TRAVEL TO CUBA
A Journey to Explore Cuba’s Coral Reefs, Sea Turtles and People.

Join us from September 9-18, 2014

Join us for a unique exploration of coastal and marine Cuban Travel to Guanahacabibes National Park, the island’s westernmost area and one of the most biologically diverse, pristine and remote nature parks in Cuba. You will assist green sea turtle monitoring efforts, SCUBA dive in some of the healthiest coral reefs in the Caribbean, visit the breathtaking Viñales Valley, and come back with a deep appreciation for Cuba’s incredible ecological riches.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
• Meet Cuban marine scientists and learn more about the island’s coastal ecosystems.
• Participate in a sea turtle monitoring effort where you will see green turtles nesting and hatchlings emerge from their sandy nests.
• SCUBA dive or snorkel on some of the finest reefs in the Caribbean at Maria la Gorda, located on the western tip of Cuba.
• Explore caves and look for birds endemic to this rugged peninsula.
• Meet with farmers and visit Viñales Valley in Cuba’s scenic tobacco growing region.
• Price: $3,530 per person
• Minimum age is 12 years old.
• Includes: Flight from Miami to Havana, guide, activities (including dives), local transportation, two meals per day, and accommodations.
• Excludes: Airfare to Miami, one meal per day, tips, and personal items.

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DAY 1: ARRIVE IN HAVANA
Meet local guides at the Havana airport and head to your hotel in historic Old Havana. Take a walk down the charming pedestrian streets and browse the books for sale. That afternoon, meet for an orientation followed by a welcome cocktail, and have dinner with a group of Cuban scientists working to protect their country’s marine habitats.

DAY 2: HAVANA EXPLORATION
After breakfast, you will be led on a guided tour of the National Museum of Natural History in the heart of Old Havana. During lunch you will meet with a coral reef biologist at the University of Havana, to discuss Cuba’s coral reefs and ask additional questions from your museum visit. In the afternoon you’ll be visiting other fascinating museums and historic sites in the Cuban capital. After dinner you will be treated to a traditional Cuban music show, with an optional dance lesson with expert Cuban teachers.

DAY 3: HAVANA & LAS TERRAZAS
Explore Old Havana and have lunch with the head of the Guanahacabibes Park sea turtle program. Later, you’ll board a comfortable, air-conditioned bus for a two hour drive to Las Terrazas, in Pinar del Rio province, a UNESCO Biosphere reserve and model sustainable community. Stay in a rustic lodge overlooking the Sierra del Rosario mountains.

DAY 4: ON THE WAY TO GUANAHACABIBES: VIÑALES
After breakfast, board the bus and pass through the breathtaking Pinal del Rio landscape. Viñales is the fertile valley where the tobacco for Cuba’s world famous cigars is grown. Viñales is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, famous for its towering mogotes or karst mounds. Every mogote houses its own miniature ecosystem of plants and colorful land snails. Mogotes are steep, isolated limestone formations surrounded by fertile alluvial plains. Stopping for a couple of breaks, you will visit a tobacco plantation and the Centro Cultural Polo Montañez in Viñales, celebrating the life and music of one of Cuba’s most famous traditional music composers. After lunch, you will be treated to one more guided SCUBA dive/ snorkel to further discover the famous coral reefs off Maria la Gorda.

DAY 5: OCEAN EXPLORATION
After breakfast, we’ll reconvene with the marine scientists and visit a turtle nesting beach in the park to document any tracks from the previous night. A picnic lunch is followed by a visit to Roncali lighthouse, the country’s westernmost point. Later, you will get your first experience of the park’s amazing coral reefs, via a guided SCUBA dive/ snorkel excursion to one of the reefs surrounding Maria La Gorda.

DAY 6: BIRDWATCHING & MORE DIVING
Start the day with a presentation by local biologists on the incredible diversity of flora and fauna found in the park, both above and below water, followed by birdwatching hike with one of the Park’s guides. After lunch, you will be treated to one more guided SCUBA dive/ snorkel to further discover the famous coral reefs off Maria la Gorda.

DAY 7: CAVE EXPLORATION & TURTLE RESEARCH
In the morning, visit the fascinating Cueva Las Perlas (Pearls Cave): a series of caverns and sinkholes in the park. The rest of the day today is free to explore or rest up for the evening sea turtle field experience. Before dusk, the group will head to a turtle nesting beach in the Park to look for nesting turtles. When a turtle is found, there will be opportunities to help the researchers measure the turtles, record other data, and perform other monitoring tasks. Spend the night on the beach assisting marine biologists with turtle monitoring research tasks, or return to your room.

DAY 8: CORAL REEF EXPLORATION
The morning is free to recover from the previous night’s sea turtle experience. After lunch, we will explore the park’s coral reefs one more time via a guided SCUBA dive/ snorkel excursion and learn about reef conservation efforts alongside Cuban biologists.

DAY 9: RETURN TO HAVANA
After breakfast, board the bus to return to Havana. That evening will be a celebratory dinner and then we will head out to listen to Cuban music, and if you will like, join locals to dance!

DAY 10: DEPARTURE