



Street musicians in Havana

EMMA GOGHEGAN

The Music of Cuba

Cuba 15 days – May 9-23 or
 8 days – May 16-23 2010

Cuba is one of the world's great musical destinations. And for the past decade, since the release of the Buena Vista Social Club CD, music has been a part of Cuba's international image. In fact there are those that credit World Circuit (the BVSC label) with helping the growth in Cuban tourism. Virtually anyone visiting Havana these days is likely to find themselves with a group of *soneros* strumming 'Chan Chan', but thankfully the Songlines Music Travel trip offers a good deal more than that. It's led by Philip Sweeney, author of the *Rough Guide to Cuban Music* and regular *Songlines* contributor.

Essentially Cuban music is a mix of African and Spanish ingredients (from the slave population brought to the sugar and tobacco plantations; and the Spanish colonisers). Of the original inhabitants virtually nothing remains except the maracas and the adoption of the name of one of the tribes, Siboney, by the recording studios in Santiago, where *son* – Cuba's most infectious fusion of African and Latin ingredients – was born.

Our journey through Cuba starts in the east, where son and the Cuban revolution began in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. And it ends in Havana, where the popular sound of *mambo* emerged and where reggaeton holds sway today. A journey that will introduce us to the range of Cuban music today, from Afro-Cuban *rumba*, to son and reggaeton – ending with three rhythm-drenched days in Havana.

All Songlines Music Travellers will receive an information sheet about the local music, plus recommended recordings and DVDs.

To reserve your place

Please read the booking conditions on the website and contact the reservations office on:

+44(0)20 8505 2582
 or email:
songlines@thegroupscompany.com

Cuba – 15 days

Itinerary

Day 1 Sun Today we check into our Havana hotel, meet our Songlines Music Travel Leader and talk through our musical plans.

Day 2 Mon This morning we transfer to the airport and fly south to the small airport at Holguin. From here we drive to Baracoa. The town lies at the far eastern end of Cuba, a long way from the bustle of Havana. Here there is time to unwind and sample the local beaches and music scene.

Day 3 Tues Today we start our exploration of the area with our travel leader, perhaps relaxing on the beach or hanging out in the town with the locals.

Days 4 Wed Today we start our journey west across the island, driving first to Guantánamo Bay (Cuba's most famous song 'Guantanamera', is about a woman from Guantánamo – not dressed in an orange jump suit) and then to Santiago de Cuba, our first major stop. Our hotel is in the centre of town and we are well-placed to wander out into the streets of town for an initial exploration. This evening we will probably visit the Casa de la Trova, one of the best music venues in Cuba.

Days 5-6 Thurs-Fri The next three days are spent in this musical heart of the island. We have arranged a walking tour of the old city, and there are optional excursions including a boat trip; but our reason for being here is of course the music. *Son* developed here and it was where BVSC's Compañy Segundo and Ibrahim Ferrer started their musical careers. The wonderful Eliades Ochoa is still based here.

Day 7 Sat Today we continue our progress across the island. Too many visitors to Cuba only visit the major tourism centres such as Trinidad and Havana and see little of the life of the rural communities that dot the island. Our drive today will correct that as we drive to Camagüey for the night.

Day 8 Sun We continue west, along country roads towards the sleepy town of Trinidad. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this historic Cuban town has a laid-back feel that belies its vibrant music scene. We stay a few streets from the main square and the old part of town. In the evening we can listen to music in the square or dance until the early hours close to our hotel.

Days 9 & 10 Mon-Tues Two days to get to know Trinidad. We have arranged a walking tour of the old town, and will be able to explore *rumba*, the much more African side of Cuban music thanks to the Palenque de Congos Reales. There also is free time to wander the streets of this charming place. You may want also to visit the beaches just out of town to catch the sun. There'll be plenty of music in the evening.

Day 11 Wed Today we drive west again, at first on narrow country roads and then joining the main highway to Havana. With a stop in Cienfuegos en route we should reach Havana in the late afternoon.

Days 12 & 13 Thurs-Fri Two full days in this musically vibrant city. We have arranged a city tour but there is also time to delve into the music of the capital, as we pick up on the mix of son, salsa, hip-hop and reggaeton that drives the city's music scene. As well as visits to learn about the recording scene here, we will visit several major music haunts during our evenings.

Day 14 Sat A last day free, for shopping, wandering or just chilling out in the city's bars and cafés.

Day 15 Sun After breakfast in the hotel our tour ends.

Cuba – 8 days

The 8-day trip joins the 15-day trip on Sunday May 16 2010

Itinerary

Day 1 Sun Check into your hotel in Havana. This first evening is free for you to unwind after the long flight, but there are the music clubs waiting if you can't sleep!

Day 2 Mon A full day drive to the old city of Trinidad and time to start exploring, with your Songlines Music Travel Leader, the music of this still very traditional city.

Day 3 Tues In Trinidad. Time to explore the old quarter and the nearby beaches as well as listen and learn about the world of Cuban music.

Day 4 Wed A full day drive to Havana.

Days 5-6 Thurs-Fri In Havana. As well as taking a city tour, we will have time to delve into the musical world of the Cuban capital.

Day 7 Sat A last day free, for shopping, wandering or just chilling out in the city's bars and cafés.

Day 8 Sun After breakfast in the hotel the tour ends.

Pricing details

We have designed these tours to give you the option of taking up an all-inclusive package which includes your air seats, or the option of making your own way there and then meeting up with the rest of your party at the first hotel.

Cuba 15-day tour (ex-Havana) May 9-23 2010

Tour price £1,345

Price includes: 14 nights twin-share accommodation at a 3-4 star hotel on a bed and breakfast basis; Entry to selected music events; The services of your Songlines Music Travel leader; All sightseeing and transfers as listed.

Single supplement: £295 per person

Cuba 16-day tour (ex-London) May 9-24 2010

Flights from London are available from £662 per person in conjunction with this tour. Flights are from London. Transfers from and to the airport in Havana are included with flights purchased through Songlines Music Travel.

Cuba 8-day tour (ex-Havana) May 16-23 2010

Tour price £995 per person

Price includes: 7 nights twin-share accommodation at a 3-4 star hotel on a Bed and Breakfast basis; entry to selected music events; the services of your Songlines Music Travel leader; all sightseeing and transfers as listed.

Single supplement £159 per person

Cuba 9-day tour (ex-London) May 16-24 2010

Flights from London are available from £662 per person in conjunction with this tour. Transfers from and to the airport in Havana are included with flights purchased through Songlines Music Travel.

Items not included: Single room supplement, visas, travel insurance, all meals with the exception of breakfast, gratuities and any items of a personal nature

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