



Tour 06/18 Cuba February 2018

We are offering the PTG "The Real Cuba" tour to club members. It runs Monday 19th February to Sunday 4th March 2018. As an incentive to those booking through the club you will receive a year's free LCGB membership.

We aim to deliver the real Cuba to you, visiting authentic provincial towns and travelling through a countryside where the passage of time seems to have been suspended. Much of our journey will be undertaken in our own private train, a vintage USA -built diesel railcar delivered to the island before the Revolution, and the tour will appeal to both railway enthusiasts and to those intrigued by the sound of the unusual and outlying places we plan to visit.

Highlights

- Unique lost world time warp
- Private heritage charter train taking us to the far east of the rail network
- Haulage by electric, diesel and Classic American Steam Locos
- Viewing of 200 steam locomotives and antique diesels
- Visits to UNESCO World Heritage Sites

By rail we travel with diesel haulage, and steam, and by antique electric traction, but always accompanied by a modern air-conditioned road coach which takes our luggage from hotel to hotel, and ferries us to and from the nearest station. Our tour allows you to visit the UNESCO World Heritage sites of old Havana and Trinidad, marvellous examples of Spanish colonial architecture; and to see classic American cars of the 1950s (perhaps Cuba's most distinctive anachronism). The tour has been designed, and will be led, by Mr. John Bennett, one of the News Editors of the prestigious railfan magazine 'Locomotives International'. John is by way of being an expert on things Cuban, having first been to the island in 1989 and having returned most years since.

Day 1 Monday 19 February 2018 (L) Fly to Havana. Coach transfer to Hotel. Dinner at leisure.

Day 2 Tuesday 20 February (B,L) We visit the Parque Agrimensoros with six ex-MINAZ steam locos plinthed and a 15-inch gauge Cagney in steam. Next we move to the Cienaga engine sheds where another 15-inch Cagney will be giving rides. Then we go to the Lenin Park which has a 3ft gauge railway with American-built steam locomotives which once worked in the sugar mills. The railway isn't in an operable condition but we will be shown around the engine sheds at least. Lunch will be taken at a convenient restaurant and then, in the afternoon, we visit a waterfront warehouse converted into a bazaar full of souvenir stalls. The warehouses used to be serviced by the Waterside Tramroad, and several sugar industry locos are parked outside, one of which will be in steam and running along a section of the old Tramroad. Finally our bus will take us to the Cristina Railway Museum, with its interesting collection of USA built steam engines from the sugar mills, and diesel locomotives from various European manufacturers including the USSR which once belonged to the FCC, the national railway company. Once back at our hotel, you have a free evening when you can dine at a restaurant of your choice.

Day 3 Wednesday 21 February (B,LB,D) Today we take Lunch Boxes from our hotel and go to ride the Hershey Railway, a genuine USA-style electric interurban, and an amazing museum-piece. But first we visit a steel works which owns four Alco RS18 design diesels (MLW, 1959) acquired second-hand from Canada, one of which will be giving rides. After the Hershey, our bus will take us to Jaguey Grande where we visit the remains of Australia Mill and have a steam train ride through the cane fields. At the end of the day, we retire to an all-inclusive hotel in Varadero.

Day 4 Thursday 22 February (B,D) First our bus will take us to the former José Smith Comas Mill, now a railway museum, and we will have a steam train ride to the neighbouring town of Cardenas. After lunch we move on to the Catorce de Julio Mill which is (or was) the last mill in Cuba hauling cane on a 2ft-6in gauge field railway, using USSR-built diesels. If the railway isn't working, we will at least get into the engine shed. Then we go to Cienfuegos where there are four USA-built 2ft-6in gauge steam locos displayed at the old station. Stay Cienfuegos.

Day 5 Friday 23 February (B,LB,D) Today we meet our own special train, a single unit diesel railcar built by the Budd Corporation in the United States in the 1950s. We cross from the south to the north coast, from Cienfuegos through Santa Clara to Caibarien. There will be beer and water and lunch boxes on board. Those who are not railfans will be offered the option of detraining in Santa Clara, for a city tour which will include Ché Guevara's Mausoleum and the Armoured Train Memorial Park (at the height of the revolutionary insurgency a government troop train was derailed and attacked near Santa Clara, an important military success which led to the President fleeing the country). The Budd will continue to the amazing Marcelo Salado museum of sugar industry steam locos. After a decent time to view the collection, our bus takes us to the nearby Heriberto Duquesne Mill which still operates a 3ft gauge field railway using British-built locos. At the end of the day, everyone will meet up at our hotel in Santa Clara.

Day 6 Saturday 24 February (B,LB,D) We return to Marcelo Salado for a steam train ride to Camajuaní, whence the Budd railcar will take us to Sancti Spiritus. There will be beer and water and lunch boxes on board the Budd. Sancti Spiritus is one of the oldest towns in Cuba and we have a brief city tour before going by bus to a hotel in Trinidad for a 2-night stay.

Day 7 Sunday 25 February (B,L,D) We start our day catching the 09.30 tourist train departure which terminates at the former FNTA Mill which is now a railway museum. We have lunch at nearby Manaca- Iznaga where we visit a slave owner's estate, and the tower he built so he could spy-out the slaves who were running away, and eat in his colonial-style mansion. Then our bus will take us back to Trinidad, a finely preserved example of a Spanish colonial town and a UNESCO World Heritage site where we have a walking tour of the city centre, although the railfans may prefer to go to the station and ride the service railcar to Casilda (Trinidad's port). Stay Trinidad again.

Day 8 Monday 26 February (B,T) Our bus will take us back to Sancti Spiritus, where the Budd railcar has been waiting for us. In it we will travel to Morón, once the headquarters of the Cuban Northern Railroad; the town has a large locomotive works, and a handsome station building. Morón is the home of the 50901 class of Bo-Bo DE (GM, 1955) and our visits begin at the loco works and engine sheds, after which we board an antiquated railcar for transfer by rail to the former Patria sugar mill nearby, now a railway museum with several steam engines. One of these will take us for a ride through the cane fields on what remains of the mill's internal rail system. At the end of the line, at Rancho Palma, we will be served a Cuban-style afternoon tea ("merienda") in a Cuban-style thatched barn. Stay Morón.

Day 9 Tuesday 27 February (B,LB,D) The railcar takes us from Morón to Nuevitas, via Brasil, where we visit the sugar factory. Again, there will be water and beer and lunch boxes on board. There are rumours the fireless locos which used to shunt the cane cars into the factory have been restored and, if Brasil is milling (it was in 2017), they will be able to charge them up with steam for us. Our bus will collect us from Nuevitas and take us to Manatí to visit the loco shed, hoping to find a couple of USA-built diesels of a type now extinct in America (GE U6B, 1959), and maybe have a ride to Puerto Manatí. Then the bus takes us to Guardalavaca where we will check-in to an all-inclusive hotel for another two-night stay.

Day 10 Wednesday 28 February (B,L,D) Today there is an option to stay poolside in our all-inclusive hotel. Otherwise we take you to the nearby Rafael Freyre mill, now a museum, with the remains of its 2ft-6in gauge railway system; for the photographers, there will be a steam engine shunting cane cars. After lunch we charter a railcar for a ride to the end of the line. Stay Guardalavaca again.

Day 11 Thursday 1 March (B) Today we drive right across the island, from Guardalavaca through Bayamo to Niquero, where we will visit the Roberto Ramírez Delgado Mill with its still-working 3ft gauge field railway. After lunch, we return to Bayamo and check-in at the hotel. On the way, we will stop at the Media Luna Mill; they used to run their own (i.e. not FCC) passenger service and we will visit the engine shed and hope to ride the train (train ride TBC).

Day 12 Friday 2 March (B,LB,D) Once again reunited with the Budd, we continue eastwards, Bayamo—San Luis—Guantanamo—Manuel Tames. There will be water and beer on board, and lunch boxes. Manuel Tames Mill is not working but is mothballed and 'held in reserve'. It had a narrow gauge field railway and the locos are in the engine shed. Then our bus will take us to a hotel in Santiago.

Day 13 Saturday 3 March (B) Bus to Santiago Airport. Fly Santiago to Havana. Then in the evening fly back to UK overnight.

Day 14 Sunday 4 March (B) Our flight arrives back into London mid-morning.

Disclaimers: (1) The Cuban authorities reserve the right to change any arrangements if circumstances should make it necessary, and we cannot promise that everything outlined above will be achieved. However, the Cubans are also good at offering an alternative and we will not have any "empty" days.

(2) The PTG tour of Cuba goes off the beaten track and stays away from the tourist resorts. Some of the hotels we are assigned might not be of the standard PTG usually manages to get in other countries.

People booking onto this tour are understood to have read these Disclaimers, and to accept the situation. We have always had a good time in Cuba but things rarely go exactly to plan! Seats on the direct Virgin Atlantic flights to Havana are extremely limited in this peak season. Passengers are recommended to book early if you want to use these flights.

Prices (per person)

- Full 14-day holiday including flight from London Gatwick: £3,899
- Own travel to Havana and back from Santiago de Cuba: £3,299

Options

- Single room Supplement: £360
- Additional nights in Havana: POA

Deposit

- Travelling by air: £1,250
- Own travel: £600

Price includes

- All travel and excursions as outlined in the itinerary
 - En-suite accommodation
 - Meals as shown in the itinerary;
- B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner
- Services of our tour manager. Holiday is fully escorted.
- #### Flights
- Virgin Atlantic direct from Gatwick (limited seats) or other airlines via France, the Netherlands or Spain.

Please complete an LCGB Overseas Tours Booking (note ref to sae in conditions does not apply): http://www.lcgb.org.uk/images/OTBF_2011.pdf. Conditions: <http://www.lcgb.org.uk/html/tours/TourConditions.htm>. These are available from the contact below. Please include 3 s.a.e.'s if you do not use email.

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