



## CANADA-CUBA SPORTS & CULTURAL FESTIVALS

*Revised February 2019*

### *Spirit's Call Choir*

#### ***CUBA CHORAL FOCUS: January 11 - 18, 2020***

##### CULTURAL EXCHANGE and PERFORMANCE PROGRAM IN CUBA

This program is specifically designed to provide opportunities for choirs of all ages and proficiency levels to perform, interact, share and socialize with their counterparts in Cuba. In addition, participants will experience a comprehensive overview of Cuban culture and history.

Cuban choral music is unique; its roots are drawn predominantly from the heritages of Spanish and African traditions. During the past four decades, Cuba has developed a system of choral education beginning at elementary school and continuing through both junior and senior high school to university. A complementary initiative exists within the Cuban choral movement, jointly nurtured by the Ministry of Education and Cuba's professional choirs, that has brought together thousands of children singing in *cantorias* (children's choirs) throughout the country. As a result of this broad based pyramid style organization Cuba boasts the existence of 18 professional choirs and hundreds of community, church and children's choirs.

Beginning in Havana, founded in 1519, your choral ensemble will meet, share and perform with Cuban counterparts. Additional concerts will take place at public venues arranged in conjunction with the Cuban Ministry of Culture. We will then travel by bus and explore the climates and topography of tropical rain forests, orchid gardens and caves systems, while observing the life ways of rural communities in the Cuban countryside.

# ITINERARY

## DAY 1

**Flight to Cuba.** On arrival in Cuba we will be met by our hosts at the airport and transferred to our hotel in Havana (approximately 140 kms), for check-in. Dinner at the hotel will be followed by a welcome briefing. Optional rehearsal time available at the hotel.

## DAY 2

Today begins with an orientation and walking tour to Old Town Havana, Spain's gateway to the conquest of Latin America. Havana, founded in 1519 became the capital of Cuba in 1553 and in 1982 UNESCO declared Old Havana a World Heritage Site, where 144 buildings from the 16th and 17th centuries are preserved. Our guide will lead a walking tour of the Old City. We then travel by air-conditioned coach to the harbour entrance to visit the *Parque Historico del Morro* (entrance fee to park included) and see fortifications built in the 17th century to guard the city from attack by pirates. Lunch at the hotel.

This afternoon we will have an encounter with a Cuban choir. The encounter will take the form of a workshop and joint rehearsal of music that has been exchanged in advance. The Cuban choir and the Canadian choir will each have an opportunity to make a 20-minute presentation then begin to collaborate in the preparation of 1 or 2 choral pieces that will be performed by the combined choir at a concert later in the week. Dinner at the hotel. Attend evening performance by Cuban musicians at the hotel.

## DAY 3

After breakfast we will have an encounter with another Cuban choir. Each choir will make a 20 minute presentation, then the encounter will also take the form of a joint rehearsal of 1 or 2 choral pieces that will be performed by the combined choir at the concert later in the week. Lunch at the hotel.

This afternoon we will visit Santa Maria beach to enjoy the sun, white sand and turquoise Caribbean Sea. Dinner at the hotel. This evening dance to popular Cuban music at the hotel and receive informal Salsa dance classes.

## DAY 4

This morning we will attend a performance by Novel Voz, an excellent a cappella/vocal jazz ensemble. A performance by the Canadian choir will follow. Lunch at a local restaurant together with the members of Novel Voz.

This afternoon the Canadian choir will perform a joint program with other Cuban performing artists at a venue arranged with the Ministry of Culture. Dinner at the hotel. Evening unscheduled. This is an ideal opportunity to make plans to dine out, take in a show or check out Havana's jazz clubs. Our local staff is able to make suggestions. Reservations for cabaret shows such as the Tropicana or Cabaret Parisien should be made 24 hours in advance at the tour desk at your hotel.

## DAY 5

This morning we have been invited to attend a presentation by an Afro-Cuban musical/dance group. Members of the group will endeavour to share Afro-Cuban song and dance with us. Lunch at the hotel. Return to the hotel to rest.

Afternoon transfer to the concert venue. One hour rehearsal before this evening's concert. The Cuban choirs will also attend in order to rehearse the pieces that they will be performing jointly with the visiting choir. Evening concert comprising a series of 20 minute presentations by the Cuban choirs, the Canadian choir, and closing with a 10 minute presentation by the combined choirs. After the concert we will have a dinner and dance party with the Cuban choirs.

## DAY 6

**Havana, Soroa, Vinales, Havana.** On our bus trip through Western Cuba we will explore the climate, topography, plant and animal life of tropical rainforests and mountain terrain. We will visit Soroa, a nature preserve located in the foothills of the lush Sierra del Rosario. While here, you may choose take a walk along the ½ kilometre path through the jungle that leads to a 66-foot-high waterfall cascading into a pool deep enough for bathing, and/or visit the orchid garden that contains almost 700 types of orchids as well as epiphytes (non-parasitic species that grow on other plants, moderate admission charged). Lunch (boxed).

We continue on to the Viñales Valley, which is like nowhere else in the world. Giant limestone outcrops coated in thick vegetation, called *mogotes*, rise sheer above a valley floor of russet-coloured earth and a patchwork of small *vegas*, or tobacco plantations. The *mogotes* are all that remain of a limestone plateau which, owing to the dissolving effect of the underground rivers collapsed in the Jurassic period 160 million years ago (effectively the *mogotes* acted as columns supporting the plateau roof. Beneath the valley floor are subterranean rivers and one of the most extensive cave systems in the Americas. Later, in small groups you may choose to explore one of the most accessible of these subterranean rivers by boat (admission fee included). Return to the hotel for dinner. This evening dance to popular Cuban music at the hotel and receive informal Salsa dance classes.

## **DAY 7**

This morning we will visit the National Art Gallery, a historical and architectural treasure with numerous works of art and colonial objects. Lunch at the hotel.

This afternoon we will visit shopping areas in the city including the artisans market and a collection of boutiques housed in a restored 18th century colonial palace. The rest of the afternoon will be spent at beautiful Santa Maria beach. Dinner at the hotel. Evening free to enjoy Havana's nightlife.

## **DAY 8**

We now leave the hotel and return to the airport. Time permitting other points of interest may be visited en route to the airport.



## **Program Includes**

Round trip airfare to Cuba, 7 nights hotel accommodation based on double occupancy in air-conditioned rooms with private bath, breakfast, lunch and dinner daily (all-inclusive), coordination and entrance/participation fees for visits - performances - workshops - tours, guide/translator services, local facilitators, ground transportation via modern air-conditioned bus, Cuban visa, and the Cuban airport tax. **Not Included:** Personal expenses, optional activities and tips.

## **Please Note**

Hotels, restaurant and recreational facilities are quite expensive by local standards. You may choose to invite Cuban students and teachers to participate in social activities with your group. This is always warmly received, however, you as host, are expected to assume the cost of the invitation as it is beyond the means of most Cubans. We recommend you check with your guide for suggestions before extending any invitations.

## **Important**

Venues and Cuban choirs indicated have all expressed interest and a willingness to participate, however availability may change due to performance and touring schedules. Havana is home to 7 professional choirs as well as many award winning youth ensembles and a number of performance venues appropriate for choral music. Adjustments may be required to substitute choirs or performance venues of similar quality. Depending on local conditions the order of activities may not be as indicated, however all activities identified in the itinerary will be delivered. We reserve the right to adjust the itinerary if required for the safe and proper management of the tour.