Travel to Cuba with Chef Guillermo Pernot (6 Days)

ITINERARY
YOUR 6-DAY ITINERARY WITH CHEF GUILLERMO PERNOT

DAY 1: Our Havana Tour Begins

Welcome to Cuba! After you pass through immigration and customs, you will step outside into Havana's tropical breeze, where a guide will be waiting for you. We'll transfer you via required airport taxi to your villa where you will check in and relax until dinner, enjoying time with the group and special guest Chef Guillermo Pernot.

Tonight's welcome dinner is at beloved Havana hotspot, El Biky. Consistently ranked as one of the top paladares (privately owned restaurants) in Havana, this restaurant offers Cuban and Caribbean favorites for an excellent introduction to the culinary gems of Havana.

Meals included: Dinner

DAY 2: Food, Art and Salsa with Havana's Cultural Icons

This morning it's time to get to know Havana and the Cuban people. We'll drive to Havana Vieja (Old Havana) by private vintage car that will be yours for the duration of the trip. Starting with a walking tour of Havana Vieja, we will explore two of the four main squares: Plaza de la Catedral, dominated by the stunning 18th century Catedral de San Cristobal & Plaza San Francisco de Asis, near Havana's harbor.

For lunch today we will enjoy a cooking experience and delicious meal at one of Havana's most renowned paladares with Chef Ivan Justo at the Al Carbon location of his restaurant.

After lunch, we will wander through the street art gallery of muralist and painter Salvador Gonzales. Heavily influenced by the traditions of Santeria, an Afro-Caribbean religion, Salvador's street art uses everything from bathtubs to car parts. We will peruse Salvador's gallery and meet with the artist or curator who are happy to answer any questions about Santeria or the artist's interesting work.

Next up is a salsa class at the home of Johan, one of our fabulous dance instructors. Whether or not you choose to dance, visiting his home will be an eye-opening experience. Climbing two stories on a rickety spiral staircase (the main staircase is continuously under repair), you will get a sense of how Cubans make do with the status quo, while maintaining their passion and optimism. Once upstairs, the dance troupe's infectious smiles and joie de vivre will have you dancing in no time!
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Dinner this evening will be at renowned Havana paladar Habana Mia 7.

After dinner, those who are interested in Cuba's legendary music can attend an optional jazz performance at the Jazz Cafe in Vedado (just a few steps from this evening's dinner). Our guide will be happy to assist you with the details.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Markets & Cigars

Learning how food is purchased in Cuba is an important part of our tour, giving you an understanding of how communism and an embargo impact the lives of everyday Cubans. Our first stop this morning is a trip to a mercado agropecuario (produce market) where you'll see what fruits and vegetables are available to the locals and chat with the friendly vendors. Then we'll head next door to a ration store where you will observe how basic staples are procured in limited, fixed quantities. Our last market stop is a supermarket, where you will get a stark sense of what is, and is not, available to ordinary people.

Next we will explore the Museum of the City and Plaza de Armas. We will then enjoy lunch at the famous La Guarida. This paladar is renowned for its innovative cuisine and of course, its part in the movie "Fresa y Chocolate".

After lunch, we will head to Plaza Vieja, which dates back to 1559 and whose buildings have been lovingly restored to their former glory. Here we will stroll through the plaza, visiting art galleries and a coffee roastery. We'll then take a short break at a chocolate museum, where you might like to sip a cup of hot or cold chocolate and taste their delectable chocolate treats. And, if you still have room, perhaps try some refreshing coconut ice cream from an ice cream street cart.

Dinner this evening will be at renowned Havana paladar, La Cocina de Lilliam.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Hemingway's Havana

Today we'll enjoy a lovely visit to Finca Vigia, Hemingway's house just outside Havana, where he was inspired to write three of his most famous novels. Next we continue on to Cojimar, a small fishing village where Hemingway docked his beloved boat, Pilar, and the inspiration for his famous novel, "The Old Man and the Sea." Here we will enjoy a delicious lunch with coffee demonstration at Ajiaco. After a peek into one of Hemingway's favorite watering holes for a final taste of vintage Cuba, we'll return to Havana.

Next we'll enjoy a visit to a cigar factory to learn about the process of rolling world-famous Cuban cigars, as well as peruse the cigars available for purchase. The late afternoon is yours to explore Old Havana on your own or your guide will bring you back to your casa to relax. You could also continue on to El Floridita, the home of the daiquiri, as Papa Hemingway surely would have.
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Dinner this evening will be at renowned Havana paladar Cafe Laurent. Â

Later in the evening, guests will have the option to attend either the Buena Vista Social Club or Parisien Cabaret show - touristy, but fun! Both are held on Saturday nights at the iconic Hotel National, just down the street from where we'll be dining this evening. Our guide will be happy to assist you with the details.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Fuster Gallery, Farm Tour & Sunday Dinner

We'll start the day with a visit to the Fuster Gallery, where we will see Jose Fuster's incredibly colorful mosaic sculptures that have spread throughout his neighborhood.

Then we will take a 40-minute drive to an organic farm just outside the city of Havana. This farm is a new venture started by a young and entrepreneurial agricultural engineer, Dr. Fernando Funes. Fernando will show us around, telling us about the herbs and vegetables that are produced. We will also learn about honey production, as they have several swarms of bees. After lunch with our friends on the farm, we'll pass through Revolution Square on our way back into Havana.

Once we arrive back in the city, the late afternoon is yours to explore Old Havana on your own or your guide will bring you back to your casa to relax.

Our last stop of the day is a highlight of our tour, as our guide and his wife invite you to their home in Centro Havana for Sunday dinner. Your charming host will show you how to make the perfect daiquiri. For a special treat, we will also enjoy a traditional roasted pig, paired with home-cooked tapas, great conversation, and more than a few laughs.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Your Havana Tour with Chef Guillermo Ends

Alas, your tour in Havana is over and it is time to head home. Your guide and driver will take you to the airport in time for your flight. Be prepared, good-byes may be tough, because at this point they are far more than just your guide and driver - they are your friends from Havana!

Included meals: Breakfast

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In order to maintain our license for travel to Cuba, Access Culinary Trips provides a full schedule of activities during each day of our tour, and our guests must participate in those activities with the group. This will not only give you the opportunity to explore Cuba through its cuisine, but also to see some of Cuba’s iconic sights that you wouldn’t want to miss.

Please also be aware that Cuba is an adventurous destination where things do not always go as planned. We urge you to bring a flexible attitude and a sense of humor. The above itinerary reflects our best planning, but there may be times when we have to substitute different activities and accommodations on our Cuba food tours. That is la aventura Cubana - the Cuban adventure!

TRAVEL INFORMATION FOR YOUR TOUR WITH CHEF GUILLERMO PERNOT

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE TRAVEL INFORMATION

Arrival

On Day 1 of the tour, we will provide group transfers from the Jose Marti International Airport (HAV) in Havana for flights scheduled to arrive by 5:30 PM. A driver will be waiting for you with an Access Culinary Trips sign once you’ve claimed your luggage and cleared customs. Terminal 3 arrivals should exit the terminal and head left to the currency exchange kiosk, where you will find a driver with an Access Culinary Trips sign. Terminal 2 arrivals should exit the terminal and a driver will be waiting for you with an Access Trips Culinary sign. If you have any concerns when you arrive in Havana please feel free to have an airport official call our Local Operations Manager.

Note: We recommend arriving by 5:30 PM (or earlier) to be able to enjoy the included group welcome dinner on Day 1. If you arrive after 5:30 PM, we can arrange your transfer (at an additional cost).

Departure

On Day 6 of the tour, we will provide a group transfer to the Jose Marti International Airport (HAV) in Havana.

Pick-up & Drop-off Information

Group airport transfers at the specified airports/times in Cuba are included. If you require a private airport transfer, please contact us for more information.

Flights

If you would like assistance with purchasing your flight/visa or travel insurance, please let us know and we will forward your contact information and trip details to our travel agent partner.

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS FOR CUBA

Nationality
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This is a licensed tour of Cuba that is legal for US citizens as well as citizens from other countries. In order to comply with the Support for the Cuban People license granted by the US Department of Treasury, Access Culinary Trips provides a full schedule of immersive activities each day designed to enhance contact and meaningful interactions with the Cuban people, and our guests must participate in those activities with the group.

Health & Travel Insurance

Cuban health insurance is mandatory for travel to Cuba and is bundled into the price of your airline ticket. Your boarding pass will serve as proof of your insurance, so please keep this with you throughout the duration of your trip. The insurance policy does not cover any pre-existing conditions. If you have a pre-existing condition or would like increased health benefits coverage, we recommend purchasing supplemental travel medical insurance that includes emergency medical evacuation. Please see more on pre-existing medical conditions under "Health Requirements".

We require that you purchase a trip cancellation and interruption insurance policy that covers the entire cost of the trip, so that you will be covered in the event that you are unable to attend our trip due to injury, illness or other unforeseen circumstances. A "cancel for any reason" (CFAR) insurance coverage is strongly recommended for all of our tours and, depending on the insurance provider, must be purchased within 7 - 21 days of booking your tour. Please check with your travel insurance provider for specific guidance on what policy may be best for you.

You must purchase a trip cancellation insurance policy (we strongly recommend including CFAR coverage) and provide us with documentation within 14 days of booking your trip. If you need to cancel your trip, we will assist with any documentation needed to file a claim. There will be no exceptions to our cancellation policy.

Please note: proof of insurance is due within 14 days of booking, and delay in receipt may result in late documentation charges.

Note: For residents of NY, some insurance policies (including CFAR coverage) may not be available, please contact us as well as check with your travel insurance provider for additional details.

We do not provide travel insurance for our clients. Additional details are on our website at:
http://www.accesstrips.com/company/insurance/

Passports & Visas

Travel to Cuba requires a valid passport (with a minimum of 6 months validity) and visa. A travel visa (sometimes referred to as an entry card or tourist card) is required for all US citizens. This trip operates under the category of Support for the Cuban People, general license #515.574. You will need this number and the address of the accommodations in Havana (provided by Access Culinary Trips) to complete the visa paperwork. Each airline has its own process and recommendations regarding visas. Please contact your airline for more information.

To learn more about visa and entry requirements for Cuba, please check out the Cuba page of the US Department of State website at: https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/cuba.html or consult a travel agent.

Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documentation.

HEALTH & SAFETY IN CUBA
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Emergency Contact

If your friends or family need to contact Access Culinary Trips due to an emergency while you are on the tour, please have them refer to the pre-departure email that is sent out approximately three weeks prior to departure, which will have specific contact information relevant to your trip. If you need to contact Access Culinary Trips while traveling, please also refer to the emergency contact information in the pre-departure email.

Health Requirements

Guests with preexisting medical conditions are required to disclose this information prior to traveling with Access Culinary Trips, and all guests with preexisting conditions are required to provide a note from a doctor clearing them for travel to Cuba. The US Department of State recommends that travelers with medical prescriptions consider bringing small additional amounts of prescribed medicines as well as a copy of the prescription and a letter from the prescribing physician explaining the need for prescription.

We strongly recommend that all of our guests visit a travel doctor before embarking on international travel. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that you receive any necessary vaccinations before traveling on your trip with us.

Please carefully review the following webpage for up-to-date health information, including information on the quality of medical care, the availability of medications and the necessity for vaccinations in the destination country, and the latest updates on the Zika virus: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/cuba. If there is a chance that you may be pregnant during your trip, please discuss your travel plans with your doctor.

Fitness Requirements

Our trips are open to anyone who wants to explore our exotic destinations through cuisine. Unfortunately Cuba does not yet have adequate facilities for disabled travelers. The accommodations and restaurants may not have elevators, the sidewalks may not be even and we will be walking on cobblestone streets. We also engage in walking tours, some of which last several hours.

Age

Children ages 12 and up are welcome on group trips. Children under 12 are welcome on private tours. Please contact us with any questions.

Safety & Security

To maximize your safety during our tours you should exercise common sense and caution at all times. We recommend that you always stick to set travel arrangements and avoid unknown areas. We also recommend that you wear minimal jewelry and that you keep valuable items (including cell phones) safely stored. Always keep a copy of your passport, airline tickets, and credit card numbers separate from where you keep the originals.

For more information on safety and security in Cuba, please review the safety and security section of the following webpage: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/cuba.html

Note: As a rule, do not drink tap water or use unfiltered ice in Cuba, even in hotels. We strongly recommend buying bottled water. Eating uncooked or unpeeled fruits and vegetables can also be a potential risk if they have been washed in tap (unfiltered) water. Please eat street food at your discretion.
CURRENCY, BANKING & SPENDING MONEY IN CUBA

Converting CAD or Euro to the Convertible Peso

The local currency is the Cuban Peso (CUP). Tourists are required to use an official tourist currency, known as the Convertible Peso (CUC). Cubans can use either CUP or CUC. The value of the Convertible Peso (CUC) is pegged to the US dollar, however when exchanging US dollars to CUC, you will lose 13% to Cuban taxes and exchange fees. Please consider bringing Canadian dollars or Euros to exchange instead, as they are not subject to the same taxes and fees as US dollars. Please see more below.

Cash vs Credit Cards in Cuba

Although there are some American banks that offer credit cards for use in Cuba, credit card service is still not widely accepted in private Cuban businesses. There are also issues with connection to servers (due to the lack of internet access). Therefore, please be prepared to bring as much cash as you need to cover all personal expenses. We recommend exchanging $600-$1200 US dollars (per person) into Canadian dollars or Euros which you will exchange into Convertible Pesos in Cuba. $600 is the approximate minimum amount needed for non-included meals (at moderately priced restaurants) and services. If you plan to purchase many souvenirs, rum, cigars, artwork, enjoy evening shows, or dine at higher end restaurants, you should consider bringing closer to the $1200 range.

Exchanging Money in Cuba

If the airport currency exchange office is closed when you arrive in Havana, your guide will provide you with local currency for your first evening in Cuba. The following morning the guide will bring the group to an exchange office to change money into CUC. There is often a long line at the exchange counters, so we recommend exchanging as much money as you think you will need for the entire tour at this time. If you choose not to, please let your tour guide know when you need to exchange more and the group will make another stop later in the tour. Please see above for spending money recommendations.

Spending Money

Please see above for specific recommendations on budgeting for spending money.

We provide bottled water during tour activities. In addition, bottled water and other beverages are usually available for purchase in most guest houses. Payment for any extra beverages is generally due upon checkout. We recommend keeping track of what you buy. At the end of your stay, if there are any discrepancies, please let your guide know and they will help clear up any possible confusion.

Meals: All breakfasts, lunches, and dinners are included. Please plan to budget additional money for snacks, drinks, and bottled water.

All of the paladars included in our itinerary are privately-owned. Some of our guests have expressed an interest in trying a government-run restaurant. These restaurants generally lack the service and quality of privately-owned paladars. However, if you would like to experience one, please ask your guide for a recommendation. Your guides are happy to help you arrange transportation and make reservations, however, the average Cuban does not have the luxury of eating out and they may not be able to provide a multitude of recommendations.

Tipping
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Restrooms: Most public restrooms are staffed and a tip of 0.25 CUCs are expected. Please ask your guide if you are in need of a small coin to tip the attendant.

Tour Staff: We pay all of our providers a fair wage for their services, however, tipping is prevalent in Cuba and most people in the hospitality industry view a tip as an affirmation of a "job well done". If you receive exceptional service and choose to tip providers, here are some guidelines:

Salsa instructor: 3-5 CUC per guest
Bartender at the happy hour dinner: 2-5 CUC per guest
Discretionary Tips for Guides & Drivers: We recommend 10 CUC per guest, per day (60 CUC total per guest) for the guide and 5 CUC per guest, per day (30 CUC total per guest) for the driver. If you have more than one guide or driver, please divide the 60 CUC (guide tips) and 30 CUC (driver tips) between them as you see fit.

Other expenses: You should also plan to take spending money for incidentals such as taxi rides during your free time, internet cafes, souvenir shopping and nightlife, or for street musicians or people you take photographs of.

Helpful Hints

You will need your passport to exchange money.

Please keep all exchange receipts. You may need to show them when you convert back at the end of the tour.

For the latest currency exchange information please go to: http://www.finance.yahoo.com/currency

There are no longer monetary restrictions on bringing Cuban alcohol and/or tobacco products (for personal consumption) into the US. There is no value limitation on bringing informational materials (including art, books, magazines, CDs, DVDs) to the US.

Please click here for more information on importing goods from Cuba on the US Customs and Border Protection website.

CUBAN CULTURE

Cuba is known for its distinct Caribbean culture with influences from Spanish, African, and French traditions. The people are warm, engaging and passionate about sharing their culture with tourists as well as learning about other cultures. It is part of Cuban culture to serve an abundance of food at meals, in both homes and restaurants. It is one of the many ways that Cubans show generosity and hospitality to their guests. They do not expect that everything will be eaten and ensure that no food goes to waste.

Most people are open to being photographed but it is courteous to ask first. Also, if you are photographing a street performer or someone in a working environment, it is appropriate to give a small tip, 1 CUC.

Cuba is a communist society and many of the businesses are owned by the government. The government has allowed some recent entrepreneurial reforms that have led to a rise in innovation and customer service levels in privately-owned businesses, such as restaurants and guesthouses. With that said, there are still many things not available in Cuba as a
consequence of both the US embargo and Cuban government restrictions.

Language

Most Cubans speak Spanish only and occasionally some will speak English.

CUBA’S CLIMATE

Cuba has two seasons, rainy (May-Oct) and dry (Nov-Apr). In the dry season you can expect sunny, warm and humid weather, with average daytime temperatures between 75F and 85F and nighttime temperatures between 65F and 70F. The rainy season is slightly warmer (average daytime temperatures between 85F and 90F, average nighttime temperatures between 70F and 75F) and more humid, with a greater likelihood of rain and thunderstorms.

Notes:

June to November is considered hurricane season, with September and October historically seeing the highest number of hurricanes, although many years have no hurricane activity. We do run tours during this season and if you book a tour during this period you should be aware that, although unlikely, hurricanes could disrupt the normal tour itinerary.

Please check specific weather for your dates before you travel. You may consider a website such as Weather.com.

ELECTRICITY & INTERNET IN CUBA

Cuba mainly uses the same electrical plugs and voltage as in the United States (110 V/60 Hz). However, there are a few guesthouses that do use European style outlets, so it is a good idea to bring a universal adapter just in case.

Internet access is not widely available and you will likely need to visit an internet cafe or hotel to stay connected. Also, even with internet access, certain websites and apps, like Skype, may not be available.

Cable TV stations may not have US or international stations.

Most major phone carriers have expanded their cell phone service to include Cuba. However some may still not work in Cuba and even with coverage, service may be unreliable. Please do not expect to be able to make or receive non-emergency calls. Please contact your carrier for more specific information and fees.

WHAT TO TAKE ON YOUR CUBA TOUR

We strongly recommend using TSA approved luggage locks on your bags and to hand carry valuables on the plane.

In general, we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible. There may not always be someone available to help you carry your bags so you should only bring as much as you can carry on your own up a flight of stairs. Some of our Cuba guests prefer to bring just a carry-on, as it can significantly speed up your arrival at Havana’s airport.
Laundry services are available at most accommodations.

We suggest that you bring the following items:

**Clothing & Equipment**

- Warm weather casual clothes (Cubans dress very casually and the emphasis is on comfort)
- Slightly nicer clothing for upscale restaurants
- Bathing suit (some guesthouses may have a pool)
- A pair of comfortable walking shoes and sandals. Rainy season can be muddy so closed-toe shoes are a good choice. A light jacket/fleece/raincoat (It can be breezy in Havana in the evenings.)
- An umbrella (for shade and/or rain protection)
- Toiletries (Please bring all the toiletries you need, including shampoo and soap, as they are not readily available for purchase in Cuba.)
- Toilet paper and hand sanitizer (for public restrooms) **Note: No paper products can be put in any toilets in Cuba.**
- Hair dryer
- Sunscreen, sunglasses and hat
- Bug repellent with DEET
- Over-the-counter steroid or antihistamine cream for possible bug bites/stings (like AfterBite®)
- First-aid kit with lip balm, aspirin, band aids, Imodium or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhea
- An extra amount of prescription drugs you may be taking
- Travel laundry detergent
- Universal travel plug adapter
- Optional gifts for Cubans: gum, pens, travel toiletries, batteries, or unopened over-the-counter medications (Advil, Tylenol, Antacids), dried spices & herbs

**Travel Documents**

- Passport (with photocopies)
- Travel insurance (with photocopies)
- Travel visa (sometimes referred to as an entry card or tourist visa)
- This document, printed

**RECOMMENDED TRIP RESOURCES**

We strongly recommend that you bring a map of Havana with you on your trip. Here are two suggestions:

Available on Amazon: [Street Smart Travel Map by Van Dam](#)

Available on iTunes and Google Play: OsmAnd Maps. (This is a free app where you can download a map to your phone for use offline.)

[Click here to check out our recommended reading list!](#)

Also, you will be dining at La Guarida, which is featured in the film [Fresa y Chocolate (Strawberry and Chocolate)](#). You might consider watching it before you go!

**FINAL NOTES ON YOUR CUBA CULINARY TOUR**
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Please keep in mind that Cuba is still a developing nation whose service standards, timeliness, available resources, and cultural norms may differ from our own. It is also an adventurous destination where things do not always go as planned - in fact they often do not go as planned. We urge you to bring a flexible attitude and a sense of humor on your Cuba tour. This trip reflects our best planning, but there may be times when we have to substitute different activities and accommodations. That is la aventura Cubana - the Cuban adventure!

This is a tool meant to help you decide what you should bring on your upcoming trip. It is by no means comprehensive. While we do our best to be as thorough as possible, we cannot foresee every possible condition. If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

The information contained in this document is provided in good faith. Due to the nature of travel, details in this document may change. You should thus use the above information as an indication only and not as a contractual obligation on the part of Access Culinary Trips.