

In 1908, the first Sephardic immigrants arrived in Cuba, mostly from Turkey, and to a lesser degree, from Syria and Greece. In 1914, the first Sephardic synagogue was founded. Its name was Shevet Achim Hebrew Union. It functioned until 1995, when it became necessary to close its doors due to its state of disrepair. Successive waves of immigration took place around the First and Second World Wars. At the time this happened, there were in existence in the capital of Cuba two Sephardic synagogues. One of them, founded in 1954, the Sephardic Hebrew Center of Cuba, is still functioning presently. It is the only Sephardic synagogue in Havana City. Presently, approximately 65% of the total Jewish population of the country is Sephardic. We will go to the Sephardic Hebrew Center and meet with Dr. Myra Levy, president of the congregation followed by fellowship and interaction with members of the community. Lunch on your own.

We proceed to Muraleando, to see artists and musicians rebuilding their neighborhood.

Farewell dinner at a Paladar.

DAY 9 THURSDAY, MARCH 16

Breakfast and departure to the airport.

We've been on tours all over the world, but I will have to say that this particular trip was one of the best. Not only did we learn more about Jewish history, especially in a place like Cuba, because Miriam is Cuban born, there was Miriam's personal story and point-of-view to everything we saw and did.

Everything from the hotels, the food, the people, and old cars was top notch. A highlight of the trip was Friday night Shabbat services at the Patronato (the Conservative synagogue, which rivals any synagogue in the States) and meeting people from, really, around the world.

Now is the time to go before the cruise ships and tourists hit the island and it gets so crowded that traveling will be that much harder. And, that President Obama several weeks before we got there (we visited those same places) was a point of pride among the Cubans we met." Mark & Ilene Weiss, JCC Rockland Members.

DOUBLE: \$3549
SINGLE: \$4149

Itinerary is subject to change without notice.

Not Included:

Departure taxes of \$25 & \$175 in tips per person. Both will be added to final invoice.

Due to the uniqueness of travel from Miami, you have the option of taking care of your own flight arrangements from New York or Great Time Tours will book your flights for you. This is a great time to visit your friends and family in Florida – either before or after your trip to Cuba.



TO REGISTER

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Journey TO CUBA

MARCH 8-16, 2017

Cuba, a Caribbean gem, is a cultural oasis of warm, generous people. Be inspired by Cuba's soulful art, musical rhythms and vibrant dance. Join JCC Rockland on an extraordinary journey to Cuba to meet and bring support to the Jewish communities of Cuba. Escorted by Elena Heydt and Miriam Levinson, you will learn about Cuba past, present and the changes the future will bring.



JCC Rockland
Travel with the J





**THIS
FULL-TIME
Journey**
to bring support
to the Jewish
communities also
allows time to
experience the
**SIGHTS,
HISTORY,
CULTURE,
ART,
MUSIC
AND
PEOPLE**
of this
extraordinary
country.



**DAY 1
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8**

Arrival in Miami – The Crowne Plaza Hotel shuttle will take you from the airport to the hotel. Seminar about Cuba in the evening. Overnight at the **Crowne Plaza Hotel**.

**DAY 2
THURSDAY, MARCH 9**

We depart by hotel shuttle for the Miami International Airport.
After an early morning flight to Havana, we proceed to the neighborhood of Vedado. The neighborhood is all about the spirit of Havana’s people and provides a firsthand look at the promise of the future. No trip to Vedado is complete without a stop at Coppelia for some of its famous ice cream. Here, you’ll sway to the melodies of life and groove to the music at clubs frequented by the likes of Ernest Hemingway. Our hotel, the **Melia Cohiba located in Vedado** is fully air conditioned with stunning views of the city and the sea. The hotel provides comfort and an elegant, modern design. The hotel features an outdoor pool, several restaurants, a night club and a boutique gallery. En route to the hotel, you will see a city that has remained just as it looked more than fifty years ago. Upon arrival, we have a **light brunch**.

In order to understand the scope of the Jewish life in Cuba, we begin our mission at the ships’ terminal starting with a **walking tour of Old Havana and the Jewish Quarter**. Old Havana has been declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO and will remind you of cities in Europe with its beautiful architectural elements. During the walking tour of the four main squares **Plaza de Armas, Plaza de San Francisco, Plaza Vieja and Plaza de la Catedral**, you will gain insight about the families that forged the Jewish Community of Cuba and the present members of that community.

This evening we have **dinner** at a private home (Paladar). Paladares are the independent, state sanctioned, family run restaurants of Cuba. Since the beginning of the Cuban government’s quest to open up their country to democratic economic reforms, paladares were one of the first enterprises to fall under these reforms. The food is authentic and wholesome.

**DAY 3
FRIDAY, MARCH 10**

Breakfast served daily at our hotel. We will have a **briefing on Cuba’s religious life, economy and related topics by a professor of the University**.

Lunch on your own in Old Havana.
Afterwards, we go to **Beth Shalom Temple** to bring donations. Built in 1952, the synagogue is located in the Vedado district of Havana that was once a center of Jewish activity. Much of the original building



was sold, and only part remains in Jewish hands today. Extensive repairs were undertaken in the 1990s with help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and wealthy Jewish donors from Miami. The building actually looks brand new. Today it contains the main community center and library with a nursery and educational activities to help bring back the youth into the Jewish community. We will meet with **Adela Dworin, president of Beth Shalom and other community leaders** to discuss and assess the needs of the Jewish community on the island. We return to our hotel for time to freshen up and relax.

This evening **optional services** at Bet Shalom and festive **Shabbat dinner** at our hotel.

**DAY 4
SATURDAY, MARCH 11**

Following breakfast, we go to **Hemingway’s House**. In 1940 Hemingway, with his new wife Martha, purchased a home outside Havana, Cuba. His home, with many original furnishings, hunting trophies, and personal artifacts can be viewed.

Afterwards, go to view Cuban art exhibit at the **National Museum of Fine Arts of Havana**. Founded on February 13, 1913. In 1954, the new Palacio de Bellas Artes was opened, designed by the architect Rodriguez Pichardo. The museum is dedicated exclusively to housing Cuba Art collections. Spanning the 17th and 19th centuries it has rooms dedicated to landscape, religious subjects and the Costumbrismo narrative scenes of Cuban life. A modernist sculpture by noted Cuban artist Rita Lonja stands outside the main entrance.

Lunch on your own in the Central Park area.

Afternoon, ride about Havana in vintage American convertibles.

Dinner tonight is at Café del Oriente, one of the best government restaurants of Havana.

**DAY 5
SUNDAY, MARCH 12**

Breakfast followed by a visit to a **typical Cuban home** and learn the wonderful story of this house and its residents, past and present. We depart for **Matanzas**, a ninety minute drive, en route we visit the oldest pharmacy of Cuba dating back to the 19th century. We **overnight in Varadero**. Your hotel is all inclusive.

**DAY 6
MONDAY, MARCH 13**

Breakfast and lunch at the hotel. We depart Varadero for Havana. En route we go to **Guanabacoa to do work at the Jewish cemetery**. We will clean

up graves and help to restore graves in the children’s section. Those who are unable to do physical work may recite Kaddish at graves. A stop will be made at the first and **oldest Holocaust Memorial in the Western Hemisphere** located inside the cemetery. **Dinner at a Paladar.**

**DAY 7
TUESDAY, MARCH 14**

Following breakfast, we go to one of Havana’s **cigar factories** to learn about the art of cigar rolling. Afterwards, we go to **Callejon de Hamel** a lively alleyway to see Afro Cuban art and learn a bit about Santeria.

We stop at the arts & crafts market **Almacenes Santa Fe**.

Lunch on your own
This afternoon we visit the **Compas Dance of Cuba** to see a rehearsal. The group uses percussion, African rhythms and ballet to a new Cuban beat.

Later, we visit with **José Rodriguez Fuster**. Born in August 1946, Fuster is a Cuban native artist specializing in ceramics, painting, drawing, engraving, and graphic design. This winner of many awards with collections in prominent museums, has made a major contribution over 10 years of rebuilding and decorating the fishing town of Jaimanitas in the outskirts of Havana, where he lives. Jaimanitas is now a unique work of public art where Fuster has decorated over 80 houses with ornate murals and domes to suit the personality of his neighbors. Nowadays, Fuster’s art is a cherished part of Cuban culture. He sponsors this project by the sale of his paintings and ceramics.

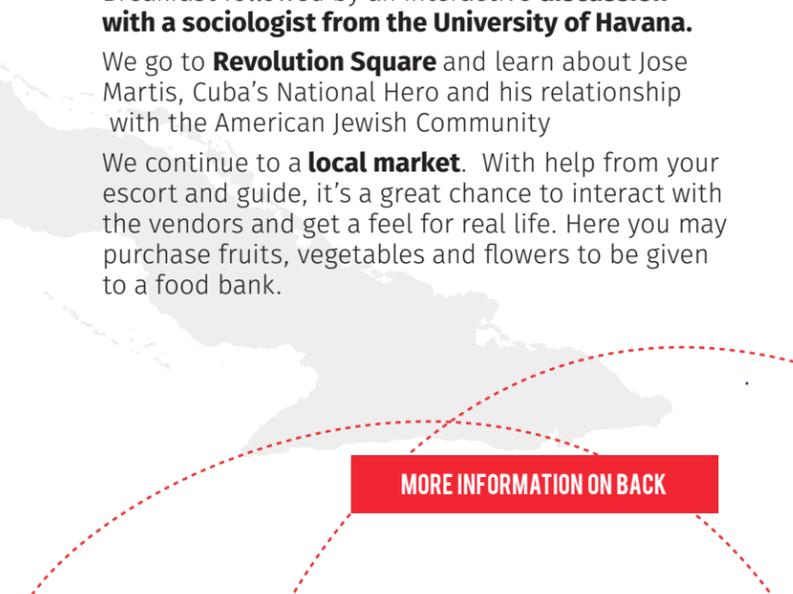
Dinner at a Paladar.

**DAY 8
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15**

Breakfast followed by an interactive **discussion with a sociologist from the University of Havana**.

We go to **Revolution Square** and learn about Jose Martis, Cuba’s National Hero and his relationship with the American Jewish Community

We continue to a **local market**. With help from your escort and guide, it’s a great chance to interact with the vendors and get a feel for real life. Here you may purchase fruits, vegetables and flowers to be given to a food bank.



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