



SPENCER *Jems*

UNIQUE SMALL GROUP TOURS

MEXICO/CUBA 15 October to 2 November 2017- PROPOSED ITINERARY

SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2017

Fly American Airlines/Qantas from Sydney to Los Angeles where you will clear US immigration and customs before connecting onto American Airlines for your flight to Mexico City.

Mexico City is located in the Valley of Mexico. It has a minimum altitude of 2,200 metres above sea level and is surrounded by mountains and volcanoes that reach elevations of over 5,000 metres.

On arrival, after clearing immigration and customs, you will be met by our local operator and transferred to your centrally located hotel, Zocalo Central, for a two-night stay. The Zocalo Central is a stunning building from the 1890's, located right on Mexico City's main square which is also the second largest square in the world.

Daily breakfast included.

Welcome Dinner included at the hotel on their wonderful terrace overlooking the Zocalo (Main Square), and the historic centre of Mexico City. We have included local beer and wine with your dinner this evening.

MONDAY 16 OCTOBER 2017

Plaza de las Tres Culturas (Place of The 3 Cultures), Basilica and Pyramids of Teotihuacan, Special Dinner and Overnight Mexico City.

After breakfast, we head towards the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, which demonstrate the cultures that form both Mexico and Mexico City. We continue with a drive out of Mexico City to reach the archaeological site of Teotihuacan (UNESCO World Heritage): visiting Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, Jaguar Temple, Quetzalpapaloti Palace and Jaguar Mural, among others. Afterwards, a delicious lunch will be served at Villas Arqueologicas before returning to the hotel for free time before dinner.

Our farewell dinner to Mexico City is a short transfer away from the hotel. Hacienda de los Morales, is a beautiful, historic building in the middle of the city serving tasty contemporary Mexican cuisine. The wonderful atmosphere will ensure this is a special evening to remember.

TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2017

Fly Mexico City to Merida, lunch, walking tour, Special Dinner and Overnight Merida

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your flight to Merida, the capital of the state of Yucatan. Merida is a charming city of narrow streets, colonial buildings, and shady parks. Known throughout Mexico as the "White City" due to the preponderance of quarried limestone and white paint used there. Merida was a centre of Mayan culture in Yucatan long before the conquistadors' arrival.

On arrival, you will be met by our local operator and commence your visit to Merida with lunch at Alberto's Continental Patio. Almost as old as Merida itself, Alberto's is an institution – you don't go for the food, you don't go for the ambiance, you go for the opportunity to experience a slice of Merida's unique history and culture.

After lunch our locally guided walking tour will include Plaza Mayor, the Cathedral, and the colourful houses and specialty shop around the centre. Our tour will end with a transfer to Hotel Casa del Balam, where you will stay for two nights.

Tonight your Welcome Dinner to Merida will be at a restaurant not too far from your hotel, Restaurante Amaro. A nice mixture of carne (meat) and vegetarian dishes and not only do you get to eat under the stars in a beautiful location, the deserts are heavenly as well!

Daily breakfast included.



WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2017

Merida – Kabah - Uxmal

After breakfast, we head towards the Puuc region to visit the amazing sites of Kabah, with the Temple of the Masks, Uxmal with the Nunnery, the Governor's Palace, and Pyramids of the Wizard. Lunch will be at Hacienda Ochil; a former working hacienda, where you will have the opportunity to savour an authentic Yucatan lunch. After lunch we will return to Merida for some free time before continuing back into the colonial centre for a special dinner.

This evening's dinner will be at Restaurant Panchos which is in a beautiful garden setting. Our meal will end with a chance to try a Mayan Coffee (be careful not to have too many!).

Transfer back to hotel for overnight in Merida

THURSDAY 19 OCTOBER 2017

Merida – Chichen Itza-Playa Del Carmen

After breakfast, we travel by luxury coach for to the archaeological site of Chichen Itza (UNESCO World Cultural Heritage) for a guided tour. You will visit Kukulcan Pyramid, the giant Pelota Ball Game court, Temple of the Warriors with Chac Mol sculpture, the Observatory and the Complex of the 1000 Columns (among others). Afterwards, we take a 30-minute drive to Hacienda Selva Maya for lunch and a swim in the clear water cenote. A cenote is a water sinkhole in the porous limestone underground of the Yucatan Peninsula. After lunch there is time to visit a local Mezcal (an agave-based liquor) production and try some locally made Mezcal in Valladolid. Afterwards, we continue to Playa del Carmen for a four night stay at the Grand Hyatt hotel.

Daily breakfast included.

Tonight we will dine at La Parrilla - an authentic Mexican restaurant located only a short 10-minute stroll from the hotel.

FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER 2017

Catamaran Tour

Today you will experience a full day private Catamaran tour. First, a short drive to the pier in Cancun to collect your snorkel instruction and equipment. We then sail out over coral reefs for a wonderful day of swimming, snorkeling and floating over a fascinating underwater world of colourful coral reef and fish. An open bar and buffet lunch is included at a private beach club. There

is also time to visit the small village of Isla Mujeres before returning to Cancun for our transfer back to the hotel.

Still hungry? We hope so because dinner this evening is at Casa del Agua, a hidden gem not too far from our hotel. Save room for the desserts!



SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER 2017

Half day Tulum Tour

Morning at leisure to enjoy breakfast and the beach (or just sleep in!).

Lunch today will be served at La Cueva del Chango – a unique restaurant in a natural setting serving tasty homemade authentic Mexican cuisine.

After lunch, we take a short stroll back to the hotel for our coastal coach trip down to the archaeological site of Tulum; beautifully built by the pre-Hispanic Maya culture on high rocks overlooking the white beach and turquoise coloured water of the Caribbean Sea.

This afternoon, we take guided tour of Tulum archaeological site with time to swim in the Caribbean before returning to the hotel in Playa del Carmen.

Our special dinner this evening will be at El Alux; a one of a kind restaurant housed in beautifully illuminated caves. Dining here is a once in a lifetime experience. Nature itself is the star attraction with amazing stalagmites and stalactites created from ancient Mayan limestone. The cuisine offered is pre-Hispanic, Mexican and international.

A little bit of folklore – The Aluxes are mystic Mayan elves said to sprout in the moonlight and seek places with magic to hide. Few people see them because they are agile and mischievous!

After dinner, we return to the hotel for overnight.



SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2017

Full Day Xcaret Tour

After breakfast we depart by coach for the short drive to Xcaret; an incredible eco-archaeological theme park. The park is built around an ancient Mayan village with underground rivers. You will have a full day to see the tropical gardens and animals kept here as well as the opportunity to enjoy a swim in the underground rivers, along with many other activities.

A buffet lunch is included - Mexican cuisine with seafood.

In the late afternoon, you will enter the Valley of Aromas, here pre-Hispanic Mayan priests and warriors emerge from the vegetation to accompany you to the Mexican Night Show. Possibly the best cultural show in the world! The programme starts with the representation of the pre-Hispanic era in Mexico, continuing with the merging of the two cultures with the arrival of the Spanish people in Mexico. Finishing with a representation of the impressive and incomparably rich of cultures to emerge from this blend of nations. Filled with pre-Hispanic music, colonial Mexican dances, colourful costumes, and the Flying Men of Papantla, it is set to be more than a memorable performance!

A 3-course dinner will be served during the show.

Late evening return to hotel for overnight.

MONDAY 23 OCTOBER 2017

Playa del Carmen – Cancun Airport – Havana Airport – Havana, Cuba

Morning transfer to the airport for the flight from Cancun to Havana

On arrival, transfer to the Hotel Saratoga for a 4-night stay in a Junior Suite. Daily breakfast included.

Afternoon at leisure.

Tonight, we take a short drive across town for a special welcome dinner at El Cocinero. After dinner, order one of the expertly crafted cocktails, sit back on the terrace and enjoy the sprawling views of the city of Havana.

TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2017

Morning transfer to the airport for the flight from Cancun to Havana

The "City of Columns", as it is nicknamed, is the largest colonial "old town" of Latin America. Nearly 500 years after its founding, Havana has just been

officially declared as one of the Seven Wonder Cities of the modern era. Our day begins with a ride around the old town centre in the quirky "coco Taxis" before a guided walking tour along Havana's busiest street, Calle Obispo. Followed by a tour around the four most fascinating squares in Old Havana: Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza Vieja, Plaza de Armas and Plaza San Francisco de Asis.

On the way, we make a short stop at La Bodeguita del Medio, a frequent haunt of Hemingway serving possibly the best Mojito you will ever taste! The mood is set by musicians playing "old" salsa music.

Our morning tour will end with a private salsa class before moving onto Rio Mar restaurant for lunch. Rio Mar specialises in seafood and has a lovely terrace overlooking where the Rio Almendares flows into the sea.

After lunch, we return to the hotel to freshen up before we embark on our evening adventure!

Tonight, we set out in Bici Taxis (Havana's version of the auto-rickshaw) to El Floridita, a legendary Havana bar and one of many regularly frequented by Ernest Hemingway. Proud of its reputation as The Cradle of the Daiquiri, there is only one drink to order here! It would be remiss not to! Enjoy the beats of authentic Cuban music while sipping your "Papa" daiquiri.

Next we drive across the harbour in 1950's American Classic Cars to the gunfire ceremony at fortress El Morro overlooking Havana's beautiful harbour.

Tonight's dinner will be at San Cristobal Paladar for a taste of colonial Cuba. Perhaps you might like to finish your meal with a local liquor and an excellent cigar!

The evening continues onto Casa de la Music in Miramar for an opportunity to move to Cuban rhythms as you practice the salsa steps learned earlier today. This is your chance to enjoy Havana's nightlife.

Return to Hotel Saratoga for overnight.





WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2017

Havana – Arts & History

We have a late start this morning giving you time to recover from last night. First we will travel by American vintage car to Fusterlandia, one of the most unique places to find modern Cuban art. Fusterlandia is the nickname given to Jaimanitas, a seaside town west of downtown Havana. Here, artist Jose Fuster, known as the “Picasso of the Caribbean”, has built a creative enclave called Casa de Fusta that has spilled out into the surrounding neighbourhood.

Next, we visit the Necropolis de Colon for a guided visit. Located in the Vedado area of Havana, the Colon Cemetery is without doubt a location to understand the unique history, legends and myths behind Cuba immortalised in monuments of marble and bronze.

Lunch will be served at La Moraleja Paladar, serving Cuban Creole Food. Weather permitting, our lunch will be served on the outdoor patio with its gigantic mango tree as a centrepiece.

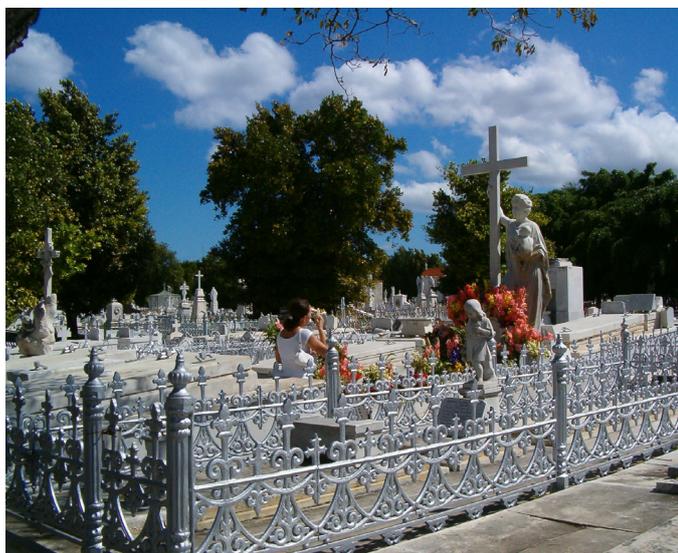
Following lunch, we continue to the Museum of the Revolution for a guided tour.

Late afternoon, we return to our hotel with time to relax and freshen up for the evening ahead.

Our evening starts with dinner at La Guarida, one of the most elegant restaurants in Havana. After climbing up the staircase of the once glamorous 18th-century townhouse, you will enjoy a very creative and exquisite Cuban meal.

Later we will visit and enjoy the famous Tropicana Cabaret Show in the best category seating.

Return to Hotel Saratoga for overnight.



THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER 2017

Havana – Viñales - Havana

Our full day tour to Pinar Del Rio takes us into the green western part of Cuba. First a visit to a cigar factory in Pinar del Rio to learn about the manual process of cigar making. Later, enjoy the simple lifestyle in the countryside at the beautiful valley of Viñales with its dramatic limestone rocks. Next we visit a local tobacco farm and the famous Mural de la Prehistorica. Enjoy a rustic lunch at Alberto Vitamina's, where rice and beans are prepared with a lot of love. Return to Havana for dinner. A change of pace this evening – pizza and pasta at 5 Esquinas Trattoria – set in a beautiful corner of Habana Vieja.

Overnight Havana at Hotel Saratoga.

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2017

Havana – Cienfuegos - Trinidad

Depart Havana by coach this morning. Continue along the legendary Bay of Pigs towards the city of Cienfuegos with its French colonial architecture. Visit Teatro Terry, where Caruso once performed, famous for its whimsical ceiling frescoes. Later enjoy a cocktail at Moorish Palacio del Valle followed by lunch at Finca del Mar. In the afternoon, we continue along the coastal road before arriving at Trinidad (classified as Cultural World Heritage by UNESCO) for a 2-night stay. Just over 300 kms from the bustle of Havana, horses still trot down the narrow cobblestone streets of sleepy Trinidad; a Caribbean coastal town founded by the Spanish explorers in the 1500s that rose to prominence as Cuba's sugar economy boomed.

In the evening dinner is at a private restaurant – Restaurante Museo 1514. Following dinner, a visit to Casa de la Musica for a drink and a chance to practice your salsa skills.

Overnight at Iberostar Grand Hotel Trinidad – Daily breakfast included.



SATURDAY 28 OCTOBER 2017

Trinidad

In the morning, we take a city tour along the cobblestoned streets and alleys accompanied by a specialist from Oficina del Historiador in Trinidad. Visit the Casa del Alfarero and enter the Palacio Brunte. During our tour you will also visit the famous Iglesia de la Santisima Trinidad.

Today lunch will be at your own arrangement. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure or take the optional afternoon excursion to nearby Playa Ancon, one of the prettiest beaches on the south coast of Cuba.

In the evening, we head to dinner at La Redaccion.

Following dinner, we will visit Discoteca Ayala – also known as “La Cueva” (the Cave). Trinidad is an unlikely setting for one of the world’s most bizarre discos – Disco Ayala is a dance club built into a natural cave – 30 meters under the earth! A mix of techno and salsa music explodes, whilst stalactites and stalagmites surround the room, all illuminated in colour. Let’s see how long we can last this evening!

Return to Iberostar Grand Hotel Trinidad for overnight.

SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2017

Trinidad – Sugarmill Valley – Santa Clara - Varadero

Farewell to Trinidad. A trip to Sugar Mill Valley, where the historic mansion of sugar baron Sanchez Iznaga is, as well as its legendary tower for overseeing slaves.

Continue to Santa Clara where Che Guevara obtained his most important victory and where his mortal remains are kept. Lunch enroute. Later we continue to the beautiful Caribbean beaches of Varadero for a 2-night stay.

Overnight at hotel Melia Las Americanas. Our stay here is on an all-inclusive basis.

MONDAY 30 OCTOBER 2017

Varadero

A full day at leisure to enjoy the white sand beaches of Varadero.

Overnight Melia Las Americanas – classic sea-view room. All-inclusive basis

TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2017

Transfer to Varadero International Airport for your flight to Miami, American Airlines flight AA2742

On arrival, you be required to clear US Immigration, collect your baggage and clear customs before proceeding to check in for your flights Miami/Dallas/Sydney.

WEDNESDAY 01 NOVEMBER 2017

Cross International Date Line

THURSDAY 02 NOVEMBER 2017

Arrive Australia