

POLITICALTOURS

Current affairs at first hand

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Cuba – a nation in flux.

Dates:

2019, Saturday 30th November to Saturday 7th December

Cuba's long awaited rapprochement with the United States is under threat as President Trump has rolled back the opening up of ties introduced by his predecessor.

Our tour examines all aspects of Cuban society, its politics, and recent history as it enters this uncertain period. From the backstreets of Havana to the private tobacco plantations of Viñales, where farming has remained unchanged for centuries, we'll travel across the island looking at Cuba's experiments with the market economy. We'll speak to some of the island's most senior independent commentators and experts. And we'll engage in a full itinerary of activities designed for visitors to learn from and directly support the Cuban people.

The Cuban government has opted for political continuity while introducing limited free-market reforms. Ordinary Cubans hanker for greater opportunities, but also want to hold onto the social benefits delivered by the Revolution.

The tour is led by **Michael Bustamante**, a Cuban-American and Miami-based academic, and **Claire Boobyer**, journalist and author of the Frommers Guide to Cuba. Both have worked in Cuba for over a decade.

We talk with international journalists, Cuban academics, independent artists, small business owners, and, above all, ordinary people. We grapple with the issues Cubans face daily and support their enterprises. Key speakers include the FT & Reuters Correspondent, Marc Frank, who is widely regarded as the best international political analyst on the island.

The tour includes all transport, accommodation, as well as dining in privately-run local restaurants.

How will the Revolution confront renewed tensions with its old foe the United States? Join us to gain in-depth and unique insights into this fascinating island state.

Price: £4030.00

Single Supplement: £500.00

This tour offers a first class introduction to a beguiling country that many westerners have viewed largely as a beach break destination. As with all of our expert-led tours, we ensure that our groups remain small and intimate, and will not exceed 14 people. Flights to Cuba aren't included in the tour price and should be arranged by customers themselves or with an agent.

Political Tours Limited Bloxham Mill, Barford Road, Bloxham OX15 4FF, UK.

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As with all of our tours the itinerary focuses on current affairs, and owing to the dynamic nature of politics means that local conditions may lead us adjust the final schedule.

Itinerary

Day One: Havana

Meet at 6.30pm for an introduction to the week ahead with Michael Bustamante and Claire Boobbyer. Dinner at a local café. *Overnight in Havana*

Day Two: Havana

Breakfast before a walking tour of Old Havana with a local architect, who has helped to restore the historic areas of the city. We explore the city's history, efforts to restore it, and the impact on the local population. We'll hear how Fidel Castro came to power, and how the government has endured since the collapse of the Soviet Union almost thirty years ago. After a tapas lunch, we meet with a leading Cuban economist for a discussion of the challenges Cuba's economy faces as it opens up to the world. We then take a ferry across the Bay of Havana, accompanied by one of Cuba's foremost experts on race relations. We visit Regla, a focal point for the Afro-Cuban religions of Santería and the all-male secret Abakua brotherhood. *Overnight in Havana*

Days Three: Viñales

We head out early to Viñales, a small town in the west of the island that is home to fruit and vegetable farming, and more famously the island's tobacco plantations. Most things here are still farmed by hand. Will that change? We'll meet with local farmers in an 'Eco Community' for an overview of Cuban agriculture, including a visit to their local store and health clinic. Lunch is at the island's only authentic vegetarian restaurant, where the owner is a slow food champion and helps to train local youth to become waiters and chefs. Homestay with local families all five minutes walk from the main street in town. *Overnight Viñales*

Day Four: Viñales

Breakfast in your own homestay provides a great chance to find out about everyday life in Cuba and interact with Cuban citizens. We drive south to visit one of the island's most beautiful tobacco plantations which produces some of the best leaves in the country. We meet with local farmers, enjoy a cigar rolling class and lunch. We cap off the day by meeting a historian of the region to hear about local issues, historical and agricultural, and sustainable tourism. Optional night

out for those interested in listening to live music. *Overnight Viñales*

Day Five: Havana

In Artemisa province en route back to Havana, we visit Finca Marta, a privately run organic farm that sells much of its produce directly to private restaurants in Havana. This is an excellent place to see Cuba's experiment with market reforms in action. After lunch we return to Havana and meet with the director of a cultural centre that is the only organisation to offer private individuals training on how to run a business. We'll stroll down to the Prado for dinner in a Soviet-Cuban private restaurant and meet the Ukrainian owner, who has lived in Cuba for two decades. We'll also meet the Russian cook and the son of a Cuban-Soviet marriage. This exchange will provide a look at the Soviet legacy in Cuba. *Overnight in Havana*

Day Six: Havana

This morning we'll meet Reuters bureau chief and author Marc Frank, who has been reporting on Cuba for more than 20 years and visit several privately owned businesses, including Cuba's first private fashion designer. In the afternoon we explore Cuba's thriving independent art scene and meet with local artists. Dinner with the BBC's correspondent in Havana. *Overnight in Havana*

Day Seven: Havana

After breakfast we meet with a professor of architecture at the prestigious Havana Science University, CUJAE. He is working on the transformation of the Bay of Havana. Lunch in an artisanal bread shop, with the Michelin Star chef and baker, who met President Obama on his 2016 visit to Cuba. We delve into Cuba's vibrant music scene by visiting the studio of a local band to hear about their music and activism. Our final dinner is overlooking the sea in Miramar where we look back over the week. Optional visit to the Fabrica de Arte Cubano, an interesting art gallery and nightclub. *Overnight in Havana*

Day Eight: Havana

Tour ends after breakfast.