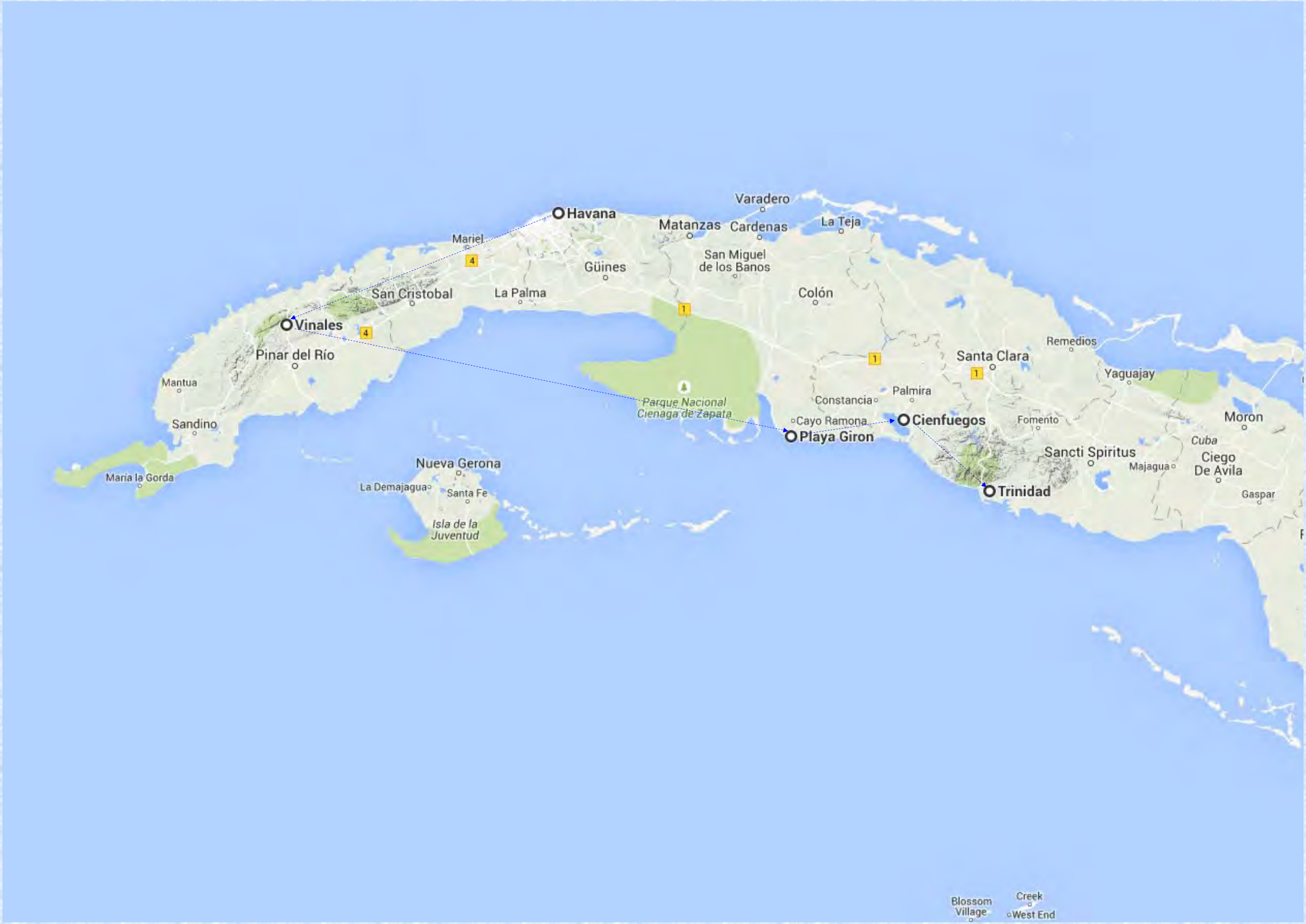
- Cuba explored, Laterally -

laterallife

Because I've always wanted to...


Havana
Varadero
Matanzas
Cardenas
La Teja
Mariel
Güines
San Miguel
de los Banos
San Cristobal
La Palma
Colón
Vinales
Pinar del Río
Mantua
Sandino
Parque Nacional
Cienaga de Zapata
Remedios
Santa Clara
Yaguajay
Palmira
Constancia
Cayo Ramona
Cienfuegos
Playa Giron
Fomento
Moron
Cuba
Sancti Spiritus
Majagua
Ciego
De Avila
Trinidad
Gaspar
Maria la Gorda
Nueva Gerona
La Demajagua
Santa Fe
Isla de la
Juventud
Blossom
Village
Creek
West End

In a Nutshell…

Day 1, - Fly from the UK to Cuba. Saratoga Hotel.

Day 2, - Cigar Factory, Mafia Tour & Colonial Havana City Tour. Saratoga Hotel.

Day 3, - Havana's Architecture & Art. Cigars & Rum tasting. Saratoga Hotel.

Day 4, - Transfer to Viñales. Casa Naveda.

Day 5, - Journey to Cienfuegos, via Playa Giron. Casa Verde.

Day 6, - Cienfuegos City Tour. Transfer to Trinidad. Finca Kenia.

Day 7, - At leisure / Topes de Collantes Walk. Finca Kenia.

Day 8, - Departure. Overnight flight.

Day 9, - Arrive in the UK.

Flights…

Date	Airline & Flight Number	From	Departs	To	Arrives	Class
DAY 1	TBC	LGW	TBC	HAVANA	TBC	TBC
DAY 8	TBC	HAVANA	TBC	LGW	TBC DAY 9	TBC

Your Recommended Itinerary...

Day 1, - Fly from the UK to Cuba.
Fly from London to Havana.

Upon arrival at Havana airport you will be welcomed by an airport representative that will guide you through customs into the VIP lounge to wait for your luggage to come out. A lateral**life** representative, Juan Carlos, will be waiting for you as you exit into arrivals for your private transfer from José Martí airport to Saratoga Hotel for a 3 night stay.

Your guide will welcome you at the Hotel and go through your itinerary and make suggestions of places to see and things to do.

Any Cuban journey must start in **Havana**. Her faded beauty is legendary – this is hands down the most winsome city in the Caribbean, and one of the top five scrumptious Latin American honies too. It's also rising up from its ruins: a chunk of the tourist money that has hit the Cuban coffers over the last two decades has been showered on sprucing up Habana Vieja, the old colonial centre. Once fortified against the threat of pirates and colonial rivals, the seductive city has risen from the ashes with the painstaking restoration work of city architect Eusebio Leal, who had to bring some restoration artisans out of retirement to realise his dream and pass their wisdom on to the next generation.

Cobbled streets lead to now immaculately polished Baroque churches, castles and palaces. Plazas have been returned to their former glory, their fountains flowing once more, their facades re-rendered attentively. Along the seafront of Havana, the malecón, the strains of salsa waft from the rebooted sound systems of vintage Cadillacs and Buicks, and the facades of grandiose seafront buildings are being slowly resurrected. Admittedly, the restoration money hasn't quite reached most of the rest of the city yet. Just west of Habana Vieja, the gritty working class district of Centro Habana is a picture of ruined, rutted beauty, and the well-heeled districts of Vedado and Miramar, west again, are more peeling and faded than salubrious cousins in more solvent cities.

Street life in Havana is key: on-the-ground socialising is the top Cuban pastime, whether that's domino playing, gossiping, or arguing loudly about baseball, so from the Havana belles to the beauteous buildings, there is always something to captivate and beguile. There is also something to do in Havana as well. There are realms of museums and cultural spaces, and you can enjoy virtuoso ballet, Afro Cuban dance, flamenco, jazz and timba. After years of boredom on the restaurant scene, a panoply of new private restaurants, paladares, are pushing the envelope on the culinary scene as the government loosens the laws governing small business start-ups.

The nightlife is exuberant: think alfresco salsa clubs, plentiful life music venues and troubadour sessions. Just outside town, Las Playas del Este offers a sneak preview of Cuba's legendary turquoise water-and-white-sand beaches.

Finally, the hotels are a draw: choose from faded art deco grande dames, colonial boltholes, contemporary international chains, and a plethora of villas.

Dinner tonight is suggested at **Chef Ivan Justo**. The style of the place is thoroughly Mediterranean, located on the second and third floors of a building that

must be 200 years old. There is a comfortable, airy feel to the restaurant which serves Spanish influenced Cuban cuisine. The meat dishes are hearty and flavoursome and the fish sourced fresh everyday. Leave room for the gorgeous Cuatro Leches dessert! *Address: Aguacate 9, Esquina Chacon. Havana Vieja. Tel: 863 9697*

Accommodation: Saratoga Hotel.
Meals: None.

Day 2, - Cigar Factory, Mafia Tour & Colonial Havana City Tour.
Today's schedule:

09:00 - Cigar Factory Tour.
Admire the skill with which the experts hand-roll those famous Montecristos and Cohibas at one of Havana's oldest cigar factories.

10:00 - Mafia tour - Havana; The Gangsters' Paradise of the 50's
Since the 1930's Havana was replete with mobsters. Meyer Lansky, Lucky Luciano, Al Capone to name but a few. This tour visits the haunts of the mafia bosses and along the way takes in the panoramic views of the city and some of the best architecture of this period.

12:00 - We recommend having lunch at **Doña Eutimia**. Traditional Cuban creole cuisine served with a smile by the team at Nao. The eclectic decoration makes for an interesting ambience. *Address: Obispo No 1 e/San Pedro y Baratillo. + 537 867 3463*

15:00 - Colonial Havana City Tour
Walk in the footsteps of Havana's colonial past visiting the 4 plazas of Old Havana, a UNESCO world heritage site. Visit Plaza de Armas, Plaza San Francisco de Asis, Plaza Vieja and Plaza de la Cathedral with our expert guide offering insightful history along the way.

18:30 - We suggest having drinks at **Fabrica del Arte**. A meeting place where the best of the island's avant-garde arts can be enjoyed with all the artistic manifestations under the same roof and with prices making it accessible to the majority of Cubans, this is a place where everyone is an artist.

19:30 - Dinner recommendation: **El Cocinero** - Great private restaurant located in parts of an old industrial factory. Reservations are recommended as the place is often fully booked. A slightly different menu on the rooftop bar to the restaurant downstairs. For Cuban standards, the food is excellent, especially in the downstairs restaurant. Very nicely designed space, both inside and outside. All in all probably one of the best restaurant experiences you can find in Havana. *Address: 26 entre 11y13. Tel: (537) 8322355*

21:30 - Buena Vista Style Show at Sociedad Cultural Rosalia de Castro (Optional - to be paid locally)
See this Buena Vista Social Club inspired music show at this venue in the crumbling but atmospheric part of Havana Vieja. The building is a restored 18th Century beauty and adds to the historic atomosphere that the music creates. These retiried members of the world famous social club for musicians in Havana will transport you to the golden era of Son music. *Address: Edifico 504 Altos e/ Monte y Dragones. Tel: +53 78611766*

Accommodation: Saratoga Hotel.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 3, - Havana's Architecture & Art. Cigars & Rum tasting.
Today's schedule:

10:00 - Architecture Tour
Take a tour of the wonderful architecture of Havana from Baroque To 50s Modernism with a local architect guide.

13:00 - Lunch is recommended at **La Cocina de Lilliam**. Everyone's favourite restaurant in Havana. Delicious food served in a lovely tropical garden: what more could you want? Charming exquisite service? Well you've got that too in spades! *Address: Calle 48 1311, between 13 and 15, Playa. Tel: +(537) 209 6514*

15:00 - Art tour - Emerging art
If you´re interested in emerging Cuban artists – and any serious aficionado or collector should be, Havana´s Higher Institute of Art is a hot house of talent right now. Many students not yet graduated are producing extraordinary work. Not yet capable of mounting personal shows, our expert will be able to bring you to their home studios to meet these raw talents and enjoy their works up close and personal. This a real insider's view of art.

19:00 - We suggest having drinks at **Bar El Floridita.** Drinks at Hemingway's haunt and birthplace of the Daiquiri made (if you are lucky) by our favourite Cuban bartender, Jesus Rodriguez Fernandez. *Address: Calle Obispo #557, esquina Belgica (Monserate) Tel: + 53 7 867 1299*

20:30 - Restaurant recommendation for dinner: **La Guarida**. Enrique and Odeisys Nuñez first opened what has become Cuba's most celebrated paladar on July 14, 1996. Anyone who has been to La Guarida will find it difficult to disagree that Enrique and Odeisys have managed to create their own magical place. To be paid locally. *Address: Concordia No. 418 e/ Gervasio y Escobar,Centro Habana. Tel: +53 7866 9047*

21:30 - Cigar Reinces
A cigar expert will join you for a pre paid Rum and cigar tasting in a restaurant of your choice The tour will be 1.5 to 2 hours and he or she will pair your cigar with a good rum and explain How cigars are made and smoked. (Include one Aged Rum and one Cigar)

Accommodation: Saratoga Hotel.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 4, - Transfer to Viñales.
Today at 08:30 you are collected from your hotel and transferred to Viñales. Check in at Casa Naveda for your overnight stay.

Vinales Valley - To the west of Havana, the rolling green hills of Pinar de Río commence. This is tobacco-growing country, with an old fashioned agrarian economy. Farmers trot down dusty tracks in spurs, plough the rust-red earth with oxen and sow seeds by hand. The valley of Viñales, spiked with karst limestone peaks,

is a hypnotically beautiful Eden and its eponymously named little town is one of the best weekenders near Havana.

Here, a functioning private-sector tourist economy means that old-fashioned country Cuban life has been spruced up for international consumption (in a good way): the porches are recently painted, the people are cheerful and well fed, and an array of farmyard animal cluck and oink happily in backyard pens. For visitors, biking, caving and horse riding in the valley are the main events. Then you return to your casa particular to enjoy a mojito while rocking on the porch, bookended by a delicious home cooked meal.

The nearest beach centre from here is little Cayo Levisa to the north. Cabanas (33 of them) pepper the 3km beach of powdery white sand and the waters are lusciously aquamarine. Snorkelling, diving, and slumping on a beach lounger reading Hemingway while slurping mojitos are the required activities or you can join excursions, to distant, more deserted, keys. Mosquitoes can be irritating at night, but that's Cuban beach life for you.

11:00 - Vinales Specialist Private Day Trip
Explore the unique geology and nature of the Viñales valley with a trip on an underground river and an exploration of caves and the famous Mogotes. Your guide, a native of the valley, will take you into the heart of the lush countryside, explaining the history of tobacco growing as you walk. You'll visit the tobacco plantations where they still plough with Oxen, see the famous drying houses and have a tobacco farmer show you how to roll a cigar.

13:30 - Restaurant reservation at **Finca Wilfredo** (payable locally). Overlooking the valley of Vinales, this agro - ecological farm is at the vanguard of sustainable production. The family decided to go organic 7 years ago and opened the tiny restaurant just over 2. You'll be served fresh organic produce from their farm and with wonderful flavours. They are inventive with ingredients and warm and passionate about their project. Bring mosquito repellant as the veranda of the house is open and they have been known to bite! After lunch Arian will organise transport for you to go back to your casa.

22:00 - Live Music - Centro Polo Montañez (Optional)
Named for the late Pinar del Río resident-turned-guajiro hero, Polo Montañez, this open-to-the-elements patio off the main plaza is a bar-restaurant with a full-blown stage and lighting rig that comes alive after 9pm.

Accommodation: Casa Naveda.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 5, - Journey to Cienfuegos, via Playa Giron.
At 08:30 you are collected and transferred from Vinales to Cienfuegos, with a stop en route in Playa Giron. The journey takes approximately 4.5 hours.

12:30 - Lunch is suggested at **Casa Ronel**. A hearty lunch prepared using fresh local ingredients by Ronel and his wife Evette. To be paid locally.

14:00 - (Optional) Snorkeling at Playa Girón
For those who are looking for underwater adventure, Ronel is a certified Dive Guide and SCUBA Instructor who has been diving professionally since 1986. He leads snorkeling adventures for every level of experience. His passion is sharing

the pristine underwater world of Playa Girón, one of Cuba's best kept secrets! (Ronel makes his house available for a shower afterwards.)

Playa Giron - The vast Zapata Peninsula is an uninhabited swamp that's catnip for birdwatchers, fishermen, scuba divers and lovers of the wilderness. This is arguably Cuba's top birding spot, with 18 of the 24 endemic Cuban bird species calling Zapata home, such as the tiny bee hummingbird. Fishing is huge, with many aficionados returning time and time again to catch bass, trout, tilapia, bonefish and more in the mangroves and saltwater flats, the rivers and lagoon. Some of Cuba's best diving can be found off Playa Larga and Playa Girón; the area is sponge and coral rich, with huge drop-offs. At its eastern perimeter is the Bay of Pigs – Bahía de Cochinos – a crucial place in the national consciousness as the site of the failed 1961 USA-backed invasion of Cuba. The little Museo Playa Girón is where you can find out all about the invasion and check out tank wrecks, plus a fallen US plane. There is one hotel on Playa Larga and Playa Girón each; the latter is superior to the Soviet blocks on Playa Larga, but generally there are better hotels – and better beaches – in Cuba, so a trip to Zapata is usually reserved for committed naturalists and lovers of the Cuban wilderness, as opposed to sybarites.

16:00 - Later this afternoon continue your journey to Cienfuegos for about 3 hours. On arrival check it al Casa Verde.

Cienfuegos on Cuba's south coast is a pleasant colonial gem (with pockets that look distinctly like 1950s Floridian suburbia) on a splendid bay where dolphins frolic (we can arrange for you to swim with them, if you like). Its private restaurants, or paladares, are known for their seafood, and other attractions are the magical Botanical Gardens, and the old fashioned beauty of its facades (don't miss the beautiful Catedral de la Purísma Concepción). Its marina is also the embarkation point for many catamaran excursions to the southern keys near Cayo Largo. Other than that, there is not a lot else to do but soak up the pleasant provincial atmosphere. On the Paseo del Prado, the longest street in Cuba, people-watching and ice cream consumption seems to be the main event.

Cienfuegos was settled late for Cuba in 1819, so streets are spacious and civilised. It remains old fashioned and laid back, and horse drawn carriage seems the most common form of transport. An American planter Edwin Atkins created the Botanical Gardens, in the outskirts of town, in the early 1900s with the help of Harvard professors Oakes Ames and George Goodale. These days they are little visited and the guides are keen to show you their little-visited Eden of more than 2,000 species of tropical plants, which you are likely to have all to yourself.

20:00 - We recommend having dinner at **Villa Lagarto**. With spectacular views of Cienfuegos harbour, Mailin and her friendly staff are welcoming and produce tasty, fresh Criolla cuisine. *Address: Calle 35 No. 4B, between O and Litoral. La Punta, Punta Gorda. Cienfuegos. Tel: 043-519966*

Accommodation: Casa Verde.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 6, - Cienfuegos City Tour. Transfer to Trinidad.
Today's schedule:
09:00 - Cienfuegos City Tour

This city tour includes a visit to Jose Marti Park with an explanation of the history and architectural style, a visit to Tomas Terry Theatre, to local markets around the Boulevard and a visit to Palacio del Valle.

11:00 - You are transferred approximately 1 hour from Cienfuegos to Trinidad. On arrival check in at Finca Kenia for a 2 night stay.

Trinidad is far and away the most handsome town in Cuba, with multi coloured pastel hued terraces and rust-red roofs. This fertile land of mountain and sea has always brought wealth to lucky locals. In the colonial area, especially between 1750 and 1850, sugar cane was huge, and fabulously rich Spanish families raised gorgeous mansions around Trinidad's main square off the back of their sugar mills in the valley. Now their descendant rent rooms out to hordes of visiting foreigners. Mountain and sea collide around the Topes de Collantes, producing rich soil for crops.

As produce is bountiful, so the home-cooked food has always been superior, even in bad economic times. As the state restaurants in this town are below par, investigate the private restaurants – paladares – even the meals offered by your own casa particular, or that of other visitors you encounter. Bell towers intersperse the picture-book houses, offering winning views to mountain and the hazy coast. It's a short drive from Trinidad to Playa Ancon, one of the loveliest beaches on the island, and if you can cope with all-inclusive hotels, it's possible to stay there too, though day trips are the better alternative.

13:00 - Restaurant recommendation: **La Botija**. A recently opened 24 hour bar and restaurant in the historic part of the city. Great tapas and salads in a chilled out ambience. The music by local young jazz inspired trovadors is worth the visit alone. *Address: 71B Calle Amarggura, Trinidad Tel: (53) 5283 0147*

15:00 - Trinidad City Tour
This walking tour offers you an introduction to Trinidad a UNESCO world heritage site. Our local expert guide will talk you through the history of the town by visiting its architectural high points and give you some insight into its complex history both in the colonial period and in the years after the revolution. Wear comfortable shoes, as although quaint, the cobbled streets are not for heels! Your guide will meet you at your casa.

Accommodation: Finca Kenia.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 7, - At leisure / Topes de Collantes Walk.
Spend the day at your leisure. Alternatively we recommend the Topes de Collantes Walk.

09:00 - Topes de Collantes Walk (Optional)
Visit Cuba's beautiful nature park, Topes de Collantes, which is 200 sq. kilometres and a protected area. This is a place of extraordinary beauty and of great scientific value for Cuban botanany, zoology and ecology as it has a great number of endemic species of flora and fauna.

Accommodation: Finca Kenia.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 8, - Departure.
After breakfast spend some time at your leisure. Later you will be transferred to Havana airport for your overnight flight back to London.

Note on VIP Departure: Please don't rely on the monitors in the VIP departure lounge to give accurate information. Its best to check with the airport staff also to keep up to date with your departure time!

Accommodation: Overnight flight.
Meals: Breakfast.

Day 9, - Arrive in the UK.
Welcome home!

- - - - -

Laterally sleeping...

Hotel Saratoga, Havana
The Hotel Saratoga is an elegant building newly reconstructed in neoclassical/eclectic style that lies at the heart of an attractive corner in Old Havana, between Paseo del Prado and Dragones Street. With grand views of the Capitolio building, Parque de la Fraternidad and the prestigious Partagas Cigar Factory and Cuba's principal opera house, the Gran Teatro de La Habana. Since its renovation, The Saratoga is a favorite for writers, musicians, artists and socialites from Cuba and overseas.

Casa Naveda, Vinales
Casa Naveda is a charming, private and renovated apartment in a classic colonial house. Located on the main street of Vinales, only 3 blocks from main square and downtown. Close to Don Tomas Restaurant. Private entrance, 2 completely new rooms with most facilities, back terrace with mountain view and excellent cuisine. Ask Neive, our charming host, for a welcome drink!

Also included: air-conditioning, private bathroom, private terrace and garden and supervised parking. The room has a fridge, hair dryer, private entrance and English is spoken.

Casa Verde, Cienfuegos
The Hotel Casa Verde is located in the well-known residential area of Punta Gorda, at the south of Cienfuegos City. This hotel is a symbol of the authentic heritage monuments of Cienfuegos City obtained from the symbiosis of these stylish properties with the sea. The building is part of a project that has been started with the goal of restoring old buildings that have cultural or architectural significance, these buildings are often located in historic areas of the city. The Hotel Casa Verde has eight comfortable rooms to offer, and each room has new modern services, even with this modernization, the rooms still have the old colonial charming style. The hotel is so small is nice because it makes your stay feel more like an experience at a private venue, you will know the staff by name and they will strive to help you in every way that you need.

Finca Kenia, Trinidad
Finca Kenia is one of the oldest houses in Trinidad, built in the second half of the nineteenth century on the edge of Santa Rosa Valley. It has spacious rooms, with a stylish, modern design within a natural and rustic setting. The large garden and back yard looks out on the ruins of a colonial fort. Each room is air conditioned and is ensuite and has a pretty private sitting area outside the front of the room with table, chairs, rocking chairs and sometimes even a hammock

The Nitty Gritty...

What's Included...

- All accommodation on a twin/double share basis with private facilities
- Breakfast throughout, other meals as specified
- Private excursions and transfers including entrance fees
- English speaking guides on excursions
- VIP airport service

What's Not Included...

- Items of a personal nature - phone calls, laundry, minibar etc
- Gratuities & Porterage
- Early check-in / late check-out
- Departure taxes
- Excess baggage fees
- Beverages during meals
- Insurance cover
- Visas

How to Proceed...

Once you are in agreement with the itinerary, we ask for a deposit representing 30% of the trip cost unless noted otherwise together with a signed booking form which will be emailed to you for completion. The balance of the trip is due 90 days prior to your departure date.

For payment of ground arrangements we ask that you arrange a direct bank transfer or send us a cheque.

For payment of any international flights, we ask for a debit (no surcharge) or credit card (surcharge applies) which will then be processed through our flight issuing agent and financially protected under their ATOL or IATA licences.

...Yours Laterally

lateral**life specialises in...**

Executive Sabbaticals
Complex itineraries worldwide
Creative Honeymoons
Milestone birthdays & anniversaries
Family reunions

Not so small print...

lateral**life** will do all possible to confirm arrangements as per the agreed itinerary. In the event of any change we will notify you at once with a suitable alternative. The total trip price may change due to variables beyond our control such as force majeure, weather conditions, political conditions and events. When you are on-trip, you will be provided with 24 hour emergency contacts both in the country you are visiting and at lateral**life** in the UK. Our full terms and conditions are on our website.

Financial Protection

The Inspirational Travel Company LTD is a company committed to customer satisfaction and consumer financial protection. We are therefore pleased to announce that, at no extra cost to you, and in accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Inspirational Travel Company LTD are fully insured for the initial deposit, and subsequently the balance of monies paid as detailed in your booking confirmation form. The policy will also include repatriation if required, arising from the cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Inspirational Travel Company LTD. This insurance has been arranged with MGA Cover Services Limited (registered address Farren House The Street, Farren Court Cowfold West Sussex RH 13 8BP, company registration: 08444204 authorized and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority registration number 597536) under a binding authority with the insurer CBL Insurance Europe Limited (registered address 2nd Floor 13-17 Dawson Street Dublin 2 Ireland, who are authorized and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority registration number 203120).

In the unlikely event of Insolvency you must Inform MGA Cover Services Limited immediately on +44 (0) 20 3540 4422. Please ensure you retain this booking confirmation form as evidence of cover and value.

Policy exclusions: This policy will not cover any monies paid back to you by your Travel Insurance or any losses which are recoverable under another insurance or bond.

laterallife

Contact Me...
lateral**life** Region Specialist: Steve Wilson
1-5 Offord Street, London N1 1DH W: www.laterallife.com
E: stevewilson@laterallife.com T: 0207 607 1943 M: 07746 370062