

Karst and Caves in Cuba

February 3 – 16, 2016

Arranged by:

Sociedad Espeleológica de Cuba (SEC)
Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity (FANJ)
Cuban Institute for Friendship with the People (ICAP) / AMISTUR
Marazul Charters, Inc.

Eco Cuba Network, Program Consultants

Guide/Interpreter: Amircal “Cal” Salermo

Tour Leaders: Dwight Deal, PhD; Mary Fletcher Deal, MA

FANJ and SEC Leaders: Angel Graña González, Alejandro Romero Emperador, Evelio Balado Piedra

Evelio Balado Piedra will be with the group on the bus for the full trip, from Havana to Havana. Alejandro Romero Emperador will join us in Sancti Spiritus and will continue with the group on the bus in his province and back to Havana. Other leaders, speleologists, and cavers will join us in each of the areas we visit.

Breakfast is provided daily at hotels.

Wed, Feb 3 (Arrival Day / Havana)

PM: Programming depending on time of arrival
Check into the Hotel Copacabana
Welcome Dinner with Cuban guests

Thurs, Feb 4 (Havana)

AM Meeting at the Antonio Núñez Jimenez Foundation for Nature and Humanity
Overview of the history and work of the FANJ and of the Cuban Speleological Society, Led by director Angel Graña González

Lunch Old Town, Havana

PM Walking tour of Old Havana with guide

Dinner on your own – best option is to stay in Old Havana

Fri, Feb. 5 (to Matanzas / Varadero)

AM Drive to Matanzas and enjoy a city tour of this provincial capital
Check into the Hotel Playa de Oro on the peninsula of Varadero

Lunch At the hotel

PM **Visit “Cueva Ambrosio”**- a small flank margin cave illustrating how caves form at the interface of fresh and salt water

Dinner at the hotel

Sat, Feb 6 (Matanzas)

AM **Visit “Cueva de Bellamar”** with Esteban Graü Gonzales-Quevedo, Vice Secretary of the Sociedad Espeleológica de Cuba (SEC) and President of the Speleological Committee of Matanzas. This is a large polygenetic and complex cave system.

Lunch Join local cavers at their unique base, **Jardines de Bellamar**

PM Learn about the extraordinary conservation efforts by the Cuban cavers that stopped the planned development over beautiful and ecologically sensitive parts of the Bellamar cave system.

Dinner at the hotel

Eve a lot of fun at a neighborhood party, a true People-to-People experience!

Sun, Feb 7 (Matanzas)

AM Santa Catalina Cave – enjoy the scenery as you walk through fields to reach the cave. Evelio, Esteban and local cavers will guide small groups that will choose their own pace

Lunch TBD – choices may a) a box lunch and more caving or b) return to the hotel

PM Caving or hotel/local activities

Dinner at the hotel with a wrap-up with Esteban and other cavers

Mon, Feb 8 (to Sancti Spiritus)

AM: Travel to Sancti Spiritus, about 5 hours
Lunch en route

PM: Arrival and hotel check-in

Dinner Informal welcome, drinks and dinner with Alejandro Romero Emperador, President of the Cuban Speleological Society, and local cavers

Tues, Feb 9 (Sancti Spiritus)

AM Meeting at the regional FANJ office and museum, led by Alejandro
Lunch TBD

PM Tour the city of Sancti Spiritus

Dinner in town - on your own

Optional Casa de la Trova – performance of traditional Cuban music – *cost not included*

Web, Feb 10 (to San Jose del Lago)

AM: Depart for the karst and caves in the northern section of the province
– discussion of karst features en route
Arrive in *Mayajigua / San Jose del Lago* and check into our lodging

Lunch en route

PM: A chance to see one of the karst areas; visit a cave that is accessible to all
Dinner at the hotel

Thurs, Feb 11 (San Jose del Lago and Remedios)

Day-long excursions / in two separate groups:

- 1) Parque Caguanes / Caving w/box lunch – by truck with local cavers
Cueva de los Chivos; Cueva Humboldt; Cueva de Ramos (exact caves TBD)
- 2) Day-trip to the Colonial City of Remedios with our guide Cal on the group bus
Include Sugar Mill Museum, trains, possibly old printing press

Lunch Box lunch for cavers; a restaurant in Remedios for others

Dinner at the hotel with a sharing session on activities of the day

Fri, Feb 12 (to Trinidad)

A day of learning about the karst and landscape of this province as we travel south to the Colonial City of Trinidad on Cuba's southern coast
Visit Bocorones, a large and significant river cave – a choice to wade across the river and enter the cave or enjoy the landscape outside of the cave with walks and hikes as you wish

Lunch en route – perhaps at a “paladar”, a local Cuban home (cost on own)

PM Various stops and discussion en route to Trinidad

Arrive Trinidad and check into our lodging (TBD)

Dinner in Trinidad (TBD)

Sat, Feb 13 (Trinidad)

AM Explore Trinidad all day with our guide Cal

Lunch Sol Ananda Paladar

Dinner on our own and enjoy what cultural happenings Trinidad has to offer

Sun, Feb. 14 (to Havana)

AM Travel back to Havana along the shore route
with karst stops and explanations by Alejandro and Evelio en route
Stop in the City of Cienfuegos for a tour

Lunch Club Cienfuegos

PM Arrive in Havana and back to our Hotel Copacabana

Dinner on your own

Mon/15 (Havana)

AM Wrap up meeting / final session at Local/Regional Speleological House
Lunch *Fusterland*
PM visit the home/studio of artist Jose Fuster
Dinner Farewell Dinner with guests (TBD)

Tues/16 Flight to Cancun

*End of Karst and Caves of Cuba trip
Program is subject to variation*

COSTS

A few spaces are still available.

Costs are based on the group size and on the additional special arrangements for our group. Fees based on recent expectations in Cuba are:

\$4,965 for 21 or more participants, which comprises:

\$4,465 Land
\$ 500 Air from Cancun

\$5,250 for 16 – 20 participants, which comprises:

\$4,750 Land
\$ 500 Air from Cancun

Trip costs begin with the flight from Cancun to Havana and end with your return flight to Cancun. You will be responsible to get to Cancun by February 2nd, 2016. Departure for Cuba is on February 3rd.

Fee includes:

- Round trip airfare Cancun to Havana on Aeromexico Airlines
- Cuban visa and required Cuban health insurance
- Double-room accommodations*
- Full daily program
- Transportation to and from all programmed activities
- Experienced delegation guide / translator
- Honoraria to all host speakers, organizations and communities
- Preparatory educational material
- Donations to Cuban Speleological Society and other host organizations
- All group gratuities (guide, driver, bellmen, maids, wait staff) included
- Bottled water daily

* Single participants will be paired with a roommate if desired. Single room supplement \$400.

Tour fee does not include:

- Meals and snacks not included in the itinerary
- Optional cultural activities
- Expenses of a personal nature