



CAPTURING CUBA: A PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP
WITH MAGDALENA SOLE

Cuba is a country like no other. A forbidden fruit destination for American travelers for many decades, this extraordinary island – one of the world’s last remaining Communist bastions – has developed in its own unique way.

Aesthetically, it is a delight: its cities are crammed with cobbled colonial squares and scores of wheezing vintage cars; its countryside is a jumble of sugar-white beaches, rugged mountains and tropical forests that hum with life. But incredible though the physical topography may be, it is the cultures, communities and remarkable people that make it an especially intriguing place for photographers to develop their skills, as well as their portfolio.

During this 11-day trip to Cuba, participants will be accompanied by award-winning social documentary photographer Magdalena Solé, who will offer advice on the technical and creative aspects of their photographic endeavors. Local Cuban guides, meanwhile, will also be on hand to offer insight into the rich authentic cultures, customs and ways of living that thrive here on the island.

TRIP DURATION
11 days, 10 nights

DATES:
Jan 20 - 30, 2017



WORKSHOP ITINERARY

Day 1: Miami/New York

Travel via charter flight from Miami or New York and touch down in Havana, Cuba's storied capital, where you'll be driven through the elegant Miramar district. Once an exclusive enclave for pre-revolutionary elites, Miramar's mansions are now occupied by embassies, commercial offices and hotels. Pass through Revolution Square, where matching memorials depicting national heroes Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara glare down from the side of buildings, before touring the Vedado neighborhood. Here, we'll see a more modern side of the city, as well as Havana institutions such as the state-run Coppelia ice-cream parlor and emblematic 1950s hotels Habana Libre and Habana Riviera.

Later, check in to the four-star Telegrafo Hotel in downtown Havana, which is set in a renovated 19th-century structure and features period details. Reconvene with the group for dinner at Café La Taberna, where food will be accompanied by live music from a nine-piece bolero son band.

Day 2: Havana (B,L,D)

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll hit the twisting lanes of UNESCO-listed Old Havana. The tour will take us to old plazas where the cobblestones have been polished to a shine by footfall and to centuries-old churches. We'll also visit a local gym where you can turn your lens

on the determined young athletes training in the art of boxing – Cuba's second favorite sport. Participants will also get the chance to learn about a restoration project currently underway in Old Havana, which aims to preserve the resplendent historic buildings through traditional handcraft methods.

The focus will then shift to Cuba's photography scene as we are welcomed at the Fototeca, a leading photographic guild, by director Nelson Ramirez, who was recently selected to represent Cuba at the Venice Biennale. Learn about the challenges that Cuban artists and photographers have to contend with, from government censorship to restricted internet access.

After eating lunch at the Mercaderes paladar, a privately owned restaurant that is commonly said to be among the best in the city, it's back out onto the streets of Old Havana for more exploring, followed by an optional visit to the Taller de Grafica Experimental, an institution dedicated to graphic arts.

Upon return, participants will meet to discuss their photographic goals and objectives. We'll then be picked up by classic car and taken to the privately run Rio Mar restaurant, which serves up straight-from-the-sea delicacies on its ocean-view terrace. Should you wish, you can continue on to a bohemian club to listen to live jazz-influenced boleros and trova music.

Day 3: Havana (B,L)

After breakfast, we'll take a ferry out to the waterfront Iglesia de Nuestra Señora

de Regla. This church is for the followers of Santería, a syncretic religion that blends elements of Catholicism with the aspects of African Yoruba mythology, and is famous for its depiction of the Black Madonna. While here, we'll get to witness and photograph a fascinating Santería ritual.

Next, we'll survey the funerary jewels of the Christopher Colón Cemetery, a vast graveyard containing ornate mausoleums, vaults and military tributes.

Continue your photographic adventure, as you have the opportunity to mingle with locals and learn about an art and music-focused community project run by Salvador Gonzales and his team. You can even enjoy dancing the "Domingo de la Rumba."

After lunch at one of Havana's best paladars, VIP Habana, we'll venture to the district of Jaimanitas to see the work of Cuban artist José Fuster, whose colorful and whimsical murals cover more than 80 houses in the neighborhood.

Back at the hotel, you'll have time to edit your photographs before dinner at a place of your choosing and, if you're feeling energetic, enjoy some post-dinner dancing at the legendary Havana Café too.

Day 4: Havana (B,L,D)

Our Cuban journey continues today with a visit to a day care center for children of single, often teenage, mothers. From there, it is on to the Instituto Superior de Arte, the city's premier arts school.

After lunch at El Templete, located on the Malecon, we'll stop by the Centro Pro Danza, a dance school whose talented alumni have become known around the world. You will also get the chance to speak with the dancers and hear their stories.

You'll have the opportunity to meet members of a local Cuban art collective Muraleando, who run art workshops as well as community-focused events, which act as a platform for local artists, dancers, poets and singers. After, shop at a local arts and crafts market where you can buy handcrafted souvenirs from the artisans who made them.

Linger over dinner in famed Rejoneo palador, which is known for its excellent grilled cuisine, before returning to our historic hotel in downtown Cuba.

Day 5: Viñales (B,L)

After breakfast, we'll set out for a 2.5-hour drive to Valle de Viñales, considered by many to be the most beautiful place in Cuba. With its red soil, lush green tobacco plantations and hulking limestone outcrops, this stunning UNESCO-listed landscape begs to be captured on camera. The valley is famous for its tobacco growing plantations, which yield some of the best tobacco in the world. A local guide will show us around, introducing us to tobacco farm workers and leading us around a private finca (farm), where we'll be granted access to places that very few tourists ever see. With the wonderfully contrasting colors of the rusty soil and deep green crops, and the sheer karst hillocks rising in the background, this whole region is a photographer's paradise.

Lunch at the farm will be followed by even more local interaction. This time, we'll chat with members of a state-owned farming cooperative, El Moncada, to find out more about the practice of Communist crop growing, before visiting a nearby bodega.

Stay overnight in the three-star Hotel La Ermita in Pinar del Río, which promises

dramatic valley vistas and an open-air bar that is perfect for sipping sundowners.

Day 6: Havana - Viñales (B,L)

Today our journey will take us to a local farm that produces fruits, vegetables and grains as well as tobacco. The owners will show us around their 40-acre land, which has been in the same family for generations, before everyone tucks into a homemade meal back at the farmhouse; where we will be joined by other members of the local community. Then it's on to a despalillo (stripping house) to learn about how tobacco leaves are prepared for use in cigars.

The afternoon is yours to do as you please. You might want to wander Viñales town center, shop at the arts and crafts market, go hiking, or even trek through the valley on horseback.

Day 7: Viñales - Cienfuegos (B,L)

This morning, you will have time to edit your photographs before sitting down with the group to review your work so far. Magdalena will answer any questions you may have, as well as offering feedback and guidance, and suggesting tips to help improve your photography. Eat lunch together then embark on a five-hour drive to Cienfuegos, a thriving oceanfront city where French flavor and Caribbean soul collide. We'll stay overnight here in a boutique, colonial-style hotel called Encanto Casa Verde. The intimate eight-room hotel is set in a historic, early 20th century building, which was renovated as part of a project designed to save buildings of cultural and architectural significance by converting them into small hotels.

Day 8: Cienfuegos - Trinidad (B,L)

Embark on a whistle-stop tour of Cienfuegos, ticking off all the most important sights in its UNESCO-listed center including the Government Palace and the 19th-century Santa Iglesia Catedral de la Purísima Concepción.

Work off lunch with a stroll in the city's botanic garden, where a whopping 2,000 species of plants, including some 280 types of palms, grow.

Later that afternoon, we'll arrive in Trinidad. It is hard to resist photographing this time-warp Spanish colonial settlement, where it seems almost nothing has changed since its 19th century heyday.

Day 9: Trinidad (B,L)

Enjoy a walking tour around Trinidad's UNESCO-listed streets, which are lined with grand, red-roofed colonial buildings, most of which were built during the city's sugar-producing heyday in the 19th century. When the sugar industry began to decline during the latter half of the 19th century, the lavish colonial construction projects ceased. During our tour, we'll see the central Plaza Mayor, and its cathedral – the largest in Cuba. We'll also explore cultural institutions such as the Museo Romantico, which houses a vast collection of precious porcelain, glass, paintings, and furniture. Participants with a head for heights can climb up the tower at the Antiguo Convento de San Francisco de Asis and enjoy views out over the countless colonial mansions of the city.

Next, we will drive out of town to the Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills), the former center of Cuba's once lucrative, slave-driven sugar industry. Lunch will be at the Manaca Iznaga Plantation, where original features from the site's sugar-producing heyday, including the owner's house (which has now been converted into an excellent restaurant) and old slave quarters, still survive.

We will explore the old ruins of haciendas and visit families living in the large estates of former plantations, which have been converted into multi-family dwellings.

This evening, you'll be free to do as you please so you can enjoy dinner, and perhaps some live music, at your leisure.

Day 10: Sancti Spiritus (B,L,D)

After another group photography review session, we'll head back out on the road to Sancti Spiritus, a little-known but wonderfully photogenic city that ranks high in the colonial charm stakes. Discover a palatial mansion that was once owned by the elite Valle Iznaga family, which is beautifully adorned with stunning furniture – including a Cuban smoking chair, a mid-18th century American piano, Italian marble tables and Baccarat crystal chandeliers – and spectacular, original paintings. We'll also visit the majestic colonial home and exhibition space Museo de Arte Colonial (the Colonial Art Museum).

After the mansion, we check into our own swish accommodation; the lovely neoclassical-style Hotel Del Rijo, complete with 16 spacious double rooms with high beamed ceilings and marble bathrooms.

In the evening, the group will get together for a final farewell dinner. Dine on sumptuous dishes that blend Spanish and Cuban flavors in Meson de la Plaza, a beautiful wooden-ceilinged colonial house turned restaurant. Later on, we'll toast the end of trip with a glass or two of sublime Cuban sangria.

Day 11: Sancti Spiritus - Santa Clara (B,L)

After being transferred to Santa Clara, we will enjoy one last lunch together. You will then be transferred to Abel Santamaria International Airport in Santa Clara to catch your return flight back to Miami.

***This trip is operated by Ya'lla Tours USA Inc. under humanitarian license granted by the Office of Foreign Assets Control branch of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

ABOUT MAGDALENA SOLE



Magdalena Sole is a social documentary photographer. She is best known for her vibrant and complex color work. Visual language has been her life's work. In 1989 she founded TransImage, a graphic design studio, in New York City. In 2002 she graduated with a Masters of Fine Art in Film from Columbia University. Her last film, "Man On Wire", on which she was the Unit Production Manager, won an Oscar in 2009. She has taught in Europe and the US.

Her projects span the globe. Her current work includes: Kamagasaki — a photo documentary on the shunned elderly day laborers of Japan. Japan — "After the Water Receded", an exploration of the aftermath of the great 2011 Tohoku disaster, which was shown at the Sidney Mishkin Gallery in April 2012 in New York City. Most recently her photographs of the Mississippi Delta have been selected as a PDN Photo Annual 2011 Finalist. Her book "New Delta Rising", published by the University Press of Mississippi, was released in February 2012. It has won the Silver Award in 2011 at PX3 Prix de la Photographie, France. She is also winner of the Silver Prize 2011 at Slow Exposures, Concord, GA. Other shows in 2012 are Voices from Japan at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York City, Dante and the Delta at Doma Gallery in Charlotte, NC, The Delta at WilJax Gallery in Cleveland, MS, and Sous Les Étoiles in New York City. The Mississippi Delta is on view until February 22, 2013 at the Leica Gallery in New York.

Born in Spain, raised in Switzerland, she arrived in New York City in 1984, where she lives with her family. She speaks seven languages.

www.solepictures.com

EXPEDITION COST:

\$ 6,395 per person double occupancy
Add 500 for single supplement.

* Should a single traveler wish to share a room with another traveler, and the land operator is unable to match him/her with a roommate, the single room supplement will apply.

DEPOSIT AND PAYMENT POLICY:

* A deposit of \$1,500 per person is required at the time of booking.
* Final payment is due on October 21, 2016, 90 days prior to the group departure.

Cost for the Charter flights**:

MIA-HAV // SNU-MIA: \$675 (not final)
JFK-HAV // SNU-MIA: \$890 (not final)

** International Flight to/from Cuba are not included. Price subject to change until booked.

INCLUDES:

- 10 nights of accommodations in Cuba with buffet breakfast daily
- 9 lunches and 3 dinners as per the itinerary
- Drink package during lunches and dinners as follows:
 - 1 (one) glass of:
 - Mojito and/or
 - Mineral Water
- 2 bottles of water per person per touring day.
- 10 days journey in a private, air-conditioned bus with a licensed, English-speaking guide.
- All entrance fees per itinerary.
- Hotel service fees and taxes.
- Information kit
- Cuban Tourist Card application

- Tips for guide, driver and at hotels.
- Tips for bellmen.
- Tips during lunches and dinners.

DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- Cuban departure taxes, \$25 per person to pay at the charter counter at JFK or MIA.
- Any domestic flights within the US or Cuba
- Meals and drinks other than those specified above on the itinerary
- Personal expenses
- Travel insurance (\$440 per person in a double room or \$502 per person in a single room) is highly recommended.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

- Air schedules are subject to change at any time
- You must have a valid U.S. passport to enter Cuba. (Must be valid at least 6 months past your scheduled return date).
- The land operator, Ya'lla Tours USA, reserves the right to change the hotels to others of similar quality.
- Sightseeing sequence may be changed.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUND:

- * For cancellation occurring more than 90 days prior to departure, a cancellation fee of 50% of the security deposit will apply;
- * For cancellation occurring 89 to 60 days prior to departure, a cancellation fee of 75% of the trip cost will apply;
- * For cancellations occurring 59 days or less prior to departure, a cancellation fee of 100% of the trip price will apply;
- * No refund will be paid for unused services such as: transfers, sight-seeing, meals, hotel accommodations, entrance fees, and others that are listed in the tour program.

* Travel insurance is NON-REFUNDABLE.

LAND ARRANGEMENTS:

The Land Operator, Ya'lla Tours reserves the right to change the itinerary due to unforeseen circumstances. In all cases, Ya'lla Tours will do its best to maintain the content of the tour. The Tour operator reserves the right to change the hotels listed on the tour for others of similar quality.

RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY:

Whereas Ya'lla Tours USA Inc. "The Operator" and the participating airlines and tour operators operate the land tours offered under this program only as agents of the aircraft, railroads, car rental contractors, steamship lines, hotels, bus operators, sight-seeing contractors and others who provide the actual land arrangements, we are not liable for any act, omission, delay, injury, loss or damage or nonperformance occurring in connection with these tours.

The Passenger contract in use by the airline concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airline and the purchaser of these tours and/or passenger.

Ya'lla Tours USA Inc. reserves the right to bring legal action to collect damages in the event that purchaser fails to pay any fees due and owing for services, including cancellation fees as set out in the section entitled 'Cancellations & Refunds'. The parties agree that should legal action be commenced, the prevailing party will be entitled to his/her or its reasonable attorney fees and court costs in addition to the actual damages sustained and proven. Venue for any dispute is Multnomah County Circuit Court, Oregon. This contract shall be governed by the laws of the State of Oregon.

PASSENGER RESPONSIBILITY:

Passenger has read the above terms and conditions and agrees to each of them.

Passenger hereby warrants that he/she fully understand each of them. Specifically passenger understands that should he/she cancel their trip for any reason, passenger will be charged the cancellation fee set out in the 'Cancellations & Refunds' section.

ENTIRE AGREEMENT SEVERABILITY:

This is the entire agreement of the parties and it may be amended only by written agreement signed by both Ya'lla Tours USA Inc. and the client. If any part of this agreement is held unenforceable by a court of law, the rest of this agreement will nevertheless remain in force and effect.

TRAVEL INSURANCE:

Each tour participant is responsible for paying any applicable fees for cancellation, medical treatment, medical evacuation, and repatriation of remains. Ya'lla Tours USA highly recommends the purchase of travel insurance for cancellation (for covered reasons), medical treatment, medical evacuation, and repatriation of remains. Travel insurance is not included in your tour price.

If you need more information or have questions, give us a call or drop us an email, we will respond promptly.

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