CUBA IN-DEPTH

Our 2nd OLLI Excursion
March 7-21, 2016
Registration Deadline: October 1, 2015

The response to our first Cuba tour was so great that we have scheduled a second opportunity to closely examine our close southern neighbor. This study tour is again offered by OLLI in cooperation with Road Scholar (formerly Elderhostel). This is not just a sightseeing tour. It is an in-depth study of the country, its people, and its culture in the manner that has made Road Scholar such a well-respected travel leader for older adults.
Cuba... a country of great contrasts.... Communist government.... emerging private enterprise.... salsa dancing.... reconditioned 50’s Chevrolets.... old rusted Russian automobiles.... horse drawn carts. The list goes on.

But, substantial change is underway. Our two governments have re-established diplomatic relations, embassies have recently opened in Havana and Washington, DC and regular airline flights between our two countries are about to begin. American investment dollars will soon flow. For many people Cuba may be best known for the faded colonial splendor of Havana, but the island’s real story is told in its small villages, varied landscapes, and Havana itself. Join your OLLI friends in this unique opportunity to explore this island nation, its people, and its culture.

Valden Tours has entered into a travel agreement with Road Scholar to provide our OLLI members the same intensive land and sea visit to Cuba that will be enjoyed by our first group. Join us on our March 7-21 excursion.

THE ITINERARY

Monday, March 7: Depart Omaha’s Eppley Airfield via Delta airlines for a flight to Miami via Atlanta. Arrive mid-afternoon, check into the hotel. Later this afternoon meet the Road Scholar Group Leader for an orientation to the tour, regulations that govern the program, safety procedures, and the itinerary. The included dinner this evening gives an opportunity to become acquainted with our travelling companions. D

Tuesday, March 8: There will be an early departure for the airport and our chartered flight to Holguin City, Cuba. After going through Cuban Customs, meet our Cuban Study Leader who will provide local history and knowledge throughout the program. Overview of the city of Holguin, capital of the third most populous province in Cuba. After lunch in a local restaurant drive north to the coastal village of Gibara. Christopher Columbus called it “the most beautiful land human eyes have ever seen.” Stroll the main town square. People to People connection with workers in the town’s cigar factory to learn why Cuban cigars are world famous. Late afternoon check into our hotel and enjoy dinner in the hotel. B, L, D

Wednesday, March 9: People to People activities at a Health Care Center and Unique Typesetting Workshop. For today’s People to People Connection we will drive to a village in the countryside and meet with doctors, nurses, and other staff at a small family clinic to discuss healthcare in Cuba, learn about their training, and gain insights into the care they provide in this rural area. Dinner will be on your own this evening in a privately owned restaurant in Gibara. This evening stroll the town and visit with Cubans out on their evening walk. B, L

Thursday, March 10: Journey Through Eastern Cuba to Santiago. This morning we journey inland by motorcoach through Holguin province and on to Santiago de Cuba at El Cobre Sanctuary, dedicated to the Patron Saint of Cuba. Here, pilgrims from all over Cuba come to pray and ask for favors of the country’s most cherished saint. Following lunch in a local restaurant we will explore the Castillo de San Pedro de la Roca, better known as El Morro, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as “the most beautiful land human eyes have ever seen.” Stroll the main town square. People to People Connection: Meet a local artist and learn about his work and inspiration. Following lunch, experience a People to People Connection with La Tumba Francesca Pompadour. Meet and interact with the dancers who carry on this Franco-Haitian tradition. The dance, song and drumming style known as “Tumba Francesa” (French drum) was brought to Cuba by Haitian slaves who were resettled in the island’s eastern regions during the 1790s. It embodies one of the oldest and strongest links to Afro-Haitian heritage -- a fusion of music from Dahomey in West Africa and traditional French court dance. La Tumba Francesca is inscribed on the UNESCO’s list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. People to People Connection with the Casa del Changüí. Meet and interact with musicians who play this style of popular Cuban music and see
how each instrument is played. Changüí originated in the early 19th Century, combining elements of Spanish canción with African rhythms and percussion instruments. Return to Santiago.

Your choice for dinner this evening is a local Paladares or the selection of restaurants in the hotel. A list of suggestions will be provided in your program materials. Our hotel again is Melia Santiago de Cuba. B, L

Saturday, March 12: Discover Santiago de Cuba and Board MV Louis Cristal. Field Trip around Santiago de Cuba. The city’s colorful, sometimes turbulent history dates back to 1514 when it was founded by Spanish conquistadors. Stop at the top of San Juan Hill, where Teddy Roosevelt’s Rough Riders won a decisive victory in the Spanish American War. In Revolution Square, learn about the Cuban Revolution. Walk through the Cemeterio Santa Ifigenia, to examine the most impressive monuments to famous Cubans, such as poet and national hero José Martí. Lunch will provide the opportunity to explore private enterprise in Cuba, a Paladar (privately owned restaurant).

Afternoon: During a People to People Connection with members of a community project, learn how their work enables low-income Afro-Cuban children to participate in the arts, and the great need in this neighborhood. Transfer to the port to board the MV Celestial Crystal. Dinner: On board the ship. This evening settle in and begin exploring the ship that will be our floating hotel for the next five nights. The MV Louis Crystal navigates along the northeast coast of Cuba, en route to Havana. B, L, D

Sunday, March 13: At Sea En Route to Havana / Learn Salsa ‘ Meet Cuban Crew. Enjoy a day at sea as we navigate to Havana. During a People to People Connection with Cuban Dance Instructors, learn the most popular national dance – Salsa! As you practice the steps during an exclusive Road Scholar group lesson, take this opportunity for one-on-one conversations with your instructors. This afternoon there will be a presentation by your Study Leader examining aspects of Cuba’s history and culture to deepen your knowledge and understanding. A People to People Connection with Cuban members of the crew provides insight on their lives, their work and what attracted them to working on board a ship. Engage in candid, small group conversations. This evening our ship continues navigating west along the north coast toward Havana. B, L, D

Monday, March 14: In Port in Havana: People to People Activities with a Dance Company ‘ Santeria. The ship arrives in Havana. Disembark and meet your Cuban Study Leader for a full day of exploration. Begin with a People to People Connection with young Cuban dancers who belong to one of Cuba’s prominent modern dance companies. Learn about their training and life as a professional dancer. For lunch, experience Free Enterprise at a Paladar (privately owned restaurant). In a discussion with the owner and staff, learn the challenges and rewards of being a private business owner. This afternoon, make a short stop by the Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña to take in the view of Havana’s skyline. Explore art-filled Callejon de Hamel and during a People to People Connection with practitioners, learn about Santeria, a unique synchronistic religion that evolved as African slaves who were forbidden to practice their native African religion and embraced the outward forms of Christianity without any meaningful change in their beliefs. Witness an interactive music and dance performance by the Santeria deities. Return to Old Havana for a walk with your Cuban expert through the cobblestone streets of the historic quarter. From the Plaza de Armas, surrounded by historic buildings in keeping with the Old Town’s listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to San Francisco de Assisi Square. Return to the ship. Enjoy dinner on board ship, and this evening you may wish to enjoy the city since the ship is docked in the heart of Old Havana. B, L, D

Tuesday, March 15: In Port in the Heart of Old Havana / Dominoes & Private Enterprise. Continue your exploration of Old Havana, as you walk with your Cuban Study Leader through the exquisitely renovated Plaza Vieja. Examine the architecture and learn about the history. Continue to Plaza de la Catedral, then board your private motorcoach. Visit the offices of OnCuba Magazine for a People to People Connection, to learn about the first American business to be authorized in Cuba. Meet the writers and artists featured by the publication for conversation. Enjoy the panoramic views overlooking all of Havana from the office’s advantageous location. Following lunch in a paladar, focus on dominoes, Cuba’s national game, has its own set of rules, played enthusiastically in private and public. More than competition and skill, it is a greatly enjoyed social activity. In this exclusive People to People Connection, meet with members of a local dominoes league to learn the Cuban rules, then play with club members. Teams will rotate and each American will play with one Cuban, talking and getting to know one another during the camaraderie of the game. Return to the ship. This evening the ship departs Havana to navigate west toward remote Maria La Gorda, reputed as one of the best dive sites in Latin America. B, L, D
**Wednesday, March 16: Maria La Gorda.** Your Study Leader delivers a second presentation to deepen your understanding of Cuba. Then engage in conversation with Cuban members of the ship’s crew, to learn about their lives and aspirations during an exclusive People to People Connection. Lunch is on board ship. The afternoon is at leisure to tender ashore to Maria La Gorda or relax on board the ship. Dinner: On board the ship, in the Alberta Prime Steakhouse restaurant. Enjoy the final night aboard ship as you enjoy the warm Caribbean breezes on deck, or take in a performance, as the ship navigates to Cienfuegos. **B, L, D**

**Thursday, March 17: Disembark Ship / Trinidad / Transfer to Santa Clara.** Bid the MV Louis Crystal farewell as we disembark. Meet your Cuban Study Leader for a stroll through the main square of Cienfuegos, to the shopping street where we learn about the differences between Ration, Cuban Pesos, and CUC stores. Explore the complexity of the two-currency system with opportunities to talk with Cubans who work in these stores. Depart to Trinidad, the crown jewel of colonial Cuban cities. Founded in 1514, this time capsule of a city is a mix of historical landmarks and majestic natural beauty. On foot, discover the historical center of Trinidad with your Cuban Study Leader. Walk to Plaza Mayor to explore the historically and architecturally significant landmarks of this colonial town. This afternoon, during a People to People connection, meet artisans at a ceramics studio and learn about their unique family history and traditions. Depart to Santa Clara. Upon arrival, gain insight into a central figure of the Cuban revolution as you explore the Che Guevera Memorial and Museum on a field trip. Late afternoon, check-in at the hotel. This evening enjoy a traditional Pig Roast and buffet in the lovely garden setting near the hotel pool. **B, L, D**

**Friday, March 18: Return to Havana /Organic Farm / Community Project.** Depart Santa Clara and transfer to Havana via private motor coach. En route, discuss current events and daily life with your Cuban study Leader. Lunch: People to People Connection at lunch in the gardens of an organic farm, at a Paladar - a private enterprise restaurant. Afternoon: People to People Connection at an organic farm: Meet with members of a cooperative - a joint venture between the government and private enterprise. Learn about urban agriculture, organic and cooperative farming, and how the farm sells its products. Check in to the hotel. People to People Connection at Proyecto Muraleando. After beginning neighborhood art workshops in 2001, a small group of artists set out to transform their barrio through a “muraling” project. Murals began appearing, and eventually a community-centered event brought together artists, musicians, dancers, singers, actors, poets, and food for a cultural celebration. Meet project members and their families, enjoy dinner that they prepare and serve in this unique setting. This evening you can socialize and enjoy music with the people of the neighborhood. **B, L, D**

**Saturday, March 19: Havana Museum of Fine Arts and Hemingway’s Farm.** Field Trip to the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Museum of Fine Arts). Examine the Cuba’s history through the evolution of art, and the style that has made Cuban art popular around the world. Following lunch in a paladar, Following lunch travel ten miles east of Havana for a field trip to the small, working-class town of San Francisco de Paula where Ernest Hemingway bought a modest house in 1940 and lived for 30 years with his wife Mary. Here he wrote “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” “The Old Man and the Sea,” and “A Movable Feast”. After the writer’s death in 1961, the Cuban government took ownership of the property. Dinner: People to People Connection: As an “appetizer”, enjoy a performance by a choral group. This is an opportunity not only to hear beautiful voices, but to discuss what life is like for women today in Cuba. Then enjoy a farewell dinner. **B, L, D**

**Sunday, March 20: Return Charter Flight to Miami.** Following breakfast at our hotel we will transfer to the Havana airport for our return charter flight to Miami. Since timing for flights varies we are unsure of our return time to Miami. Reservations will be held at a hotel for our overnight. Dinner is on your own this evening. **B**

**Monday, March 21: Return to Lincoln.** This morning we transfer to the Miami airport and an 11:30 a.m. departure for Omaha via Atlanta. We will arrive in Omaha at 5:11 p.m. and return to Lincoln.
LIMITED TIME FOR RESERVATIONS

Since this study tour/cruise is being offered to our OLLI group on an exclusive basis, there is a limited time to secure reservations. If a minimum of sixteen reservations are received prior to October 1, we will be assured this exclusive basis. If there are fewer than sixteen OLLI reservations, Road Scholar may market remaining spaces to its broad clientele. OLLI members may still register following October 1. However, reservations after that time can be accepted only on a space available basis.

Accommodations on this tour are available both on a double occupancy and single occupancy basis. The price includes:

- Roundtrip motorcoach between Lincoln and Omaha Eppley Airport
- Roundtrip airfare between Omaha and Miami
- Roundtrip airfare between Miami and Cuba
- 14 nights accommodations, 36 meals: 13 breakfasts, 12 lunches, 11 dinners
- Two expert led lectures, 13 field trips, 19 hands-on experiences, 4 performances
- Cuban visa

### PRICING OPTIONS - Relating to shipboard accommodations

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<th>ROAD SCHOLAR</th>
<th>VALDEN TOURS</th>
<th>TOTAL PER PERSON</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DOUBLE OCCUPANCY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Deluxe Outside stateroom</td>
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<td>4. Outside stateroom</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$5,298</td>
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| DETAILS FOR ABOVE       |              |              |                 |
| 1. Two lower beds, sofa bed, bathroom with shower, deck 7 | | | |
| 2. Two lower beds, sofa bed, bathroom with shower, deck 4 | | | |
| 3. Two lower beds, sofa bed, bathroom with shower, decks 3 or 5 | | | |
| 4. Two lower beds, bathroom with shower, decks 3 or 5 | | | |
| [5] $250 is non-refundable | | | |
| [6] Lincoln/Omaha motorcoach, roundtrip airfare Omaha/Miami, final night Miami hotel, OLLI fee and Valden Tours overhead | | | |

**NOTE:** Due to the cooperative relationship between Valden Tours and Road Scholar, all payments must be sent to Valden Tours, but a check payable to Road Scholar will be required for their portion of the tour and a separate check to Valden Tours for the items listed in [6] above. This information and accompanying registration form provides the basis for the initial registration information. Additional information will be requested to comply with the Road Scholar licensing agreement with the Cuban government. This information will be forwarded upon receipt of the initial registration form and deposits.

AN INFORMATION MEETING RELATIVE TO THIS TOUR HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR 10:30 A.M., WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, AT NEBRASKA EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS (NET), 1800 NORTH 33RD STREET, LINCOLN. THE MEETING WILL INCLUDE A PRESENTATION BY OLLI MEMBERS WHO RECENTLY VISITED CUBA, AS WELL AS MORE DETAIL ABOUT THE TOUR ITSELF, AND AMPLE OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TOUR.

Participants should be aware that the tour will include moderate walking activities in a tropical climate. Streets in colonial districts are made of uneven cobblestone. Participants must be able to walk unassisted or opt out of the activities that involve a lot of walking. Many stairs at sites do not have railings.
CUBA IN-DEPTH OLLI EXCURSION MARCH 7-21, 2016

RESERVATION FORM

Deadline: October 1, 2015

____________________________________________________________________________

Name(s) as they appear on your U.S. passport

________________________________________________________________________________________

Birth date for TSA regulations   Home telephone   cell telephone   email address

________________________________________________________________________________________

Street Address                                    City                                    State                             Zip code

Accommodations desired:

_____ 1. Deluxe Outside Stateroom  Double occupancy at $6,048 per person
       Sharing with:________________________________

_____ 2. Outside Stateroom  Double occupancy at $5,948 per person
       Sharing with:________________________________

_____ 3. Outside Stateroom  Double occupancy at $5,848 per person
       Sharing with:________________________________

_____ 4. Outside Stateroom  Single occupancy at $6,648

Are you an OLLI member? _____yes _____no. If no, your charges will be increased $25 for each non-member

Individuals requesting assistance under the American Disabilities Act (ADA) should contact Valden Tours at the time this reservation is submitted.

Information concerning trip interruption and cancellation insurance will be forwarded with acknowledgement of this reservation.

This reservation should be accompanied with a deposit of $500 payable to Road Scholar and $100 deposit payable to Valden Tours. The reservation and deposits should be mailed to:

Valden Tours, Inc., 2101 South 66th Street, Lincoln, NE 68506

Questions? Contact Lee Rockwell at lrockwell@windstream.net or call 402-486-0990

Note: All deposits are due with the Reservation form. Final payment is due October 24, 2015. The fee for cancellation up to 120 days prior to the program starting with the date of enrollment through October 4, 2015 is $250. Cancellation between October 5 and October 24 incurs a fee of $500 per person. Cancellation between October 25 and January 2 incurs a fee of 50% of the total tour price. Any cancellation after January 3, 2016 incurs a fee of 100% of the total tour price.

Valden Tours, Inc.