



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
STATE CAPITOL
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North Dakota Agriculture Learning Journey to Cuba **October 25-28, 2015**

Overview

In recent months, U.S.-Cuba relations have rapidly thawed. Late in 2014, the administration announced efforts to normalize relations with Cuba and supported ending the embargo on trade with Cuba that has lasted more than 50 years. Since then, the U.S. has expanded its diplomatic presence in Cuba, and provided more flexibility for U.S. banks to do business with Cuba. Many in Congress are now working together in support of measures that will normalize trade relations with Cuba.

North Dakota agriculture has been engaged in this effort, emphasizing that normalized trade relations with Cuba would be a very positive step forward for North Dakota's agriculture industry. Expanding trade with Cuba – including more than 11 million people living just 90 miles from Florida – presents new opportunity to grow North Dakota's agriculture sector, and we are hopeful that relations will be fully normalized by Congress soon.

North Dakota agriculture leaders have already participated in one business-focused “learning journey” to Cuba, and we have seen growing interest in a second visit. **As a result, the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) is working in partnership with Cuba experts to organize a learning journey to Cuba for those in North Dakota agriculture.**

Over the course of four days, attendees will have an opportunity to meet Cuban officials and farmers; see farms and agriculture facilities; and conduct discussions about opportunities for both countries. Outside of professional activities, there will be time to see and enjoy the city of Havana, learn about its changing economy and its cultural life.



Photograph by Mark Tomaras

Program Leadership

The North Dakota learning journey will be led by Agricultural Commissioner Doug Goehring. A third-generation family farmer, Commissioner Goehring, along with his son, Dustin, operate a 2,600 acre, no-till farm near Menoken in south central North Dakota, where they raise corn, soybeans, spring wheat, field peas, sunflowers, winter wheat and alfalfa. In the past, the Goehrings have also produced durum, barley, mustard, canola, millet and safflower, and have had a feeder cattle operation. Commissioner Goehring believes the future growth and prosperity of North Dakota agriculture depends on the expansion of overseas trade and on new technology. He strongly supports increased research into cereal grains and biofuel crops.

NDDA will also be working with Paul Johnson, a Cuba policy and business expert who has spent the past twenty years studying the history, culture, economy and language of Cuba. Johnson wrote his master's thesis on the economic development of Havana in 1999 and founded Chicago Foods International, LLC that exports food products to Cuba. Johnson works with Phil Peters on coordinating all trips to Cuba. Peters has worked with the U.S. State Department under both President Reagan and Bush. Peters is an analyst of U.S. policy toward Cuba and is an advisor to the Cuba Working Group that was formed in the House of Representatives. In March 2015, Johnson & Peters led a learning journey to Cuba that included more than 90 leaders from across the nation, including two former U.S. Secretaries of Agriculture.

Cost and Details

The cost of this trip is \$3,600 per person, with a \$200 per-person discount for double occupancy. This fee covers:

- All planning and trip logistics, guide and translation services
- Obtaining Cuban visas and ensuring compliance with U.S. travel requirements
- **Miami-Havana** roundtrip airfare – please note attendees will be responsible for their own travel arrangements to Miami
- Three nights' hotel accommodations in Havana
- Air-conditioned coach transportation for the group from beginning to end, including airport transfers, with driver and guide
- The cost of all activities on the group schedule
- Most meals (some lunches and snacks are not included)

The fee does not cover:

- Bar bills at group meals
- Tips for driver, guide, porters, or waiters
- Air travel to Miami or hotels in Miami

Registration and Payment

Because we have limited hotel space in Havana, we encourage you to complete the RSVP form & provide us with a copy of your passport by **Tuesday, May 26th**. A detailed e-mail will follow after all RSVP's have been received, and will include what is needed to finalize your reservation. The deadline to receive all materials, and payment, is Wednesday, July 1st.

Draft Itinerary

SUNDAY, October 25

- 5:30 a.m. Arrive Miami International Airport
- 7:40 a.m. Depart Miami International Airport
- 8:40 a.m. Arrive Havana Airport
- 10:00 a.m. Bus from airport and guided tour of [Old Havana](#)
- Lunch and market visits in Old Havana
- Check-in Hotel
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner in Old Havana

MONDAY, October 26

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Commercial and Government meetings with Cuban counterparts
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. [Port Visit](#) or Commercial/Government Meetings
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner in Havana

TUESDAY, October 27

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Depart for Learning Journey to Country
Tour will visit a tobacco farm in [Vinales](#), Pinar del Rio province, the valley that produces Cuba's prime tobacco a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- 5:00 PM Return to Havana
- 8:00 p.m. Dinner in Havana

WEDNESDAY, October 28

7:30 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Group Wrap-up Meeting

1:40 p.m. Depart Havana Airport

2:40 p.m. Arrive Miami International Airport

Attendees will be recommended to allow at least two hours to allow for any possible delays in customs, immigration, and security screening.

Additional Information

Legal issues: Your travel is completely legal as part of this learning journey. You will be provided the documents to establish that in the event that anyone – such as a U.S. immigration officer – asks you about it. Under U.S. law, travel to Cuba and transactions in Cuba are only permitted under license from the Treasury Department. Our trip fits under the general license category for professional meetings. Under U.S. regulations we are required to organize and participants must engage in a full-time schedule of professional meetings, allowing free time in the evenings for non-program activities.

Travel documents

Paul Johnson will obtain your Cuban visa and other travel documents and will distribute them to you. These documents must remain with your tickets and passport – in the event that someone from U.S. Customs or Immigration asks about your trip to Cuba, you can present them to establish that your travel was fully licensed.

Passports/visas

You will need a valid passport; please don't forget it. Your Cuban visa is not stamped in your passport, it is a small document that fits inside it, and when you pass through immigration before departing Cuba, the officer will take the visa back.

Cash and credit cards

You will operate with cash during your entire stay. U.S. credit cards do not work in Cuba – not at banks, ATM's, hotels, restaurants, or any other business establishment. You need to carry cash for all purchases you make. Recent changes in U.S. regulations will allow U.S. credit cards to work in Cuba, but these changes have not yet taken effect.

Currency and purchases

The Cuban currency is the peso convertible, or CUC; \$100 will exchange for about 87 CUC. Money can be changed at hotels or currency exchange facilities all around the city. The exchange rate is the same everywhere. We recommend carrying \$1,000 in cash. That will far exceed what you need, but it is prudent to have extra cash since U.S. credit cards are not valid in Cuba. You will need money for hotel incidentals, lunch, taxis if separate from group, entertainment, Internet access, phone calls home at about \$3.00 per minute, Havana airport tax upon departure (\$30/person), plus purchases that you bring home (see the following).

Under U.S. law, “informational materials” such as paintings, sculptures, crafts, posters, and other art, CDs, DVDs, video tapes, books, photos, and the like can be purchased and brought home legally with no limit on quantity or value. Under new regulations, we are allowed to bring home up to \$400 in other merchandise including up to \$100 worth of tobacco and alcohol products.

Phone communication

There is direct phone service between the United States and Cuba, so you will be able to make and receive calls from the hotel for about \$3.00 per minute. U.S. cell phones do not work in Cuba because U.S. carriers do not have roaming agreements with the Cuban phone company, Etecsa.

E-mail/Internet

The hotel has Wi-Fi service and a business center where you can use the computers with Internet access; the cost is about \$8 per hour. While Cuba's Internet connections have improved in recent years, the speed and quality of connection are usually uneven.

Tipping

Tipping is entirely up to you based on the service you receive. We recommend the U.S. standard 15 percent tip in restaurants, although many tip less. We encourage you to tip porters at the airport and hotel as you would at home. There will be a Cuban guide accompanying us on the bus and assisting us during our stay; most groups pass the hat to provide the guide and driver a tip at the end of the trip.

Attire

No part of our program requires formal attire. Business casual is appropriate for all meetings; jacket and tie optional for men. No shorts or sandals, except during the day. Nights may be cool or breezy. It's good to have a jacket just in case, and do not forget sunscreen and comfortable shoes for walking.

Medications

Be sure to bring any personal medications and prescriptions with you. They will not be readily available, if at all, in Cuba.