

Exploring opportunities for collaboration between Cuban and Dutch entrepreneurs in Agri-tourism



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Preface

The present study was carried out by a team of consultants led by Dr Humberto Ríos Labrada, a professional associated with *Stichting iCRA* (Netherlands-based training foundation), at the initiative of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Cuba, in order to learn about the opportunities for collaboration between the emerging Cuban private sector and Dutch companies in the agri-tourism sector, and to describe the value proposition of Cuban agri-tourism and suggest the client segments that should be targeted, as well as the capacities that should be strengthened through such collaboration.

Opening of the Cuban government to develop the private sector Reforms

The Cuban government's announcement of a series of laws in favour of the development of the private sector opens a new door for the development of the country, which is immersed in an economic crisis. Undoubtedly, the reforms announced in August 2021 have made it easier for a critical number of entrepreneurs, either self-employed or organised in small and medium-sized enterprises, to operate with greater entrepreneurial freedoms inside and outside the island.

Considering this unprecedented development in the history of the Cuban socialist state, this study explores how this opening of the government could offer opportunities for collaboration between the emerging Cuban private sector and Dutch entrepreneurs.

Favourable environment

The legal basis for the measures announced by the Cuban government is the following:

- Decree 46 of 2021 gives the right to set up a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME).
- Article 1.3 of Law 118 on Foreign Investment promotes the diversification and expansion of export markets.
- Article 2(f) of Act 118 gives the right to an SME to enter into a partnership contract with Dutch companies.
- The Deputy Minister confirmed that support for the private sector appears to be a long-term policy and one of the ways to avoid uprisings such as those of July 2011.

Agritourism in Cuba

Promising sub-sector

The agri-tourism sub-sector is a promising sub-sector because:

- Since its beginnings in the 2010-2020s, even before the political reforms of the Cuban government, there were already private initiatives promoting this type of tourism in Cuba. These received agro-tourists directly and through the government company Eco-Tour, as well as through international tourism companies.
- Limited access to conventional chemical inputs and seeds and other external resources for agricultural activity has forced farming families to practice agriculture based on organic and circular principles, which becomes an attraction for travellers.
- Cuba, its more recent history, its culture, as well as the prevailing socio-economic model, is still an attractive destination for agro-tourists.
- Managed from the beginning by the private sector, which is represented by family farms (Photo 1).



Photo 1 Artist farmer and co-owner of the agri-touristic estate Cuba-Puerto Rico, La Palma.

- There is a collaborative network between farmers, artists, craftsmen, restaurant owners, as well as the small entrepreneurs who run the rental house and restaurant businesses in the urban centres of the heritage cities.
- Family farms located in natural parks, Biosphere Reserves and around the urban centres of UNESCO-recognised heritage cities.

- Implementation of business models in which the participation of women stands out (Photo2). These initiatives with relatively little investment have succeeded in creating infrastructure for services and attracting an increasing number of visitors (before COVID 19).

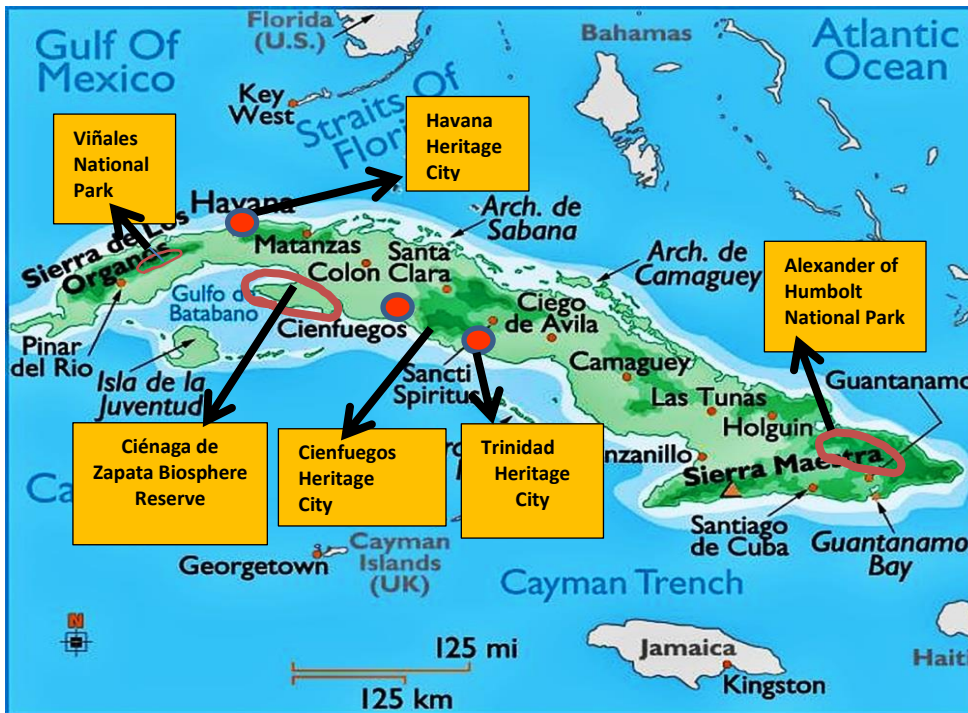


Photo 2 Maria Valido owner of the agri-tourist farm El Charrabascal is supported by the Local Development Programme, Municipality La Palma.

- An existing collaboration between *finqueros*, the international agencies based in Cuba with business models that continuously adapt to the political, social and financial challenges imposed by the Cuban reality.
- Young people involved in the initiatives are motivated and have a clear perspective on how to generate income from local knowledge and natural resources. These enthusiastic young people defend agrotourism as an alternative that stimulates the local economy and encourages them to stay on the island.
- The development of the sector requires relatively small investments in order to visualise its impact in the short to medium term.

Agri-tourism regions and routes

The agrotourism offer in Cuba has been closely linked to initiatives in tourist areas related to heritage cities such as Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Viñales, the Ciénaga de Zapata biosphere reserve area and the Alejandro de Humboldt National Park (Map 1).



Map 1. Agrotourism zones of Cuba

Within the value proposition identified by the working team (see page 16), it was found that each zone offered different elements. The distinctive elements of each zone are presented below. A proposal for an agri-tourism route that includes different zones is presented in Annex 3.

Heritage City/Viñales National Park

The Viñales National Park (linked with rural accommodations in the neighbouring municipality of La Palma and the tobacco growers of San Juan and Martínez) is distinguished by a unique *mogotes* landscape and the connection between chefs and food production. As a special element in this region, it includes several experiences of production and elaboration of the world famous Cuban Habanos. Options such as hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing are also offered in the region.

Heritage City Havana

This region combines accommodation in Havana's urban centre with excursions to the experiences of urban and peri-urban farmers who organise the production and distribution of food with an interesting social orientation. Highlights include the haute cuisine of Finca Tungasuk and the vegetable and honey production business of Finca Marta.

Ciénaga de Zapata National Park

The territory, with an exceptional wealth of flora and fauna, covers an area of about 10,500 square kilometres and is located in the south of the province of Matanzas, some 180 kilometres southeast of Havana. The region's tourist attractions include the biosphere reserve, bird-watching, particularly between November and April, and diving, which can be practised all year round along the coast and in flooded caves. The seabed is among the best preserved in the country, as are the corals. In this environment, a group of agri-tourism initiatives have emerged, which also provide educational programmes on organic farming. These initiatives offer rural lodgings whose architecture is based on the traditional peasant houses made of wood and guano roofs.

Cienfuegos Heritage City

It is the only city in Cuba founded by French settlers under the Spanish crown. The architecture of Cienfuegos, as well as its elegant and perfect neoclassical layout, make this city a unique jewel that has earned it the category of Heritage City, recognised by UNESCO. In addition to its architectural values, it has innumerable natural attractions such as the Bay of Cienfuegos and a set of three routes that combine visits to agricultural production cooperatives, local potters, observation of pink flamingos, rivers and lagoons, as well as sites related to aboriginal culture.

Heritage City Trinidad

Tourist area, whose main attraction is the colonial architecture. In this area, most of the accommodation is in colonial houses managed by the families themselves. With a varied offer of services, bars, restaurants, music, beaches, dance classes and nature excursions. Trinidad is beginning to expand into agri-tourism, where farming families produce food and accommodation in paradisiacal production systems.

Alejandro de Humboldt National Park

The complex geology and varied topography have given rise to a diversity of ecosystems and species unparalleled in the insular Caribbean and have created one of the most biologically diverse places on the planet. A series of agri-tourism initiatives are being developed in this environment, where visitors are exposed to the cocoa route and a series of experiences on how to produce food,

while respecting nature. The combination of rivers and unique tropical beaches characterise this region.

Cuban agencies with package tours

The Cuban government has a group of tourist agencies that offer package tours. These are:

- Havanatur <http://www.havanatur.cu/>
- Cubatur <https://www.cubatur.cu/>
- Ecotur www.ecoturcuba.tur.cu
- Viajes Cubanacán <https://www.viajescubanacan.cu/>
- Gaviota Tour <http://www.vacaciones.gaviotatours.cu/>

With the growth of agri-tourism initiatives, international companies integrated the packages into their circuits. This conditioned an agreement between the government and the international agencies, in which the latter had an annual quota of services, which they had to contract from the government. For example, companies such as CRÉA, which specialised in agri-tourism, had to contract transportation, accommodation and food services from state companies for a minimum of 200,000 USD per year. After COVID, there have been no new agreements and they operate without commitment.

The international travel agencies that have been involved with the farms visited in the fieldwork are:

- Passion Adventure <http://www.centrecreea.com/>
- Cuba4travel <http://www.cuba4travel.com/en-us/index.php>
- Cuba adventures www.cubaaventuras.com
- Hawans <https://webviajes.com/huwans-1>
- Atalante <https://www.atalante.fr/recherche/pays/cuba/continent/ameriques/>
- Nova travel <https://www.novaviajes.com>
- Cuba bike <http://cubanbiketour.com/es/>
- Cubania <https://cubaniatravel.com/tours/>

Business models

In order to discuss first-hand the business models implemented by the farmers, the following farms were visited: a farm in Caimito-Artemisa, 3 farms in San Andrés La Palma, 4 farms in Viñales National Park, 2 farms of the Tobacco Route in San Juan and

Martínez, 2 farms in Trinidad and the community tourism experience of La Picadora in Yaguajay, Sancti Spíritu (Map 2).



Map 2 Locations visited by the study team

Three business models were identified on the farms visited and are described below:

Model A: A model in which travellers contact the farmers directly for 2 or 3 day stays or day trips. This model without intermediaries, while offering interesting payments to Cuban families per visit (mainly in cash), still has limitations in attracting a critical mass of agri-tourists. Practitioners of this model still have limited marketing capacity and little developed collaboration with other businesses that could be attractive to travellers.

Model B: Cuban state enterprises directly receive tourists and organise the routes. Two major limitations emerge from this model:

- 1) Normally, state-owned companies pay for the services of the *finqueros* in Cuban pesos at an exchange rate that is not attractive to entrepreneurs, which does not encourage business improvement.
- 2) Little capacity to adapt to the changes required to maintain and improve the quality of services in the Cuban context.

Model C: International companies with experience in agri-tourism registered in Cuba organise the marketing, the specific information for agri-tourists and all the financial management to pay the farmers. These agencies have in practice provided loans and advice for farming families to improve their accommodation capacities and other facilities that have improved the quality of services.

The results of the fieldwork prove model C to be the most promising. In this sense, Dutch agencies could collaborate with these international companies positioned on the island or could consider the possibility of registering as an independent agritourism agency in Cuba. The actors involved in this business model argue about the importance of establishing a solid collaboration with entrepreneurs who manage the local context (see also next chapter).

Development of the agrotourism sector in Cuba

Relevant actors

The consultation of tourism policy in Cuba, the interviews and surveys conducted with Dutch and Cuban experts, as well as the fieldwork carried out, make it clear that the agri-tourism sub-sector has the following main actors:

Farmers: Regularly farming families who have organised accommodation and/or excursions on their farms and other sites of interest in their regions. Aware of their social and environmental values, they strive every day to offer a unique service (photo 3).



Photo 3 The Carvajal family, owner of the Hoyo de Mena farm, organises apprenticeship programmes for the planting, drying and twisting of the world famous Cuban Havanas.

Families renting rooms in the urban centres of tourist areas: This actor plays a crucial role, in practice combining the accommodation they run as a family business in the cities with those farmers able to showcase their ecological food production systems linked to gastronomic offerings.

The Ministry of Tourism: The Ministry of Tourism recognises agri-tourism as a form of tourism, however, from a legal point of view; it does not facilitate the creation of travel agencies managed by representatives of the Cuban private sector.

Municipal governments. Local governments politically and financially support agri-tourism related businesses. Based on the new local development law, local entrepreneurs can apply for public funds for the generation of environmental, social and financial subsidies that also benefit the municipality. Although this practice is relatively new and somewhat bureaucratic, Cuban experts and operators agree that being involved in the local development programme gives a powerful political umbrella to families and individuals who provide agri-tourism services and those community members or professionals who promote them.

Local agri-tourism promoters: These are mainly representatives of state-owned tourism-related companies. With the practice of wearing the "red and blue hat"¹, on the one hand, these actors who officially represent the public sector wear the "red hat" in their meetings with state authorities, demonstrate their support for the regime and grope for opportunities to boost the private sector. On the other hand, wearing the "blue hat", local tourism promoters include visits to the farms in the tourism programmes of the state enterprise. There are other experiences, where local tourism promoters organise the whole tourism package with the farmers and rent the bus services offered by the government companies. This situation, in which local agri-tourism promoters interact with the public and private sector, seems to be tolerated by local authorities and even by officials of the Ministry of Tourism.

In practice, local agri-tourism promoters have been able to connect farmers with international agencies and exponentially increase the number of farm visits by travellers.

¹ J. La Croix. Private Business and Economic Reform in China
Susan Young, M. E. Sharpe: Armonk, New York, 1995; 179p.

State tourism enterprises: These facilitate the implementation of agri-tourism services by international companies registered in Cuba in exchange for some of their state services of transportation, accommodation and food.

International tourism companies: These are foreign companies registered in Cuba, which promote agri-tourism. In practice, these are the ones that handle the largest number of clients interested in agri-tourism in Cuba.

Resources and skills required

Since Cuba's tourism boom in the 1990s, the largest investments in tourism in Cuba have been directed towards tourism managed by state-owned enterprises, in collaboration with large international hotel companies. However, agritourism, which has been managed primarily by the private sector, does not appear on either the investment or promotion agendas of the central government. This creates a certain inertia that slows down the impact of the sub-sector. Apparently, this seems to condition the dispersion and sometimes lack of coherence in the information provided on the sub-sector in Cuba.

Cuban agritourism operators, international travellers and Cubans living abroad made it clear that Cuban agritourism requires:

- Marketing, highlighting the value proposition offered by Cuban agri-tourism and especially the leadership of private initiative in the sub-sector.
- Disseminating the value proposition of Cuban agri-tourism in the Dutch/European market, North America and especially where the Diaspora has a greater presence.
- Organising information packages consistent with visitors' requirements.
- Creating content to disseminate the values of Cuban farmers' initiatives on social networks and sustainable tourism platforms.
- Learning from international experiences on how to provide a tailor-made service to travellers.

Financial and legal aspects

The main financial obstacle found in the study is the inability of sub-sector operators to do *online* banking transactions. For the most part, the *finqueros* carry out transactions in cash with travellers or with international companies. In practice, this problem is mitigated by

international travel agencies registered in Cuba, which organise payments to farmers and local agri-tourism promoters.

Risks

The main risk for developing collaboration is the political aspect. Even Cuban private sector actors are not allowed to develop their own travel agencies. This means that they have to carefully manage relations with international tourism companies, travellers and the services provided by the state sector. In addition, the fact that travellers have to turn to the informal market to buy Cuban pesos at a favourable exchange rate is a risk to consider.

Potential collaboration between Cuban and Dutch entrepreneurs in agrotourism

Interest from Dutch companies

Dutch and European tourists in general are increasingly interested in so-called sustainable tourism, which is linked to nature, organic farming and agro-forestry practices, as well as staying mainly in one destination in order to reduce the CO2 footprint.

Dutch experts and travellers expressed that:

- Dutch agritourists could be in a wide age range between 25 and 75 (families, friends, couples) with medium to higher education levels and above average income with a peculiar urban mentality.
- Dutch travellers are interested in a unique experience of life (unique character of the area and heritage), reliability, knowledge, ecological, sustainable service, entertaining and also educational activities. A representative of a Dutch travel agency commented: *"Dutch agri-tourists are often looking for responsible trips and tours where they can, in different ways, contribute to the sustainability of the planet while travelling"*.
- Travellers interested in agri-tourism are not interested in high-end accommodation, but in basic comforts combined with unique features.

A European tourism expert noted that agri-tourists are generally divided into two groups:

A group of *formal agritourists* representing 70-80 percent of travellers who identify with agritourism destinations in terms of language, music, dances, gastronomy, food production, way of life of the local population, landscape and other traditions, related to their own culture. According to the expert, this group is not always prepared for "surprises", which is why they are a bit more demanding about the quality of services even in a rural environment.

The other group, called *adventurous agritourists*, represented by 20-30% of agritourists, are generally quite flexible.

The expert also considered that Dutch travellers interested in Cuban agri-tourism could be in the group of *adventurous agri-tourists*, which does not represent a large market niche. However, Dutch and Cuban experts agree that agri-tourists representing this group can be a catalyst to attract not only formal Dutch agri-tourists but also travellers from other countries.

Dutch travel organisations are often affiliated to organisations such as ANVR/VvKR (Dutch Travel Associations), Calamity Funds, Guarantee Funds, Insurance Funds and in the case of sustainable travel agencies, many of them are affiliated to *TravelLife*, which are organisations where travellers take into account, when booking, to have a certain quality guarantee.

Regarding the interest of Dutch agencies in doing business with Cuba, a Dutch tour operator expressed: "*As a Dutch tour operator, I am attracted to Cuba, I want to work with local professional travel companies/agencies that are experienced, qualified and have the same ideas and principles about tourism as my company has*". Further on, the tour operator adds "*to promote agri-tourism with Cuba there are not many requirements, although they must demonstrate a certain reliability. A local brand would help as a kind of "control"*".

Dutch travellers felt that: "*the Cuban agri-tourism proposal is attractive, although we discovered it practically by accident*". They insist on the need for greater promotion of the sub-sector.

Advantages of Cuba as an agri-tourism destination

As a result of the Covid 19 health crisis, European countries, as well as other Latin American countries (e.g. Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica) are investing more and more in developing agri-tourism. The Dutch and Cuban experts interviewed agree that travellers look first for the country of destination and not in principle for agri-tourism. The combination of both factors is the key.

According to the criteria of the experts, operators and travellers interviewed, they consider that a Cuban agri-tourism proposal can be unique and attractive because of:

- Being one of the few communist countries still in existence
- The lack of inputs for agricultural work has accelerated small farmers' innovation towards green businesses (photo 4).



Photo 4 Cuban entrepreneur harvesting organic vegetables for her Restaurant El Paraíso, Viñales National Park.

- To be a safe destination, open to European travellers and with good air connections.
- The local population is seen as helpful, interested in tourists.
- The ability to organise routes that combine experiences in farms, beaches, rivers, lagoons, heritage towns, biosphere reserves and internationally recognised national parks.

Commercial value proposition

Based on the criteria of experts, Dutch operator-travellers and Cuban travellers living abroad, the study team identified that the Cuban agri-tourism proposal is based on: ***Exposing visitors to sustainable livelihoods, where local organic food production, local cuisine, cultural heritage, art and interaction with families come together in a safe environment and unique natural landscapes.***

This value proposition differs from other agri-tourism initiatives in Latin America because of:

- Cuba being one of the few communist countries that still exists, what experts call a "Living Museum".
- The lack of inputs for agricultural work accelerating smallholder innovation in green business.
- The local population being seen as helpful, interested in tourists.
- The coexistence of travellers with Cuban families allows visitors a better understanding of the Cuban way of life.
- Exploiting the values of natural parks, biosphere reserves, heritage cities and artistic manifestations (e.g. Tumba Francesa and Rumba Cubana) recognised by UNESCO.
- The government promotes a local development programme that supports initiatives in the family-run agri-tourism sector.
- Charismas of Cuban agri-tourism entrepreneurs.
- Cuba remains a safe destination with citizens open to interacting with international travellers.
- The interest of a critical number of Cubans who have emigrated in the last 20 years and who still maintain family relations and have an interest in reconnecting with the values of their culture.
- The coexistence of visitors with rural families, where the participation of women in the business is highlighted.

Market niches

Dutch experts and travellers, local farmers and agri-tourism promoters, as well as Cuban travellers living abroad agree that the Cuban agri-tourism proposal could be attractive mainly to two customer segments:

Adventurers: This segment is regularly represented by travellers interested in enjoying unique living experiences (unique character of the area and heritage), reliability, knowledge, ecological, sustainable, entertaining and educational activities with basic amenities.

Adventurers are typically in a broad age range between 25 and 75 (families, friends, couples) with medium to higher education levels and above average Dutch income with a peculiar urban mentality. Representatives of this segment are generally quite flexible. Experts consider that Dutch/European travellers interested in Cuban agrotourism could be in this group, which does not represent a large

niche market. However, interviewees agree that *Los Aventureros* can be a catalyst for attracting travellers from other segments.

The Diaspora: This segment of agri-tourists represented by the 1.4 million Cubans living abroad² (plus native friends in their places of residence) who identify with agri-tourist destinations in relation to language, music, dances, gastronomy, food production, way of life of the local population, landscape and other traditions, related to Cuban culture itself. According to international experiences, this group of agri-tourists interested in reconnecting with their roots usually makes an impact. This customer segment, which is in the majority, is more demanding about the quality of services even in a rural environment. Both the Dutch experts interviewed and the representatives of the Cuban diaspora stress that the so-called "Agri-tourism Nostalgia Market" can be one of the objectives of Cuban and Dutch entrepreneurs to develop the sub-sector in Cuba.

Channels to promote agritourism

Cuban and Dutch experts, tour operators and travellers interviewed advise:

- Have a fully equipped online presence for promotion and bookings.
- Make use of the most effective and relevant channels in social media and *Google Search Adwords*.
- Invite journalists from influential Dutch newspapers to Cuba. These journalists, connected to tour operators, could provide information and offer this type of tourism as a special offer to their readers.
- Participation in events such as "Vakantiebeurs" at Jaarbeurs Utrecht and perhaps the smaller event "Vakantiebeurs voor Bijzondere Reizen" and "Beurs van Berlage" in Amsterdam.

Representatives of the Diaspora group suggest using digital publications with wide audiences in social networks such as On Cuba, CiberCuba, El Toque, De Cuba and Cuba Debate.

² United States 1.3M, Spain 141,000, Italy 37,300, Canada 19,000 and Germany 13,400. Source: Juan Pablo Elverdin. 13:53 ET(17:53 GMT) 19 July, 2021. Figures and data to understand Cuban immigration in the United States and the rest of the world. CNN English

Cuban experts consider that the international nature tourism event (TURNAT) can be a channel to consider for the promotion of agrotourism.

For their part, Cuban landlords expressed their positive experience of being involved in the Airbnb platform, which has become the most popular platform for providing private accommodation services in Cuba. In the two years prior to COVID 19, the platform had generated \$40 million by facilitating the visit of more than 560,000 tourists, who visited the initiatives offered by Cuban individual and family businesses primarily in the cities of Viñales, Havana and Trinidad³.

Price range

Cuban and Dutch experts and Cuban operators agree that a two-week agri-tourism route could be ideal for Dutch/European tourists. For travellers based in North America it could be around one week.

Dutch experts consider that for a two-week stay, a budget per person between 80 and 120 Euros/day could be reasonable. This amount would include local transportation, accommodation, breakfast and two meals a day in local restaurants. The cost of airfare is not included. On the side of the prices estimated by Cuban experts, the costs per traveller could be in the range expected by the Dutch agencies (see example in Annex 3).

Considerations and recommendations

The study team considers that the Cuban agri-tourism proposal stands out as:

- It is unique in that it takes place in a country with a singular socio-economic regime and varied in its capacity to combine aspects related to the way of life of Cuban families, ways of producing and consuming food linked to art, as well as natural and historical environments that are attractive to visitors.
- The economic impact it has generated on farmers. Compared to the other sub-sectors, agri-tourism has required relatively low levels of investment with attractive levels of income for Cuban operators.

³ Airbnb (2017) Airbnb and Cuba: Two years of connecting people and generating economic opportunity for individuals and families. Link

- Present very limited national and international promotion highlighting the values of the sub-sector and especially the leadership of families and mainly women.
- Offer special attractiveness for traveller segments such as *The Adventurers* represented by *Dutch/European agri-tourists* and *The Diaspora* represented by a critical number of Cubans living abroad and interested in reconnecting with their culture. The latter, *The Diaspora*, could become an opportunity for the development of the "Agrotourism Market of Nostalgia" which could have a solid impact on the sub-sector.

Nowadays the collaboration between Dutch companies and local actors managing agri-tourism can take place through the intermediation of international companies registered in Cuba and state tourism agencies in the following ways:

- Dutch companies (e.g. WetravelEco) in collaboration with international companies registered in Cuba (e.g. Passion Adventure) can collaboratively promote agri-tourism.
- Dutch companies could register in Cuba to promote and organise the marketing of Cuban agri-tourism products.
- Dutch companies can collaborate with state-owned tourism companies in Cuba. This option is not the most advisable, due to the inefficiency of the state sector itself, which, together with the financial crisis faced by Cuban state companies, limits the management of this sub-sector, which is fundamentally led by the private sector.

If Dutch companies are officially registered in Cuba, farmers can provide them directly the agritourism services.

Cuba's agri-tourism sector requires investments mainly directed at:

- Increasing the marketing capacity of the Cuban sub-sector proposal.
- Strengthening the soft skills of its operators in offering services that could further enhance the values of the sub-sector.
- Engaging more Dutch tour operators and experts to help develop tailor-made programmes for those customer segments interested in enjoying the sub-sector's value proposition.

The results of the study suggest to:

- Strengthen the capacity of local farmers and agri-tourism promoters in marketing and services aimed at increasing the number of travellers in the *Adventurous* and *Diaspora* segments.
- Strengthen the capacities of local farmers and agri-tourism promoters in designing tailor-made programmes for the above-mentioned typology of travellers.
- Promote the participation of Cuban agri-tourism champions in national and international sustainable tourism events. This action could be a starting point to strengthen the sub-sector.
- Accelerate collaboration between Dutch and Cuban entrepreneurs in the agri-tourism sub-sector as a solid alternative to strengthen agri-tourism in Cuba.
- Promote a virtual platform to disseminate the Agritourism value proposition, which is essentially managed by the Cuban private sector.

Annex 1: Guiding questions

1. Is there a favourable political environment in Cuba in favour of promoting Cuban private sector cooperation with Dutch companies?
2. What is the (commercial) value proposition of Cuban agrotourism?
3. What are the niche markets for promoting agrotourism in Cuba?
4. What requirements do Dutch tourists/European tourism agencies demand from agritourism providers (standards, certifications)? Which of these requirements are mandatory (by law) and which are voluntary or recommended?
5. What are the most relevant channels and/or events to promote Cuban agri-tourism in the Dutch market and in the Cuban diaspora?
6. What would be the regions and the types of experiences, accommodation, services and routes that could be offered?
7. What would be the price range?
8. Which Cuban agencies can offer packages to the Dutch market?
9. Who are the relevant actors to be considered in the development of the agri-tourism sector in Cuba? What is the role and relevance of each one?
10. What resources and/or skills are required to develop the sector in Cuba?
11. What are the financial and legal aspects to be considered for the development of the sector?
12. Is there interest from Dutch companies in establishing a business relationship with agrotourism in Cuba?
13. What are the main risks for developing a business collaboration between Cuban and Dutch entrepreneurs in agritourism?

Annex 2: Anonymous sources of information

- One Dutch agrotourism tour operator (3 additional tour operators were invited but did not respond).
- Three Dutch experts in international agri-tourism development.
- Ten family farms with experience in providing agri-tourism services in Havana (1), Viñales (4), San Juan y Martínez (2), Trinidad (2) and Yaguajay (1).
- 2 local agri-tourism promoters in La Palma (1), Cienfuegos (2) and Trinidad (2).
- Five small entrepreneurs renting housing in Havana (1), Viñales (2), Trinidad (2) and Yaguajay (1)
- An international sustainable tourism agency operating in Cuba at the time of the study.
- An expert in Agrotourism from a Cuban University.
- Two policy makers in the agrotourism sector in Cuba.
- Two policy makers from the Ministry of Agriculture.
- A legal expert.
- 10 Cuban resident travellers abroad (4 from the United States, 4 from Spain and 4 from Italy).
- 2 Dutch travellers.

Annex 3: Contacts of farmers and local agritourism promoters in Cuba

For interested persons, contact details of a list of local promoters and entrepreneurs in the agri-tourism sector in Cuba are available at the Dutch Embassy in Havana.

Annex 4: Example of an agri-tourism programme

"The Cuba you dreamed of "

Tailor-made programme specially designed
for agri-tourism



Days of stay: 14 days

Detailed programme:



Day 1: (30 Km) Arrival in the capital of
all Cubans: Havana.

Arrival at José Martí International Airport in
Havana.

Administrative formalities, luggage
collection, welcome by your local driver who
will be waiting for you with a sign with your
name on it and then departure to your
accommodation in a beautiful private house for a 3-night stay with breakfast
included in a double room.



Important notes:

Your driver will be waiting for you in the Arrivals Area outside immediately after customs clearance: he will have a sign with your name on it. If you cannot find it, you can go to the information desk in the arrivals area and ask for a sign with your name and country.

Your driver will meet you at the counter. If you still can't find him, feel free to contact me 24/7.

Havana is the largest city in the Caribbean, with a rich historical and cultural heritage and a wide variety of monuments, forts, cathedrals, colonial houses and museums.

Its historic centre, Old Havana, is inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List and has more than 900 important historical monuments and architecture from the colonial era, such as the Plaza de la Catedral, where the bar-restaurant La Bodeguita del Medio is located and where the famous Mojito was born!



Day 2 : Discovering Havana with a guide

Breakfast. At 9:00 am there will be a first contact with one of our local travel agents who will provide you with useful information and give you the possibility to book optional excursions and evening entertainment (shows, restaurants, etc.).



Departure for a guided walking tour of the historic centre of Old Havana: colonial architecture, tobacco factory, Cathedral Square, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de Armas, Plaza de San Francisco de Asís with its beautiful lion fountain, the Capitolio, Paseo del Prado and other attractions of the city.



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In the afternoon, it includes a guided tour of modern Havana aboard a vintage American automobile. Visit to the Plaza de la Revolución, the residential area of Vedado, Miramar and its many diplomatic offices, stroll along the famous Malecón.

Things to do (optional for a fee):



Show at the Cabaret Tropicana every day from 20:30 to 00:00 the show starts at 22:00 offers from 80,00 euros 90,00 euros and 100,00 euros per couple. The most famous Cabaret in Cuba and the Caribbean open since 1939 where music, dance, rum and pure Cuban glamour are mixed.



Visit of the Bar, Casa della Musica, FAC (Fattoria di arte cubano).



El cañonazo de las nueve or El Cañonazo de Las 9:00 pm (With charge 250.00 CUP) Ceremony that dates back to the 18th century and consists of a cannon shot, infallibly fired at 21:00 local time from the Fortress of San Carlos de la Cabaña, which together with the Castle of the Three Kings of Morro dominates the entrance to the bay of the city and main port of the island.



Departure to Jaimanitas and after a twenty minute taxi ride you will arrive in this authentic Cuba where the locals go shrimp hunting behind the government's back. But if there is one attraction worth visiting Jaimanitas for, it is undoubtedly Fusterlandia, the house of José Fuster, the artist who, after a trip around Europe, brought the influences of Gaudí and Picasso to this corner of Havana (for a fee of 40.00 euros).



Day 3 Visit to the Marta farm and to Bello el "señor de las cabras "

Breakfast. At 8:30am, departure with your private driver to Finca Marta.

Located on the outskirts of Havana, Fernando Funes, owner of Finca Marta, holds a PhD in Agroecology from Wageningen. Fernando's wealth of knowledge has been put into practice in an attractive experience of production and marketing of organic vegetables. On the way back to Havana, the experience of Luis Bello will be visited. This man in an urban environment demonstrates in practice the old proverb "Necessity is the mother of invention". The experience of milk production and dairy processing is a unique local business experience that travellers should not miss.



Day 4 :: (189 Km) Las Terrazas, Viñales.

The Tobacco route

The Tobacco route

Breakfast. At 8:30am, departure with your private driver to the nature reserve of Las Terrazas, a region declared a world biosphere reserve and dedicated to ecotourism. Free visit of Las Terrazas, a picturesque village with its lime painted houses located next to a lake.

Here a dynamic artistic community has decided to establish itself, with open workshops dedicated to artistic work with wood and terracotta. The place is ideal for relaxing, walking and bird watching. Visit Soroa and its Orchid.



Departure to the Viñales Valley, the westernmost place in Cuba where the best tobacco in the world is grown and some of the most beautiful places in Cuba such as the Palenque (Aldéa Cimarrona) and the nearby Caves all over the area such as La Cueva del Indio, Cueva de José Miguel and Cueva de Santo Tomás and the fabulous viewpoint of Los Jazmines. The Viñales Valley has an unusual geological peculiarity, the Mogotes, calcareous mountainous mounds that emerge from the plain.

2 nights stay with breakfast and 1 dinner included.

Free walk through the Viñales National Park to visit the famous Prehistoric Mural in the heart of the Sierra de los Órganos.

- Visit with your driver of an artisanal cultivation of tobacco in the homes of peasant families. A unique moment to share with this family (one of the most hospitable) who will show you their crops and let you taste their cigars (tip not included).
- You can also take one of the many excursions offered in the National Park.
- Evening in the public square with dancing and music.



Day 5 : Viñales, Visit to the agroecological farm El Paraiso

Breakfast. Pick up your driver who will accompany you throughout the day.

The Finca Agroecológica, a few minutes from the centre of Viñales, is a place of recognised prestige not only in the area, but also in Cuba. The farm, in addition to its own crops and plantations, has a large country ranch with a restaurant where you can enjoy typical Cuban dishes, vegetarian food and the famous suckling pig, all in a space surrounded by nature and with splendid views of the whole valley.

Optional activities to be paid for:

Trip to Cayo Leviza:

A boat trip to the secluded beaches of Cayo Leviza, a place popular with snorkellers for its coral gardens, caves and crystal-clear waters.

Coast: (40.00 euros to be paid by Visa or Mastercard) per person which includes: Buffet lunch plus a drink, 1 snack bar, sun loungers and umbrellas on the beach) The driver takes you to Palma Rubia to take the ferry which leaves at 10:00 am to the Cayo 30 min drive. Return from the boat at the end of the day and return to your accommodation with the driver.

Note: You can do any of the above suggested activities, depending on your planning the day before, whichever activity you choose, your driver will accompany you. We recommend Cayo Leviza, it is a marvellous beach, although this excursion is only done every other day.



Day 6 : Visit to the Tungasuk farm Artemisa- Playa Larga (375 Km)

Breakfast At 8:30 am, departure with your private driver to Artemisa and then Playa Larga.

FINCA TUNGASUK is a family agroecological project founded in the municipality of Caimito in the province of Artemisa by Annabelle Cantarero, a Nicaraguan chef living in Cuba since 2014. The initiative combines practice with scientific knowledge to contribute to the transformation of the Cuban agro-food system from a local experience. It welcomes volunteers willing to spend a day working alongside local farmers and family, interested in learning about sustainable and organic agriculture, as well as Cuban culture, history and horticulture, a unique experience for all interests.

After lunch departure with your private driver to Playa Larga and the Bay of Pigs which offers some of the best diving in the Caribbean. An impressive drop off with the seabed, created a huge wall, covered with sponges, gorgonians and corals.

There is no need to hire a boat, the region's spectacular dive sites are accessible from shore. The two main beaches in the Bay of Pigs region are Playa Larga and Playa Giron.

Options;

- Visit to "Los Blancos" agri-tourism farm
- Visit the former Australia sugar factory, where Fidel Castro led the counter-attack that led to the defeat of the invaders who landed at Playa Giron in 1961.



- Visit to the Guamá Cocodrilo crocodile farm, where more than 10,000 crocodiles can be observed, classified by area and volume, Aldea Taina and Laguna del Tesoro.

Accommodation in Casa Particular in double and triple rooms with breakfast and 1 Cuban dinner included for 1 night.



Day 7: Cienfuegos, the pearl of the South.

Breakfast. At 8:30 am, pick-up of your private driver on board your car and departure to Cienfuegos.

Cienfuegos, a port city located at the bottom of one of the most beautiful bays in the Caribbean, is known as the Pearl of the South.

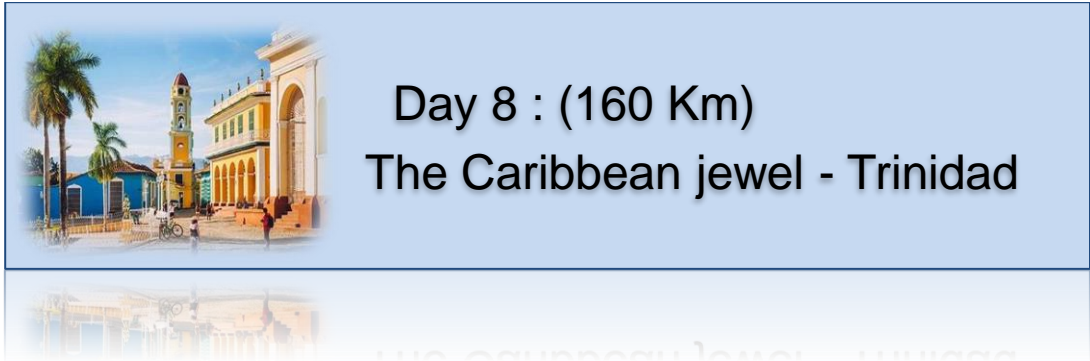
The French influence on the architecture of Cienfuegos is very present in the perfect symmetry of its urban design, its neoclassical buildings and its long pedestrian street.

Visit with your driver to the City Hall Palace, the Tomás Terry Theatre with its horseshoe-shaped stalls and two orders of wooden boxes, visit of the José Martí Park surrounded by the most significant buildings, the Cathedral of the Purísima Concepción and the Ferrer Palace which houses the Provincial House of Culture, the Tomás Acea Cemetery and the Fortress of Nuestra

Señora de los Ángeles de Jagua, strategically located at the entrance of the port of Cienfuegos.

Visit to Rancho Luna Beach and Faro Luna Lighthouse

Accommodation in a private house with breakfast and 1 Cuban dinner included for 1 night.



Breakfast. At 8:30 am pick up your driver and departure to Trinidad.



Stop in Tránsito to visit El Nicho Natural Park: El Nicho is an enclave of the Topes de Collantes Natural Park. Its name derives from a beautiful waterfall of crystalline waters that exists in the Hanabanilla River, in Cuba.

To reach the waterfall you have to follow a beautiful nature trail of just over a kilometre known as the Kingdom of the Waters, through which you can discover the exuberant fauna and flora of the area, such as tocororos and palmiches. To take a break from the hike you can take a refreshing dip in the many natural pools you will find. Upon arrival pick up your guide for the included guided tour of the city.



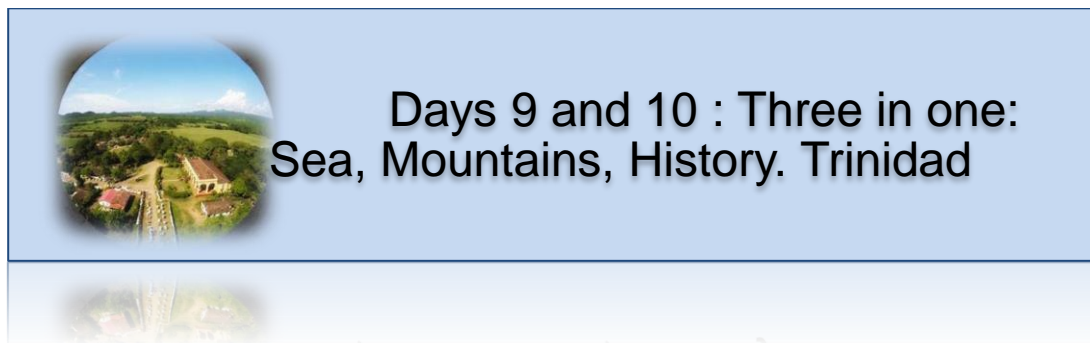
Trinidad Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site 1988, the ancient city of Trinidad, founded in the 16th century, is undoubtedly one of the jewels of colonial architecture in the country and in the Americas.



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Close to its historical and cultural values, the natural attractions of the Escambray mountainous area, the beaches and the splendour of its seabed as well as the hospitality of its inhabitants make this city an exceptional region and each of its places is certainly worth a visit.

Accommodation in Trinidad for 3 nights with breakfast and 1 Cuban dinner included.



- **Day 9, Breakfast. Excursion to the Valle de los Ingenios by car:**



Departure from your accommodation in the city. Visit to the viewpoint to enjoy the view of the valley, a World Heritage Site since 1988. Enjoy the beautiful landscape of this archaeological site. Visit to the hacienda of the Iznaga family, one of the richest families of the Trinitarian village in colonial times, where you can taste a rich guarapo made

from sugar cane. Optional visit to the watchtower built in the 19th century. Arrival at the Guachinango ascent, horseback ride in the surroundings of the ascent and time for a swim in the river and a Creole lunch. Return to Trinidad, intermediate stop at the potter's house to admire one of the oldest traditions of the city in the workshop of the founding family. Return to the place of origin.

Taxi service to and from Ancon Beach.

Day 10, Breakfast At 9:00 am pick up at your lodge by the guide and departure to the CRÉA centre, www.centrecrea.com for a day of nature, time to interact with the horses, lunch and then walk along an attractive trail and at the end, time for a swim in the natural pool "Cascata El Pilon".



Trinidad has much to offer:

A very stimulating cultural life thanks to its many museums and workshops of local artists, its excursions on the sea and in the mountains, everything is at your fingertips for your satisfaction!

Things to do (optional):



*From 9:00 to 16h: Excursion by catamaran to Cayo Iguanas, a one kilometre long virgin island, a real natural aquarium to enjoy, 1 hour snorkelling, lunch on the island, 1 drink, iguana watching and relaxing on the magnificent beaches are on the menu of the day. **55.00 Euros** per person. Taxi round trip **20.00 Euros.***

*From 9:00 to 16h: Fishing Trinidad, bathed by the crystal clear and warm waters of the Caribbean Sea, is a preferred area for fishing, with a great diversity and abundance of fish. Price **400.00 euros** (up to 6 people). Included, snorkeling, lunch at Iguanas Island and drinks.*



Day 11, Santa Clara and Los Álamos farm



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Breakfast. 8: 30 am. Departure from Trinidad to Villa Clara by private taxi. In transit through the city of Santa Clara, a significant city during the period of the Cuban revolution. Visit to the city of Santa Clara, monuments of the Cuban revolution dedicated to Che Guevara.

We continue with a visit to a "hidden" jewel. This is the case of the agro-tourist farm Los Alamos, located in the Jobo Rosado Protected Area of Managed Resources, in Yaguajay, on the north coast of the province of Sancti Spíritus, in the centre of the country.

The farm has historical values, such as having been owned by the owner of the Central Vitoria in the 19th century, and was rebuilt by the Empresa Flora y Fauna Sancti Spíritus.

The Jobo Rosado area, where it is located, has 399 reported species of fauna and more than 400 species of flora, many of them endemic, while birds of national importance such as the tocororo, the cartacuba and the mockingbird, among others of great beauty, stand out.

In Los Álamos, the Jeep Safari Jobo Rosado tourist product is provided. Through the María Goya trail, one goes to the Los Álamos agro-tourist farm, which has accommodation, and this route ends at Rancho Querete, an area with several trails, he added.

Among the attractions, you can visit the Cueva de Valdés, the Solapas de Genaro and other trails such as the one from Güira to the viewpoint of the unit, known as Brujo. Afterwards, a walk along the Delio path and there you can observe colonies of plants such as orchids, he added.

Accommodation at Rancho Querete for 1 night with breakfast and 1 Cuban dinner included.



Day 12 : The Central Patria, in Ciego de Ávila.

Breakfast. 8:30 am and departure in the direction of Morón for the visit of El Central Patria, in Ciego de Ávila, for lovers of culture and traditions linked to production.

Converted into a museum, the Central Patria presents visitors with indoor and outdoor rooms, with a sample of the history of the sugar industry in Cuba. The museum has guides to provide information of interest to tourists, and there are live performances that recall the times of slavery.

The exhibition is complemented by industrial exhibits of yesteryear and a large fleet of locomotives from the past. There is also a trip in a vintage train through a sugar landscape to a farm where you can have lunch and get in touch with the life, gastronomy and traditions of the peasants. On the way, the drivers give the passengers sugar cane cane canuts to taste the sweetness of sugar cane.

Accommodation in Ciego de Avila for 1 night with breakfast and 1 Cuban dinner included.



Day 13 : Rest in Varadero Beach

- Breakfast. 8:30 am and departure to *Varadero for a day of rest on the wonderful beach.*

Accommodation in a private house in Varadero for 1 night with breakfast included.



Day 14 (30/08) Moving to La Habana.

Pick up at 14.00 hours by your private driver and departure to Havana to your accommodation in a private house with breakfast included for 1 night.

You will be able to return at your leisure and stroll through its squares, streets, markets and cafés to say Hasta La Vista instead of Adios.



**DÍA 15 (31/08): (180 KM)
TODO LO QUE COMIENZA,
TERMINA.**

Breakfast: Everything that begins ends! Your driver will be waiting for you to take you directly to the José Martí Airport in Havana at the time of your return flight. According to your flight schedule you should be at the airport 3 hours earlier.

This will be the saddest day, but the one that will leave the feeling of wanting to return to Cuba.

Back home safe journey!

PRICES AND SERVICES

Price per person: 1325 Euros (Rate for 2 pax)

Price per person: 1090 Euros (Rate for 4 pax)

Price per person: 1040 Euros (Rate for 6 pax)

The price takes into account: All transfers indicated in the quotation with driver, car and fuel: Transfers will be made with a comfortable, air-conditioned car allowed for xx persons and xx pieces of luggage included in the price.

- Private transfer from the airport to the accommodation in Havana on day 1.
- Private driver from day 4 to day 8 and from day 11 to day 14.

- Private transfer on the 15th (Havana - Airport)
- All accommodation in double rooms including breakfast.
- 7 dinner included at the indicated places (drinks not included).
- Guide service on the visit to Havana and Trinidad
- Vintage American car ride through modern Havana.
- All visits to the agri-tourism farms including transportation.
- Taxi to Ancon beach and back.
- Our assistance on site 24/07

Accommodation:

Hosting	Nights	Dinner
Casa Particular (Havana)		
Casa Particular (Viñales)		1 dinner
Casa Particular (Playa Larga)	1	1 dinner
Casa Particular (Cienfuegos)	1	1 dinner
Casa Particular (Trinidad)		2 dinners
Casa Particular (Rancho Querete)	1	1 dinner.
Casa Particular (Ciego de Ávila)	1	1 dinner.
Casa Particular (Varadero)	1	
Casa Particular (Havana)	1	

The price does not take into account:

- International flights.
- Tipping
- Airport taxes (international)
- Main meals (from € 10 to € 20 per meal and per person), in addition to those mentioned above
- Visa costs
- Repatriation / insurance assistance
- Drinks and personal expenses
- Entrance fees to monuments, museums, historical sites, parks.

International flights are not included in the price, for information, there are three links serving the destination:

http://www.bravofly.fr/offres/vols/milan-la_havane

<http://www.blu-express.com/voli/cuba/>

www.skyscanner.it

Private Houses:

This solution is often proposed to compensate for the lack of hotel facilities and to contain prices.

The quality of private homes varies from one provider to another.

The price varies according to the type of house and the monthly taxes that owners must pay to the Cuban state. The level of comfort in general is quite rudimentary, some beautiful and luxurious, well located, clean and pleasant with private bathrooms and air conditioning. The experience

is truly authentic as you will live exactly like the locals!

Bed linen, towels and soap will be provided.

If you need a laundry service, you can ask the owners of the private house.

Most houses offer meals as a supplementary option.

The accommodation with the resident could be a bit noisy, be aware that this is part of the Cuban culture (loud music, the cock crowing, the mother calling her children from the window).

Those who choose this type of accommodation are looking for authenticity, an encounter with the locals and the discovery of Cuban cuisine!



TERMS OF PAYMENT

Payment will be made by bank transfer, to confirm your booking, you must give a deposit of 30% of the total price, by bank transfer, the balance of your trip must be paid 45 days before departure at the latest.

CANCELLATION POLICY

All cancellations must be sent via email to the local agency. The amount of the cancellation fee varies according to the time of cancellation:

More than 45 days of departure: 30% of the travel cost (land services)

Between 45 and 22 days of departure: 50% of the cost of travel (land services)

Between 21 and 8 days of departure: 75% of the travel cost (land services)

Less than 8 days before departure: 100% of the cost of travel (land services)