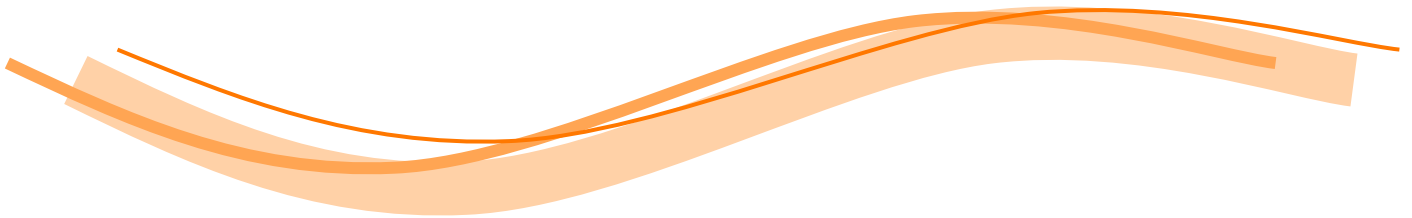




BARCELO RESORTS & TRANSAT HOLIDAYS





BARCELO RESORTS	<p>Barcelo Hotels and Resorts is one of the most respected names in the world for all-inclusive vacations. It operates 121 hotels with 31,000 rooms and 16,000 employees around the world.</p> <p>Their tag line says it all: "The best place, the best holiday."</p>
Barcelo History	<p>The name of Barceló, which began as a small transportation company, is today associated with one of the most prestigious holiday groups. Behind this lies the determination and hard work of three generations for seventy years.</p> <p>1931: Creation of Autocares Barceló (a transport company), founded by Simón Barceló in Felanitx (Majorca, Spain).</p> <p>1962: First hotel of the chain opened in Majorca, Spain. This stage culminates in 1965, with the development of a new concept of hotel: the Barceló Pueblo Palma</p> <p>1985: The international hotel operations begin: opening of the first hotel in the Caribbean (Barceló Bávaro Beach Resort, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic). Thus, Barceló becomes the pioneer Spanish hotel company in the area</p> <p>1999: Opening of the Barceló Maya Resort complex, in the Mayan Riviera in México, and purchase of two hotels (Ixtapa and Huatulco) on Mexico's Pacific coast</p> <p>Barcelo believe that they have a great responsibility that includes social and environmental aspects, so Barceló Hotels & Resorts has explicitly confirmed its commitment to society and the environment by signing the United Nations Pact on Human Rights and the Environment</p>
Website	<p>Have fun exploring: www.barcelo.com www.barcelobrochures.com</p>
Travel Show Prize	<p>Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort - Prestige Class - in Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba</p>
Barcelo and Transat Holidays 2008-2009	<p>Transat Holidays offers 9 Barcelo resorts in 7 destinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort Prestige Class, Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba Barcelo Marina Palace Prestige Class, Varadero, Cuba Barcelo Puerto Plata Prestige Class, Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic Barcelo Punta Cana Prestige Class, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Barcelo Karmina Palace, Manzanillo, Mexico Barcelo La Jolla de Mismaloya, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico Barcelo Costa Cancun, Cancun, Mexico Barcelo Maya Colonial Beach Prestige Class, Riviera Maya, Mexico

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	Barcelo Maya Palace Beach Prestige Class, Riviera Maya, Mexico
Barcelo and Nolitours 2008-2009	Nolitours offers 14 Barcelo resorts in 8 destinations: Barcelo San Jose Palacio, San Jose, Costa Rica Barcelo Tambor Beach, San Jose, Costa Rica Barcelo Cayo Largo, Cayo Largo, Cuba Barcelo Marina Palace, Varadero, Cuba Barcelo Solymar Beach, Varadero, Cuba Barcelo Bavaro Beach & Caribe, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Barcelo Bavaro Casino, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Barcelo Bavaro Palace, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Barcelo Dominican Beach, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Barcelo Capella Beach Resort, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic Barcelo Talanquera Beach Resort, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic Barcelo Tucancun Beach, Cancun, Mexico Barcelo Ixtapa Beach Resort, Ixtapa, Mexico Barcelo Maya Beach Resort, Riviera Maya, Mexico

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Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort	El Barceló Cayo Santa María is situated in an area of beautiful white sand beaches bathed by the clear turquoise waters of Cuba. This 5 star hotel where you can enjoy a complete all-inclusive programme is ideal for your holiday, offering 624 comfortable junior suites designed to be enjoyed with your partner or with your family.
Location	Situated directly on a beautiful white sand beach, approximately 50 minutes from downtown Caibarién and 116 kms from the Santa Clara airport in Cuba
Accommodation	This latest addition to the Barceló family will be opening in two phases. The first two hotels featuring 624 rooms will open in November 2008; while the other two hotels offering 684 rooms will open in February 2009. Hotel rooms feature air-conditioning • 1 king-size or 2 double beds • Full bathroom • Hairdryer • TV • Mini-bar • In-room safe • Iron • Balcony or terrace • Maximum occupancy 3 adults (or 2 adults and 2 children) Ocean Views and 1-Bedroom Suites are also available
Services	For children: Kids' Club (ages 4 to 12) • Playground • Children's pool • Babysitting available Wedding and free honeymoon packages are also available
Dining	Restaurants include 4 à la carte (Italian, Seafood, Spanish and Cuban (as of Mar. 2009) • Beach grills •
All-Inclusive	Buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner, Grill lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 à la carte dinners/week • Unlimited local and selected international drinks • Mini-bar (water, soft drinks and beer) • Admission to the disco • Daily activities program and Nightly entertainment • Selected non-motorized water sports • Introduction to scuba diving in pool ADDITIONAL INCLUSIONS AT PRESTIGE CLASS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation in rooms located closest to the beach • Concierge service • 3 guaranteed reservations/ week for à la carte dining • Continental breakfast and lunch service at the beach grill • Separate check-in/check-out • Beach towels, bathrobes and slippers in room • Mini-bar (water, soft drinks and beer) • VIP room amenities (soaps and lotions) and Turn-down service • Welcome gift, letter and distinct identification bracelet
Activities	Pools • Whirlpool • Bars • Disco • Jazz café • Snorkelling • Windsurfing • Catamaran • Kayaking • Volleyball • Tennis • Bicycles • Gym • Bocce
Deals with Transat	Save up to \$140 per couple/week, for travel between Jan 03/09 and Apr 23/09, when you book and pay in full 35 days prior to departure.

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	Savings are based on hotel, dates of travel and length of stay.
TRANSAT HOLIDAYS	<p>Transat is now the largest tour operator in Canada, and is at the core of the vertical integration process developing and marketing vacation products as well as flights to destinations in the South and Europe. The company acts as a master craftsman in assembling different components of leisure travel: air transportation, passenger transfers from airport to hotel, accommodation, recreational and cultural activities, meals, cruises, and much more.</p> <p>As an industry leader, Transat Holidays offers departures from many Canadian cities including: St. John's, Halifax, Moncton, Fredericton, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto, Brandon, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Comox, Abbotsford, Prince George and Kelowna.</p> <p>They also own a second brand for vacationers: Nolitours cover many additional destinations and resorts to complement the Transat Holidays line-up.</p>
Mission	<p>Transat Holidays offers quality vacation packages to a wide variety of destinations. Each season, the company presents a wide selection of quality products, in order to meet the diversified needs of Canadian travellers. In keeping with their mission, their employees aim to exceed vacationers expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader. They see their role, ultimately, to turn holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience one of the most memorable ever.</p>
Products	<p>Packages, Cruises, Hotels, Flights, Tours, Car Rentals & Train Travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat Holidays are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p>
Awards	<p>2005 Agent's Choice Awards: Transat Holidays ranked number one for a third year in a row by Canada's travel agents according to the results of the Agents' Choice Awards 2005, a survey carried out in February 2005 by Canadian Travel Press and Travel Courier. Transat Holidays is without a doubt the country's leader in the tour operator category, maintaining a sizeable lead over its closest competitor. In fact, since the survey began, it is the only tour operator to consistently finish first in its category for three consecutive years.</p>
Transat Holidays and Barcelo Resorts	<p>Transat Holidays and Nolitours Sun 2008-2009 Brochures</p> <p>Transat Holidays and sister company Nolitours offer 23 Barcelo Resorts across 15 destinations in Mexico, Cuba, Costa Rica and the Dominican Rep. Pick up their winter brochures at your travel agent to find golf packages and discounts, great options for weddings, honeymoons or vow renewal, and perfect family getaways.</p>

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	<p>Transat Holidays features the brand new 4 star Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort - Prestige Class - in Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba. This is also the prize hotel. A true vacationer's paradise, this property is set on one of the Caribbean's most fabulous beaches, is the ideal choice for a relaxing dream vacation with family, friends or loved ones.</p> <p>Transat Holidays also features 6 Barcelo resorts as part of the Transat Distinction Collection, an outstanding line of luxury hotels, offered exclusively to Transat Holidays guests.</p> <p>The Prestige Class is the ultimate in pampering with enhanced services and facilities with great added value. Accommodations in rooms closest to the beach, concierge service, 24-hour room service and VIP room amenities are just a few of the exclusive privileges offered.</p>
<p>Air Transat Kids Club</p>	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves while onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
<p>Special Deals</p> <p>Website</p>	<p>Transat currently has some very special deals at the Barcelo resorts: From Toronto: Barcelo Punta Cana – Prestige Class, all inclusive, 7 nights, departing 27 Nov 2008, \$618 From Montreal: Barcelo Costa Cancun, all inclusive, 7 nights, departing 8 Dec 2008, \$1498 Check out their website at www.TransatHolidays.com for latest deals</p>
<p>New Barcelo resort</p>	<p>New to the Barcelo family – Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort Prestige Class. Transat Holidays is proud to offer the newest additions to the Barcelo chain, the 4-star Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort Prestige Class in Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba. A true vacationer's paradise, this brand-new property is set on one of the Caribbean's most fabulous beaches, is the ideal choice for a relaxing dream vacation with family, friends or loved-ones.</p>
<p>Prestige Class – Transat Distinction Collection</p>	<p>Transat Holidays features 6 Barcelo resorts as part of the Transat Distinction Collection, an outstanding line of luxury hotels, offered exclusively to Transat Holidays guests. The Prestige Class is the</p>

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	ultimate in pampering with enhanced services and facilities with great added value. Accommodations in rooms closest to the beach, concierge service, 24-hour room service and VIP room amenities are just a few of the exclusive privileges offered.
Nolitours and Transat Holidays flights	With added leg room in Economy class, advanced seat selection at your fingertips, onboard duty free shopping, the Air Transat Kids' Club to keep your children entertained, the best on-time performance and best aircraft reliability in Canada, you can depend on us to get you where you want to go as quickly and as comfortably as possible.
Air Transat's Club Class	Enjoy exclusive privileges such as wider, more comfortable leather seats, even more legroom, a selection of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding, and much more!
Golf	From golf packages, golf discounts and a selection of hotels with golf courses nearby, Nolitours and Transat Holidays' golf offer at selected Barcelo resorts is sure to please even the most avid golfers. Some of the best courses are found nearby or even on some of the hotel properties such as the Barcelo Bavaro Beach Golf Course.
Weddings, Honeymoons & Renewal of Vows	Imagine a romantic moment in paradise – overlooking the turquoise sea, in a hibiscus covered gazebo or directly on a white-sandy beach – surrounded by family and friends. Nolitours and Transat Holidays propose resorts that offer affordable wedding and renewal of vows packages that include the essential elements of the important day as well as free honeymoon packages that pamper newlyweds with gifts such as champagne bottles, room upgrade, breakfast in bed and much more.
Family Getaways	Nolitours and Transat Holidays invite you to spend some quality time with your family under the warm sun. With plenty of resorts offering activities and services for all age groups, it's a great way for all generations in the family to enjoy their stay and reconnect. Kids' Clubs, babysitting services, Kids free promotions and single parent specials are among the elements that are available for you to take full advantage of this wonderful way to travel. For further details on Nolitours or Transat Holidays' Barcelo offer, consult your travel agent or visit www.nolitours.com or www.transatholidays.com .

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DESTINATION	<p>CUBA</p> <p>Cuba is unlike any other place on earth. What draws people to this fascinating Caribbean island is much more than beaches, sun, and cheap drinks, though there are plenty of all three for those who want them. One of the last Communist nations left, it doesn't suffer from the drab and desultory demeanor of its disappeared peers. Cuba's rich culture, unique political history, and continued survival through ongoing economic hardship make it one of the most eye-opening countries that travellers can still discover.</p> <p>Lonely Planet says of Cuba: "The Caribbean's largest and least commercialised island" and "Clearly the time to go is now!"</p>
Location	<p>Cuba is the largest Caribbean island, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. It lies 145 km south of Key West, Florida, between the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas, to the west of Haiti, and northwest of Jamaica.</p> <p>Formed by over 4,000 keys, islets and islands, Cuba covers 110,922 square kilometers of terrain, encompassing luxuriant vegetation with a huge variety of flora and fauna, virgin islands, grottoes, caves, mountains, forests and over 280 beaches.</p> <p>A veritable paradise in the very heart of the Caribbean, whose capital, Havana, was declared a World Heritage City by UNESCO in 1982 in recognition of its concentration of historic buildings.</p>
Geography	<p>111,000 square km, 4200 coral cays and isles, 1250 km long, 30-100 km wide, with 7000 km coastline</p> <p>Pico Turquino is the highest mountain at 1974 meters</p>
Name	<p>Columbus named it Juana, the first of several names he successively applied to the island. It eventually became known as Cuba, from its aboriginal name, Cubanascnan.</p>
Population	<p>Nationally 11.2 million, with Havana having more than 2 million</p>
Language	<p>Spanish; English is widely spoken in the resorts and in Varadero</p>
Currency	<p>One Canadian Dollar = 22 CUP or Cuban Pesos (8 Nov 2008) One Canadian Dollar = 0.78 CUC or Cuban Convertible Pesos (8 Nov 2008)</p> <p>There are two currencies circulating in Cuba, Cuban Pesos (CUP) and Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC). Prior to November 2004 US dollars were in wide circulation on par with the CUC, but the government discontinued that and they are no longer used.</p> <p>CUC is the currency most tourists will use in Cuba. It is how you will pay for hotels, official taxis, entry into museums, meals at restaurants, cigars, rum, etc. Conversion into CUC can be done at exchange houses (casa de cambio, or cadeca). These are located in many hotels and in other places throughout the cities. CUC are valued at 24 times the value</p>

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	<p>of CUP. Tourists are permitted to import or export a maximum of CUP 100 or CUC 200 at any one time.</p> <p>CUP are also known as local Pesos and Moneda Nacional (National money). There is a limited range of goods that can be bought for local pesos, and these are transactions carried out in agricultural markets or from street vendors. Fruits, vegetables, fresh juices and snacks from street vendors are among the things CUP can buy. Because the products that can be purchased with CUP are limited, it is not a good idea to change more than CUC 5-10 into CUP at a time, as the CUP will last for a good while.</p> <p>Note that Amex is not accepted in Cuba and as of January 2007, US dollars are not being accepted for exchange in official outlets.</p>
Tipping	American dollar notes are always appreciated if you receive good service
Government	Socialist republic, but Fidel Castro has created his own brand of more pragmatic Socialism
Documentation	Passport and tourist card (included in package tours) Departure tax is 25 CUCs
Time zone	Eastern Standard Time
Health	"Cuba's health and education facilities are more accessible to the average citizen than those of many richer countries, including the U.S." Life expectancy: 76 years; literacy: 96%
Safety tips	Cuba is generally a very safe country; strict and prominent policing, combined with neighborhood watch style-programs keep the streets safe from violent crime. Nonetheless, a certain degree of common-sense and caution is advisable, especially in major cities.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Wet season is May to Oct; temp averages 26 degrees in Jan and temperatures are sub-tropical year-round
Today's weather	26 degrees Centigrade and sunny periods (8 Nov 2008)
Best time to visit	November to April

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	3.5 to 4 hours
Cities	<p>Havana: 2.5 million people, faded glory, 1950's cars, swinging nightlife; "a rhythm all of its own: halfway between the easy tempo of a sleepy tropical resort and the feverish pace of a metropolis"</p> <p>Founded 1514: "the jewel of the Spanish colonies"; UNESCO world Heritage Site; 1898-1902 ruled by US; rent a bike \$14/hr;</p>

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Old Havana is a walkers paradise;
Catedral de la Havana – baroque façade;
Plaza de la Cathedral - Is perhaps the most beautiful square in the Caribbean which is surrounded by examples of the finest baroque architecture in the country
Castillo de la Real Fuerza – oldest colonial fortress in the Americas;
Museo de la Ciudad – former Palace of the Captains General;
Malecon – seawall meeting place;
Hemmingway – El Floridita 180 yrs old, birthplace of daiquiris, 'papa especial': double 3yr rum, lemon, crushed ice;
247 museums;
Nightlife: Tropicana Cabaret;
Restaurant: El Meson – on roof of Castillo, Cuban cuisine and cabaret

Varadero: Varadero is a privileged enclave on the west coast of Cuba, with over 20 kilometers of superlative beaches sheltering caves and virgin keys whose crystalline waters conceal more than 40 different kinds of coral, fish, lobsters, shrimp, crabs and turtles. This beautiful destination has excellent connections and a vast range of leisure and entertainment options, making it the ideal spot for a relaxing and enjoyable vacation in the heart of the Caribbean. Highlights:

History: Siboney Indians, Cubanacan nation, Cueva de San Ambrosio: 50 drawings at tip of peninsula, discovered in 1961;
1928: Mansion Xanadu – Cary Grant, Ava Gardner;
1900-1920: wooden houses;
Museo Municipal – Varadero history with English captions;
Establecimiento Tabaquero – cigar factory, 20 tobacco craftsmen;
Parque Josone – flamingos, macaws and rowboats;
Scuba – 3 clubs \$60 Playa Giron intro 2 hrs;
Horseriding – Casa del Valle, Valle Yumuri near Matanzas;
Cardenas – 15km from Varadero, architectural jewel, Museo Oscar Maria de Rojas – eclectic: shrunken heads and snails;
Shopping: cigars, ceramics, art;
Delfinario – 8 dolphins, 5 born there, 3 shows;
Cuevas de Bellamar – discovered in 1861, 45 mins, La Fuente del Amor
Sailing ship to Cayo Blanco from Marina Chapelin \$65 seafood lunch, snorkeling

Santa Clara: Santa Clara is a pretty city set amid green hills. The capital of the province of Villa Clara; it was founded in 1689 as San Juan de los Remedios.

Overlooking the Parque Leoncio Vidal, the Museo de Artes Decorativas occupies a magnificent colonial house built around 1740. Transformed over the centuries, it was restored in 1820 and again in 1980. The

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furniture exhibited here comes from several homes in Santa Clara and is displayed in chronological order, with a series of rooms presenting various decorative art ensembles from the 17th century up to the 20th century. In keeping with baroque tradition, the rooms are very heavily decorated. This custom goes back to the inferiority complex felt by members of the Cuban aristocracy towards Spain. Perhaps overcompensating, they filled their rooms and walls to prove their wealth. The museum has some extraordinary items, including an armoire built entirely without nails and a washbasin from the days when there was no running water.

The memory of Che Guevara permeates the town of Santa Clara. Located a little over 2 kilometres west of Parque Leoncio Vidal, the Plaza de la Revolución is dedicated to the famous Argentine guerrilla who fought fiercely alongside Fidel Castro to overthrow Batista in the late 1950s. A gigantic statue of Che Guevara dominates this plaza, the site of major political and cultural rallies in Santa Clara. Built in 1988 to commemorate the Guevara-led Battle of Santa Clara, this 7-metre high bronze sculpture is the work of Cuban artist Delana; the gigantic stone pedestal upon which it rests is more than 10 metres high.

Below this monument, anyone interested in this almost mythical Argentine revolutionary will not want to miss the Museo Memorial Nacional Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara. Inaugurated on December 28, 1988, it traces Che's life from his childhood up to his death, including his trips through Latin America, his stay in Mexico during which he met an exiled Fidel Castro, the landing of the Granma on the coast of Cuba, and his revolutionary experience in the Sierra Maestra. The museum is well documented, and displays a number of Che's personal items, including his uniforms, hand-written letters as well as many photos. The door that faces the entrance to the museum leads to the Mausoleo del Che, where lie the remains of Che and the 13 Cubans who were killed with him in Bolivia. An eternal flame shines in this solemn and touching shrine.

Following Che Guevara's footsteps in Santa Clara also requires a visit to the Monumento del Descarrilamiento, Acción y Toma del Tren Blindado, which recounts the decisive battle led by Che Guevara against an armoured train carrying Batista's forces on December 28, 1958. The reinforcements aboard this train were sent by Batista to help his army finish off the rebels in the centre of the country. After leaving Havana, the train arrived in Santa Clara on December 24. Che arrived on December 28 and settled in at the University of Santa Clara, where he made clandestine requests for equipment with which he could derail the train. He managed to obtain a bulldozer and, during the night, he breached the railway line leading to Havana. The ensuing attack from atop a hill prompted the train's crew members to back up and attempt to return to

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Havana... and the rest is history. Four of the train's 22 cars can be viewed at the monument.

The Museo de Artes Decorativas also offers classical music concerts. The museum is recognized as Santa Clara's most important centre for classical music.

The Casa de la Cultura Juan Marinero is Santa Clara's community cultural centre. At the entrance, a small art gallery exhibits works by contemporary artists from the region. This beautiful house, built in 1927, is the site of many cultural activities. Shows and concerts are held here regularly.

Shopping is a rare diversion in this region of the country, but you can still head to Calle Independencia, open only to pedestrians starting at Calle Maceo. Most of the shops are intended for local residents, including Santa Clara's biggest bookshop.

Excursions from Cayo Santa Maria:

CATAMARAN: A relaxing sail on crystal clear waters aboard a magnificent catamaran. A wonderful opportunity to do some snorkelling and enjoy an excellent lobster lunch. Open bar.

SANTA CLARA-REMEDIOS: A guided tour through the fascinating city of Santa Clara. Visit the Che Guevara Museum and Memorial Center. Explore Remedios, a 16th century colonial village, and see how cigars are made in an authentic cigar factory.

TWO COLONIAL CITIES: Experience history with a visit to Trinidad and Sancti Spiritus, both superb colonial towns where the splendours of yesteryear remain intact. A museum tour is followed by a chance to browse through souvenir shops.

SUNSET CRUISE: Enjoy a succulent lobster dinner onboard a catamaran that slowly sails on the water surrounding the cayos while the sun sets!

DOLPHIN SHOW & SWIM: Visit Cienfuegos, also known as "The Pearl of the South" and "City of Domes". Watch an impressive dolphin show, a demonstration of intelligence and skill, and swim and play with these fascinating mammals.

JEEP SAFARI: Enjoy a panoramic drive and head to Los Alamos for an ox-drawn carriage ride and a chance to try your hand at milking a cow. Savour tasty Creole cuisine and go for a refreshing dip in the crystalline river.

FOREST ADVENTURE: Perfect for nature lovers! Hike through the Guanayara National Park, come down a spectacular waterfall and swim in a natural pool. Guided tour in the forest provided by an ecological guide.

JET SKI TOUR: Ride your own jet ski (max. 2 people) on the crystal clear channels of water between the surrounding cayos.

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	<p>Santiago de Cuba: Set on the seaside, near the island's eastern tip, Santiago de Cuba is the country's second-largest city. Vibrant, tropical, and often sweltering, Santiago is the country's liveliest cultural showpiece, outside of Havana. With a population just under a half-million people, Santiago is a world apart, with a unique history and rhythms all its own.</p>
Distances	<p>Varadero to Havana: 144 km Santa Clara to Havana: 270 km</p>
Buses	<p>There are 30,000km of paved road. Probably the nicest way to get around Cuba is on the Víazul buses. These are well-staffed and luxurious air-conditioned buses with toilets, big comfy seats, and lots of leg room. Refreshments are provided. Víazul buses are mostly used by foreigners and rich locals. You'll need to book your ticket a day before departure to secure your seat; you may not get a ticket if you just show up right before departure.</p>
Trains	<p>Standard gauge: 4,226 km of which 140 km is electrified</p>
Car Rental, Taxis	<p>Car rental starts from CUC 65 per day (including insurance) plus the cost of a full tank of gasoline. The refundable deposits start around CUC 200. Rental cars are for the most part fairly new, imported European or Asian models. Collective taxis often use pre-1959 US cars.</p>
Regions	<p>Central Cuba is an area rich in both historical and natural attractions. It is home to several wonderful colonial-era cities, as well as isolated and pristine beaches. Heading east from Matanzas into Cuba's central heartland you first hit Villa Clara province, which is devoted largely to sugar cane, citrus, and tobacco farming and cattle ranching. The provincial capital, Santa Clara, a lively university town, is often called "Che Guevara's City" and features an impressive monument and plaza dedicated to the fallen revolutionary. To the north of Santa Clara lie the tiny and well-preserved colonial-era city of Remedios, and the jaw-droppingly beautiful beach resort destination of la Cayería del Norte. Abutting Villa Clara to the south is Cienfuegos province. The city of Cienfuegos is affectionately known as La Perla del Sur (The Southern Pearl). Cienfuegos is a busy port city with a pretty, colonial-era center and the country's second-longest seaside promenade, or Malecón. Cienfuegos is connected to Trinidad by a pretty coastal highway, and is definitely worth a visit on a loop trip around the region. The province of Sancti Spíritus is the only one in Cuba to count two of the original seven villas (towns) in Cuba among its offerings. The colonial gem Trinidad, tucked in the southwest corner of the province, is the highlight of a visit to the central section of the country, or all of Cuba for that matter. The provincial capital, Sancti Spíritus, isn't a great deal larger than Trinidad, and though it is more ramshackle and rough around the edges, lacking Trinidad's remarkable collection of perfectly</p>

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	<p>preserved architecture, it is still worth a visit to see its couple of colonial highlights.</p> <p>Cuba's Northeast Coast: The extraordinary, powdery beaches of Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo, the cays that lie off the mainland and jut into the deep blue of the Atlantic Ocean, are the primary attractions of Ciego de Avila province. It is a remote area, but one with the infrastructure and natural gifts that make it perfect for idyllic sun, sand, and sea holidays. The namesake provincial capital Ciego de Avila and other towns and cities in this province hold few attractions for visitors. A little farther east, predominantly flat low-lying Camagüey province, southeast of Ciego de Avila, is the largest in the country, though it is also the least densely populated. It occupies the widest swath on the island, 120km (75 miles) from the Atlantic coast to the Caribbean coast. Camagüey, the provincial capital, is Cuba's third-largest city, after Havana and Santiago de Cuba, and is a relatively undiscovered colonial gem of a city that is worth exploring.</p> <p>El Oriente: Prior to the 1959 Revolution, the eastern half of Cuba was a single province, straightforwardly called "El Oriente," or the East. Most Cubans still refer to everything east of Camagüey -- a region much more scenically and historically interesting than most of central Cuba -- as El Oriente, even though it is now composed of the distinct provinces of Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, and Guantánamo. The region is less known and visited than the west, but every bit as rewarding for travelers (and perhaps more so). The farther east you go, the more emphatically Caribbean it feels. The region's remarkable landscapes include the north coast's exuberant banana and coconut groves, densely wooded peaks of the Sierra Maestra, and tropical rainforest on the east coast.</p>
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<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>Everything from five star international resorts to the B&B equivalent in Cuba called casas particulares. In general, the rooms and homes are kept very clean, while the furnishings and amenities are quite simple. The rates average between \$8 and \$20 per person, and meals are often available at very reasonable prices.</p>
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<p>TARGET GROUPS</p> <p>Kids</p>	<p>If you've got kids in Varadero, you might want to head to the Parque de Diversiones, a small amusement park in Varadero that has the types of rides and booths you might find at a county fair. Near the Marina Chapelín, on the ocean side of the road, you'll find the Delfinario. Open daily from 8am to 5pm, this attraction offers a 40-minute show by trained dolphins about four times daily. Admission is</p>
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	\$10 per person; it's \$5 extra to take photos, and \$45 for a 15-minute swimming session with the dolphins.
Teens	<p>If all the activities at the resorts are not enough, there is a large swath of the eastern end of the Varadero peninsula is protected as the Parque Ecológico Varahicacos. There are some gentle paths through the scrub forests here, and you can visit a series of small caves, some of which contain ancient indigenous pictographs.</p> <p>If your family is adventurous, try the Jungle Tour, which is a fast and furious trip through the mangroves aboard sit-on-top motorized watercraft.</p> <p>Sign up for a day-cruise on one of the many sailboats operating out of Varadero. These cruises head out to nearby cays, and include some snorkeling time, as well as lunch either on the boat or on some private little island beach.</p>
Romance	Old Havana has to be one of the most romantic cities on earth...
Honeymoons & Weddings	The major resorts are all able to create magical wedding events – involve your travel agent at the early planning stage.
Seniors	<p>The nicest spot to visit in "downtown" Varadero is the Parque Josone, a beautifully maintained little city park with cool shady grounds and gardens. There are paths winding around and over little lakes with fountains, several restaurants and food stands, and the park is dotted with gazebos and park benches.</p> <p>The old colonial city of Trinidad is a perfect day excursion from many of the island resorts.</p>

UNIQUES	<p>Fábrica de Tabaco Partagas, Havana: Founded in 1845, this is Cuba's largest and perhaps most renowned cigar factory, producing around 5 million cigars a year.</p> <p>If you want a bird's-eye view of things, the Centro Internacional de Deportes Aéreos, off a little side road across from the Marina Dársena, offers parachute jumps and ultralight flights. Tandem parachuting costs \$150 per person. Ultralight flights run \$30 to \$300, depending on the length of time</p>
Surprising	<p>Santería is a folk religion of African deities combined with Catholic saints; Cubans are open about it and happy to tell you more</p> <p>Guantanamo Bay: the US forced Cuba to accept a US lease in 1903 which can be ended only by abandonment or mutual agreement.</p>
History	<p>In 1492 Columbus said of Cuba " I have never seen a more beautiful country..."</p> <p>It's thought that humans first cruised from South America to Cuba around 3500 BC. Primarily fishers and hunter-gatherers, these original inhabitants were later joined by the agriculturalist Taino, a branch of the Arawak Indians. Christopher Columbus sighted Cuba on 27 October 1492, and by 1514, Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar had conquered the</p>

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island for the Spanish crown and founded seven settlements. When captured Taino chief and resistance fighter Hatuey was condemned to die at the stake, he refused baptism, saying that he never wanted to see another Spaniard again, not even in heaven.

Cattle ranching quickly became the mainstay of the Cuban economy. Large estates were established on the island under the *encomienda* system, enslaving the Indians under the pretext of offering instruction in Christianity. By 1542, when the system was abolished, only around 5000 Indians (of an estimated 100,000 half a century before) survived.

Undaunted, the Spanish imported African slaves as replacements. British troops invaded Cuba in June 1762 and occupied Havana for 11 months, importing more slaves and vastly expanding Cuba's trade links. In 1817, Spain's long-standing monopoly on tobacco ended, which raised prices, encouraging the crop's expansion. Tobacco quickly became one of the island's most important products. Sugar had also become a major industry, as American independence in 1783 created new markets, and the 1791 slave uprising in Haiti eliminated Cuba's biggest sugar-producing competitor. By 1820 Cuba was the world's largest sugar producer.

After the great liberator, Simón Bolívar, led Mexico and South America to independence, Cuba and Puerto Rico were the only remaining Spanish holdings in the Western Hemisphere. Spanish loyalists fled the former colonies and arrived in Cuba in droves. Even they, however, began demanding home rule for the island, albeit under the Spanish flag.

In October 1868, planter Carlos Manuel de Céspedes launched Cuba's First War of Independence. After 10 years and 200,000 deaths, the rebels were spent and a pact was signed granting them amnesty.

Meanwhile, a group of Cuban rebels exiled to the USA began plotting the overthrow of the Spanish colonial government. Among their ranks was José Martí, a respected journalist and critic of US policy, as well as an important poet and the author of the best-known Cuban song of all time, *Guajira guantanamera*. Martí and his military commander, General Máximo Gómez, landed on eastern Cuba in 1895; within days Martí, conspicuous on his white horse, was shot and killed in a skirmish with Spanish soldiers. His martyrdom earned him the permanent position of Cuba's national hero.

Gómez and rebel leader Antonio Maceo pushed westward, burning everything in their path. Spain came down hard, forcing civilians into *reconcentración* camps and publicly executing rebel sympathizers. These methods effectively reestablished Spanish control, but Cuba's agriculture-based economy was in ruins. The Spaniards adopted a more conciliatory approach, offering Cuba home rule, but the embittered populace would agree to nothing short of full independence.

José Martí had long warned of US interest in Cuba, and in 1898 he was

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proved right. After years of reading lurid (and often inaccurate) tabloids tales about Cuba's Second War for Independence, the American public was fascinated with the island. Although everything was quiet, newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst told his illustrator not to come home just yet: 'You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war.' In January 1898 the US warship Maine, anchored outside Havana harbor, exploded mysteriously. All but two of its officers were off the ship at the time. The Spanish-American war had begun.

Spain, weakened by conflict elsewhere, limped to battle, trying to preserve some dignity in the Caribbean. They nearly beat future US president Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders (though they'd had to leave their horses on the mainland) in the Battle of San Juan Hill. The USA's vastly superior forces eventually prevailed, however, and on December 12, 1898, a peace treaty ending the war was signed. The Cubans, including General Calixto García, whose largely black army had inflicted dozens of defeats on the Spanish, were not invited.

The USA, hobbled by a law requiring its own government to respect Cuban self-determination, could not annex Cuba outright, as it did Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. In 1903, the USA built a naval base at Guantánamo Bay that is still in operation today.

By the 1920s US companies owned two-thirds of Cuba's farmland, imposing tariffs that crippled Cuba's own manufacturing industries. Discrimination against blacks was institutionalised. Tourism based on drinking, gambling and prostitution flourished. In 1933 Morales was overthrown in a coup, and army sergeant Fulgencio Batista seized power. Over the next 20 years Cuba crumbled, and its assets were increasingly placed into foreign hands. On January 1, 1959, Batista's dictatorship was overthrown after a three-year guerilla campaign led by young lawyer Fidel Castro. Batista fled Cuba for the Dominican Republic, taking with him US\$40 million of government funds.

Castro was named prime minister and began reforming the nation's economy, cutting rents and nationalizing landholdings larger than 400 hectares. Relations with the USA, already shaky, deteriorated when he nationalized US-owned petroleum refineries that had refused to process Venezuelan oil. The Americans retaliated by cutting Cuban sugar imports, crippling the Cuban economy, and the CIA began plotting devious ways to overthrow the revolutionary government.

In 1961, 1400 CIA-trained Cuban expats, mainly upper-middle-class Batista supporters who had fled to Miami after the revolution, attacked the island at the Bay of Pigs. They were promptly captured and ransomed back to the US for medical supplies. The following week, Castro announced the 'socialist nature' of the revolutionary government, and its relationship with the Soviet Union flourished, who provided food, technical support and, of course, nuclear weapons. The October 1962

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	<p>Cuban Missile Crisis is said to be the closest the world has ever come to nuclear conflict.</p> <p>The missiles were shipped back to the USSR, and the USA declared an embargo on Cuba. Castro and his Minister of Economics, Che Guevara, began actively supporting guerilla groups in South America and Africa, sending troops and advisers to assist socialist insurgencies in Zaire, Angola, Mozambique, Bolivia (where Guevara was killed) and Ethiopia. The US response was to support dictators in many of those countries.</p> <p>In December 1991, the Cuban Constitution was amended to remove all references to Marxism-Leninism, and economic reforms began. In 1993, laws passed allowing Cubans to own and use US dollars, be self-employed and open farmers' markets. Taxes on dollar incomes and profits were levied in 1994, and in September 1996 foreign companies were allowed to wholly own and operate businesses and purchase real estate. These measures gradually brought the economy out of its post-Soviet tailspin. The US responded by stiffening its embargo with the Helms-Burton Act, ironically solidifying Castro's position.</p> <p>In July of 2006, Fidel Castro handed off the reins of government for the first time in 47 years. The reins were not passed far. In fact, Fidel turned over the day-to-day chores of governing to his younger brother Raúl, who was already the head of the Cuban armed forces and the head of Cuba's Communist party.</p>
Books	Frommer's Cuba
1000 Places to see before you die	<p>Cuba's Jazz Festival – mid Feb in Havana</p> <p>La Habana Vieja – Havana's Old Quarter</p> <p>Hemingway's Hangouts – La Floridita and La Bodeguita del Medio</p>
Must Sees	Havana, Trinidad, the countryside, the people

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	<p>Baseball is the national sport. Cuba's amateur players are considered some of the best in the world, and the premier players are aggressively scouted and courted by Major League Baseball. The regular season runs November through March, and playoffs and the final championship usually carry the season on into May. Most major towns and cities have a local team. Some of the consistently better teams include Pinar del Río, Sancti Spíritus, Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara, and of course Havana's Industriales. It's usually easy to buy tickets at the box office for less than 5 Cuban pesos, or ask at your hotel and perhaps they can get you tickets in advance.</p> <p>If you want to bring presents for the locals, you can't go wrong with any baseball equipment!</p>
Golf	<p>The country's only regulation 18-hole golf course is the Varadero Golf Club (www.varaderogolfclub.com). The course is a relatively flat resort course, with lots of water, plenty of sand, great views, and almost no rough. Greens fees are \$60 for 18 holes</p>

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Fishing	<p>There's fabulous deep-sea sportfishing for marlin, sailfish, tuna, dorado, and more off of most of Cuba's extensive coastline, while the Zapata Peninsula and Cayo Largo del Sur may just be some of the best and least exploited bonefishing spots left in the hemisphere. The mountain lake and resort of Hanabanilla is getting good grades as a freshwater ground for widemouth and black bass. A half-day of fishing should cost between CUC\$150 and CUC\$400, while a full day can run between CUC\$300 and CUC\$1,400, including gear and lunch, depending on the size of the boat and number of fishermen. There's a broad network of state-run marinas all around Cuba; the greatest number are run by Cubanacán (tel. 7/208-6044; www.cubanacan.cu) and Gaviota (tel. 7/66-9668; www.gaviota-grupo.com). All offer sport fishing charters</p>
Hiking	<p>Walking along Havana's Malecón: Your best bet is to start in Habana Vieja and work your way toward the Hotel Nacional in Vedado. Take your time to stop and sit on the sea wall for a spell, and be sure to talk to some of the locals on your way. If you time it right, you will reach the Hotel Nacional in the late afternoon -- a good time to grab a cool drink and enjoy the setting sun from their "Compass Card" outdoor terrace. Hiking Pico Turquino: Pico Turquino, tucked within the celebrated Sierra Maestra National Park, is the highest peak in Cuba at just under 2,000m. The trail to the summit is swathed in cloud forest and tropical flora. Mountaineers in good physical condition can do the 15km round-trip journey in a day, but most camp overnight below the summit. The panoramic views of the coast and Caribbean Sea are breathtaking.</p>
Cycling	<p>With a local reliance on bicycles for everyday transportation and a relatively well-maintained road network serving a small motor vehicular fleet, Cuba is a great country to tour by bicycle. There are very few operations renting decent bikes in Cuba, so it may be best to bring your own</p>
Diving	<p>There are fabulous scuba diving and snorkeling opportunities on the coral reefs, ocean walls, and ancient wrecks that lie just off Cuba's coasts. María la Gorda, Isla de la Juventud, Playa Larga, Playa Girón, and Los Jardines de la Reina are widely considered the absolute top scuba-diving destinations. You will also find perfectly acceptable dive opportunities and operations in Varadero, Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, Guardalavaca, and Cayo Largo del Sur</p>

CULTURE	
Music	<p>Buena Vista Social Club; rumba; jazz; salsa; son Cuba has a strong tradition in the performing arts. Cuban musicians, playing in a range of styles, are world-renowned. The Cuban National Ballet (tel. 7/855-3084; www.balletcuba.cu) has been garnering international accolades for decades, under the seemingly eternal direction of Alicia Alonso.</p>

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	<p>The Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba (Cuban National Folklore Group) hosts the weekly Sábado de la Rumba, a mesmerizing show of Afro-Cuban religious and secular dance and drumming. The 2-hour shows are presented every Saturday at 3pm, at El Gran Palenque, Calle 4, between Calzada and Avenida 5 in Vedado.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>Museo de la Ciudad, Havana: Old Havana's preeminent museum displays colonial-era art and artifacts. It's worth the price of admission alone to stroll the rooms, outdoor courtyards, and interior veranda of the former Palacio de los Capitanes Generales (Palace of the Captain Generals), which houses the museum.</p> <p>The National Fine Arts Museum fills three floors of this square-city-block building, and the design - with a central courtyard and zigzagging ramped stairwell - can make navigating the upper floors confusing, so allow yourself plenty of time, and be prepared to get mildly lost inside. An extensive collection of Cuban art and sculpture is on display at the newly renovated main building here. Modern masters like Wifredo Lam, Raúl Martínez, Amelia Peláez, and Rene Portocarrero are well represented. The international collection is now housed in a recently restored early-20th-century gem of a building.</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>The Havana Jazz Festival, (Feb) organised by Chucho Valdés, is an internationally renowned event that consistently attracts an excellent line-up, with performances at venues around the city. Cuban music enjoyed a worldwide boost in popularity due to the success of the Buena Vista Social Club, and rightly so. Cuban son was a precursor to salsa and much excellent Latin jazz emanates from this sunny Caribbean island.</p> <p>What better place for a jazz festival than Havana, with its rich musical heritage and unique atmosphere? The Hotel Rivera acts as the festival headquarters, while the Casa de la Cultura Plaza, Teatro Nacional de Cuba, Teatro Amadeo Roldán, Teatro Mella and Teatro Karl Marx also host performances</p> <p>Carnival Santiago de Cuba July/Aug: in the intense heat of summer, Santiago de Cuba explodes with the island's best carnival, an evocative celebration of the city's Afro-Caribbean roots. Ripe with rumba music, conga processions, booming percussion, fanciful floats, and wild costumes, it's a participatory party.</p>
<p>ATTRACTIONS</p>	<p>Trinidad - The best-preserved colonial city in Cuba, in the shadow of the Escambray mountains, Trinidad was not even linked by road to the rest of the country until the 1950s. Declared a national monument by the Cuban government this city is very much as it was four centuries ago, the beauty of its baroque architecture and cobblestones squares harking back to a bygone era when Trinidad was a key player in the Caribbean slave trade. There are many interesting things to see (e.g Guamuhaaya</p>

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	<p>Archaeological Museum, Plaza Mayor, Church of Santa Ana, Calle Simon Bolivar....) but the most impressive of all Trinidad's many museums is Trinidad Municipal Museum and a visit to the Taller Alfarero, a large ceramics workshop where traditional techniques are still used is also worthwhile.</p>
Beaches	<p>Varadero is Cuba's premier beach resort destination, and it ranks right up there with the best in the Caribbean. If you're looking for a well-run all-inclusive resort loaded with amenities and activity options, Varadero is a good choice, with a 21km stretch of nearly uninterrupted beach</p>
Wildlife	<p>Bird-Watching in the Zapata Peninsula: A dedicated (and lucky) bird-watcher might be able to spot 18 of Cuba's 22 endemic species in the swamps, mangroves, and wetlands of the Zapata Peninsula. In addition to the endemics, ornithologists and lay bird-watchers can spot over 100 other varieties of shore birds, transients, and waterfowl in this rich, wild region. Other top bird-watching destinations include La Güira National Park, as well as the areas around Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo and Baracoa.</p> <p>Cayo Largo: In the Archipiélago de los Canarreos, off the south coast, 177 km southeast of Havana; 38 sq km, 26 km long, 2 km wide; glittering white sands faced by turquoise waters; 200 shipwrecks in the area, shallow coral reefs; wildlife: turtles, iguanas, cranes, flamingos, bee hummingbirds; Playa Paraiso – nude beach; Cayo Iguana – home to 100's of friendly iguanas</p>
Parks	<p>Gran Parque Natural Montemar: 4500 sq km, Peninsula de Zapata, vast wetland of mangroves, 160 birds species, 31 reptiles, 12 mammals, manatee sea-cows, hummingbirds, flamingos, parrots, Apr/May red land crabs swarm in their 10,000's</p> <p>The Viñales Valley: This broad, flat valley is punctuated by a series of limestone karst hill formations, or mogotes. The views from the small mountains surrounding the valley are spectacular. The area offers great opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, bird-watching, and rock climbing, as well as caves to explore.</p> <p>Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve: (100 km west of Havana) The mountainous region between Havana and Pinar del Río is another prime destination in the country's budding eco-tourism industry. With both the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve and La Güira National Park, as well as eco-tourism projects in Soroa and at Las Terrazas, the area offers a wealth of opportunities to explore the flora and fauna of Cuba's inland mountain forests. Add the sulfurous mineral springs of San Diego de los Baños into the mix, and you've got the perfect recipe for some nature-based rest and relaxation. Declared a UNESCO biosphere reserve in 1985, the 25,000-hectare (nearly 62,000-acre) Sierra del Rosario encompasses a mountainous area of rapidly recovering secondary tropical deciduous forests, cut with numerous</p>

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	rivers and waterfalls. Nearly 100 species of birds can be spotted here, including over half of Cuba's 22 endemic species.
Gardens	Parque Josone in Varadero is a beautifully maintained little city park with cool shady grounds and gardens.
Castles/Forts	Castillo de la Real Fuerza , Havana: a well-preserved 16th-century fort sits within a broad cloverleaf moat. This is the oldest fort in Havana, and the oldest surviving fort in the hemisphere. It was a failure, built too small and too far from the harbor entrance to be of much use, but crossing over the old drawbridge and walking around the ancient stone battlements gives a great sense of history.

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	Highlights of Cuban craftsmanship include articles made from leather, vegetable fibers, wood, stone, metal and coal as well as traditional clothing such as Cuban hats and "guayaberas", beautifully cool, comfortable shirts made from pure linen, and select Cuban tobacco products such as Havana cigars. There are nine shopping centers in Varadero where beautiful examples of Cuban craftsmanship can be found as well as delicious local produce. They are generally open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m
Markets	Havana: The biggest and best street market in Havana features three narrow rows of stalls stretching over a full city block. It's open daily from 10am to 6pm in Habana Vieja on Calle Tacón, between Calles Empedrado and Chacón. In addition to the typical arts and crafts and souvenir T-shirts, you'll find scores of local painters selling their wares. Varadero: There are several outdoor arts and craft markets around Varadero; the best, Artesanía , is at Avenida 1 and Calle 12. The Plaza de los Artesanos is also good. ARTex has stores at each of these sites, as well as at Avenida 1 and Calle 35. At each you will find a broad collection of trinkets, T-shirts, musical instruments, posters, and CDs.
Nightlife	Tropicana , Havana: This is the original and still reigning cabaret show in Cuba. The Tropicana has been at it for over 60 years and it shows no signs of slowing down. The sea of lithe dancers, the exuberance of their costumes, and the sheer excess of it all is worth the trip. It all occurs under the stars in the shadow of tall overhanging trees. There's a second Tropicana in Matanzas for visitors to Varadero, and another in Santiago. El Gato Tuerto , Havana: The mood is dark and bohemian, although the decor mixes Art Deco and kitsch in equal measure. The nightly show usually features three or four distinct acts, which can range from sultry boleros to up-tempo jazz. A storyteller, poet, or comedian might perform between sets. La Zorra y El Cuervo , Havana: This is Havana's best jazz club, and that's saying a lot. The vibe is mellow and unpretentious in this compact basement club, but the music and acts are usually culled from the best

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	<p>Cuba has to offer.</p> <p>Habana Café, Havana and Varadero: Mix the Tropicana with a Hard Rock Cafe, and Habana Café is more or less what you'd get. The floor show is a mix of cabaret-style dance numbers and slightly burlesque comedic bits, all anchored by a top-notch big band. After the show, the dance floor swings and writhes for hours</p>
Casinos	None in Cuba – unlike pre-Castro days!

CUISINE	
Food	<p>Cuban cuisine is influenced by Spanish, African, indigenous and other cultures. The national dish is ajiaco, a stew of assorted root vegetables cooked with pork, poultry or beef. Other typical dishes are lechón (roast pork), fried green plantains (tachinos, chatinos or tostones), black beans, congrí (rice with red beans), moros y cristianos (rice with black beans), picadillo a la habanera (ground beef in tomato sauce), roast chicken and tamales among others. The Cuban sweet tooth ensures that each meal includes dessert.</p>
Wine	<p>Cuban national cocktails include the Cuba Libre (rum and cola) and the Mojito (rum, lime, sugar, mint leaves, club soda and ice). If you request a rum in a small country restaurant do not be surprised if it is only available by the bottle. Havana Club is the national brand and the most popular. Expect to pay \$4 for three year old white rum or \$8 for seven year old dark rum.</p> <p>Cristal is a light beer and is available in "dollar" stores where Cubans with CUCs and visitors may shop. Cubans prefer the Bucanero Fuerte, which at 5.5% alcohol is a strong (hence the "fuerte") darker beer. Both Cristal and Bucanero are brewed by a joint venture with Labatts of Canada, whose beer is the only Cuban beer sold in CUC.</p> <p>In nearby Cardenas is the Arrechabala Rum Factory, where the brand Havana Club was born and where present-day Varadero and Buccanero rums are made. Tours of the factory are given daily between 9am and 4pm; admission is \$3.</p>
Restaurants	<p>The best restaurants are within the major resorts, but good food will also be found in paladares (locally owned restaurants in private homes). Restaurants in Varadero: Mi Casita – Cuban style seafood; El Bodegon – Creole cooking; La Casa de Antiguadades – best in town; Nightlife: La Cueva de Pirata – Latin music; Casa du Pont – quiet piano bar and gorgeous views</p>

MORE INFO	
Brochures	<p>Transat Holidays Sun 2008-2009</p> <p>Nolitours Sun 2008-2009</p>
Websites	<p>www.transatholidays.com</p> <p>www.nolitours.com</p>

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	www.gocuba.ca www.barcelo.com
HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER	Barcelo Cayo Santa Maria Beach Resort (see notes above)
AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER	Air Transat
Flight details	3 times per week from Toronto to Santa Clara; 3 hours 45 mins
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	2005 Havana; 2004: Varadero and Holguin; 2000: Cayo Largo and Varadero; 2002: Cayo Coco and Trinidad

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