



# MEJDI TOURS

**CUBA: Religion, Politics, Art, Music, Architecture and More**  
Temple Emanuel, St. Louis, MO  
10-Day, 9-Night Tour of Cuba  
December 6-15, 2016



**Day 1, Tuesday, December 6, 2016: Arrival**

- Catch an early morning flight from St. Louis to Miami. (not included)
- Group flight to Cuba
- Meet and greet with the guide.
- Transfer to the hotel.
- Welcome dinner.

*Hotel:* Santa Clara [D]

**Day 2, Wednesday, December 7, 2016: Santa Clara**

- Begin the day with an introduction to American-Cuban relations, which are reflected in a series of comic book-style murals.
- Learn all about Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution at the Che Guevara Museum and Mausoleum and/or as an open-air museum at the site of a 1958 battle between Che Guevara and 18 supporters and some 370 government troops aboard an armored train car.

- Have lunch at NaturArte, a community project that transformed an empty lot filled with garbage into one of Santa Clara's most beautiful sites. Community members have taken on the task to reuse materials found on the lot to convert them into either art for the location or as building material for the many different structures within NaturArte.
- Check out the beautiful interior of the Teatro de La Caridad ("Charity's Theater"), one of the few remaining colonial theatres in Cuba.
- Visit the Comunidad Tikun Olam synagogue in Santa Clara, home to a community of approximately 20 Jews. Meet with David Tacher, leader of the Jewish community, and potentially other community members. Present donations.
- See the community's somber Holocaust memorial, located in the town's Jewish cemetery.
- Have dinner with members of the Jewish community.
- Optional evening out at El Mejunje (Spanish for The Mixture), a bohemian and LGBT cultural center, children's theater, bar, and art gallery.

*Hotel:* Santa Clara [B, L, D]

### **Day 3, Thursday, December 8, 2016: Cienfuegos**

- Check out and travel to Cienfuegos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home of Cuba's most spectacular bay.
- Visit Benny More Art School.
- Lunch together.
- Check into the hotel.
- Take a walking tour of Cienfuegos with a city historian.
- Private performance by a local choral group.
- Dinner together.

*Hotel:* Cienfuegos [B, L, D]

### **Day 4, Friday, December 9, 2016: Cienfuegos**

- Enjoy a day on the beach.
- As Shabbat gets in, gather with the small Jewish community in Cienfuegos, present them humanitarian gifts and donation, then have Shabbat services and dinner together.
- Enjoy an in-depth discussion of Jewish life in Cuba.

*Hotel:* Cienfuegos [B, L, D]

### **Day 5, Saturday, December 10, 2016: El Nicho, Trinidad, and Cienfuegos**

- Begin the day with a walk through the nature trails at El Nicho with its scenic waterfalls, clear turquoise-blue pools (there is the possibility to swim), luxuriant vegetation, and splendid views of the valley.
- Continue to Trinidad de Cuba for a tour of this UNESCO World Heritage Site with a local historian. Founded in 1514 by Diego Velazquez, little has changed since this was a sugar town back in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Lunch at your leisure with free time to explore this colonial city and its large craft market.
- See the former home of an 18<sup>th</sup> century sugar baron prior to the collapse of the sugar market later in the century.
- Meet artist Yami Martínez at her gallery where she will speak about her art depicting Cuban women, their invisible labor and their invisible pain.

- Return to Cienfuegos for dinner together at Los Conspiradores paladar.

*Hotel:* Cienfuegos [B, D]

### **Day 6, Sunday, December 11, 2016: Bay of Pigs, Hemingway, and Havana**

- Check out of the hotel.
- Learn about the history of Cuban-American relations while traveling to the Bay of Pigs.
- Time permitting, go snorkeling or scuba diving in the Bay of Pigs.
- In the afternoon, check out Hemingway's home in Cuba (1940-1962), Finca La Vigia, that remains just as he left it before returning to the USA and his sad end.
- Travel to Guanabacoa, a suburb of Havana, for a tour of the Jewish cemetery. Visit the first Holocaust Memorial in Western Hemisphere.
- Arrive in Havana and check into the hotel.
- Have dinner and take in a show at the legendary Tropicana nightclub. Check out of the hotel.

*Hotel:* Havana [B, L, D]

### **Day 7, Monday, December 12, 2016: Havana**

- Tour the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana with the museum's curator of its Cuban art collection who is a member of the Jewish Community. Using art as a lens, he will show Cuba's history and the government's role in the arts.
- Lunch together at Hotel Raquel's "Garden of Eden." The interior of the Hotel reveals references to Jewish culture, along with paintings with biblical themes from Cuban artists.
- Take a guided tour of Old Havana including its many plazas, the Belen neighborhood and Acosta Street. See the former Presidential Palace that now serves as the Museum of the Revolution along with the National Capitol Building. Visit the Orthodox Adath Israel Synagogue, the Kosher butcher shop and the Temple Chevet Achim (Cuba's oldest Synagogue). Learn about Jewish Havana pre and post-revolution.
- Meet Dr. Carlos Alzugaray, is a Cuban diplomat and professor on Cuban-American relations.
- Enjoy the many private restaurants (Paladares).
- Explore the best of Havana nightlife on your own (with suggestions from the guide) or as a group. You can go out salsa dancing to live music, listen to some jazz, or take in a performance with members of the Buena Vista Social Club and Afrocuban All Star, or check out Havana's bar and club scene.

*Hotel:* Havana [B, L]

### **Day 8, Tuesday, December 13, 2016: Havana**

- Visit the new U.S. Embassy in Cuba and meet with an embassy official to discuss U.S. policy toward Cuba and evolving bilateral relations.
- Tour a cigar factory.
- Lunch together.
- Visit the Havana Club Museum of Rum and the adjoining Havana Club Bar. The bartenders here perpetuate the grand tradition of the Cuban "cantineros", with their special know-how in the art of mixing cocktails and taking care of their customers.
- Take in some shopping at the Almacenes San José Artisans' Market.
- If the group will be in Cuba during baseball season, check out a baseball game.

*Hotel:* Havana [B, L]

**Day 9, Wednesday, December 14, 2016: Havana**

- Meet Salvador González Escalona, one of Cuba's top artists with global recognition, in the neighborhood of Cayo Hueso. Salvador's primary interest is in African cultural heritage in Cuba and the Americas. In the crisis-ridden 1990s, without any official assistance and with no money, he created what is today the most celebrated work of public art in Havana, Callejón de Hamel, a vibrant community project that attracts young people of Afro-Cuban descent, Regal de Ocha worshippers, youth movements such as Rastafarians, and tourists from around the world.
- Lunch together.
- Visit Casa de la Comunidad Hebrea de Cuba, El Patronato, the largest synagogue of Havana (Conservative Movement affiliated). Deliver donations. Meet with community leaders for a discussion on Cuban Jewish history and the resurgence of today's community.
- Visit Centro Sefardi, Havana's Sephardic Conservative Movement affiliated synagogue. Deliver donations. See their Holocaust memorial. A senior center is affiliated with this synagogue. Have the opportunity to buy crafts made by some of the seniors to help support the synagogue.
- Stop at Plaza de la Revolucion.
- Meet journalist Marc Frank, author of "Cuba Revelations," and considered to be one of the most informed English language foreign correspondent working in Cuba today.
- Enjoy a festival farewell dinner together.
- Check out Cuba's hottest nightlife at Fabrica de Arte Cubano.

*Hotel:* Havana [B, L, D]

**Day 10, Thursday, December 15, 2016: Fusterlandia**

- Visit Fusterlandia. See the studio, residence and wild kingdom of José Rodríguez Fuster. The northwestern neighborhood of Jaimanitas has changed a lot since Fuster got to town 30 years ago and set about remaking the neighborhood in his own artistic image which draws inspiration from Gaudi's transformation of Barcelona and Brancusi influence in Romania.
- Group transfer to the airport.

[B]