

Cuba, Mexico & Panama

Farm Study Tour 2019



DATE	ACTIVITY	OVERNIGHT
DAY 1 Mon, Aug 5 (Meals on plane)	Tour leader: David Dowling 0437 000 234 Depart Australia the morning of August 5; Arrive Phoenix, Arizona (via Los Angeles). Transfer to our hotel for a light meal and an afternoon rest. For those wishing to arrive a day or two earlier, there are plenty of options such as the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas etc	USA Phoenix
DAY 2 Tues, Aug 6 (B,L,D)	Get a taste for some of Arizona's amazing desert landscape as we visit some of the highly productive irrigation areas near Maricopa, close to Phoenix. Arizona is one of the USA's major producers of cotton, grain and cattle in a very hot and dry (usually irrigated) environment.	Phoenix
DAY 3 Wed, Aug 7 (B,D)	Today we take a morning flight to Hermosillo in northern Mexico. After completing immigration formalities, we will board our coach for the 3 hour drive to Ciudad Obregon.	MEXICO Obregon Fiesta Inn https://www.fiestainn.com
DAY 4 Thurs, Aug 8 (B,L,D)	Today we visit The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) at Obregon. This is the dryland wheat hub of this famous research facility. Later we will visit the maize research centre near Mexico City. CIMMYT's Global Wheat Program provides elite breeding lines to national wheat breeding programs around the world. The program was started by Nobel Prize winner, the late Dr Norman Borlaug. The Yaqui and Mayo rivers provide some of the most highly productive agricultural areas of Mexico. We will visit some of these farms on the way to El Fuerte, a beautiful colonial town. If time permits, enjoy a guided walk to the cobblestone streets; visit the colonial church, the town hall and the market.	El Fuerte Posada del Hidalgo https://www.hotelposadadelhidalgo.com
DAY 5 Fri, Aug 9 (B,L,D)	In the morning, transfer to the train station to board the famous El Chepe train through the spectacular Copper Canyon. The train leaves El Fuerte at 8:30 am. Enjoy the most interesting part of the journey on the train to cross several bridges and tunnels that adorn the breathtaking view that the Sierra Madre offers. We will break our journey at Divisadero to take full advantage of the scenery. On arrival at Divisadero, it is just a short walk to our hotel with a wonderful view of the canyon. After, lunch, enjoy a Guided Walking tour to different views points like the balancing rock which is located inside the Natural Adventure Copper Canyon Park (entrance included), challenge your spirit of adventure in the hanging bridge that crosses a small canyon, ride in the aerial Tram (ticket included) or other activities like the Tyrolean (optional-not included) or simply buy nice crafts from the Tarahumaras.	Divisadero Divisadero Barrancas http://www.hoteldivisadero.com
DAY 6 Sat, Aug 10 (B,L,D)	More exploration of the canyon this morning before we take a bus ride to the wonderful colonial city of Chihuahua.	Chihuahua Fiesta Inn https://www.fiestainn.com

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<p>DAY 7 Sun, Aug 11 (B,L,D)</p>	<p>Morning flight to Mexico City, then a guided walking tour around Mexico City historical centre. When the Aztec war god commanded his people to build their capital wherever they saw an eagle roosted on a cactus gripping a snake in its beak, he really didn't think that very bird would be sighted in the middle of a huge swamp. But six centuries and 20 million inhabitants later, Mexico City is now one of the largest and most populous cities the world has ever known.</p> <p>The tour is based in the Zocalo, the heart of the city, where you will visit the Metropolitan Cathedral, one of the oldest and largest of the Americas, and (if open, subject to governmental agenda) the National Palace, home of the famous murals of Diego Rivera. You will also see the ruins of the Templo Mayor, one of the most important temples of the Aztecs in their ancient capital city of Tenochtitlan. Next, we drive down the beautiful Paseo de la Reforma Avenue to arrive at Chapultepec Park, to visit the Museum of Anthropology. This museum is considered to be among the world's finest of its kind. Here you will admire, among many other interesting treasures, the famous Aztec calendar stone.</p>	<p>Mexico City Zocalo Central https://www.centralhoteles.com/en/</p>
<p>DAY 8 Mon, Aug 12 (B,L)</p>	<p>Today we visit The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) on the outskirts of Mexico City. Australia is one of CIMMYT's most consistent supporters and several Australian researchers are currently based there. The first of over 100 CIMMYT- related wheat varieties were released in Australia in 1973 – around 90% of Australia's wheat area is now sown to these varieties. We'll see what's in the breeding and biotech pipeline.</p> <p>After this, we continue to visit Teotihuacan (meaning "Place of the Gods") and the awesome Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. Discover Teotihuacán, 'the place where gods were created'. Teotihuacan is one of the most impressive archaeological sites of the country. It is assumed that the city may have counted 200,000 inhabitants during its period of prosperity. In those years, Teotihuacán was the biggest city of the American continent and one of the biggest of the world. Until its inhabitants abandoned the city around the 8th century, Teotihuacan was probably the most significant and civilized cultural center of ancient Mexico. During this guided excursion you see (and climb?) the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, walk down the Avenue of the Dead, visit the Temple of Quetzalcoatl with its unique stone sculptures of plumed serpents, the Temple of the Butterflies, and the Fortresses. Buffet lunch at typical restaurant near pyramids. Free evening.</p>	<p>Mexico City Zocalo Central</p>
<p>DAY 9 Tues, Aug 13 (B,L,D)</p>	<p>Box breakfast and early departure to the airport to fly to Merida, where we will meet our local guide and visit to farms in this area of the Yucatan peninsula on the way to Pisté. Visit to the famous Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza.</p> <p>Its extraordinary beauty and convenient geographic location makes Chichen Itza one of the most important archaeological sites in Mexico. At the end of the Early Classic Period, around the year 600 AD, Chichen Itza was one of the largest and most prominent Maya cities. Nowadays, Chichen Itza is undoubtedly the best-preserved Maya site in the region. It is not only recognized as UNESCO World Heritage, it was also recently declared one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. It's definitely one of the most iconic places of the country, a site that can't be missed on a trip to Mexico. Most famous landmarks are the Temple of Kukulkan ("El Castillo"), the Ballgame Court, the Platform of the Skulls, the Temple of the Jaguar, the Observatory, the One Thousand Columns, and the Sacred Cenote. Lunch at local restaurant. In the afternoon, continue on to Cancun..</p>	<p>Cancun Presidente Intercontinental https://www.ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/us/es/cancun/cunhc/hoteldetail</p>

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DAY 10 Wed, Aug 14 (B,L,D)	<p>Transfer to the airport for the short flight to Havana. Afternoon orientation tour of Havana.</p> <p>Cuba is the Caribbean's largest and least commercialised island and one of the world's last bastions of communism. The island's political isolation has prevented it from being overrun by tourists, and the locals are sincerely friendly towards those who do venture in. For nearly four centuries Cuba was the main gateway to the Spanish American empire and the major Cuban cities bear stunning testament to this era. But during the 1950s, Fidel Castro and his small band of revolutionaries, changed all that. The Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Cuban/Russian missile crisis and political and economic isolation soon followed. Almost in defiance of all this, Cuba is a world-class cultural and artistic hub. And speaking of hubs, if you're looking for a spare part for that 1953 Chevy, you've come to the right place.</p> <p>We'll commander some 1950s style American convertibles and tour around the town before returning to our classic and historic hotel – maybe an afternoon mojito on the lawn overlooking Havana Bay and a Cuban cigar if you are up to it.</p>	<p>Havana</p> <p>Hotel Nacional</p> <p>https://www.hotelnacionaldecuba.com</p>
DAY 11 Thurs, Aug 15 (B,D)	<p>In this historic seaport, classic American cars clatter along streets lined with Spanish architecture – all pulsating with African and Caribbean rhythms. Old Havana's baroque facades, massive-columned palaces, and lush patios reflect Cuba's colonial past. A free day to do your own exploration of this intriguing World Heritage listed city with a guide available to organise optional activities if required.</p>	<p>Havana</p> <p>Hotel Nacional</p>
DAY 12 Fri, Aug 16 (B,L,D)	<p>Today we start our exploration of Cuba's rural heart as we head to Trinidad, on Cuba's southern coastline. On the way, we pass through the town of Australia and past the famous Bay of Pigs, site of the ill-fated CIA-backed invasion in 1961.</p> <p>Founded in 1514, Trinidad is one of Cuba's most historically significant cities and is World Heritage listed. It is the best preserved and most visited of the country's provincial colonial cities. Some say the clocks stopped ticking in 1850 and have yet to restart. Built on huge sugar fortunes amassed in the adjacent Valle de los Ingenios during the early 19th century, the riches of the town's pre-War of Independence heyday are still very much in evidence in illustrious colonial-style mansions bedecked with Italian frescoes, Wedgwood china and French chandeliers.</p> <p>Located on the foothills of the Escambray Mountains overlooking the Caribbean, this beautiful city also commands stunning views. For some local colour, we will stay at a well appointed Casa Particular (a Cuban B&B).</p>	<p>Trinidad</p> <p>Casa Particular (TBC)</p>
DAY 13 Sat, Aug 17 (B,L,D)	<p>We have a guided tour of Trinidad this morning before lunch and a free afternoon to do your own exploration of this beautiful location. There are also many local markets showing off the local produce and handicrafts (especially textiles and crochet work).</p>	<p>Trinidad</p> <p>Casa Particular (TBC)</p>
DAY 14 Sun, Aug 18 (B,L,D)	<p>Today we continue east along the spine of Cuba and into the Camaguey region. We have a farm visit on the way at Ciego de Avila and meet with local farmers. We then continue onto Camaguey, Cuba's third largest city, for overnight.</p> <p>After almost continuous attacks from pirates the original city (founded as Santa María del Puerto del Príncipe around 1515 on the northern coast) was moved inland in 1528. The new city was built with a confusing lay-out of winding and blind alleys – that lead to squares of different sizes. One explanation is that this was done by design, to make the city easier to defend from any raiders.</p> <p>The symbol of the city is the clay pot or tinajón and clay pots are everywhere. Local legend has it that if you drink water from a girl's personal tinajón, you will fall in love with the girl and never leave her – maybe the fellas on this tour only need a one-way air ticket?</p>	<p>Camaguey</p> <p>Hotel Santa Maria</p>
DAY 15 Mon, Aug 19 (B,L,D)	<p>Camaguey is one of the major farming centres of Cuba and we will spend the day visiting a variety of farms.</p> <p>In the evening, we will have a barbecue dinner at a local farm.</p>	<p>Camaguey</p> <p>Hotel Santa Maria</p>

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DAY 16 Tues, Aug 20 (B,L,D)	<p>We travel east to the colonial region of Bayamo with a farm visit on our way. This town is where the secret meetings and conspiracies took place leading up to the Independence War between 1868 and 1878. Also, in Bayamo's main square, the Cuban National Anthem was sung for the first time.</p> <p>In the afternoon, continue on to Santiago de Cuba. Santiago de Cuba is the second largest city in Cuba and is in a partly submerged valley of the Sierra Maestra mountains. Santiago has been an important port for more than four centuries. Back in the 1950s, Fidel Castro launched his revolution from here. The city has played an instrumental part in the evolution of Cuban literature, music, architecture and the nation's social fabric. It is a cosmopolitan mix of Afro-Caribbean culture, situated closer to Haiti and the Dominican Republic than to Havana.</p>	Santiago de Cuba Melia Santiago de Cuba http://www.meliasantiagodecuba.com
DAY 17 Wed, Aug 21 (B,L)	We take a short guided tour of Santiago de Cuba including both the modern and older parts of the city. Then a free afternoon to do your own sightseeing or maybe even pursue a more adventurous option such as a spot of Caribbean game-fishing.	Santiago de Cuba Melia Santiago de Cuba
DAY 18 Thur, Aug 22 (B,L,D)	This morning, we say goodbye to Cuba and fly to Montego Bay, Jamaica on our own private charter flight. Christopher Columbus described Jamaica as "the fairest isle that eyes beheld; mountainous — all full of valleys and fields and plains." The island's idyllic tropical climate means that dramatic fluctuations in temperature are virtually non-existent, the unique environment needed for the production of the world's finest, most exclusive — and most expensive — cotton type, Sea Island.	JAMAICA Montego Bay
DAY 19 Fri, Aug 23 (B,L,D)	Plenty of time this morning to enjoy the ambience of the Caribbean before we are back to the airport for our flight to Panama City. We'll take a short orientation tour on the way to our hotel.	PANAMA Panama City
DAY 20 Sat, Aug 24 (B,L,D)	<p>We'll do a tour of the Panama canal. Watch the boats proceed through the Miraflores locks and the new locks designed to handle the larger Panamax ships. Follow the canal as far as the Gatun Lake and experience some of the Panamanian jungle. Hopefully we can take our own cruise through the canal locks, but this will be confirmed closer to the date.</p> <p>Afternoon exploration of the wonderful old town of Panama City before a farewell dinner that night.</p>	Panama City
DAY 21 Sun, Aug 25 (B)	<p>Depart Panama City for a direct flight (7hrs) to Los Angeles and connection home to Australia (15hrs). Arrive home Sunday morning (Aug 21). You also have the option of resting up in LA for the night before your flight home the following evening. We will help you arrange a hotel and transfers.</p> <p>There's also plenty of options to fill in your day such as a guided tour of Hollywood, Santa Monica, Rodeo Drive and other iconic LA sights.</p>	On plane or Los Angeles

TOUR INCLUSIONS...

- All international and internal flights (economy class) including taxes and airport charges that can be included on the pre-purchased air ticket – not including the Cuba tourist card (\$US20) which is bought at the airport in Mexico.
- First class, centrally located city accommodation (best available in regional areas) with full buffet breakfast;
- Farm and other technical visits;
- Most lunch and evening meals are included and are of the highest standard. Meals are designed to showcase the best of the regional food and wines. Some evenings will be left free to sample some of the great local restaurants at your leisure;
- Local, as well as our own, experienced Greenmount Travel guides/translators accompany the group to ensure any problems that may arise are quickly fixed;
- Private first class charter coach and experienced drivers; and,
- Park and site entries, transfers, etc mentioned on the itineraries.

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