



APEX
EXPEDITIONS



Cuba

November 29 – December 14, 2015



Expedition Overview

Cuba is a long, lean land of extremes. Though known more for its revolutionary politics and radical musical styles than for its natural curiosities, this 780-mile long “giant of the Antilles” is teeming with peculiar life—from the world’s smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird, to a large population of endemic crocodiles. Join Apex as we meld the island’s distinct culture and nature. Climb the very rainforest-draped mountains from which Fidel launched the Cuban Revolution. Listen for the trills of the endemic Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, Cuban Trogon or Toco-ro-ro, and Cuban Tody. See the largest nesting population of Caribbean Flamingos in the Western Hemisphere. Visit four UNESCO World Heritage sites, from sleepy Baracoa, Cuba’s first Spanish settlement, to vibrant Havana, where, according to Graham Greene, “anything is possible.” Get to know Cuba’s myriad landscapes and diverse people on our comprehensive 15-day journey across this unique and fascinating island.



Photos: **(Cover)** Cuban Musician,
Havana Cathedral, Bee Hummingbird





Itinerary

Sunday, November 29: Arrive Miami

Arrive in Miami and walk to the *Miami International Airport Hotel*, located in the airport. Meet your expedition team and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner at the hotel.

Monday, November 30: Havana

After breakfast and a briefing, head to your gate for the flight to Havana. A true melting pot of African, European, and Caribbean cultures, Havana has a buoyant charm that surprises most visitors. Rhythms pulse from every doorway and colorful colonial edifices line the streets. Havana has survived every sling and arrow that's been thrown its way, and Habañeros, as they're known, seem to have redoubled their infectious energy despite their city's roller-coaster history. Dinner at *El Temple*, an art-gallery-cum-restaurant, and overnight at the elegant *Hotel Saratoga*.

Tuesday, December 1: Havana

After breakfast, explore Havana's colonial past with a guided walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander the labyrinthine streets of one of the oldest cities in the Western Hemisphere (founded in 1519), enjoying the incredible faded beauty of the baroque and neoclassical architecture in the four main plazas. Visit the 1558 Castillo de la Real Fuerza, the city's first fortress, and San Salvador de la Punta, one of the best examples of Cuba's military architecture. After lunch, climb into one of Havana's famed classic American cars to visit the Hemingway House and Museum, and the fishing community where Hemingway celebrated his Pulitzer Prize with Gregorio Fuentes, captain of his yacht and main character of *The Old Man and the Sea*. After dinner, enjoy music at the cutting edge *Fabrica del Arte*. Overnight at *Hotel Saratoga*.



Photos: Vintage car outside *El Temple*, Hemingway's Typewriter, Havana Steet Scene



Wednesday, December 2: Viñales

This morning, head west to the rolling green hills of the Pinar del Río province, a stark contrast to Havana's colonial grandeur. This is tobacco-growing country, where farmers still trot down dusty roads in spurs and sow seeds by hand. Explore the unique landscape of the limestone-spiked Valle de Viñales. Sail on an underground river and explore caves strewn with relics of the Guanajatabey Indians and fossils of Pleistocene mammals. Scattered palm trees and pine forests on the area's famous round-topped hills, *mogotes*, shelter a variety of endemic birds, including the Toco-ro-ro, Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Emerald, and Cuban Grassquit. Enjoy lunch in a traditional wood house overlooking the picturesque valley, then set out on a tour of several tobacco plantations. See the famous drying houses and learn how to roll a cigar. Enjoy live music tonight at *Centro Polo Montañez*.

Thursday, December 3: Playa Girón

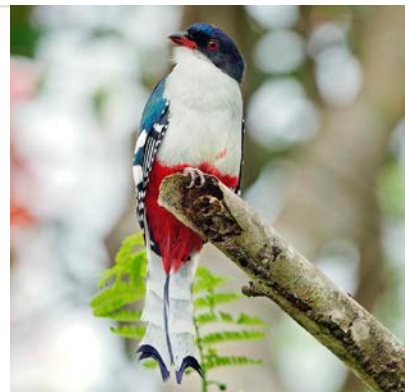
Drive this morning to the vast Zapata Peninsula, jutting off the southern coast of Matanzas Province. The peninsula itself is almost entirely uninhabited—most of it is protected as part of the Zapata Swamp National Park, an Eden for birdwatchers. At the eastern edge of the peninsula is the renowned Bay of Pigs, the site of the failed 1961 U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba. The Bay of Pigs, and Playa Girón in particular, is a sort of national shrine to this David-over-Goliath victory. Just off the shore, the coast drops off steeply for 1,000 feet, and the aquamarine water makes it a haven for divers and snorkelers. This afternoon, visit the Bay of Pigs Museum, then spend time in the mixed forest habitat of Bermejas in search of the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird. We'll have the opportunity to share experiences and strategies for conservation with local experts. Dinner at Casa Ronel and overnight in Playa Girón.

Friday, December 4: Las Salinas de Brito / Cienfuegos / Trinidad

Depart early this morning for a trek into the park to visit Las Salinas de Brito, arguably Cuba's top birding spot, with 18 of the 21 endemic Cuban bird species represented. Local endemics include Zapata Wrens, Rails, and Sparrows. Roseate Flamingos and Spoonbills abound in the lakes along the trail, as does the small but fierce Cuban Crocodile. After lunch, a short drive takes you to the city of Cienfuegos, founded during the great 19th century sugar boom, where you take in the city's striking arcade houses with a walking tour. See José Martí Park and its world-renowned Tomás Terry Theater, which saw the likes of Caruso and Bernhardt in its day. In the late afternoon, drive to the immaculately preserved city of Trinidad. Enjoy a Cuban fusion dinner before retiring for the night.

Saturday, December 5: Trinidad

After breakfast, light out on Trinidad's cobbled streets for a walking tour of this UNESCO World Heritage Site, built with the enormous wealth begotten by the 19th century sugar and slave trades. As will quickly become clear, no expense was spared in fashioning the finest Spanish colonial mansions, plazas and churches, evidenced at the former Cantero Sugar Palace (now the Museo Histórico Municipal), whose interiors are embellished with Baccarat crystal, frescoed walls, and marble statues. In the late morning board a private catamaran to visit the small keys off Trinidad where you have the opportunity to snorkel on Cuba's magnificent Southern Reef or go on a birding walk ashore. Return to the mainland in the late afternoon and be sure to catch the sunset before dinner and overnight at our hotel.



Photos: Cuban Trogon or Toco-ro-ro, Tobacco Harvest, Roseate Spoonbill, Trinidad



Sunday, December 6: Trinidad

After breakfast, head into the Sierra del Escambray, Cuba's second longest mountain range. In 1958, Che Guevara set up camp in these mountains on his way to Santa Clara. These days, this same terrain harbors the 500 square-mile Topes de Collantes Natural Park, rife with caves, rivers, falls, grottos, canyons, and crystal-clear pools. Lichens, mosses, 100 species of ferns, and around 40 species of coffee grow in the shade of the rainforest's tall mahogany and magnolia trees. Several important species live here, including unique hummingbirds, the Cuban Tody, and the handsome Toco-ro-ro, Cuba's national bird. Hiking options include three big waterfalls in the park. This afternoon, head out to the Valley of the Sugar Mills for a tour of a sugar plantation. See slave quarters and learn about slave history in relation to the sugar industry. Visit working plantation homes of the sugar barons. Tonight, strap your dancing shoes on, and enjoy dinner and music in Trinidad.

Monday, December 7: Camagüey

After breakfast, drive inland to Camagüey, among the first Spanish settlements in the country, and one of the best maintained to this day. Join an expert guide for a walking tour of its beautiful façades, elaborate churches and romantic squares. You'll quickly come to understand why Camagüey is known as "The Maze," as it is a veritable labyrinth of blind alleys and twisting streets, originally designed to confound marauding pirates in the 16th century. Camagüey is not a tourist town, evidenced by the strong communal feel and the plethora of families gathered in the streets, parks, and restaurants. Enjoy dinner at one such restaurant near the impressive Iglesia de La Soledad and the beautifully-restored, cobblestone Plaza San Juan de Dios.

Tuesday, December 8: Camagüey

Depart this morning for a visit to the muddy Humedal Río Máximo, a vast expanse of swampland that is home to some 70,000 nesting Caribbean Flamingos and countless chicks, the largest colony of these magnificent birds in the Western Hemisphere. The area recently became one of six spots in Cuba added to the Ramsar Convention's list of Wetlands of International Importance. Río Máximo is also a refuge for many migratory birds from North, Central and South America, and has the largest population of Cuban Crocodiles on Cuba's north coast. It is also home to a significant number of Manatees, the pacific cows of the sea. Dinner and overnight in Camagüey.

Wednesday, December 9: Camagüey / Granma Province

This morning, drive southeast to the cool, green peaks of Granma Province, named after the boat that brought Fidel Castro to Cuba in 1956. Here, revolutionary history and natural splendor collide in Cuba's largest mountain range, the Sierra Maestra, rising steeply from the shores of the Caribbean. The Gran Parque Nacional Sierra Maestra is an alluring natural sanctuary for botanical wonders like dwarf orchids and Sabicu (a West Indian tree commonly used for shipbuilding), and endemic birds such as Cuban Tody, and Toco-ro-ro. After lunch, hike up from the quaint Villa Izlazul Santo Domingo to Fidel's Hideout, the organizing and staging post for the Cuban revolution. Visit the completely preserved huts where Fidel and Che led their group of revolutionaries to ultimate victory. The views alone are worth the hike, with spectacular scenery and crisp, fresh mountain air. Overnight at *Villa Santo Domingo*, along the Yara River.



Photos: Cuban Tody, Topes de Collantes National Park, Sculpture with Model, Cuban Crocodile



Thursday, December 10: Santiago de Cuba

Drive this morning to the neighboring province of Santiago de Cuba, and its eponymous capital city. Caught dramatically between the lush Sierra Maestra and the azure Caribbean Sea, Santiago de Cuba's setting is ideal. Physically closer to Kingston, Jamaica, than to Havana, Santiago de Cuba is the stronghold of Afro-Cuban culture in Cuba and has a fearsome musical, cultural and political heritage. Socialist to the core, Santiago was a key stronghold during the nascent stages of the Revolution. Though it is Cuba's second largest city, it feels compact, with a handful of key monuments. Tour the Moncada Barracks, where Fidel first attempted a coup in 1953. See Revolution Square and the exquisite colonial casas of Parque Céspedes. End your tour at the imposing El Morro Fortress for panoramic sunset views. After dinner, get a taste of the city's legendary rumba at the beautiful *Casa de la Trova*.

Friday, December 11: Baracoa

This morning, head east to Guantánamo, the most rural of the Cuban provinces and check in to your hotel in Baracoa, Cuba's oldest city. Despite its illustrious history, it was Columbus's second landfall in the New World, and Cuba's first capital, today, Baracoa has a land-that-time-forgot quality to it. Located on an isolated stretch of coast, the town looks and feels antique, with its little fortresses and streets lined with wooden edifices. Ride a small boat down the Toa River, marveling at the majestic silhouette of El Yunque (the Anvil), the flat-topped mountain that looms 1,800 feet overhead. Visit a cocoa plantation, over 75 percent of the country's cocoa is collected here, and see the traditional process of making chocolate. This afternoon, enjoy a walking tour of Baracoa's forts and the Catedral Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, famous for its meter-tall cross that is supposedly the oldest European relic in the Americas. Overnight at the beachside *Villa Maguana*.

Saturday, December 12: Baracoa

Alexander von Humboldt National Park, outside Baracoa, is considered to be the largest and best-preserved mountain and tropical rainforest ecosystem in all of the Antilles. This morning, hike the Balcon de Iberia trail, keeping an eye out for some of the smallest fauna in the world: Butterfly Bats, Alto de Iberia frogs, Bee Hummingbirds, and Cuban Land Snails, the most colorful on earth. Also watch for nightingales, parrots, and Cuban Parakeets. The hike ends at El Majá waterfall at the source of the Santa María River, a beautiful spot for a swim. Enjoy dinner and dancing in Baracoa this evening, and overnight at *Villa Maguana*.

Sunday, December 13: Baracoa / Santiago de Cuba / Havana

Enjoy a morning birding walk during your last few hours on the tranquil southern coast, before driving to Santiago de Cuba for a late afternoon flight to Havana. Farewell dinner and overnight at *Hotel Santa Isabel* in Havana.

Monday, December 14: Havana / Miami

Bask in the hustle and bustle of the Havana streets one last time, before a noon transfer to the airport for your international flight to Miami.

This program is arranged in partnership with Anthropologie Consulting, LLC, a cultural and educational travel organization that is authorized by the Office of Foreign Assets Control to organize people-to-people programs to Cuba.



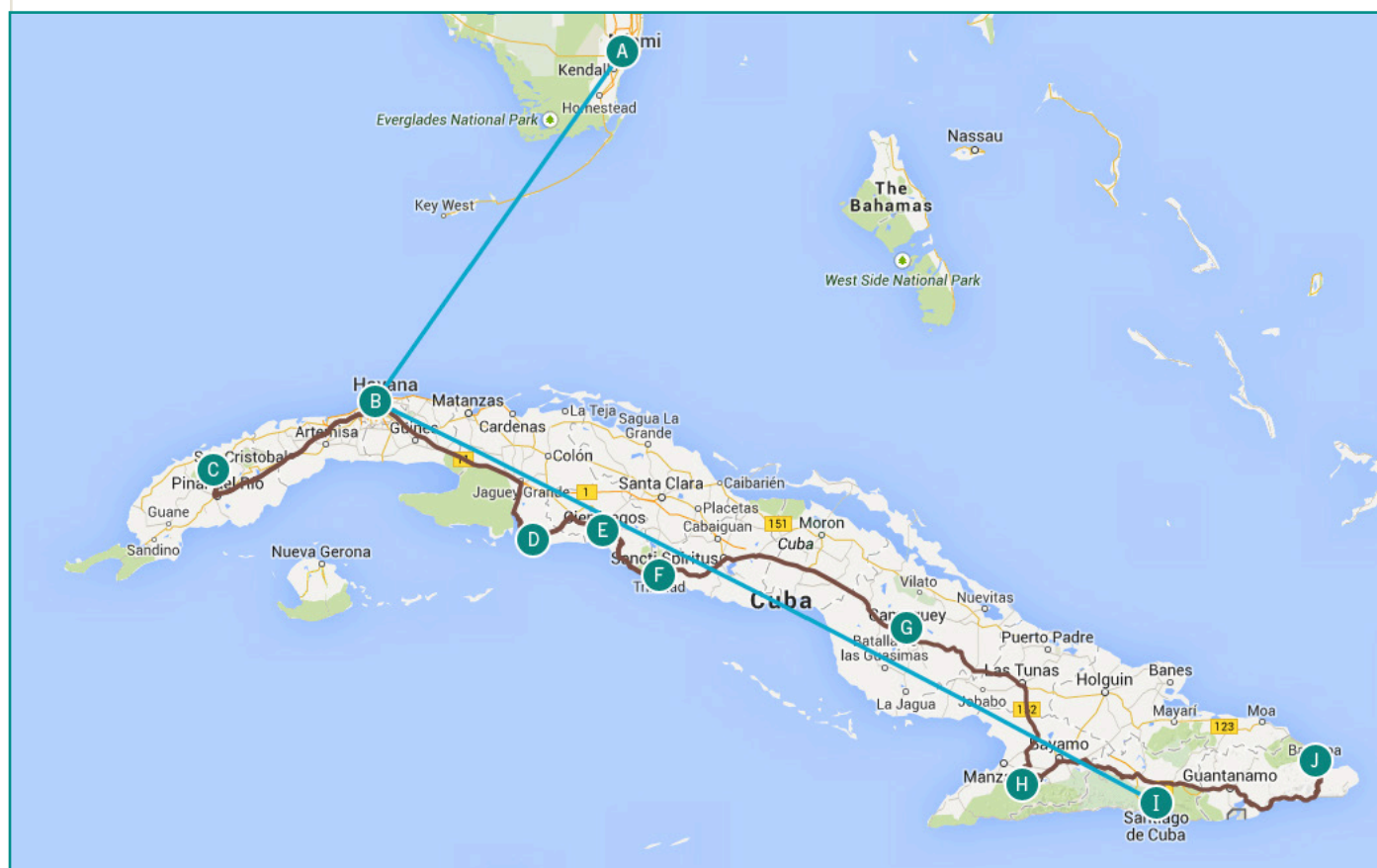
© Reddin Lundgren



Photos: El Morro Fortress, El Yunque (the Anvil), Cuban Land Snail, Vintage Cars in Havana



Expedition Map



A – Miami

B – Havana

C – Viñales

D – Playa Girón

E – Cienfuegos

F – Trinidad

G – Camagüey

H – Granma Province

I – Santiago de Cuba

J – Baracoa

— By Road

— By Air



Your Expedition Leaders

Peter Harrison

Peter Harrison has led expeditions throughout the world, from the Arctic to the Antarctic and everywhere in between. Peter has written and illustrated over a dozen books, of which *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*, is considered the bible of seabird identification. Peter is only one of a handful of authors to both write and illustrate bird books, but Peter Harrison is so much more than just a "bird man." In addition to being a professional birder, entrepreneur, artist, author and screenwriter, Peter has devoted much of his time to conservation efforts. In recognition of his outstanding work in natural history and his dedication to conservation projects, Peter was invited to Buckingham Palace and honored with the title, Member of the British Empire by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. More recently, Peter was invited to Westminster by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to receive their prestigious Conservation Gold Medal Award. This honor is bestowed upon one individual each year in recognition of their support and dedication to wild bird protection and global habitat conservation. Past recipients have included Prince Charles and Sir David Attenborough. Exploration and discovery remain a driving force for Peter and during a recent expedition to Chile he led a six-person team to locate, catch and describe the first completely new storm petrel species to be discovered in nearly 100 years, the Pincoya Storm Petrel. It is safe to say that with Peter leading the charge, adventure always abounds.



Shirley Metz

Shirley Metz's careers and accomplishments have spanned the globe. Born in Minnesota, she grew up in Europe and Hawaii, graduating from the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. Shirley became a certified diver at age 16 and while at UH did shark research earning her degrees in Marine Biology and Communications. She met her first husband in Hawaii with whom she founded Hobie Sports. She also developed several active clothing lines and consulted to companies such as The North Face.

In early 1988 Shirley visited Antarctica and became inspired to work in Antarctic conservation. To raise awareness, Shirley became a member of an international expedition that would attempt to ski 800 miles from the edge of Antarctica to the South Pole. On January 17, 1989, the nine-member expedition arrived at world's end; Shirley made history and her way into the Guinness Book of Records as the first woman to ski overland to the South Pole. A member of the Explorers Club and The Society of Woman Geographers, Shirley continues to raise awareness and support for international environmental and cultural projects. Following a chance meeting in Antarctica in 1990 Shirley married Peter Harrison and together formed the successful travel firm, Eco-Expeditions. Together with four partners, they also founded Zegrahm Expeditions, a small-ship expedition company.

Shirley continues to lead expeditions, both private and commercial. As a professional photographer Shirley documents her travels and lectures on various topics, including her South Pole expedition.



"Our lives have been enriched by the 17 journeys we have undertaken with the Apex team leaders. Simply put, no one does expedition travel better."

– Jim M., California



Expedition Details

Cuba November 29 – December 14, 2015

\$12,770 Per Person Rate

\$13,780 Solo Rate

16 Days Trip Length

16 Guests Group Size

Miami / Miami Start/End

Included

Apex Expeditions' rates include all accommodations; all meals, activities and excursions as described in the itinerary; air Miami/Havana/Miami and Santiago de Cuba/Havana, as noted in the itinerary; Cuban visa; services of two Apex Expedition leaders and local guides throughout the itinerary; all gratuities; local beer and local wines at lunch & dinner; airport transfers; permits and entrance fees; all taxes.

Not Included

Costs not included in the price of your Apex expedition include travel to and from the start and end point of trip; premium brand drinks and liquor; travel insurance (Trip Cancellation and Interruption, as well as Emergency Medical and Evacuation, insurance are highly recommended); airport departure taxes; excess baggage fees; passport and/or visa fees; items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, souvenirs, etc.); and independent travel arrangements pre- or post-trip.

Payments & Terms

20% of the trip cost will confirm your place on the expedition. The final balance is due 150 days prior to departure. All prices are quoted in U.S. dollars and must be paid in U.S. dollars. Per person pricing is based on double occupancy. The Solo Rate is paid by participants who specifically request single accommodations and is subject to availability. If you are traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we will try to match you with a roommate of the same gender. However, if a roommate is not available, the published Solo Rate will be charged. Upon confirming your reservation you will be required to pay the published Solo Rate, if we are able to pair you with a roommate, the applicable difference will be refunded at the time that the final trip payment is due for all participants. Please note that solo accommodations are limited and cannot always be guaranteed throughout. For our full set of Terms & Conditions, please visit our web site at www.apex-expeditions.com.

One-of-a-kind adventures to the world's most fascinating places. Join us.



Reservation Form

Cuba November 29 – December 14, 2015

Person 1: (Primary Contact)

Passport Name: _____

Preferred Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Details:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____ Country: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

☐ Double ☐ Solo

Person 2: (If applicable and at same address, otherwise please submit a second Reservation Form.)

Passport Name: _____

Preferred Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email Address: _____

Deposit Information:

☐ My deposit check is enclosed (20% of total tour fare)

☐ Charge my deposit to my: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Card #: _____ Expires: _____ CCV Code: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

**Please return this completed form to Apex Expeditions.
E-mail: info@apex-expeditions.com or Mail: 3275 36th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98126**

