

Rhythms of Cuba
November 8-19, 2017
with Andre Mallinger and Karen Immerso

More Information

Drumming, music, and dance are the heart and soul of Cuban culture, and this trip is a rare opportunity to connect with the culture and people of Cuba by studying with her seasoned musicians and dancers, and sharing our common rhythmic language.

This trip is real-life travel. Our trip will take place at the relaxed pace of Cuban culture, in the streets, and at the eye-level of everyday citizens. We will forego the fancy, government run hotels and stay in Casa Particulares, small bed and breakfasts run by local families. We will avoid the tourist shows and go where the Cubans go- to street music in the outdoor plazas and to local clubs and restaurants to hear the best rumba, son, and Cuban jazz.

Each day in Havana we will have lessons in Cuban drumming or dance, explore the cobbled streets of different neighborhoods, listen to street music and attend formal performances in time-worn concert halls. We will engage guides and teachers to help us understand the mysterious political and economic landscape and to understand common daily life by visiting homes, a music school, and farms. From Havana, we will travel to rural Cuba to explore the landscape, culture, and musical traditions of Valle Vinales, a UNESCO world heritage site known for its dramatic limestone cliffs, hiking, and rolling green tobacco farms.

Legal Travel in Cuba

Since the Cuban revolution in 1959, the United States has maintained a trade embargo to Cuba, and restricted travel to Cuba for American citizens. This trade embargo still exists, and while American citizens are now allowed to travel to Cuba, they may do so only under strict guidelines that ensure that the trip is educational in nature, and not traditional tourism. To travel legally to Cuba as an individual, you must be able to prove that your itinerary met all of the requirements of the “People to People” travel criteria.

True Nature Journeys held a “People-to-People” license in 2014, issued by the U.S. Government, which authorized TNJ to conduct educational trips to Cuba that involved ‘meaningful interaction’ between the citizens of Cuba and the citizens of the United States. Since then we have been guiding trips to Cuba under the new regulations. Now, organizations are no longer required to hold a People-to-People license, but any individuals traveling to Cuba must follow the same guidelines and restrictions that were

outlined in the license, and any organized groups must do the same.

The Rhythms of Cuba trip follows the same itinerary that was carefully scrutinized by the U.S. to ensure that it met the criteria for the People-to-People license. You will be provided with an official letter and detailed itinerary, so if you are questioned about your activities on return to the U.S., it will be verified that you have met all of requirements for legal travel, including daily interaction with Cuban citizens.

Cuba

Music is undeniably the heart and soul of Cuba. African rhythms make up the root of Cuban music, but the island is the birthplace of its own version of many musical styles, including rumba, son, chachacha, trova, and mambo. These styles have influenced music all over the world, and, in turn, world music has influenced distinctly Cuban versions of jazz, hip hop, and reggaeton. We will hear it all!

Cuba operates under a different paradigm, doing its best to function under the ideology of shared wealth and resources. The World Wildlife Fund has declared that Cuba is the only country in the world that is truly approaching sustainable development. Thanks to a massive energy conservation effort, which included free compact fluorescent lightbulbs for everybody, Cuba now uses one eighth of the per capita energy that the US does. Ninety percent of the food consumed in Havana is from local, urban organic farms. There is a nearly 100% literacy rate, the country boasts the lowest crime rate in the western hemisphere, and there are more doctors per capita than in the United States.

1950s Chevys and Buicks cruise the streets of Havana, held together by innovation and ingenuity. In Cuba, it is illegal not to pick up hitchhikers, because if you are fortunate enough to own a car, you must share your good fortune. In Cuba, doctors make approximately the same official state wage as a laborer, and everybody comes up with creative ways to earn more money.

Trip Itinerary

To meet the requirements of a People-to-People itinerary, this trip will provide a ‘full-time schedule’ of educational activities, including lessons in music and dance, visits to museums and places in Havana of historical and architectural significance, and visits to an organic farm, a tobacco farm, and a national park. We will schedule and meetings and conversations with local workers, professional musicians, and guides who can explain Cuban daily life, politics and the complex economic system.

See the attached itinerary for an overview of activities and classes. We will have a minimum of five drumming classes and two dance classes, and seven performances. You may arrange additional lessons, or private lessons if you are interested.

Andre, Karen, and Laura

Andre will be our musical interpreter, helping us understand the music we are hearing and supporting us in lessons with our local teachers. Together, Andre and Karen will coordinate all of the logistics of being in Cuba and help the group navigate through our days and evenings. Laura will be behind the scenes, organizing the trip ahead of time,

getting information out to participants, and answering your questions. Our local Cuban guides and teachers will give us an insider's perspective on Cuba.

Andre Mallinger has been a musician for over 35 years, beginning as a young student of classical piano and orchestral percussion. Her formal studies in music eventually led her to pursue a master's degree in cultural anthropology, combining her love of world music and cultural studies. For 20 years Andre has studied, taught and performed music from southern Africa, playing marimba, hand drums, drum kit, mbira and percussion with numerous Zimbabwean-style marimba ensembles. She has taught music at community colleges, public schools, music institutes, Naropa University and, in 2010, she served as musician-in-residence at the Gilpin County Library. She currently has a private teaching studio of young aspiring pianists, directs a new Afro-pop ensemble, Nokuthula, and is the principal accompanist of the Peak to Peak Chorale. In addition to her active musical career, Andre is also an avid outdoor adventurer and traveler. In 2008 she spent nine months in Southeast Asia, India, and Central America, traveling and teach English. She has floated the Mekong River, lived in an ashram, and visited with Burmese refugees. Her greatest adventure thus far has been a 3-month sea kayak trip with her husband, John, paddling 650 miles of the Baja coast.

Karen Immerso has led outdoor, international and experiential groups for 30 years, including university programs, Outward Bound, The Women's Wilderness Institute, and a variety of other programs. She holds a BA in Music Education and a Master's Degree in Education, and is classically trained as a pianist and vocalist. She currently plays in a marimba band, and teaches dance and Spanish classes in her community of Gunnison, Colorado. Karen is an artist, a ceramicist and a gardener, loves working with people, and shares her passion for new people and cultures from a perspective of experiential learning. She has a deep love of the Spanish language and Latin cultures, and has travelled extensively in Central and South America, Haiti, Europe, and Africa.

Preparation

The drumming, dancing, and singing classes are appropriate for anybody with an interest in music and dance. There is no need to be a musician or a dancer, although if you already have experience the teachers will find parts and moves to challenge you.

Workshops will be tailored with parts for everybody at their own level of experience. Before the trip, Andre will send video tutorials that will introduce us to basic conga technique and to Cuban music. You do not need to bring your own drum to Cuba. Drums and small percussion instruments will be supplied during our classes.

Lodging

The authentic way to experience Cuba is to stay in a 'Casa Particular', a small private home licensed by the government to operate as a Cuban style bed and breakfast. It is a wonderful way to get to know the Cuban people. They are typically run by a couple or

family living in the same house, and you can expect them to be clean and comfortable. In Havana we will stay in two adjoining, comfortable four-bedroom apartments, with terraced views of the Caribbean ocean. In Vinales we will stay in three or four neighboring small casas on a quiet dirt road, with rooftop terraces overlooking the tobacco fields.

Food

Cuban food is usually locally grown or raised, fresh, and organic. Seafood and chicken, rice, beans, root vegetables, and plantains are the basis for many meals. In many of the restaurants where we will eat it is considered safe to eat the salads. Fresh papaya, pineapple, and guava show up regularly, and pizza and soups are also widely available.

A breakfast of eggs, fruit, toast, and delicious Cuban coffee or tea will be served in your Casa, and we will dine in restaurants each night. To give you flexibility and choice about how much time you want to spend eating out, about half of the lunches are included in the trip cost, and the rest will be on your own. See below for more details about what is included.

Weather

We can expect warm temperatures, with an average high of 80F and average overnight low of 68F. November is usually a relatively dry month, although we could get a few rain showers. We'll send a suggested What to Bring list once you register, but plan on a light jacket for the evening, and loose, cool clothing for daytimes.

Logistical Details

Cost

\$3600. Single supplement \$600. (For those who wish to have a single room.)

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 is due with registration, \$1500 due April 1, and \$1600 due August 1. Please see the registration form for the cancellation policy.

What's Included:

- Lodging
- All breakfasts and all dinners, starting with dinner on November 8 and ending with breakfast on November 19.
- Five lunches
- Six classes, including percussion, dance, singing, and Cuban music history.
- Seven performances
- All entrance fees to museums, festivals, and other things on the itinerary
- Guide fees
- Ground transportation to scheduled classes and activities

What's Not Included:

- Airfare to Havana.

- Visa- \$75
- Cuba airport departure tax- \$25
- Cuban health insurance, as required by the Cuban government. This should be approximately \$3/day.
- Alcoholic drinks, and drinks (coffee, sodas, etc) at lunches and dinners.
- Bottled water and extra snacks. Estimate \$1-2 per day for water.
- 5 lunches. Estimate \$2-10 per lunch.
- Extra classes, clubs, or performances.
- Any extra activities not on the itinerary.
- Taxi fare if you stay out extra late or get a late start.
- Optional tips for local guides

Getting There

Direct commercial flights are now available to Havana from the United States. You can expect to spend around \$300-600 for your RT flight, depending on where in the country you are starting from.

*****Remember that you will need a current passport!*****

Please feel free to contact either of us by phone or email if you have any questions!

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