



CANADA-CUBA SPORTS & CULTURAL FESTIVALS

Revised May 2016

Oak Bay Secondary School

ARTS IN CUBA: April 14 – 21, 2017

CULTURAL EXCHANGE and PERFORMANCE PROGRAM IN CUBA

This program is specifically designed for music students to experience a comprehensive overview of Cuban culture and history from Columbus to Castro, with a focus on the study of the Afro-Cuban contribution to Music, Dance, and Visual Art in Cuba. Beginning in Havana, founded in 1519, participants will meet and perform with Cuban students and teachers at local arts schools. Additional performances will take place at public venues arranged by the Cuban Ministry of Culture. We will then travel by bus and explore the climates and topography of tropical rain forests, mountain terrain and caves systems, while observing the life ways of rural communities in the Cuban countryside in the capital of Pinar del Rio Province.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: **Flight to Cuba.** On arrival in Cuba we will be met by our hosts at the airport and transferred to our hotel in Havana (approximately 140 kms) for check-in. Dinner at the hotel. Optional rehearsal time available at the hotel.

DAY 2: The morning will be spent at Santa Maria beach to enjoy the sun, white sand and swim in the Caribbean Sea. Lunch (\$7-\$8) at a local restaurant. This afternoon we will take an orientation tour by bus, followed by a walking tour to Old Town Havana, Spain's gateway to the conquest of Latin America. Havana, founded in 1519 became the capital of Cuba in 1553 and in 1982 UNESCO declared Old Havana a World Heritage Site, where 144 buildings from the 16th and 17th centuries are preserved. Our guide will lead a walking tour of the Old City. We then travel by air-conditioned coach to the harbour entrance to visit the *Parque Historico del Morro* (entrance to park included) and see fortifications built in the 17th century to guard the city from attack by pirates. Dinner at the hotel. This evening you will perform for international and Cuban guests at the hotel.

DAY 3: After breakfast we will attend an interactive Percussion and Latin Rhythms workshop. A performance by Novel Voz, an excellent a cappella vocal jazz ensemble will follow. Lunch (\$7-\$8) at a local restaurant together with members of Novel Voz. This afternoon you have the option of visiting a local community centre that provides assistance to low income families and do some humanitarian work, and if you wish, your group can present a donation to the community centre kids (goods, not money). Dinner at the hotel. This evening receive informal Salsa dance classes.

DAY 4: This morning we have been invited to attend a presentation by an Afro-Cuban musical/dance group. Members of the group will endeavour to share Afro-Cuban song and dance with the students. Lunch (\$7-\$8). This afternoon we will participate in a Cuban Choral Music workshop. Dinner at the hotel. This evening you have the option of visiting the famous Jazz Café and enjoy performances by top Cuban musicians (\$10 entrance fee not included). Your jazz band can be the opening act tonight!

DAY 5: This morning we will visit the Provincial Junior Arts High School. We will learn about the school and Canadian and Cuban students will perform for each other. Lunch (\$7-\$8) at a local restaurant. This afternoon we will visit shopping areas in the city including the artisans market and a collection of boutiques housed in a restored 18th century colonial palace. Dinner at the hotel. This evening Canadian students perform a joint program with other Cuban performing artists at a venue arranged with the Ministry of Culture.

DAY 6: Havana/Pinar del Rio/Havana. On our bus trip through Western Cuba we will explore the climate, topography, plant and animal life of tropical rainforests and mountain terrain. This morning we visit the nearby Viñales Valley. Your guide will explain the significance of the formations here called "mogotes", odd hillocks considered mineral fossils because they were created during the Upper Jurassic period. Beneath the valley floor are subterranean rivers and one of the most extensive cave systems in the Americas. Later, in small groups we will explore one of the most accessible of these subterranean rivers by boat (admission fee included). Speak with your guide for recommendations on where to stop for lunch (\$7-\$8). In the afternoon, we will continue hiking along a mountain river to a look out point (380 meters above sea level). There will be an optional modest charge (\$3) for the descent to the waterfall and natural pool safe for wading. Portions of this hike are rigorous and we suggest closed walking or sports shoes. Return to Havana. Dinner at the hotel. Attend evening performance(s) by Cuban musicians at the hotel.

DAY 7: The morning will be spent at beautiful Santa Maria beach. Lunch (\$7-\$8) at a local restaurant. This afternoon all students will visit an Arts High School. We will attend a performance presented by music students at the school. A performance by the Canadian students will follow. This evening we will have a farewell dinner and dance party with our Cuban friends.

DAY 8: Cuba to Canada. We now leave the hotel and return to the airport. Time permitting other points of interest may be visited en route to the airport.

Program Includes: Round trip airfare from selected departure city to Cuba, 7 nights hotel accommodation based on double occupancy in air-conditioned rooms with private bathroom, breakfast and dinner daily, coordination and entrance/participation fees for visits - performances - workshops - tours, translator/guide services, local facilitators, ground transportation via modern air-conditioned bus as per itinerary, Cuban visa, and the Cuban airport tax.

Not Included: Lunches, beverages, optional activities, tips.

Please Note: Hotels, restaurant and recreational facilities are quite expensive by local standards. You may choose to invite Cuban students and teachers to participate in social activities with your group. This is always warmly received, however, you as host, are expected to assume the cost of the invitation as it is beyond the means of most Cubans. We recommend you check with your guide for suggestions before extending any invitations.