

**Press Contact:**

Alicia Buonanno

[Gregory FCA](#)

610-228-2096

[Alicia@GregoryFCA.com](mailto:Alicia@GregoryFCA.com)

**Company Contact:**

Leora Hafri

[Friendly Planet Travel](#)

215-572-9594 ext. 223

[LHafri@FriendlyPlanet.com](mailto:LHafri@FriendlyPlanet.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Call on Cuba's City and Sea with a Brand-New Tour from Friendly Planet Travel**

*Introducing a new seven-day tour to experience the highlights of historic Havana and vivid Varadero*

**JENKINTOWN, Pa.—June 14, 2013**—The beautiful sights and rhythmic sounds of Cuba had been closed to American travelers for over 50 years. But when People-to-People licenses became available in 2011, making legal travel to Cuba possible for U.S. citizens, [Friendly Planet Travel](#) was among the first to give Americans the chance to experience Cuba's culture, history, art, and music for themselves. Now, the tour operator is adding another People-to-People program to its growing array of tours to Cuba—[Highlights of Havana & Varadero](#)—where travelers immerse themselves in the cultures of Havana, Cojimar, Matanzas, Varadero, and more. The seven-day tour starts at \$2,499 if booked by Sept. 24. There are also new 2013 and 2014 dates available for Friendly Planet's popular [Discover Havana](#) and [Colors of Cuba](#) tours, starting at \$2,299 and \$3,199 respectively, also if booked by Sept. 24.

"The Highlights of Havana & Varadero tour is a very unique and exciting way to visit Cuba," says [Peggy Goldman](#), President of Friendly Planet Travel. "Travelers will not only have the opportunity to visit Havana and experience all of its culture and history, but they'll also stay on one of the island's most iconic beaches—Varadero. The tour combines the cultural exchange of a People-to-People tour with a magnificent beach that is flush with beautiful palm trees, warm sand, and azure water to enjoy when the day's programs are finished. We're also very pleased to introduce new and innovative People-to-People activities on this tour. One example is a visit to a uniquely named 'coincidental' farm where travelers will learn what fruit trees and pottery have in common. It's a truly extraordinary opportunity for anyone interested in experiencing how people in Cuba live and work."

The [Highlights of Havana & Varadero](#) package includes [non-stop, round-trip airfare from Miami](#) to Havana via U.S. Government-licensed charter service with letter of authorization, as

well as a Cuba entrance visa; one pre-night in Miami with a pre-tour briefing; all land transportation and transfers; superior hotel accommodations; 13 meals; mandatory health insurance in Cuba; a comprehensive schedule of educational exchanges, including entrance fees; a professional English-speaking tour guide who will facilitate these exchanges; and a Friendly Planet representative who will accompany travelers throughout the trip.

After an overnight stay in Miami, where travelers have the opportunity to get acquainted, the [Highlights of Havana & Varadero](#) tour begins in Havana, Cuba's capital city and a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. First on the day's agenda is an opportunity to interact with local citizens and visit a primary school, when in session, to meet school administrators and teachers to discuss Cuba's educational system. The day ends with a welcome dinner at the [Hotel Nacional](#), considered a symbol of history, culture, and Cuban identity, where travelers stay for the duration of their time in Havana.

The next day, travelers explore some of Havana's most interesting sites, beginning with a visit to a famous cigar factory to see workers roll Cuban cigars by hand. The day continues with a visit to [Revolution Square](#); [Morro Castle](#); and [Columbus Cemetery](#), a miniature city of mausoleums, crypts, family chapels, vaults, beautiful sculptures, and ornate gravestones. After a walk along colorful Callejon de Hamel, one of the shortest but most interesting streets in Havana, they meet with local artists, including [Salvador González Escalona](#), when in residence. Later, travelers have the chance to engage in conversations about the Cuban economy and history of U.S.-Cuban relations in the 20th and 21st centuries with Cuban experts. Dinner this evening is served at a privately owned restaurant, an example of a private enterprise allowed to flourish due to newly revised policies in the country.

Travelers then depart Havana for the day to Las Terrazas in the Pinar del Río Province, a must-see in Cuba that's known worldwide for its magnificent, scenic beauty, and home to much of the country's tobacco farming. Here, travelers learn about medical practices in rural Cuba; meet with local entrepreneurs; and enjoy an authentic, country-style lunch that's prepared and served outdoors at a local farmhouse. On the way back to Havana, travelers have the distinct pleasure of visiting "[Fusterlandia](#)," the home and surrounding neighborhood of "The Picasso of the Caribbean," José Fuster.

The adventure continues the following day with a stop at [Finca Vigía](#), Hemingway's Cuban retreat, and a visit to [Cojimar](#), a small fishing village that was the setting for his book, "[The Old](#)

[Man and the Sea.](#)” Travelers then head to the district of Alamar, home to community gardens called Organoponicos, where residents grow fruit, vegetables, and herbs for their own consumption and local sale. Similar to co-op and community gardens in the U.S., Organoponicos facilitate community development and offer Alamar’s residents access to fresh produce. Travelers enjoy lunch with organic food sourced from these gardens before heading to the beautiful town of Varadero, where they’ll check in to their five-star hotel, [Melia Varadero](#), located on the beach.

The next day begins with a visit to Marilyn Garden in the Santa Maria neighborhood of Varadero. Founded by a Cuban teacher, Marilín Molina, the Marilyn Garden serves as a daycare center for children. Visitors have the chance to discuss the need for daycare in this small Cuban community with Mrs. Molina and her assistants, and interact with the children.

The tour continues to the provincial town of Coliseo, passing by the city of Cardenas, where city residents use creative means of transportation, such as homemade bicycles or horse-drawn carriages. Next on the agenda is a visit to “Coincidencia” Farm in Matanzas, founded in 1987 by Héctor Correa, which is also home to his ceramics workshop. Here, travelers have the opportunity to engage in discussion with Correa’s family about art and creative expression in Cuba and the U.S.

The day concludes with a visit to Pelusín del Monte Cultural Center, famous for its puppets, and participate in a workshop led by puppet master Zenén Calero, a recognized artist in Cuba and abroad, in an outdoor theater set in a tropical forest. Before returning to the hotel, travelers visit a craft workshop where artisans Mariela Alemán Orosco and Marilín Martínez Barrio, members of the Cuban Cultural Fund and the Cuban Association of Artisans and Artists, have received prizes and recognition for their creative work.

Friendly Planet’s seven-day [Highlights of Havana & Varadero](#) tour is available on the departure dates of Nov. 3, Jan. 12, Feb. 16, March 9, March 30, and April 13 for \$2,499; and Dec. 15 for \$2,599, if booked by Sept. 24.

Friendly Planet’s six-day [Discover Havana](#) tour is available on the departure dates of Nov. 10, Nov. 24, Jan. 19, Feb. 23, April 6, and April 20 for \$2,299; and Dec. 29 for \$2,559, if booked by Sept. 24.

Friendly Planet's nine-day [Colors of Cuba](#) tour is available on the departure dates of Nov. 14, Nov. 28, Dec. 5, Feb. 9, March 2, March 22, and April 19 for \$3,199; and Dec. 21 and Jan. 2 for \$3,499, if booked by Sept. 24.

For more information about [Friendly Planet's Cuba tours](#) and a complete trip itinerary for its [Highlights of Havana & Varadero](#) tour, please visit the company's website at [www.FriendlyPlanet.com](http://www.FriendlyPlanet.com) or its blog at [blog.FriendlyPlanet.com](http://blog.FriendlyPlanet.com).

## **ABOUT FRIENDLY PLANET TRAVEL**

Friendly Planet Travel makes high-quality exotic travel affordable for everyone. Since 1981, Friendly Planet Travel has been arranging all-inclusive escorted discount vacation packages and cruises to the most exciting destinations in the world at the lowest possible prices.

Each year, Friendly Planet Travel offers more than 30 different group travel packages to Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and South America—at discounts of hundreds of dollars off similar vacations. With no hidden charges, add-ons, or surprises, Friendly Planet Travel vacations include convenient flights and airfare; carefully selected, first-class and superior hotels; knowledgeable, English-speaking guides; many meals; planned itineraries; as well as friendships and memories that last a lifetime.

Friendly Planet Travel offers its extensive, economical travel services to private groups, including universities, religious institutions, alumni associations, and families. Groups who wish to travel together can count on Friendly Planet Travel's three decades of experience to operate their group travel program expertly and always at the very best possible prices. Visit the company at [www.FriendlyPlanetTravel.com](http://www.FriendlyPlanetTravel.com). You can also follow Friendly Planet Travel on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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