendered, with the majority of troops being publicly interrogated and then sent back to the U.S.

The failed invasion strengthened the position of Castro's administration, which proceeded to openly proclaim their intention to adopt socialism and strengthen ties with the Soviet Union, leading to the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. The invasion was a major embarrassment for U.S. foreign policy, with Kennedy ordering a number of internal investigations. Across much of Latin America, it was celebrated as evidence of the fallibility of U.S. imperialism.

Then drive 1 hour to the city of Cienfuegos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded in 1819 as the Colony Fernandina de Jagua. The first inhabitants came not only from Spain, but also from a number of French colonies, as well as Bordeaux, Louisiana, Philadelphia and Guárico. This formal foundation followed a series of earlier attempts in this region, where the economy was based on cattle raising and cultivation of tobacco. From the 18th century, there was wax production, as well as timber and sugar. In the 1830s, the colony grew based on sugar production and the favorable geographical location. The settlement was recognized with the category of "Villa" as a confirmation of its urban aspect and was authorized to trade in domestic and foreign fields. In 1840, there were already registered companies in the town and the growth continued in the following decades. In the 1860s, it was the third city of the country. By 1914, American investors owned the most important sugar mills in the province. Trade developed mainly with the United States, the principal market for Cienfuegos. During the Cuban Revolution the city saw an uprising against Fulgencio Batista and was bombed on September 5, 1957. With the new administrative division of 1976, the city of Cienfuegos became the capital of the province with the same name, increasing its development further. The local administration remained concentrated in the downtown area. As a whole, this area has retained its historic fabric.

Visit the city’s foundation, José Martí Park, where the most representative buildings include the Government Palace (City Hall, current office of the Provincial Assembly of the Popular Power), San Lorenzo School, Bishopric, Ferrer Palace, the Terry Theater, Cathedral de la Purísima Concepción, the former Lyceum building and some residential buildings. At present, in the Historic Center, six buildings remain from the first half of the 19th century and 327 buildings from the second half. There are 1,188 buildings from the 20th century, most of them from the first half. In all there are some 300 public buildings, and the rest are mainly residential.

Lunch will be at the Villa Lagarto Paladar.
Meet Rebecca Langus Rodriguez, the president of the small Jewish community there. The synagogue is in her home. After lunch, visit the Palacio Del Valle restaurant, known for its synthesis of architectural styles. Drive along the 16-block Paseo del Prado promenade, one of the longest in Cuba.

Then, travel about 1½ hours on to Trinidad for overnight.

Our hotel, IBEROSTAR GRAND TRINIDAD, is a 5-star boutique hotel located in the center of Trinidad. The hotel is housed in a beautiful building which has been completely renovated blending beautiful elements of the local architecture with modern standards of comfort. Grand Trinidad has 40 rooms (36 standard rooms and 4 junior suites) and is for adults only (15 and over). The hotel offers an elegant atmosphere and a wide range of facilities to its visitors. www.iberostar.com/EN/Trinidad/hotels-Trinidad.html

Dinner will be at the private Maliban Paladar, the best paladar in Trinidad! Return to the hotel for overnight.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21 – TRINIDAD (B,L)
Spend the morning on a walking tour of Trinidad, a living-museum of Spanish colonialism. The whole city, with its fine palaces, cobbled streets and red-tiled roofs, is a national monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Trinidad’s prosperity rested on the sugar industry. The city was a cultural center with theaters, schools of language, music, dance and a wide variety of artisans, including gold and silversmiths. Lavish public and private buildings filled the city. During the second half of the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution and increased sugar beet production in Europe led to the decline of Trinidad’s slavery-based economy. Construction ceased and the city remained frozen in time. The maze of cobbled streets is lined with terra cotta-roofed houses in soft pastel colors. Much of the architecture is Neoclassical and Baroque, with a Moorish flavor, reflecting the town’s heritage of conquistadors. Visit the Plaza Mayor in the center of town. Around the plaza are the Museo Romantico and the Iglesia Parroquial de la Santisima Trinidad. The Cathedral is the largest church in Cuba and renowned for its acoustics. This is a place to leave donations.

The adventurous are invited to climb up to the Antiguo Convento de San Francisco de Asis. The tower and church are all that remain of the original convent.

Have lunch at one of the city’s best paladars, El Bolo Vista Gourmet. After lunch, drive to visit the Valle de los Ingenios, or Valley of the Sugar Mills, a series of three interconnected valleys about 7.5 miles outside of Trinidad. The three valleys, San Luis, Santa Rosa and Meyer, were a center for sugar production from the late 18th century until the late 19th century. At the peak of the industry in Cuba there were over fifty cane sugar mills in operation in the three valleys with over 30,000 slaves working in the mills and the sugar cane plantations that surrounded them. Sugar production was an important industry for Cuba from the earliest settlement by the Spanish, who introduced sugar cane to the island in 1512, and trade in the commodity enriched Trinidad and the surrounding areas. The island became the world's foremost
producer of sugar during the late 18th and 19th centuries, when sugar production was the main industry. In 1988, Valle de los Ingenios and neighboring Trinidad were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Although most of the sugar mills are in ruins, intact structures endure at some sites, including Guachinango, where the plantation house remains. Visit the plantation of Manaca Iznaga, where the owner's house, a tower and some barracones (the original slave quarters) still stand. Although the barracones are now used as housing, they are in poor repair. The owner’s house has been converted into a restaurant. See the magnificent view from the Iznaga Tower. The 147 ft. tower was constructed sometime in 1816 by the owner, Alejo Maria Iznaga y Borrell. According to experts, the bell that formerly hung on top of the tower announced the beginning and the end of the work day for the slaves, as well as the times for prayers to the Holy Virgin in the morning, midday and afternoon. It was also used to sound an alarm in case of fire or slave escape.

Return to the hotel for overnight.

Dinner tonight is on your own; ask your guide to recommend a paladar.

After dinner, we suggest you enjoy one of these famous music venues:
- La Casa De La Musica de Trinidad - where locals and foreigners gather after dark to listen to Cuban music. When it gets “hot” the outdoor arena fills with people dancing to the irresistible beat, an unforgettable experience for any visitor!
- La Cancháchara - famous for its eponymous house cocktail made from rum, honey, lemon and water. Local musicians regularly drop by for off-the-cuff jam sessions and it’s not unusual for the Cancháchara-imbibed crowd to break into spontaneous dancing.
- Palenque de los Congos Reales - where traditional music groups play and the Folkloric Ballet of Trinidad and the Cuba-Haiti Dance Company perform. This is the main place for African and Haitian roots music and dance.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22 – HAVANA (B,L,D)
Drive to the city of Santa Clara to visit the Ernesto (Che) Guevara Mausoleum. The Argentinean Che Guevara was one of the commanders who fought with Fidel Castro in the war against the dictatorship of Batista in the 1950s. He died in Bolivia in 1967 while leading that country’s revolution. His remains were recovered in 1998 and buried in this memorial in Santa Clara Revolution Square.

Visit the Armored Train Battle Monument, the site where guerrilla forces commanded by Che Guevara defeated reinforcements sent in an armored train (tren blindado) by Batista's army in 1958. The monument site includes original armored boxcars with displays of photos, armaments and artifacts inside, and a bulldozer used by the rebels to derail the train.
Visit Leoncio Vidal Park in the heart of Santa Clara. The park and surrounding buildings are a center of the unique traditional culture of provincial Cuba. The park’s 1911 Glorieta still hosts public concerts.

Lunch will be served at Los Caneyes.

Then, meet David Tacher, President of Comunidad Tikun Olam, the local community in Santa Clara.

Then, drive to Havana for overnight.
Our hotel, MELIA COHIBA

Evening: drive to the Centro Hebreo Sephardi de Cuba for a Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat. Then, our group will host a Shabbat dinner for the entire community, a unique experience when you can mingle with the local Jewish Community.

For some good Salsa and dancing clubs:
• The 25th floor of the Havana Libre Hotel, the Turquino Night Club an dance to some of the best Cuban music!
• The Havana Café at the Melia Cohiba hotel has a floor show and you can mingle with the dancers.
• Casa de la Musica in Miramar is popular with locals for its contagious music.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23 - HAVANA (B,L,D)
Take a walking tour around the historic center of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Visit Plaza de San Francisco de Asis and the 16th-century Convento de San Francisco de Asis, this is one of the finest buildings from the colonial period. The basilica and the monastery of San Francisco de Asis (Saint Francis of Assisi) were built in Havana at the end of sixteenth century (1580–91) as the home of the Franciscan community, and were altered in the Baroque style in 1730. The church was used for worship by the English during the year they ruled Havana. When it returned to Spanish rule, they chose not to use it as a church. It is now used for concerts.

See Plaza Vieja, one of Havana’s historic squares dating from the 16th century, and its surrounding art galleries.

See the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales at Plaza de Armas, where the city was originated. Built in 1776, this stately palace remains as a testament to Cuba’s importance as Spain’s principal port of the Americas during the 18th century.

Visit Plaza de la Cathedral, where the most prominent building is the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception, seat of Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, the Cardinal Archbishop of Havana, Cuba. The cathedral is dedicated to Saint Christopher (San Cristóbal) and is also known as Cathedral of Saint Christopher.
The construction of the cathedral was started by Jesuits in 1748 on the site of an earlier church and finished by Havana City in 1777. The cathedral is set in the former Plaza de La Ciénaga or Swamp Plaza, where the runoff of the city gathered. The Cathedral is said to be the only example of a Baroque facade that was designed with asymmetrical features - one of the towers is wider than the other. This particular feature was conceived in order to allow the water that accumulated on the plaza to freely flow. Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier famously described the cathedral as "music set in stone."

Lunch will be served at Cafe Oriente at San Francisco de Asis Square. After lunch visit he famous El Floridita Bar, birth place of the daiquiri and one of Hemingway’s favorite Havana bars. In 1953, “Esquire” magazine, called it one the world's seven best bars. (Drinks not included $7 each). Since that time El Floridita has been frequented by distinguished visitors to Havana, ranging from artists to official guests of the government. Some of El Floridita's Customers: The Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Gene Tunney, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gary Cooper, Tennessee Williams, Charles Scribner, Spencer Tracey, Rocky Marciano, Ava Gardner, Samuel Eliot Morison, Buck Lanham, Herber Matthews

Then, stop for pictures outside El Capitolio Nacional (Capitol building). Built in 1929 as the Senate and House of Representatives, the colossal building is recognizable by its dome, which dominates the city's skyline. Inside stands the third largest indoor statue in the world, La Estatua de la República. Today the Capitolio is home to the Cuban Academy of Sciences and the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural (the National Museum of Natural History), with the largest natural history collection in the country. (The building is currently under renovation and may not allow visitors inside.)

End the visit to Old Havana at the outdoor handicraft market.

Then drive to the entrance of Havana Bay and the largest fortress in the Americas: San Carlos de la Cabaña, built between 1763 and 1774 under the command of Spanish military engineer Don Silvestre Abarca. Carlos III, King of Spain at the time, requested a spyglass and exclaimed: "The Cabaña, such a valuable work, should be spotted from Madrid."

The fortress was used as a military base and a prison for more than two hundred years and Che Guevara made it his headquarters for some months during the Cuban revolution. Today it holds the most important ancient weapon collection of the country. Return to the hotel for overnight.

Dinner tonight will be at the Rio Mar, one of the best privately-run, home restaurants. The dining room is in a terrace on the water with amazing views of the Miramar neighborhood. Transfers to the restaurant will be done in vintage cars.

Then travel to the Buena Vista Social Club Show and watch Havana’s most exciting music show.

Return to the hotel for overnight.
Continue in the footsteps of Ernest Hemingway. One of Havana’s best kept treasures is its close relationship with writer Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), known affectionately as Papa. The lovely Finca Vigia was Hemingway’s home in Cuba for two decades. He bought the house in 1939 and it was opened as a museum in 1964. It contains more than 22,000 original items that belonged to Hemingway, including records, books, paintings, personal documents, photographs, and hunting weapons. Peering inside the house through large windows and strolling around the peaceful grounds, visitors get a good feel for the daily life of the great writer.

The fishing village of Cojimar, 7 miles southeast of the center of Havana, inspired his novel The Old Man and the Sea (the 1954 Nobel Prize winner).

Then, drive to UBPC Vivero Organoponico in Alamar the first and one of the leading organic farms in Cuba. We’ll be met by one of their workers that will take us around with an explanation of “how it works”.

Continue to EL DIVINO Paladar, in the country side, a nice place to observe Cuba’s vegetation and farms.

Return to Havana and visit the Arms Square gallery, which features some of Cuba’s most prominent artists: Fabelo, Pedro Angel Martinez, Zaida del Rio, Pedro Pablo Oliva, Rancaño and more.

Return to the hotel for overnight.

Dinner tonight is on your own; ask your guide to recommend a paladar. A

For jazz grooving after 10:00pm, we recommend 2 places for you to visit on your own:
• La Zorra y el Cuervo jazz club on 23rd Ave. (close to your hotel).
• The Jazz Café located in front of the Melia Cohiba Hotel.

Lecture at the hotel:
Dr. Carlos Alzugaray Treto from CESEU (Centro de Estudios sobre Estados Unidos)
will present an overview of US-Cuban relations. Dr. Alzugaray is a former Cuban diplomat who serves today as the Coordinator of International Strategic Studies.

Continue for a Cuban Cigar experience at Conde Villanueva Cigar lounge; learn about the history of the cigar in Cuba and the production process and see a wide variety of premium Habanos.

Visit the Havana Club Museum of Rum and journey back to the origins of Cuba’s most famous beverage. From freshly cut stalks of sugar cane to a refurbished distillery and ageing cellars, the museum offers a real-time experience of the rum-making process, as well as a taste of true Cuban culture. An upstairs gallery features an authentic mule-driven cane mill used in the earliest ingenious (sugar refineries). A historically accurate model of a steam locomotive reminds us that Cuba was the first country in Latin America to use a railway for the transport of sugar cane. The next door leads to a much larger model, the achievement of a master Cuban craftsman. This masterpiece captures the essence of the great sugar refineries and rum distilleries, whose immense chimneys rise as landmarks over the Cuban countryside. At the end of the visit you will have a tasting of the famous Cuban rum.

Then a visit Adath Israel, an Orthodox congregation in Old Havana; followed by a visit to the only kosher butcher in Cuba, who distributes meat in rations. Visit the Centro Hebreo Sephardi de Cuba. Meet with Dr. Levy, the head of the community, and hear about the congregation, the challenges they face and the programs they offer, and visit their new Holocaust Remembrance Hall.

Lunch will be served at El Templete Restaurant near Havana Port. Then visit the Arms Square gallery, which features some of Cuba’s most prominent artists: Fabelo, Pedro Angel Martinez, Zaida del Rio, Pedro Pablo Oliva, Rancaño and more.

End the day with a very emotional visit to the Jewish Cemetery of Guanabacoa. See the first Holocaust Memorial in the Americas, erected in 1940 by the refugees who were lucky enough to escape the war and flee to Cuba.

Our farewell dinner will be at the Mercaderes Paladar in Old Havana. Return to the hotel for overnight.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26 – (B)
Transfer to Havana Jose Marti airport for your charter flight, leaving at 10:30am and arriving Miami at 11:30am. (Times are not final and are subject to change.)
Price per person in a double room: $5,790  
Price per person in a single room: $6,390  
Cost for the charter flights MIA-HAV-MIA: $630 (not final)  
Land prices are GUARANTEED for January, 2016

TOUR INCLUDES:  
• 7 nights of accommodations with buffet breakfast.  
• 6 lunches and 3 dinners as per the itinerary.  
• Hosting Shabbat dinner for 30-40 people on Friday, January 22, 2016  
• Drink package during lunches and dinners as follows: 1 glass of -  
  ▪ Mojito or  
  ▪ Wine (Chilean or Spanish) or  
  ▪ Bottled Water  
• 2 bottles of bottled water per person per touring day.  
• Private transfers to/from to the Santiago de Cuba and Havana airports.  
• 6 days of touring in a private, air-conditioned bus with licensed, English-speaking guide.  
• All entrance fees as per itinerary.  
• Hotel service fees and taxes.  
• Ya'lla Tours USA information kit and travel bag.  
• Tips for guide, driver and at hotels.  
• Tips to porters.  
• Cuban Tourist Card.  
• Cuban departure taxes.

TOUR DOES NOT INCLUDE:  
• Personal expenses.  
• Tips at the restaurants when having lunch and dinners.  
• Travel insurance ($500 per person in a double room, $550 per person in a single room), highly recommended.  
• Baggage: All checked bags will be charged a bag fee of $20, plus $1 per pound for weight. All checked baggage can weigh up to 70lbs. Baggage fees will be paid directly at the counter by CASH only.)

IMPORTANT NOTE:  
• Air schedules are subject to change at any time.  
• A $1,000 per person deposit is required upon registration June 15. The deposit is refundable up to 120 days prior to departure.  
• Final payment is due September 15, 2015  
• Ya'lla Tours USA reserves the right to change the hotels to others of similar quality.