

CIRCLE CUBA CRUISE

Cruise all around Cuba on Oceania's *Sirena*

March 5, 2020 - 14 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person: based on double/twin

\$6395 Outside Category C2

\$7595 Verandah Category B2

\$9350 Penthouse Category PH3

- > This tour is exempt from GST.
- > Other categories available along with single fares.
- > **Early Bookers:** \$200 discount on first 12 seats; \$100 on next 6
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 130 points from this tour.
Redeem **130 points** if you book by **October 31**.



Includes

- Transportation to Seattle airport
- Flight from Seattle to Fort Lauderdale
- Air transport taxes & security fees
- 3 nights hotel accommodation & taxes
- Transfers from Fort Lauderdale Airport to hotel and hotel to Miami cruise terminal
- 10 days on Oceania Cruises' *Sirena*
- Cruise gratuities
- Port charges and cruise taxes
- Unlimited Wi-Fi internet on ship
- Dinner reservations in 2 specialty restaurants: Tuscan Steak and Red Ginger
- US\$50 per stateroom shipboard credit
- Cuba Visa - required for Canadians on a ship
- Transfer from cruise terminal to airport
- Flight to Vancouver
- Gratuities for Florida drivers
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **33 meals:** 13 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 10 dinners

Viva Cuba!

This unique cruise circles Cuba with two-day stops at the only cities that can berth a ship — Havana, Cienfuegos, and Santiago. The Caribbean Republic of Cuba consists of the 1,235-km long island of Cuba, Isla de la Juventud, and almost 4,200 islets. The colourful capital of Havana, with its pulsating nightlife, proud culture, and beautiful architecture, is the heart of the country. Outside the Caribbean's largest city, life carries on at the same laid-back pace. Horse-drawn carriages move sedately along the freeway, farms are tilled by hand, government cars are required to pick up hitchhikers, and the favourite car is a Russian Lada or a 1950s Chev Belair. We explore the treasures that have delighted visitors for the past century, including the colonial cities, remarkable architecture, lush farmland, and natural wonders.

In the next few years, modern technology will transform Cuba and millions of tourists will arrive as the US embargo is slowly relaxed. Enjoy this charming country's old-fashioned lifestyle before it is gone forever.

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Pamper yourself on Oceania's *Sirena*!

Welcome to Wells Gray Tours' newest cruise line offering! We have arranged cruises with Holland America for 25 years and Norwegian for three years, so Oceania is an exciting third cruise line. This cruise around Cuba is our second on Oceania and it is on board their small ship, *Sirena*.

Oceania Cruises was founded in 2002 by cruise industry veterans, Frank del Rio, Bob Binder, and Joe Waters. They started small with just one ship, *Regatta*, and expanded over the next few years with two more ships, *Nautica* and *Insignia*. Their goal was to create a luxury experience, a step up from Holland America, but not as all-inclusive as Crystal. The first new ships built for the company were *Marina* in 2011 and *Riviera* in 2012. *Sirena* was built in 1999 for Renaissance Cruises, then after its bankruptcy, the ship was acquired by Princess Cruises and renamed *Ocean Princess*. In 2016, Princess sold the ship to Oceania Cruises which renamed her *Sirena*, and carried out a \$40 million renovation. Oceania Cruises was sold to Norwegian Cruises in 2014 and has retained its ranking as one of the world's finest cruise lines. All Oceania ships are small by today's standards and known for impeccable service, beautifully appointed staterooms, superb shows, and extraordinary menus in all restaurants.

Sirena is certainly a small and intimate ship since she carries only 684 passengers with a staff complement of 400. She is 180 metres long with a gross tonnage of 30,277. Her nine decks feature a 400-seat live entertainment theatre, three lounges, casino, shops, beauty salon, library, games room, internet centre, spa, gymnasium, walking track, mini-golf course, shuffleboard, swimming pool, and two hot tubs. The Horizons Lounge is at the top of the ship with panoramic views forward. Later in 2019, *Sirena* will receive another major refurbishment where \$30 million will be spent on transforming staterooms, dining rooms, and lounges into the ultimate in luxury.

Dining is one of the highlights of a cruise and you are sure to be impressed with the variety of menu items in each of the restaurants. The Grand Dining Room serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and you can walk in when you wish with no reservations required. The Terrace Café offers buffet style dining with different serving stations for each course; for health reasons, you cannot serve yourself and there are numerous staff across the counter who will put your choices on your plate. The Waves Grill serves fast food such as hamburgers and sandwiches. There are two specialty restaurants on *Sirena* with extraordinary service, reserved seating times, and gourmet menus. Before the cruise, you can make one reservation at each restaurant on-line, then during the cruise you can make a second reservation by going to the dining desk. These restaurants are all complimentary. Tuscan Steak combines the flair of an Italian restaurant with the classic appeal of a steakhouse; try the Filet Mignon or the Bistecca alla Fiorentina cooked to perfection. Red Ginger offers Asian dishes and you can even choose your chopsticks from a menu. A sumptuous afternoon tea is served daily in Horizons. There is also an extensive complimentary room service menu.

Oceania is a different cruise line. Fares are higher than other cruise lines, but many more services and amenities are included. Repeat travellers often say they do not feel nickel and dimed on Oceania. For instance, unlimited Wi-Fi internet is included (one device per stateroom logged on at any time). Specialty coffees, soft drinks, and bottled water are complimentary throughout the ship. There is no extra charge for dining in the specialty restaurants or for room service. The towel covers on the deck lounge chairs are changed after each use. An expert lecturer is on board to talk about many topics of interest along the cruise route, and this person is not trying to direct you to certain shops at the next port.

Most staterooms on *Sirena* are in two categories. Veranda staterooms are 20 sq metres (216 sq feet) and include a comfortably furnished private balcony, sofa, refrigerator with minibar (stocked with complimentary drinks), TV, phone, a spacious closet, and bathroom with tub/shower and separate shower. Penthouse staterooms are very spacious with 30 sq metres (322 sq feet) and the same amenities, plus a walk-in closet and a small dining table. Penthouses also include key-card access to the Spa Terrace with a private whirlpool and deck lounges; laundry service, and a butler. There are only a few inside and outside staterooms.

Every day has a full schedule of activities, mostly included and some that cost extra — dance class, bridge games, bingo, shuffleboard, table-tennis, karaoke, board games, and fitness activities. Every evening, there is live stage entertainment in the theatre and Oceania puts on some wonderful shows. Every lounge has musical entertainment such as a pianist and a string quartet.

Oceania Cruises invited Roland, Anne, and Fraser Neave, owners of Wells Gray Tours, and two staff from the Okanagan to experience an Oceania ship during a two-week Caribbean cruise in January 2019. They came home very impressed with everything that Oceania offers. They talked to many fellow travellers on the ship and learned that most of them have cruised with Oceania many times. Come and be pampered! We think you will soon be asking for more Wells Gray Tours on board Oceania ships.

Itinerary

Thursday, March 5:

Transportation is provided to **Seattle**, and we stay overnight at the Embassy Suites near the airport. Get-acquainted with your fellow travellers at a reception this evening.

Friday, March 6:

Meals: B

We fly to **Fort Lauderdale** and stay two nights at the Embassy Suites. Hotel amenities include a pool, whirlpool, restaurant, lounge, and nightly cocktail reception.

Saturday, March 7:

Meals: B

This is a free day to relax around the hotel or visit the many nearby shops and restaurants. A free shuttle service is available to nearby places.

Sunday, March 8:

Meals: B,L,D

After a short drive to the Miami cruise port, we board **Sirena** at noon and an embarkation lunch is served in the Terrace Café. Explore the ship this afternoon. You should be on deck or your balcony at 5 pm as we cast off and cruise away from the Miami skyscrapers. Savour your first sumptuous dinner in one of the four restaurants, followed by a lively "welcome" performance in the theatre.

Monday, March 9:

Meals: B,L,D

Overnight, **Sirena** sails south and we arrive in Havana at 8 am. **Welcome to Cuba!** This is a free day to do as you wish. The ship offers many sightseeing tours so you can experience different aspects of this amazing city. **Havana** is one of the most enchanting cities in the world and the local "Habaneros" are filled with charisma, hospitality and warmth. Havana is a cultural melting pot where you can listen to music ranging from Cuban salsa, mambo, son, and guaguanco styles to Latin jazz and Buena Vista type music.

Here are some suggested highlights of Havana: Walk through the resplendent Spanish Colonial and "tropical baroque" architecture of La Habana Vieja (Old Town), designated as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. The Plaza de Armas houses El Templete which memorializes the birthplace of the city in 1519. The Palacio de los Capitanes Generales was the largest colonial building of its time and was the seat of government for 176 years. Castillo de la Real Fuerza, surrounded by a moat, is the second oldest fortress built by the Spaniards in the West Indies, erected in 1577 to defend the city from constant pirate attacks. The Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña is the fortress on the east side of the harbour. The Spanish started construction in 1763 and, when completed 11 years later, it was the largest military installa-

tion in the New World. Of course, you should not miss a tour of a tobacco and cigar factory or the Rum Museum.

Sirena stays docked overnight in Havana.

Tuesday, March 10:

Meals: B,L,D

This is another full day to enjoy everything that Havana can offer. A tour suggestion is to visit Vinales, a charming town surrounded by spectacular mogotes which are limestone towers eroded during the Jurassic era. **Sirena** departs at 7 pm.

Wednesday, March 11:

Meals: B,L,D

This is a day at sea while **Sirena** cruises around the western tip of Cuba, then along the south coast.

Thursday, March 12:

Meals: B,L,D

Sirena docks in **Cienfuegos** at 7 am. The city is known as the "Pearl of the South" with its classical buildings and wide boulevards. Take a driving or walking tour to see narrow cobblestone streets, historic buildings dating to the 1820s, a magnificent theatre, the botanical gardens, and the Cathedral with gorgeous stained glass windows and Cuban hardwood carved balconies. Cienfuegos' architectural pride is the neo-Gothic Palacio de Valle at the south end of the harbour. A full day tour can be booked to see the finest of Cuba's colonial cities, **Trinidad**. Fourth of the seven cities founded by Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar in 1514, Trinidad is maintained as a living museum, just as the Spaniards left it in its period of greatest opulence. Cobblestone streets are lined with terracotta tile-roof houses in soft pastel colors and fancy grills of wrought iron. Buildings are fronted by mahogany balustrades and massive wooden doors. By day, mule-drawn carts and "vaqueros" on horseback clip-clop through the cobbled streets. **Sirena** stays docked overnight in Cienfuegos.

Friday, March 13:

Meals: B,L,D

Most of today is free time in Cienfuegos. We cast off at 3 pm and cruise out of this lovely harbour.

Saturday, March 14:

Meals: B,L,D

This morning, we cruise along the south coast of Cuba with views of the rugged **Sierra Maestra** rising straight from the shoreline. This is the highest mountain range in Cuba, reaching 2,000 metres at Pico Turquino. Fidel Castro and Che Guevara hid in these mountains while planning the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

At noon, we dock at **Santiago de Cuba**, considered the most Caribbean of Cuba's cities and it holds great historical and cultural heritage. It is the second largest city in the country with a popula-

tion of about half a million. It was also founded in 1514 by Velázquez. If you take a tour, you should see Santa Ifigenia cemetery, the Velázquez house and museum, the Bacardí Museum, and the historic Moncada Garrison. On January 1, 1959, Castro proclaimed the victory of the Cuban Revolution from a balcony on Santiago's city hall. *Sirena* stays overnight at the dock in Santiago.

Sunday, March 15: Meals: B,L,D
Enjoy another day exploring Santiago with ship's departure at 6 pm.

Monday, March 16: Meals: B,L,D
This is a day at sea while we round **Punta Maisie**, the eastern tip of Cuba, and head north.

Tuesday, March 17: Meals: B,L,D
Sirena docks in **Nassau, Bahamas** from 8 am to 5 pm. This is the capital and commercial centre of the archipelago of 700 islands.

Wednesday, March 18: Meals: B
We dock in Miami and bid farewell to *Sirena* about 9 am. Flights are organized to Vancouver.

Cruise & Tour Notes

Please book early: Oceania Cruises has set aside staterooms in Penthouse, Veranda, Outside, and Inside categories for this tour, and they are normally held until four months before sailing (November 2019). However, any unsold staterooms can be taken away from us at any time when the ship fills. When this has happened before, we had to waitlist disappointed customers, even though we still had seats available on the coaches and planes. Oceania is a very popular cruise line, and it is rare for a ship to sail with empty staterooms, so when this recall occurs, it is unlikely that we can get late bookers confirmed on the ship.

Choose your perk on board: Oceania offers a choice of three perks on *Sirena*. When you reserve for this tour, please select one of the following complimentary offers (must be the same for both in a stateroom):

- 1) Six shore excursions per stateroom.
- 2) Beverage package which includes beer and wine at lunch and dinner.
- 3) US\$600 shipboard credit per stateroom, in addition to US\$50 credit already included.

Shore excursions: It is recommended that you reserve tours in advance at www.oceaniacruises.com to get your first choice. You can also reserve at the desk on board the ship.

Lunches on port days are shown as included, provided you are on board the ship.

Changes: This tour has been planned over a year before departure, so changes to the flights or itinerary could occur. Changes to foreign currency exchange rates and taxes, and surcharges from the airline, cruise line and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes until departure.

 **Activity Level:** Light activity most days including short distances to walk and some stairs during the shore excursions. When you go ashore in Cuba, expect cobblestone streets, uneven sidewalks, and other walking hazards. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart or wheelchair at airline check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coaches cannot carry a scooter. If you think you may have difficulty participating in Activity Level 1, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due October 31, 2019. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$200 discount on first 12 seats and \$100 on next 6 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after October 31.

Cancellation Policy: Up to September 30, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From October 1 to October 31, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From November 1 to December 2, the cancellation charge is 25% of the tour fare. From December 3 to January 2, the cancellation charge is 60% of the tour fare. After January 2, there is no refund.

Airline luggage fee of US\$30 per piece each way is not included as payment must be made at airport check-in.

Travel Insurance is not available from Travel Guard, our usual provider, for tours that visit Cuba. Please plan to purchase adequate medical and cancellation coverage from another insurance broker and check that Cuba is included.

Photo Credit: Wikimedia (Old capitol building in Havana)

E-points: This tour earns 130 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until October 31.

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