

Cienfuegos - Trinidad Tour

Price: \$400 (per car)

Duration: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM

Cienfuegos

Cienfuegos on Cuba's south coast is a pleasant colonial gem (with pockets that look distinctly like 1950s Floridian suburbia) on a splendid bay where dolphins frolic (for an additional charge we can arrange for you to swim with them, if you like). Its private restaurants, or paladares, are known for their seafood, and other attractions are the magical Botanical Gardens, and the old fashioned beauty of its facades (don't miss the beautiful Catedral de la Purísima Concepción). Its marina is also the embarkation point for many catamaran excursions to the southern keys near Cayo Largo. Other than that, there is not a lot else to do but soak up the pleasant provincial atmosphere. On the Paseo del Prado, the longest street in Cuba, people-watching and ice cream consumption seems to be the main event. Cienfuegos was settled late for Cuba in 1819, so streets are spacious and civilised. It remains old fashioned and laid back, and horse drawn carriage seems the most common form of transport. An American planter Edwin Atkins created the Botanical Gardens, in the outskirts of town, in the early 1900s with the help of Harvard professors Oakes Ames and George Goodale. These days they are little visited and the guides are keen to show you their little-visited Eden of more than 2,000 species of tropical plants, which you are likely to have all to yourself.



Trinidad

Trinidad is far and away the most handsome town in Cuba, with multi colored pastel hued terraces and rust-red roofs. This fertile land of mountain and sea has always brought wealth to lucky locals. In the colonial area, especially between 1750 and 1850, sugar cane was huge, and fabulously rich Spanish families raised gorgeous mansions around Trinidad's main square off the back of their sugar mills in the valley. Now their descendant rent rooms out to hordes of visiting foreigners. Mountain and sea collide around the Topes de Collantes, producing rich soil for crops. As produce is bountiful, so the home-cooked food has always been superior, even in bad economic times. As the state restaurants in this town are below par, investigate the private restaurants – paladares – even the meals offered by your own casa particular, or that of other visitors you encounter. Bell towers intersperse the picture-book houses, offering winning views to mountain and the hazy coast. It's a short drive from Trinidad to Playa Ancon, one of the loveliest beaches on the island, and if you can cope with all-inclusive hotels, it's possible to stay there too, though day trips are the better alternative.

