



Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden Cuba: A Nature & Cultural Journey

Soroa - Playa Larga - Havana

8 Days / 7 Nights

Date of Issue: April 23, 2026

March 14, 2027 - March 21, 2027

[Click here to view your Digital Itinerary](#)

Introduction

Join David Orban, Director of Animal Science & Strategy at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden on an immersion in the vibrant nature and birdlife in La Guira National Park, Soroa, Zapata Nature Reserve, Playa Larga, and Havana. Engage with and support Cuban naturalists, birders and private entrepreneurs as you search for endemic bird species and experience the colorful culture of Cuba.

Highlights

- Immerse yourself in the vibrant nature and birdlife in La Guira National Park, Soroa, Zapata Nature Reserve in the company of expert Cuban naturalists.
- Search for endemic bird species such as the Bee Hummingbird, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Cuban Vireo and more.
- Discover the best of Havana while meeting and supporting Cuban people from all walks of life.
- Learn about conservation and the ecology of the Zapata Wetlands with a Cuban Naturalist.
- Learn about efforts on reintroduction of the Cuban crocodiles in Cuba, with an exclusive inside access visit to the Zapata Crocodile Farm breeding and nursery.
- Search for endemics in a variety of habitats: mixed forest, dense forest, mangrove, marsh and open wetlands.
- Possible sightings include Cuban Parrot, Cuban Bullfinch, Bare-legged Owl, the threatened Cuban Parakeet, Fernandina's Flicker and Blue-headed Quail-Dove.

Accommodation	Destination	Start	End	Duration
Privately Owned B&B in Soroa	Soroa	Mar 14	Mar 16	2 Nights
Playa Larga Privately Owned B&B	Playa Larga	Mar 16	Mar 19	3 Nights
Iberostar Marqués de la Torre	Havana	Mar 19	Mar 21	2 Nights

Price

\$4,692 per person, based on double occupancy

\$4,974 single rate

Full payment due upon registration.

REGISTRATION click on BOOK NOW at the top of the page from a computer, laptop or tablet, or use this link if viewing from a mobile phone: <https://shorturl.at/k7vkI>

YOUR TRIP'S MOBILE APP:

If you use a mobile device while traveling, your Final Trip Information is also available in the TravelKey app, which provides an offline mobile version of your itinerary—handy while you're on the go. **Here is your link to download the app:** <https://shorturl.at/iPD5e>

Your TravelKey Access Code: KA58VL

Included

- Accommodations and activities as described in the itinerary
- Expert private Cuban cultural guide and vehicle as per itinerary
- Expert Cuban specialist birding guide
- Certification of participation in a pre-planned, fully scheduled program of support for the Cuban people travel to Cuba under the U.S. Department of the Treasury general license
- Meals as per noted in the itinerary (B,L,D)
- 2 drinks per each included lunch and dinner (local beer, bottled water, soft drinks, house wine if offered by the restaurant)
- Bottled water while touring with the guide
- Gratuities for included meals and luggage handling

Excluded

- Cuban e-Visa and entry form processing, charged separately at \$130 per person
- International airfare and baggage fees
- Transfers within the USA
- Passport/visa fees
- Meals not mentioned in the program as included
- Coffee with included meals unless offered by the venue; alcohol other than welcome drinks, live music venue entrance fees, unless specifically noted as included in the itinerary
- Optional activities that are not stated as included in the itinerary
- Tips for hotel housekeeping and live music during meals
- Other expenses of a personal nature
- Travel insurance
- Any other items not specifically mentioned as included
- Gratuity for Cuban Cultural Guide, suggested at \$5-\$10/per guest, per day; Birding Guide, suggested at \$10-\$20 / per guest, per day; Driver, \$5-\$10 per guest, per day.

Day 1: Privately Owned B&B in Soroa, Soroa (Sun, March 14)

Soroa

Situated in Cuba's Artemisa Region southwest of Havana, Soroa is a mountain resort town known for its incredible natural beauty featuring lush landscapes, majestic mountains, and meandering rivers. Dubbed the 'Rainbow of Cuba', it is listed as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is home to the El Salto del Arco Iris, a magnificent waterfall and the Soroa Orchidarium, a world famous orchid garden boasting the largest collection of orchids in the world.

Day Itinerary

Preliminary Itinerary

ARRIVAL IN HAVANA

Please schedule your flight to arrive Havana José Martí International Airport by 12:15 p.m.

Once you've cleared immigration, collected your baggage and cleared Customs, you'll be met at the airport exit by your Cuban hosts.

We depart the airport to head west. Your Cuban Cultural Guide will lead introductions and provide a welcome briefing with important information for our time in Cuba. Your Cuban birding expert will provide an overview briefing on Cuba's birdlife.

We will have lunch in a *paladar* (privately owned restaurant) and begin observing birdlife. Continue to the town of Soroa, and check in at our accommodations.

This evening we'll have our Welcome Dinner in a paladar.

Expert Tips

Included lunches and dinner typically feature three courses, with a limited selection from which to choose. Meals typically include two beverages: House welcome cocktail then a choice of one additional beverage: bottled water, Cuban soft drinks or beer, or a glass of house wine. Coffee (espresso) may not be included, but may be purchased individually. One of the most enjoyable aspects of dining in a paladar is the personal connection you'll make with the owner and staff, as they share their personal stories. Learn how private enterprise in Cuba functions on an individual level, as well as how the paladar's ingredients are sourced and the chef's inspiration for the food they serve.

Overnight: Privately Owned B&B in Soroa

Privately owned bed & breakfast accommodations

Included

Lunch, Dinner

Day 2: Privately Owned B&B in Soroa, Soroa (Mon, March 15)

Day Itinerary

LA GÜIRA NATIONAL PARK

We set out early for **La Güira National Park** (about one hour by road). On shaded forest trails at an easy pace, we focus on Cuba's endemics—this is our best opportunity to look for the elusive **Cuban Solitaire**. Other targets include **Cuban Grassquit**, **Cuban Tody**, **Cuban Trogon**, **Cuban Green Woodpecker**, and **Yellow-headed Warbler**. After lunch at a local **paladar**, we return to Soroa for an afternoon at the **Soroa Orchid Garden**, watching for **Great Lizard-Cuckoo**, **Cuban Emerald**, **Antillean Palm Swift**, **Loggerhead Kingbird**, **Greater Antillean Grackle**, and **Cuban Oriole**.

Dinner is included this evening at a paladar.

Expert Tips

Technical (time • distance • exertion)

Early departure

Drive time to La Güira ≈ **1 hour each way**.

Forest walking at La Güira totals ~**1 mile** over **1.5–2 hours** with frequent stops; trails are **uneven with short inclines**.

The Soroa Orchid Garden typically adds ~**0.5–0.75 mile** over **60–90 minutes**, with **paved paths and some stairs**.

Overall exertion: **easy to easy–moderate (Level 2/5)** for fit walkers, with **stop-and-go birding**

CLIMATE: Warm, humid conditions expected.

Included

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3: Playa Larga Privately Owned B&B, Playa Larga (Tue, March 16)

Playa Larga

Playa Larga is a low-key beach village on the Bahía de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs), about 13 km south of Boca de Guamá, where the forested edge of Ciénaga de Zapata meets a broad, uncrowded arc of sand. Simple, family-run *casas particulares* and small *paladares* line the shoreline, giving the town an easygoing, local feel that suits its setting on Cuba's great wetland.

The surrounding landscape is rich in wildlife and water: mangroves and marshes shelter endemics such as the bee hummingbird and Zapata wren, while nearby limestone sinkholes and clear, near-shore reefs are renowned for their visibility and marine life. Traces of 1961 Bay of Pigs history linger along the coast, but the rhythm here is unhurried—sea, marsh, and village life in close conversation.

Day Itinerary

SOROA TO PLAYA LARGA

After an early breakfast, we depart for **Playa Larga** on the Zapata Peninsula, where we'll stay in privately owned B&B accommodations (*casas particulares*).

We'll stop for lunch at a restaurant en route.

In Playa Larga, a local Cuban naturalist presents an introduction to **Ciénaga de Zapata** (*ciénaga* = wetland)—one of the Caribbean's largest and best-preserved wetland systems, designated a Ramsar **Wetland of International Importance** in 2001. The marshes, mangroves, and savannas here are home to **about 258 bird species**, including **28 Cuban endemics**; specialties include the **Cuban Parrot**, among many others.

Expert Tips

Technical (time • distance • exertion)

Early departure after breakfast

Drive ≈ 3.5 hours to Playa Larga with a **lunch stop en route**. Total distance ~**125 mi** on paved roads, with 1–2 comfort stops.

Physical activity for the day is **minimal**: short, flat walks around the accommodation (<**0.5 mi / <0.8 km**), plus a **seated presentation (≈60 min)**.

Overall exertion: **easy (Level 1/5)**.

Overnight: Playa Larga Privately Owned B&B

Privately owned bed & breakfast accommodations

Included

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4-6: Playa Larga Privately Owned B&B, Playa Larga (Wed, March 17 to Fri, March 19)

Day Itinerary

Over two days we'll sample the signature habitats of **Ciénaga de Zapata**, selecting sites based on the day's conditions.

One morning will be dedicated to a special visit to the Zapata Crocodile Farm, where we'll learn about the health and conservation of the endangered Cuban Crocodile. We'll gain insight into the park's broader ecological goals and protected status, with exclusive insider access to the crocodile breeding area and nursing station. This visit highlights the ongoing efforts to preserve Cuba's unique biodiversity and the role of science-based conservation in the region.

Areas where we'll bird include:

Bermeja Wildlife Refuge – A mixed forest habitat where we'll search for the Bee Hummingbird, Gray-fronted Quail-Dove, Cuban Parrot, Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Bullfinch, Loggerhead Kingbird, Bare-legged Owl,

and Cuban Pygmy Owl. This area is also known for sightings of the threatened Cuban Parakeet, Fernandina's Flicker, and Blue-headed Quail-Dove.

Santo Tomás – With an early morning departure, we'll head to Santo Tomás and board small boats to explore the freshwater wetlands. Here, we'll look for the Zapata Sparrow, Zapata Wren, and Red-shouldered Blackbird just after sunrise.

Las Sabanas de Soplillar (Savannas of Soplillar) – A key location for spotting Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Pygmy Owl, Fernandina's Flicker, Cuban Parakeets, and Cuban Parrots. Just after sundown, we'll also search for the Cuban Nightjar.

Exclusive Visits to Private Properties – We'll meet a local conservationist who builds artificial nest cavities for Cuban Parrots and parakeets while attracting birds with feeding stations. This area provides excellent opportunities to see the Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Zenaida Dove, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, West Indian Woodpecker, and Yellow-faced Grassquit.

Las Salinas Road – This varied ecosystem, including low dense forest, mangroves, marshes, and open wetlands, is home to the endemic Cuban Black Hawk. We'll also look for shorebirds, terns, and waders, including American Flamingos, Roseate Spoonbills, and Reddish Egrets.

Optional Nighttime Birding – One evening after dinner, we may venture out to look for species we haven't yet encountered, such as the Stygian Owl, Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Pygmy Owl, and Greater Antillean (Cuban) Nightjar.

Expert Tips

Technical (time • distance • exertion)

Typical field days run ~**8-10 hours**, with **early starts (~5:30–6:00 a.m.)** and midday breaks.

Site-to-site driving segments are **15–60 minutes** each; total vehicle time per day ~**2–3 hours**.

Walking is **stop-and-go birding** on mostly flat tracks:

Bermeja ~**1–1.5 miles**

Soplillar ~**0.5–1 mile**

Private properties ~**0.3–0.6 mile**

Las Salinas primarily roadside viewing with short walks <**0.5 mile**

Santo Tomás boat time ~**60–90 minutes**, with brief boardwalk/levee walks ≤**0.5 mile**

Daily totals average ~**2–4 miles** on foot.

Overall exertion: **moderate (Level 2/5)**

Night outing adds ~**0.5–1 mile** of slow walking.

Included

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6: Iberostar Marqués de la Torre, Havana (Fri, March 19)

Havana

Havana is Cuba's capital and its living archive - colonial plazas, Art Deco theaters, mid-century landmarks, and post-Revolution institutions overlooking the Caribbean. In Old Havana (Habana Vieja), a UNESCO World Heritage site, restored squares connect to blocks still in progress; former convents host government offices, and once-grand mansions now house families, studios, and small businesses. Classic convertibles share the streets with modern taxis, while the Malecón doubles as the city's front porch.

What makes Havana compelling is its vitality. Community-led restoration, independent paladares, and artist cooperatives breath new life into historic neighborhoods without erasing their character. The result is an authentic, working city where the past and present meet at street level—in live music, in markets and galleries, and in conversations with Habaneros who shape their city every day. This layered, resilient Havana is the one we explore: engaging with people and place to understand the history, creativity, and culture that define it.

Day Itinerary

DRIVE TO HAVANA / HEMINGWAY'S FINCA VIGIA

If we've missed either the **Zapata Wren** or **Zapata Sparrow**, we'll head out at first light for a focused try, then depart for **Havana**.

Otherwise, we depart after breakfast, reaching the outskirts in time for lunch at a paladar.

Finca Vigía—set on a breezy hill in San Francisco de Paula—is Ernest Hemingway's former home, preserved much as he left it, with shelves of books, hunting trophies, and his typewriter. View the rooms through the open windows and doors. Walk around the grounds, where his fishing boat *Pilar* and a small observation tower evoke the years he worked on classics like *The Old Man and the Sea*

Continue into Havana for hotel check-in.

After we freshen up, we'll head to dinner; a reservation is in place, and dinner is at your own expense so you can order what you like, à la carte.

Expert Tips

Technical (time • distance • exertion)

- Optional dawn birding retry: **60–90 minutes**; slow, stop-and-go walking **up to 0.5–1 mile** on flat tracks.
- Drive to Havana: **~3 hours** on paved roads, with a short comfort stop.

Overnight: Iberostar Marqués de la Torre

Iberostar Marqués de la Torre is situated in Havana, offering panoramic views from its chill-out terrace. Nearby attractions include the historic downtown, iconic monuments, museums, theatres, and traditional restaurants. The rooms are equipped with air-conditioning and 24-hour room service. Dining options feature the Habana Elegante restaurant and a cigar lounge. Leisure facilities include a pool, rooftop terrace, and professional animation shows. The hotel also provides meeting rooms, event planning services, and a chill-out area. Environmental initiatives include responsible seafood consumption and rooms free of single-use plastic.



Included

Breakfast, Lunch

Excluded

Dinner

Day 7: Iberostar Marqués de la Torre, Havana (Sat, March 20)

Day Itinerary

HAVANA

We begin our exploration of Havana with a guided walk through **Old Havana's** four main plazas, meeting local entrepreneurs along the way.

Start in Plaza Vieja (1559), known for its eclectic architecture from Cuban Baroque to art nouveau. Continue to Plaza de San Francisco, facing the harbor and anchored by the Basílica de San Francisco de Asís and the city's first financial district.

Strolling Calle Obispo, we'll meet *cuentapropistas*—self-employed artisans selling handmade crafts, books, and art—offering a window into Cuba's evolving private sector.

Lunch is on your own at nearby paladares.

This afternoon, visit **Plaza de la Catedral**, home to **Catedral de la Habana**, and **Plaza de Armas**, the city's oldest square and historic founding site.

Take time to browse the **Almacenes de San José Artisans' Market**, a reclaimed 19th-century warehouse on the waterfront filled with paintings, sculpture, textiles, and more.

To cap the day, we board **classic American cars** for a panoramic drive past El Capitolio, the Gran Teatro de La Habana, and Parque Central, then cruise the Malecón by the U.S. Embassy and along Miramar's Fifth Avenue of embassies and mansions, with a stop at Plaza de la Revolución.

After a refresh at the hotel, we gather for a special farewell dinner, then visit the **Hotel Nacional** to enjoy garden views over the Malecón and its storied memorabilia.

Included

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: End of Itinerary (Sun, March 21)

Day Itinerary

DEPARTURE

Transfer to the airport for check-in and return flight home.

Your transfer time will be confirmed in Havana by your Cuban Guide, and will be scheduled to arrive at the airport approximately three hours prior to flight departure.

Please ensure your passport and Cuban visa are in hand for check-in procedures.

Included

Breakfast

Terms and Conditions

Itinerary Terms and Conditions

REGISTRATION click on BOOK NOW at the top of the page from a computer, laptop or tablet, or use this link if viewing from a mobile phone: <https://shorturl.at/k7vkI>

What to Expect on a Cuba Birding Journey

Activity level & pace

- Active, moderate. Expect 6–7 hours of activity most days, with multiple short walks and frequent stops for observation.
- Walks and standing periods may last up to 2 hours at a time, covering up to 2 miles during half-day outings.
- Birding takes place on paved and unpaved surfaces; footing can be uneven.
- Some activities, lodgings, and meal venues are in historic buildings without elevators and may require climbing 2–4 flights of stairs

Daily rhythm

- Early starts to coincide with peak bird activity and avoid midday heat.
- On at least one day, we depart well before dawn to reach the field at or just after sunrise.
- A majority of time is outdoors; you will embark and disembark the motorcoach several times per day.

Transportation

- Private motorcoach without an onboard toilet; drives between locations range 2–6 hours (rest stops every 1.5–2 hours).
- Some roads may be poorly maintained; drive times can vary with conditions.

Climate & comfort

- Tropical climate; midday can be hot and humid.
- Bedrooms and private vehicles are air-conditioned; many public spaces are not.
- Cuba can experience power outages lasting several hours.
- Hot water is usually available, with occasional disruptions.
- Bottled drinking water is provided each day while touring, and as an option at meals.

Accommodations

- Stays are in the best available hotels, privately owned inns, or bed & breakfasts (casas particulares).
- Properties are selected to comply with U.S. Department of the Treasury (OFAC) requirements.

Flexibility

In Cuba, **flexibility is essential**. Daily plans may change due to weather, access, or wildlife activity. Your expert Cuban guide will manage adjustments.

Options to rest

While staying in Playa Larga, you may opt out of certain outings to rest or enjoy personal time—please inform your host or guide in advance.

Exploring Cuba with Conservancy Travel

Our Cuba journeys are organized under the U.S. “**Support for the Cuban People**” general license and delivered in partnership with **FANJ—Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez de la Naturaleza y el Hombre**. As a Cuban NGO, FANJ advances research, education, and hands-on community initiatives that connect people, culture, and the environment—helping strengthen local livelihoods while protecting Cuba’s natural heritage.

Cancellations

All cancellations are effective from the date that written notification is confirmed as received by Conservancy Travel.

Cancellation Fees and Refund Policy

Up to 120 days prior: \$1,000

119–70 days prior: 50% of total fees owed

69–0 days prior: No refund

Travel Insurance to cover unforeseen trip cancellation, interruptions, lost baggage, and emergency medical assistance and evacuation is strongly suggested to protect your investment in your vacation. All cancellation fees are enforced.

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CONSERVANCY TRAVEL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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