

CUBA – CENTRAL

Our organization leads educational groups to participate in humanitarian-environmental projects with meaningful contact through citizen science and cultural activities to offer direct support to the Cuban people.

The centerpiece of the Central Cuba itinerary is the bull shark population in Nuevitas bay of Santa Lucia, Cuba where visitors will dive and participate in a shark conservation program led by a local Cuban marine biologist (*October-February*)

“Cuba is a kind of biodiversity epicentre for sharks,” says Robert Hueter, director of the Center for Shark Research at the Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida, who is one of many working with Cuban scientists. Preventing the overfishing of sharks is a major part of Hueter’s research and outreach efforts. “The current fishery is not intensively targeting sharks but the catch is still significant,” Hueter says. “We have a collaboration with the University of Havana to study the sharks of Cuba, assess their status in Cuban waters, better understand Cuban fisheries for sharks and assist the Cubans in the development of a National Plan of Action for Sharks and Rays in Cuban waters.”

Your trip begins with environmental experiences in the northeast coast of Cuba in the sleepy town of Santa Lucia where horse drawn carriage taxis are the main transportation. While here, you’ll monitor local bull sharks and explore historical shipwrecks. Capture photos and help gather details for our 2nd ecological book. Then, you’ll spend the weekend in private, chic homes in the quiet, clean art colony of Camagüey – world renowned for its pottery.



If you've ever been to Havana, you will appreciate Camagüey's fresh, clean air with flourishing artists of all kind—devoid of street hustlers.

The cobblestone, European streets with Cuban flare are made for pedestrians and quaint bicycles. You'll delight in the humility of Camagüey people who are polite, accomplished, highly-educated and living out their passions in every creative way imaginable. They take care of each other. Be inspired as you take home new ideas and a fresh look at your own life.

Meet your new friends as you provide direct support to benefit local Cuban marine biologists, cowboys, artists, orchestra musicians, doll-makers, private business owners and chefs,

Your transformative, eye-opening itinerary includes:



Saturday Day 1: ARRIVE

After you land in the Camagüey International Airport, your modern, air-conditioned bus will take you to Santa Lucía, on the northern coast of Camagüey Province, protected by a long coral reef only 2 km from shore. The seabed supports an astonishing variety of marine life and several sunken ships dating from the 19th century. Santa Lucía is a prominent spot for observing bull sharks from September – January each year. Get your bearings as you settle in to Las Brisas, your 4-star, all-inclusive resort.



- ✓ Camagüey Airport pick up & bus transfer to Santa Lucía (about 1.5 hours)
- ✓ Check in to Las Brisas Santa Lucía Resort
- ✓ Meeting with dive center manager & marine conservationists

- ✓ Dinner at resort (included)
- ✓ Double occupancy, Las Brisas, a 4-star, all-inclusive resort

Sunday Day 2: **SANTA LUCIA** **Environmental Conservation**

Learn from Cuban marine professionals about the environment, conservation and safety procedures as you acclimate, fine tune your equipment and observe the ecological reef in Santa Lucia. **(3 dives)**

- ✓ Breakfast buffet (included)
- ✓ 9:00am One tank guided immersion & marine ecosystems discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours
- ✓ 11:30am One tank guided immersion & marine topography discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours
- ✓ Lunch buffet (included) 1.5 hours
- ✓ 3:00 pm One tank guided immersion & Caribbean fish ID discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours
- ✓ 5:30pm **Meeting with Local Marine Biologist about shark conservation** (included) 1 hour
- ✓ Dinner at resort (included)
- ✓ Double occupancy, Las Brisas, a 4 star, all-inclusive resort



Monday Day 3: SANTA LUCIA Environmental Conservation

Dive with and observe Cuban Marine Professionals interact with anywhere from 2-9 bull sharks up to 10 feet in length.

You'll have the best opportunity to observe them in Santa Lucia from October through early February before they migrate for the mating season. Bull sharks are listed as near threatened because they are more at risk from pollution and habitat degradation than other species. They are intentionally caught for their fins, liver oil, and skin, and are sometimes caught unintentionally as well.

The EDF (Environmental Defense Fund of the United States) has teamed up with Cuba's Department of Fisheries Regulations and Sciences and WWF to ensure the scientific and management actions outlined by the plan are initiated through a four-year "Shark & Rays Project." Across the Gulf of Mexico region, their long-term aim is that improved international cooperation, science and management will lead to the recovery and long term health of shark populations. Success here in Santa Lucia, Cuba could provide a roadmap for advancing sustainable management of sharks and other highly migratory species around the globe.

(3 dives)

- ✓ Breakfast buffet
- ✓ 9:00am (subject to high-tide schedule) One tank **guided immersion with bull sharks & 19th century shipwreck** topography diagramming with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours

- ✓ 11:30am One tank guided immersion & marine ecosystems discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals & site diagramming (included) 2 hours

- ✓ Lunch Buffet at resort (included)
- ✓ Afternoon one tank guided immersion
- ✓ Dinner at Resort (included)
- ✓ Double occupancy, Las Brisas 4 star, all-inclusive resort



Tuesday Day 4 SANTA LUCIA

Environmental Conservation

Learn from Cuban marine professionals about the environment, conservation and safety procedures as you acclimate, fine tune your equipment and observe the ecological reef in Santa Lucia.

(4 dives)

- ✓ Breakfast buffet (included)

- ✓ 9:00am One tank guided immersion & marine ecosystems discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours

- ✓ 11:30am One tank guided immersion & marine topography discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours

- ✓ Lunch buffet (included) 1.5 hours

- ✓ 3:00 pm One tank guided immersion & Caribbean fish ID discovery with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours

- ✓ Dinner at Resort (included)

- ✓ **NIGHT DIVE included**

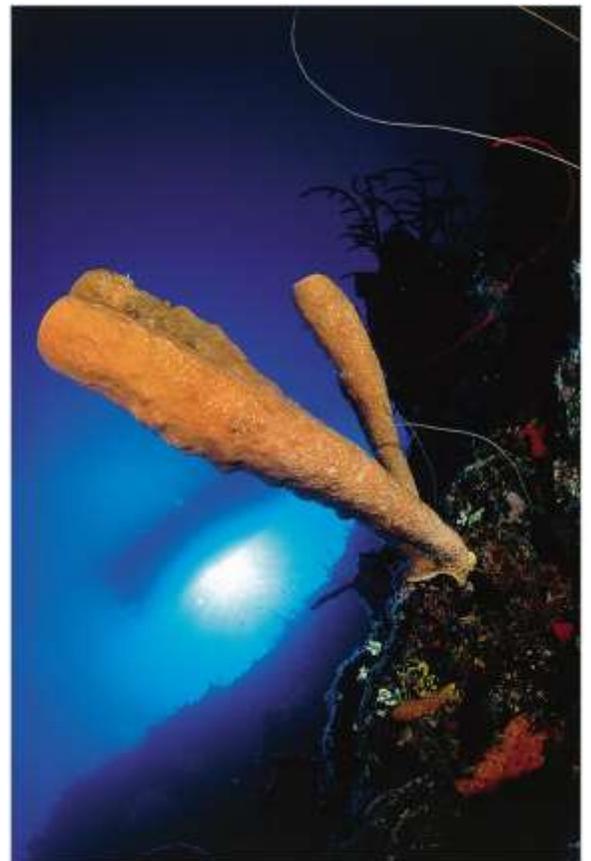
- ✓ Double occupancy, Las Brisas 4 star, all-inclusive resort



Wednesday Day 5: SANTA LUCIA / CAYO SABINAL Environmental Conservation

Participate in a full day visit to Cayo Sabinal's natural lagoon, the first island in the Jardines del Rey archipelago on the north eastern coast of Cuba. Meet with local conservation workers where wild flamingos and iguanas are sometimes seen. Here you can observe a coral reef wall and occasional sting rays. **(3 dives)**

- ✓ Breakfast buffet (included)
- ✓ 9:00am One tank guided immersion & coral reef ecosystem topography with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours
- ✓ 11:30am One tank guided immersion & Fish ID discovery & topography diagramming with Cuban Marine Professionals (included) 2 hours
- ✓ Lunch buffet (included) 1.5 hours
- ✓ 3:00pm One tank guided immersion with Cuban Marine Professionals
- ✓ Dinner at Resort (included)
- ✓ Double occupancy, Las Brisas 4 star, all-inclusive resort



Thursday DAY : 6 CAMAGÜEY Cultural Immersion & Support for the Cuban People

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the resort before departing for Camagüey. As you travel your local, certified, English-speaking Cuban guide will explain the organic farming techniques which help preserve the environment.

Enjoy a traditional family style lunch at a local ranch previously owned by a famous Texan-Cattle rancher before the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Meet with working cowboys to learn about the rural life in Cuba. Observe a Cuban rodeo.

After lunch you'll head an hour onward to Camagüey also known as the City of Pottery and the City of Churches. You'll receive a warm welcome to the city with your own caravan of private bicycle taxis to tour the city. Visit the plaza mayor where your guide will give you an orientation at a museum with a life size replica model of the city. Enjoy dinner at a local private paladar restaurant on the plaza

- ✓ 9:30am Breakfast
- ✓ 10:30am Check out & transfer (1/2 hour)
- ✓ 11:30am **Cuban Rodeo** & countryside lunch
- ✓ Bus Transfer to Camagüey (1 hour)
- ✓ 3:00pm Check in to local private bed and breakfast (Casa Particulares)
- ✓ 6:00pm WELCOME TO CAMAGÜEY – tour via **private bicycle taxi caravan** with local guides. Visit to plaza mayor town hall.
- ✓ Dinner at Private Restaurant Paladar
Optional visit to Casa de la Trova music
- ✓ Stay in Private Homes – Casa Particulares in Camagüey



Friday DAY 7: CAMAGÜEY Support for the Cuban People & Humanitarian Project

Soak in the cultural fabric and participate in the vibrant musical pulse of Camagüey while you support private community leaders in unique humanitarian projects that boost local society. After a traditional breakfast in your private Bed & Breakfast, you'll enjoy meeting dancers and observing the folkloric demonstration, followed by a private dance lesson.

After lunch at a local private paladar restaurant, you'll meet the founder of a doll making & restoration community project which benefits local children with cancer. Here you'll see their resourcefulness and also have the option of donating cloth, buttons, felt, or even a doll or two.

After dinner, you'll enjoy meeting members of the Camagüey Chamber Orquesta who will play a private concert for you at a local artist gallery. You'll also have the opportunity to mingle with various local artists and learn what inspires their unique mediums.

- ✓ 9:00am Breakfast in your Casa

- ✓ 10:00am Cultural Folkloric dance demonstration and private dance lesson

- ✓ 12:30pm Private Paladar Lunch 1.5 hours

- ✓ 3:00pm People-to-people humanitarian project support to community doll-making & restoration project

- ✓ 7:00pm Private Restaurant Paladar dinner

- ✓ 8:30pm Meeting at private art gallery community project with 13-16 Camagüey chamber orchestra members to discuss Cuba's classical music followed by a private 45-minute concert

- ✓ Stay in Private Homes – Casa Particulares in Camagüey



Saturday Day 8: CAMAGÜEY Support for the Cuban People & Humanitarian Project

Enjoy an exciting day mingling with artists starting with the iconic, local artist who has earned the internationally acclaimed UNESCO distinction for the National Culture. Her life-size bronze sculptures can be seen in the most prominent plazas of the city. You'll also participate in and support her children's social project for her environmental art class.

After a private paladar restaurant lunch, meet with private local potters to see how they turn clay into the ginormous pots on display around the city. Observe the demonstration from this private family of potters and then make your own local pottery keepsake too! Enjoy a tour of the art gallery of pottery & paintings. Take in a breath of peace in the outdoor sanctuary too.

Enjoy your farewell dinner at a countryside farm home with a cultural pig roast and traditional live music.

Congratulations on a job well done in supporting the Cuban people and participating in collecting photos and information for our 2nd book!

- ✓ 8:30am Breakfast in your Casa

- ✓ 9:30am Meeting with Iconic local artist & art class. *Optional Art supply donation*

- ✓ 12:30pm Private Paladar Lunch

- ✓ Meet with private, local potters. Observe their demonstration of art via the creativity of these family potters. Art gallery tour included

- ✓ 6:00pm Farewell dinner party in private countryside house. Enjoy the cultural pig roast! (included)

- ✓ Stay in Private Homes – Casa Particulares in Camagüey

Sunday DAY 9: DEPARTURE

- ✓ Breakfast in your casa
- ✓ Check out
- ✓ Transfer to Camagüey Airport (20 mins)

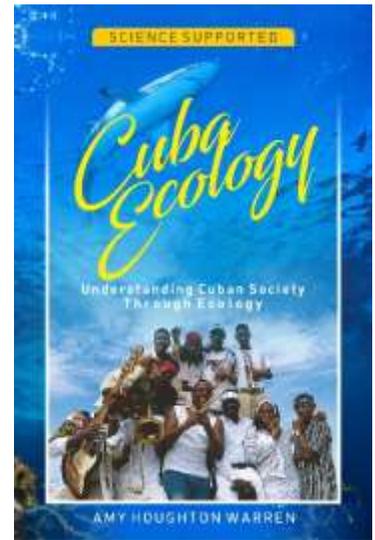


31 C.F.R. 515.575 Humanitarian – Environmental Project

Privately owned & operated, AW Futures, LLC is an organization with a pre-existing licensed operating agreement with Havanatur Celimar since February 2017 that offers group educational exchanges to understand the setting in which Cubans experience their own marine environment and efforts to protect/conservate it, while engaging in meaningful interactions for humanitarian support to the civil society to strengthen Cuba's "cuentapropistas" (private local entrepreneurs).

The purpose of this meaningful exchange is to participate in our humanitarian-environmental project that produces publishable results of marine and cultural research for our 2nd book: **Cuba Ecology**. **This environmental project directly supports the Cuban people by predominantly contracting and developing small scale private enterprise** for accommodations, meals and transportation while providing shareable data for both American & Cuban organizations. Our environmental project discoveries and information are collected using 4 methods:

- ✓ Photographic & quantitative information of the coral formations and marine animals - SUCH AS BULL SHARKS
- ✓ Informal interviews and discussions with locals on current conservation, environmental efforts with the Marine Protected Areas and the balance sought for sustainable seafood efforts with local private restaurant owners (paladares).
- ✓ Cultural and historical photography & informal feedback to update the background in the book on the current situation in Cuba since the first publication in 2003.
- ✓ Lionfish Monitoring Some participants will be observing quantities of lionfish, measuring and recording as well as assist in appropriate removal of this invasive species.
- ✓ Marine Site Diagraming Project: Some participants (Divemaster & above) team up with local environmental ecology experts / Cuban marine professionals to accurately diagram each marine site. Hand drawn maps record topography, depth, landmarks and sometimes also GPS coordinates. Maps will be used as the basis to digitally re-create these aquatic environmental maps for use in the *Cuba Ecology* book (section 7) and to be shared with American & Cuban organizations.



2nd Environmental Project
(Cuba Ecology Book)
Our first book, *Cuba Scuba* was a
236-page Comprehensive Marine
Guide, published in 2003



Example of lionfish removal with
diver using zookeeper container



Sample of hand-drawn maps which
will then be converted to
graphically designed maps

With generous support from the Waitt Foundation, The United States' Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) launched an initiative in 2013 to support collaborative field research with scientists from the University of Havana's Center for Marine Research. This initiative is enabling teams of Cuban, U.S. and Mexican scientists to carry out a series of scientific expeditions to conduct important new research on Cuba's remarkable—but understudied—marine and coastal ecosystems. This effort also supports year-round port sampling of shark fishery landings at Cuban ports, contributing to EDF's [overarching tri-national shark conservation](#) efforts throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The EDF also worked with [Cuba to develop a National Plan of Action \(NPOA\)](#) for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Sharks.



On November 18, 2015, Cuba & The United States of America signed Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Conservation and Management of Marine Protected Areas to establish a cooperative relationship to facilitate joint efforts concerning the science, stewardship, and management of MPAs (Marine Protected Areas).



Cuba Scuba's humanitarian-environmental projects intend to support the goals of this international agreement and work in conjunction with local Cuban marine biologists, marine professionals and private Cuban citizens.

This agreement between our two countries intends to:

- Direct the establishment of sister MPA relationships to better understand and conserve the interconnected ecosystems and address shared conservation challenges
- Exchange information, best practices and experiences regarding MPAs
- Develop common guidelines and methodologies for natural and cultural resource protection within MPAs
- Develop complementary activities related to:
 - Research and monitoring
 - Outreach and education
 - Enforcement methods
 - Performance assessments
 - Community involvement
- Joint publications on collaborative research and management