Cuba

February 8 – 22, 2018
Cuba is a long, lean land of extremes. Though known more for its revolutionary politics and radical musical styles than for its natural curiosities, this 780-mile-long “giant of the Antilles” is teeming with peculiar life—from the world’s smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird, to a large population of endemic crocodiles. Join Apex as we meld the island’s distinct culture and nature. Climb the very rainforest-draped mountains from which Fidel launched the Cuban Revolution. Listen for the trills of the endemic Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, Cuban Trogon or Tocororo, and Cuban Tody. Visit four UNESCO World Heritage sites, from sleepy Baracoa, Cuba’s first Spanish settlement, to vibrant Havana, where, according to Graham Greene, “anything is possible.” Get to know Cuba’s myriad landscapes and diverse people on our comprehensive journey across this unique and fascinating island.
Thursday, February 8: Arrive Miami
Arrive in Miami and walk to the Miami International Airport Hotel, located in the airport. Meet your expedition leader and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner at the hotel.

Friday, February 9: Holguin / Baracoa
Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and then walk to your gate for the flight to Holguin, Cuba. After lunch on arrival, head out of town and watch as the scenery changes and the road winds into a high, mountainous area with switchbacks and breathtaking views, as you approach Baracoa, Cuba’s oldest city. Despite its illustrious history—it was Columbus’s second landfall in the New World, and Cuba’s first capital—today, Baracoa has a land-that-time-forgot quality to it. Located on an isolated stretch of coast, the town looks and feels antique, with its little fortresses and streets lined with wooden edifices. Continue eastward for dinner and overnight at the beachside Villa Maguana.

Saturday, February 10: Baracoa
Alexander von Humboldt National Park, outside Baracoa, is considered to be the largest and best-preserved mountain and tropical rainforest ecosystem in all of the Antilles. This morning, hike the Balcon de Iberia trail, keeping an eye out for some of the smallest fauna in the world: Butterfly Bats, Alto de Iberia frogs, Bee Hummingbirds, and Cuban Land Snails, the most colorful on earth. Also watch for the Cuban Trogon, the country’s national bird. Afterward, drive to Ranchoa Toa for a lunch of roasted pig prepared over an open fire. After lunch, board a small boat to float down the Toa River, marveling at the majestic silhouette of El Yunque (the Anvil), the flat-topped mountain that looms 1,800 feet overhead, while keeping a watchful eye for birds and wildlife along the river banks. Enjoy dinner and dancing in Baracoa this evening, and overnight at the Porto Santo Hotel.
Sunday, February 11: Santiago de Cuba
Drive this morning to the province of Santiago de Cuba, and its eponymous capital city. Caught dramatically between the lush Sierra Maestra and the azure Caribbean Sea, Santiago de Cuba's setting is ideal. Physically closer to Kingston, Jamaica, than to Havana, Santiago de Cuba is the stronghold of Afro-Cuban culture in Cuba and has a fearsome musical, cultural and political heritage. Socialist to the core, Santiago was a key stronghold during the nascent stages of the Revolution. Though it is Cuba's second largest city, it feels compact, with a handful of key monuments. After lunch, tour the Moncada Barracks, where Fidel first attempted a coup in 1953. See Revolution Square and the exquisite colonial casas of Parque Céspedes. End your tour at the imposing El Morro Fortress for panoramic sunset views. After dinner, get a taste of the city's legendary rumba at the beautiful Casa de la Trova. Overnight at the Casa Grande Hotel.

Monday, February 12: Granma Province
This morning, drive to the cool, green peaks of Granma Province, named after the boat that brought Fidel Castro to Cuba in 1956. Here, revolutionary history and natural splendor collide in Cuba's largest mountain range, the Sierra Maestra, rising steeply from the shores of the Caribbean. The Gran Parque Nacional Sierra Maestra is an alluring natural sanctuary for botanical wonders like dwarf orchids and Sabicu (a West Indian tree commonly used for shipbuilding), and endemic birds such as Cuban Tody, Tocororo and Bee Hummingbird. After lunch, hike up from the quaint Villa Iztaluz Santo Domingo to Fidel's Hideout, the organizing and staging post for the Cuban revolution. Visit the completely preserved huts where Fidel and Che Guevara led their group of revolutionaries to ultimate victory. The views alone are worth the hike, with spectacular scenery and crisp, fresh mountain air. Overnight at Villa Santo Domingo, along the Yara River.

Tuesday, February 13: Camagüey
After breakfast, drive to Camagüey, among the first Spanish settlements in the country, and one of the best maintained to this day. Stop in Bayamo along the way to tour the main plaza and enjoy lunch and some music at a local paladar. After lunch continue the drive to Camagüey and check in to your hotel. Camagüey is known as “The Maze,” as it is a veritable labyrinth of blind alleys and twisting streets, originally designed to confound marauding pirates in the 16th century. Camagüey is not a tourist town, evidenced by the strong communal feel and the plethora of families gathered in the streets, parks, and restaurants. Enjoy dinner at one such restaurant near the impressive Iglesia de La Soledad and the beautifully-restored, cobblestone Plaza San Juan de Dios.

Wednesday, February 14: Camagüey
Depart this morning for a drive to La Belen Reserve some 45 miles south of Camagüey. The reserve was originally created to care for some of Cuba’s famed prancing horses. These are still present, but nowadays the reserve is known as one of the best birding sites in the country, with well over 100 species of birds present, including such specialties as Cuban Green Woodpecker, West Indian Woodpecker, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Crow, Palm Crow, and White-crowned and Scaly-naped pigeons. Following lunch at the reserve’s charming estancia, pay a visit to a nearby lake, home to a variety of waterfowl, herons, egrets and jacanas. Dinner and overnight in Camagüey.
Thursday, February 15: Camagüey / Trinidad
After breakfast, light out for a tour of local art galleries and to view the beautiful façades, elaborate churches and romantic squares of Camagüey. After an early lunch, drive to Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, built with the enormous wealth begotten by the 19th century sugar and slave trades. Head out to the Valley of the Sugar Mills for a tour of a sugar plantation. See slave quarters and learn about slave history in relation to the sugar industry. Visit working plantation homes of the sugar barons. Tonight, strap your dancing shoes on, and enjoy dinner and music in Trinidad.

Friday, February 16: Trinidad
Today, head into the Sierra del Escambray, Cuba’s second longest mountain range. In 1958, Che Guevara set up camp in these mountains on his way to Santa Clara. These days, this same terrain harbors the 500-square-mile Topes de Collantes Natural Park, rife with caves, rivers, falls, grottos, canyons, and crystal-clear pools. Lichens, mosses, 100 species of ferns, and around 40 species of coffee grow in the shade of the rainforest’s tall mahogany and magnolia trees. Several important species live here, including the Cuban Tody, unique hummingbirds, and the handsome Tocororo, Cuba’s national bird. Take your pick between hiking or walking options in the park. Return to Trinidad this afternoon. As will quickly become clear during your afternoon tour, no expense was spared in fashioning the finest Spanish colonial mansions, plazas and churches, evidenced at the former Cantero Sugar Palace (now the Museo Histórico Municipal), whose interiors are embellished with Baccarat crystal, frescoed walls, and marble statues. Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant, then overnight at your hotel.

Saturday, February 17: Cienfuegos / Playa Girón
After breakfast, drive to the city of Cienfuegos, founded during the great 19th century sugar boom, where you take in the city’s striking arcade houses with a walking tour. See José Martí Park and its world-renowned Tomás Terry Theater, which saw the likes of Caruso and Bernhardt in its day. After lunch in town, head west toward Playa Larga for an afternoon of snorkeling at the Cueva de los Peces, a flooded cenote full of bright tropical fish and dramatic formations. Freshen up at your hotel before departing for a special dinner at Casa Ronel and overnight in Playa Girón.

Sunday, February 18: Playa Girón
Spend the morning exploring the Zapata Peninsula. The peninsula itself is almost entirely uninhabited—most of it is protected as part of the Zapata Swamp National Park, an Eden for birdwatchers. Here we’ll also search for the Bee Hummingbird, as well as many other species. After lunch, depart for a trek into the park to visit Las Salinas de Brito, arguably Cuba’s top birding spot, with 18 of the 21 endemic Cuban bird species represented. Local endemics include Zapata Wrens, Rails, and Sparrows. Roseate Flamingos and Spoonbills abound in the lakes along the trail, as does the small, but fierce, Cuban Crocodile.

Monday, February 19: Playa Girón / Viñales
This morning visit the renowned Bay of Pigs, the site of the failed 1961 U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba. The Bay of Pigs, and Playa Girón in particular, is a sort of national shrine to this David-over-Goliath victory. Then begin the scenic drive to the far west of Cuba through the rolling green hills of the Pinar del Rio province. The landscape is quite unlike anything else you have seen in Cuba, as it is dominated by a unique...
string of limestone mountains and bluffs, or magotes. In their shadows are the lush green vegas, or fields, that produce the world’s finest tobacco leaves. The pace of life is slower here, with bullock-drawn carts the preferred mode of transportation. Villages are dreamily small, each with its own vintage church and palm-fringed plaza. We arrive late-afternoon and check in to the hotel with expansive views of the valley. Enjoy live music tonight at Centro Polo Montañez. Overnight at Jasmine’s.

**Tuesday, February 20: Viñales / Havana**
After an early breakfast, explore the unique landscape of the limestone-spiked Valle de Viñales. Sail on an underground river and explore caves strewn with relics of the Guanajatabey Indians and fossils of Pleistocene mammals. Scattered palm trees and pine forests on the area’s famous round-topped magotes shelter a variety of endemic birds, including the Tocororo, Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Emerald, and Cuban Grassquit. Enjoy lunch in a traditional wood house overlooking the picturesque valley, then set out on a tour of several tobacco plantations. See the famous drying houses and learn how to roll a cigar.

This afternoon, drive to Havana, a true melting pot of African, European, and Caribbean cultures. Havana has a buoyant charm that surprises most visitors—rhythms pulse from every doorway and colorful colonial edifices line the streets. Havana has survived every sling and arrow that’s been thrown its way, and Habañeros, as they’re known, seem to have redoubled their infectious energy despite their city’s roller-coaster history. Dinner at El Templete, an art-gallery-cum-restaurant. Afterward, enjoy a visit to Hemingway’s Hotel and Floridean Bar. Overnight at the elegant Hotel Saratoga.

**Wednesday, February 21: Havana**
After breakfast, explore Havana’s colonial past with a guided walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander the labyrinthine streets of one of the oldest cities in the Western Hemisphere (founded in 1519), enjoying the incredible faded beauty of the baroque and neoclassical architecture in the four main plazas. Visit the 1558 Castillo de la Real Fuerza, the city’s first fortress, and San Salvador de la Punta, one of the best examples of Cuba’s military architecture. After lunch, visit the Hemingway House and Museum, and the fishing community where Hemingway celebrated his Pulitzer Prize with Gregorio Fuentes, captain of his yacht and main character of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Enjoy a festive farewell dinner, then overnight at Hotel Saratoga.

**Thursday, February 22: Havana / Miami**
Bask in the hustle and bustle of the Havana streets one last time, then transfer to the airport for your international flight to Miami.

*This is program is arranged in partnership with Anthropologie Consulting, LLC, a cultural and educational travel organization that is authorized by the Office of Foreign Assets Control to organize people-to-people programs to Cuba.*
A - Miami  
B - Baracoa  
C - Santiago de Cuba  
D - Granma Province  
E - Camagüey  
F - Trinidad  
G - Cienfuegos  
H - Playa Girón  
I - Viñales  
J - Havana
Kevin Clement

Not many people can say they have lived inside Denali National Park, but Kevin Clement is one. Nowadays, however, he spends most of his time guiding ecotourism and adventure travel trips on all seven continents. Kevin has served as the Denali Foundation instructor for natural history and as a trainer for the Park’s staff of naturalists. For several years he worked with the sled dogs of Denali National Park, rebuilding sleds in the summer and patrolling in the winter. He has lived in several other national parks and has guided groups in whitewater rafts, on cross-country skis, by sled dog, and on foot, earning certifications in scuba diving, swiftwater rescue, and wilderness medicine, as well as a Coast Guard Master’s license.

Kevin’s interests and experience make him a superb all-round naturalist. A veteran of the Americas, most recently he’s been designing expeditions to several emerging destinations and is very much looking forward to Cuba. And, as always, he still draws and paints. His first career was as an illustrator and he never travels without his sketchbook. Or his sense of humor.

“Kevin is the consummate Renaissance Man, possessing a poetic and artistic take on the world that adds a fascinating dimension to his interpretation as you explore alongside him.”

– Judy M., Hawaii
Expedition Details

Cuba  February 8 – 22, 2018

$14,970  Per Person Rate
$16,490  Solo Rate
15 Days  Trip Length
10 Guests  Group Size
Miami / Miami  Start/End

Included
Apex Expeditions’ rates include all accommodations; all meals, activities and excursions as described in the itinerary; air Miami/Holguin and Havana/Miami, as noted in the itinerary; Cuban visa; services of an Apex expedition leader and local guides throughout the itinerary; all gratuities; local beer and local wines at lunch & dinner; airport transfers; permits and entrance fees; all taxes.

Not Included
Costs not included in the price of your Apex expedition include travel to and from the start and end point of trip; premium brand drinks and liquor; travel insurance (Trip Cancellation and Interruption, as well as Emergency Medical and Evacuation, insurance are highly recommended); airport departure taxes; excess baggage fees; passport and/or visa fees; items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, souvenirs, etc.); and independent travel arrangements pre- or post-trip.

Payments & Terms
20% of the trip cost will confirm your place on the expedition. The final balance is due 150 days prior to departure. All prices are quoted in U.S. dollars and must be paid in U.S. dollars. Per person pricing is based on double occupancy. The solo rate is paid by participants who specifically request single accommodations and is subject to availability. If you are traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we will try to match you with a roommate of the same gender. However, if a roommate is not available, the published solo rate will be charged. Upon confirming your reservation you will be required to pay the published Solo Rate, if we are able to pair you with a roommate, the applicable difference will be refunded at the time that the final trip payment is due for all participants. Please note that solo accommodations are limited and cannot always be guaranteed throughout. For our full set of Terms & Conditions, please visit our web site at www.apex-expeditions.com/about/terms-conditions/
Reservation Form

Cuba  February 8 – 22, 2018

Person 1: (Primary Contact)
Passport Name:

Preferred Name:

Date of Birth:

Email Address:

Mailing Details:
Address:

City: __________________________ State: _______ ZIP Code: _______ Country: _______

Phone: ________________________ Fax: ________________________

☐ Double  ☐ Solo

Person 2: (If applicable and at same address, otherwise please submit a second Reservation Form.)
Passport Name:

Preferred Name:

Date of Birth:

Email Address:

Deposit Information:
☐ My deposit check is enclosed (20% of total tour fare)

☐ Charge my deposit to my:  ☐ VISA  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ American Express

Card #: ______________________ Expire: _______ CCV Code: _______

Name on Card: __________________________

Signature: ___________________________

Please return this completed form to Apex Expeditions.
E-mail: info@apex-expeditions.com  or  Mail: 4130 California Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98116