

Cuba, Mexico & Panama

Farm Study Tour 2019



DATE	ACTIVITY	OVERNIGHT
DAY 1 Mon, Aug 5 (Meals on plane)	Tour leader: David Dowling 0437 000 234 Depart Australia the morning of August 5; Arrive Phoenix, Arizona (via Los Angeles). Transfer to our hotel for a light meal and an afternoon rest. For those wishing to arrive a day or two earlier, there are plenty of options such as the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas etc	USA Phoenix
DAY 2 Tues, Aug 6 (B,L,D)	Visit some of the highly productive irrigation areas near Maricopa, close to Phoenix. Arizona is one of the USA's major producers of cotton, grain and cattle in a very hot and dry (usually irrigated) environment.	Phoenix
DAY 3 Wed, Aug 7 (B,D)	Today we take a morning flight to Hermosillo in northern Mexico. After completing immigration formalities, we will board our coach for the 3 hour drive to Ciudad Obregon.	MEXICO Obregon
DAY 4 Thurs, Aug 8 (B,L,D)	Today we visit The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) at Obregon. This is the dryland wheat hub of this famous research facility. Later we will visit the maize research centre near Mexico City. CIMMYT's Global Wheat Program provides elite breeding lines to national wheat breeding programs around the world. The program was started by Nobel Prize winner, the late Dr Norman Borlaug. The valleys of the Yaqui and Mayo rivers provide some of the most highly productive agricultural areas of Mexico. We will visit some of these farms on the way to El Fuerte.	El Fuerte
DAY 5 Fri, Aug 9 (B,L,D)	Early start as we catch the famous El Chepe train through the spectacular Copper Canyon. We will break our journey at Divisadero to take full advantage of the scenery. On arrival at Divisadero, it is just a short walk to our hotel with a wonderful view of the canyon.	Divisadero
DAY 6 Sat, Aug 10 (B,L,D)	More exploration of the canyon this morning before we take a bus ride to the wonderful colonial city of Chihuahua.	Chihuahua
DAY 7 Sun, Aug 11 (B,L,D)	Morning flight to Mexico City. When the Aztec war god commanded his people to build their capital wherever they saw an eagle roosted on a cactus gripping a snake in its beak, he really didn't think that very bird would be sighted in the middle of a huge swamp. But six centuries and 20 million inhabitants later, Mexico City is now one of the largest and most populous cities the world has ever known. We spend the afternoon on a guided walking tour around Mexico City.	Mexico City
DAY 8 Mon, Aug 12 (B,L)	Today we visit The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) on the outskirts of Mexico City. Australia is one of CIMMYT's most consistent supporters and several Australian researchers are currently based there. The first of over 100 CIMMYT- related wheat varieties were released in Australia in 1973 – around 90% of Australia's wheat area is now sown to these varieties. We'll see what's in the breeding and biotech pipeline. On the way to CIMMYT we will visit Teotihuacan (meaning "Place of the Gods") and the awesome Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. Free evening.	Mexico City

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DAY 9 Tues, Aug 13 (B,L,D)	Morning flight to Merida. Visit to farms in this are of the Yucatan peninsula on the way to Piste. Visit to the famous Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza. Over 1000 yers old, this sacred site was one of the greatest Mayan centres of the Yucatán peninsula. Several buildings have survived, such as the Warriors' Temple, El Castillo and the circular observatory known as El Caracol. In the afternoon, continue on to Cancun.	Cancun
DAY 10 Wed, Aug 14 (B,L,D)	Transfer to the airport for the short flight to Havana. Afternoon orientation tour of Havana. Cuba is the Caribbean's largest and least commercialised island and one of the world's last bastions of communism. The island's political isolation has prevented it from being overrun by tourists, and the locals are sincerely friendly towards those who do venture in. For nearly four centuries Cuba was the main gateway to the Spanish American empire and the major Cuban cities bear stunning testament to this era. But during the 1950s, Fidel Castro and his small band of revolutionaries, changed all that. The Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Cuban/Russian missile crisis and political and economic isolation soon followed. Almost in defiance of all this, Cuba is a world-class cultural and artistic hub. And speaking of hubs, if you're looking for a spare part for that 1953 convertible, you've come to the right place.	Havana
DAY 11 Thurs, Aug 15 (B,D)	In this historic seaport, classic American cars clatter along streets lined with Spanish architecture – all pulsating with African and Caribbean rhythms. Old Havana's baroque facades, massive-columned palaces, and lush patios reflect Cuba's colonial past. A free day to do your own exploration of this intriguing World Heritage listed city.	Havana
DAY 12 Fri, Aug 16 (B,L,D)	Today we start our exploration of Cuba's rural heart as we head to Trinidad, on Cuba's southern coastline. On the way, we pass by the famous Bay of Pigs. Founded in 1514, Trinidad is one of Cuba's most historically significant cities and is World Heritage listed. It is the best preserved and most visited of the country's provincial colonial cities. Some say the clocks stopped ticking in 1850 and have yet to restart. Built on huge sugar fortunes amassed in the adjacent Valle de los Ingenios during the early 19th century, the riches of the town's pre-War of Independence heyday are still very much in evidence in illustrious colonial-style mansions bedecked with Italian frescoes, Wedgwood china and French chandeliers. Located on the foothills of the Escambray Mountains overlooking the Caribbean, this beautiful city also commands stunning views.	Trinidad
DAY 13 Sat, Aug 17 (B,L,D)	We have a guided tour of Trinidad this morning before lunch and a free afternoon to do your own exploration of this beautiful location. There are also many local markets showing off the local produce and handicrafts (especially textiles and crochet work).	Trinidad
DAY 14 Sun, Aug 18 (B,L,D)	Today we continue northwest along the spine of Cuba and into the Camaguey region. We have a farm visit on the way at Ciego de Avila and meet with local farmers. We then continue onto Camaguey, Cuba's third largest city, for overnight. After almost continuous attacks from pirates the original city (founded as Santa María del Puerto del Príncipe around 1515 on the northern coast) was moved inland in 1528. The new city was built with a confusing lay-out of winding and blind alleys – that lead to squares of different sizes. One explanation is that this was done by design, to make the city easier to defend from any raiders. The symbol of the city is the clay pot or tinajón and clay pots are everywhere. Local legend has it that if you drink water from a girl's personal tinajón, you will fall in love with the girl and never leave her – maybe the fellas on this tour only need a one-way air ticket?	Camaguey
DAY 15 Mon, Aug 19 (B,L,D)	Camaguey is one of the major farming centres of Cuba and we will spend the day visiting a variety of farms. In the evening, we will have a barbecue dinner at a local farm.	Camaguey

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DAY 16 Tues, Aug 20 (B,L,D)	<p>We travel east to the colonial region of Bayamo with a farm visit on our way. This town is where the secret meetings and conspiracies took place leading up to the Independence War between 1868 and 1878. Also, in Bayamo's main square, the Cuban National Anthem was sung for the first time.</p> <p>In the afternoon, continue on to Santiago de Cuba. Santiago de Cuba is the second largest city in Cuba and is in a partly submerged valley of the Sierra Maestra mountains. Santiago has been an important port for more than four centuries. Back in the 1950s, Fidel Castro launched his revolution from here. The city has played an instrumental part in the evolution of Cuban literature, music, architecture and the nation's social fabric. It is a cosmopolitan mix of Afro-Caribbean culture, situated closer to Haiti and the Dominican Republic than to Havana.</p>	Santiago de Cuba
DAY 17 Wed, Aug 21 (B,L)	<p>We take a short guided tour of Santiago de Cuba including both the modern and older parts of the city. Then a free afternoon to do your own sightseeing or maybe even pursue a more adventurous option such as a spot of Caribbean game-fishing.</p>	Santiago de Cuba
DAY 18 Thur, Aug 22 (B,L,D)	<p>This morning, we say goodbye to Cuba and fly to Kingston, Jamaica. Christopher Columbus described Jamaica as "the fairest isle that eyes beheld; mountainous — all full of valleys and fields and plains." Afternoon tour of Kingston.</p>	JAMAICA Kingston
DAY 19 Fri, Aug 23 (B,L,D)	<p>The island's idyllic tropical climate means that dramatic fluctuations in temperature are virtually non-existent, the unique environment needed for the production of the world's finest, most exclusive — and most expensive — cotton type, Sea Island.</p>	Kingston
DAY 20 Sat, Aug 24 (B,L,D)	<p>Morning flight to Panama City where we will do an afternoon tour of the Panama Canal followed by a farewell dinner.</p>	PANAMA Panama City
DAY 21 Sun, Aug 25 (B)	<p>Depart Panama City for a direct flight (7hrs) to Los Angeles and connection home to Australia (15hrs). Arrive home Sunday morning (Aug 21). You also have the option of resting up in LA for the night before your flight home the following evening. We will help you arrange a hotel and transfers.</p> <p>There's also plenty of options to fill in your day such as a guided tour of Hollywood, Santa Monica, Rodeo Drive and other iconic LA sights.</p>	On plane or Los Angeles

TOUR INCLUSIONS...

- All international and internal flights (economy class) including taxes and airport charges that can be included on the pre-purchased air ticket. ;
- First class, centrally located city accommodation (best available in regional areas) with full buffet breakfast;
- Farm and other technical visits;
- Most lunch and evening meals are included and are of the highest standard. Meals are designed to showcase the best of the regional food and wines. Some evenings will be left free to sample some of the great local restaurants at your leisure;
- Local, as well as our own, experienced Greenmount Travel guides/translators accompany the group to ensure any problems that may arise are quickly fixed;
- Private first class charter coach and experienced drivers; and,
- Park and site entries, transfers, etc mentioned on the itineraries.

Visit the website (www.greenmounttravel.com.au) for terms and conditions and for other *Greenmount Travel* tours.

St Petersburg add-on option

This tour includes first rate accommodation (with breakfast), Moscow to St Petes train ticket, transfers and private guiding. Apart from breakfast, all meals would be your own arrangements.

Date	Activity	Overnight
DAY 21 Mon, Aug 13 (B)	<p>THIS DEPARTURE DATE ASSUMES 2 NIGHTS IN MOSCOW WITH THE MAIN GROUP BEFORE HEADING TO ST PETERSBURG. YOU MAY WANT TO EXTEND YOUR STAY IN MOSCOW WHICH IS VERY EASY TO ARRANGE.</p> <p>This morning you are transferred to Moscow train station to enjoy a 5 hour express train journey through magnificent forests, farmlands and small villages, to St Petersburg (all in daylight). You will be met at the train station by your local guide and before checking into your downtown hotel, you will be taken on a brief city tour to get your bearings. Free evening.</p>	<p>St Petersburg</p> <p>An excellent hotel for location and quality is the Petro Palace</p> <p>Website</p>
DAY 22 Tue, Aug 14 (B)	<p>Today your local guide will take you on a full day tour of this beautiful and historic city dubbed the 'Venice of the North' because of its palace-lined waterways. Miraculously, St Petersburg escaped the Stalinist architectural incursions (and perversions), and stands majestically on the Gulf of Finland and Neva River.</p> <p>Sights highly recommended to visit over the next few days include the magnificent State Hermitage buildings and the Hidden Treasures (includes priceless artworks captured by the Red Army), Peter and Paul Fortress, Nevsky Prospekt, Catherine the Great's Summer Palace and the magnificent Amber Room.</p>	<p>St Petersburg</p>
DAY 23 Wed, Aug 15 (B)	<p>You can opt for a free day today to do your own exploration of St Petes or you can do some more sightseeing with your local guide.</p> <p>On an agricultural note, St Petes is the home of the Vavilov Research Institute of Plant Industry – the world's first seed bank. Nikolai Vavilov, a Russian biologist, botanist and geneticist, scoured five continents in the 1920s and 1930s and amassed a vast collection of wild and cultivated seeds of food crops.</p> <p>Stalin imprisoned Vavilov in 1940. His 'crime' was that plant genetics was seen as a science that supports "inborn class differences". One year later, Hitler's army blockaded Leningrad (now St Petersburg). While guarding the collection, some Vavilov Institute scientists starved to death rather than eat the precious seed collections.</p>	<p>St Petersburg</p>
DAY 24 Thu, Aug 16 (B)	<p>Transfer to the airport today for your flight/s home.</p>	