***CUBA ITINERARY - 2016***

Departs Wednesday, May 4 - for 8 Days and 7 Exciting Nights!!!

**Day 1 - Miami**

Welcome to Miami! If you have purchased your airline tickets through ***Sweetwine Travel Services***, you will be welcomed by an ***STS*** representative and transferred to your hotel, as part of your package. *(Guests who have made their own air travel arrangements should make their own way to the hotel).* This evening you will join your fellow travelers in the hotel for a trip briefing where you will learn about the exciting days ahead and prepare for your memorable Cuban people-to-people experience! The hotel is in the Miami Airport area.

**Day 2 - Santa Clara, Cuba**

This morning, your group will check in for your early 55-minute charter flight from Miami International Airport to historic Santa Clara, Cuba. An ***STS*** Tour Manager will accompany you on your charter flights. Their role is to ensure your travel program is as uncomplicated as possible, and to work alongside the assigned National Cuban Guide; who will greet you upon arrival at Santa Clara International Airport, after you have cleared immigration and customs. Your National Cuban Guide will be with you throughout your stay. You'll head directly from the airport to a delicious lunch - after which you'll tour the 'Che Guevara Mausoleum' where there will be a photo stop in route to Santa Clara. The Mausoleum's location was chosen in remembrance of Guevara's troops taking the city on December 31, 1958 - resulting in Cuban dictator Batista fleeing into exile. Santa Clara was founded in 1689 and is the capital city of the Province of Villa Clara. It is here that you will also visit the 'Abuelos de Fiesta' community center for senior citizens. You will have an opportunity to interact with some of the participants and staff at the center and learn about its importance to those who use it. Later you will tour a local market and meet with some of the local traders. Finally, you will enjoy a drive to Cayo Santa Maria, a coastal resort on the Cayos Villa Clara (Keys), by way of a 30-mile causeway that jumps from Cay to Cay. Host hotel: Playa Cayo Santa Maria.\*

**Day 3 - Remedios & Caibarien**

After breakfast, you will travel to Remedios - a charming town boasting colonial architecture and cobble-stoned streets. Now with a population of 18,000, Remedios is considered a national monument and celebrated its 500 year anniversary in 2015! During a walk-through of the city center, you will visit the historic cathedral and meet with a Catholic Priest who runs a range of community projects. You will also meet and interact with local residents involved with the church and many of its activities. Remedios is also known for its annual 'Parrandas Festival' - a carnival-like celebration that takes place at the end of each December. You will learn more about its history during a visit to the Parrandas Museum where you will also speak with the Museum staff. This afternoon, there will be a short drive to the nearby fishing community of Caibarien. Here you will visit the 'Color Miel' art project that teaches art to local kids and houses an art gallery and studios of various local artists. This evening, relive the experiences of the day with your fellow travelers over Cuban dinner and dancing at the hotel. Dancers will welcome you onto the dance floor and be on hand to offer instruction! Host Hotel: Playa Cayo Santa Maria.\*

**Day 4 - Havana**

This morning, you head West toward Havana for your first opportunity to get acquainted with this fascinating city. You will stop along the way for lunch and arrive in Havana in the early afternoon. There will also be an afternoon lecture at the hotel: "Life in Cuba Today" - providing introductory insight to modern day living in Cuba. During the lecture, you will able to ask questions and discuss relations with the USA. This evening's dinner host will be the El Tocororo Hotel Restaurant in Quinta Avenida, Havana.\*

**Day 5 - Agriculture & Rural Life; Vinales, Pinar Del Rio**

Today, you visit Vinales in the Province of Pinar Del Rio and witness Cuba's picturesque countryside, rural life, and agriculture. Vinales is approximately a 2.5 hour drive from Havana - where you will see perhaps the greenest, most verdant landscape in all of Cuba. With its mountains and fertile valley, many suggest it is reminiscent of the scenery in New Zealand. You will visit an organic farm, tour the crops, and meet with the farmer and his family. Today's stop for lunch is at a local Paladar (private restaurant). After lunch, you will visit a tobacco farm to witness the growing, drying, and cigar rolling process of Cuba's most famous export. You will also meet and talk with the farming family in the intimacy of their own home. After a brief stop in the center of Vinales, your drive back to Havana will have you arriving at the hotel in the early evening. Host Hotel: Quinta Avenida.\*

**Day 6 - Havana**

The main event of the morning is a visit to Muraleando - an inspiring community art project that has transformed the neighborhood. Founding artist, Manolo, describes it as a 'people's art gallery' where the murals and sculptures depict fanciful

celebrations of Cuban life. Later, you will visit San Alejandro Art School - before lunch at the popular 'El Aljibe' a well-regarded and renowned open-air restaurant. The food is served family style, and the specialty is chicken. After lunch, you will visit the Santovenia Elderly Center and learn about its role in the community. Following, is a brief stop at 'Revolucion Plaza'. The Plaza has been the site of many of Havana's major historical events including the recent visit by the Pope, and it is where Fidel Castro addressed his fellow citizens on many occasions. Later, there is a visit to the house and studio Jose Fuster - one of Cuba's most imminent artists. The entire property is adorned by ceramics - some reaching upward, many feet from the ground. Fuster has made a significant contribution by decorating and rebuilding the fishing town of Jaimanitas, in the outskirts of Havana. Fuster has decorated over 80 houses there. Host Hotel: Quinta Avenida.\*

**Day 7 - Havana**

This morning you will visit a pre-school day care facility called a 'guaderia infantile'. It is run by Nuns - who will explain their role in the community in looking after the young children, allowing their parents to work. Next, you'll visit a Bodega - or State ration store - where you will learn about the monthly allowances of basic staples and how the system works. An exciting highlight this morning is a visit to the Hemingway farm - "Finca Vigia". This is where the famed author lived with his wife from 1939 to 1960. You will see the house presented as it would have been during his life. After lunch, you will visit the Havana City Model where an Architect will explain where the city is headed and answer any questions. This session is followed by an architectural walk of old houses, where you will see some of the main restored Plazas in the pedestrian-only 'Old City' - with its intimate cobble-stoned streets that will transform you back in time. Before returning to the hotel, there will be a stop at the 'Mercado San Jose' - an arts and crafts market - where you will have the opportunity to speak with traders. Your final event today is a private presentation and performance. at the hotel, by musicians of the 'Cuban Institute of Music'. This organization represents more than 15,000 Cuban musicians. After their performance of traditional Cuban music, you will talk with them about their lives and how they make a living. This evening, you attend a 'Farewell Dinner' at a Paladar - one of Cuba's privately run restaurants. Host Hotel: Quinta Avenida.\*

**Day 8 - Depart for Home**

Time to bid farewell to Cuba. This morning you will take your charter flight from Havana back to Miami.

 **\* - *indicates, or similar accommodations***

**<<<<<< SPECIAL NOTES >>>>>>**

* ***Travel to Cuba for Americans and Permanent Residents of the United States is tightly controlled by the Office of Foreign Asset Controls (OFAC). U.S. law imposes restrictions on what may be purchased and imported to the U.S. If you require further information, please visit www.treasury.gov and see the Cuba sanctions pages.***
* **Specific Itinerary inclusions, including hotels, visits and/or meetings with individuals and organizations, and home visits, are dependent on outside factors and it may sometimes be necessary to substitute with alternatives of equal relevance and interest.**
* **A current Passport is REQUIRED for travel to Cuba. A Cuban Tourist Visa is included for all travelers regardless of Nationality. You will receive your Visa in Miami the evening before departure. Your Passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your return travel date. *IMPORTANT:* Those born in Cuba cannot travel on a Tourist Visa and must themselves aplly directly for a Visa (extra cost).**
* **Our special Miami charter flights to and from Cuba are all operated by U.S. carriers and governed by the FAA. Our ground transportation in Cuba is serviced by a fleet of modern motor coaches. Flight timings for your charter flights between Miami and Cuba will be confirmed on your final travel documents. If you are making your own air travel arrangements to/from Miami, please confirm charter flight timings before booking your tickets. This is to ensure that you book appropriately timed flights with adequate connection times. You should note that a group briefing takes place in the Miami hotel on the arrival evening - usually between 6:30-8:30pm. Please make your flight arrangements with this in mind.**
* **Cuba is a developing country, and as such, visitors are reminded that certain aspects of life are not the same as in North America. Many amenities and services we take for granted are luxuries in Cuba, or simply not available. Hotel accommodation in Cuba is subject to the same influences and while basic necessities, comfort, and cleanliness can be assured, you should not expect U.S. standards - and other amenities (including air conditioning) are prone to unreliability. Please bear this in mind when booking this trip!**
* **Gratuities for your *STS* Program Manager, National Cuban Guide, and driver/s are customary and not included in the price of your tour. However, gratuities for your baggage handling in Cuba, (included) meals, and hotel housekeeping are included in your tour costs.**