Dear Alums and Friends,

We are, in a word, thrilled to be planning a trip for you to our near— but for many, many years, very far away— neighbor, Cuba. We think that now is the perfect time to travel there, before the huge cruise ships of day trippers descend. March 11-19, 2017 will find 24 Meredith travelers on what we expect to be the trip of a lifetime.

We also think that the theme of the tour that Globus has designed— People to People – is perfect for our alums and friends. Cubans are curious about us and we are curious about them, and the tour we have selected for you ensures that we will have a myriad of opportunities to have real conversations with real people. During our 8 days in Cuba, we will meet artists, both organic and tobacco farmers, cigar makers, community activists, and other various local folk in addition to spending time with several children’s groups and visiting a school.

We will enjoy the contrast between the amazing city that is Havana, where no amount of neglect can take away the beauty of its architecture nor the spirit of its people. We will not only enjoy the parade of vintage cars we will take a ride in one. Some of us, of course, will be able to remember when they were new! While in Havana we will visit Ernest Hemingway’s House, Revolution Square, the University, and the Capitol. A local tour guide will take us on a tour in Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and discuss with us the various types of architecture and the restoration work that is being undertaken to revitalize the area.

We will travel to Matanzas, known as the “Athens of Cuba” because of the vibrant art, musical, and intellectual community that at one time flourished there. “Real Cuba” is how many describe its dilapidated but captivating ambiance. We are pleased that we will not be restricted to the areas of the country that have been polished up for tourists since we will understand best the history of Cuba if we can move fairly freely throughout it. What all agree is that in Matanzas we will be impressed by the spirit of the residents who are proud of the history of their city and energized by the prospect of revitalization that is taking place.

Varadero, in sharp contrast, is the center of Cuba’s tourist industry, something most Americans are not aware of though Canadians and Europeans have been coming for a long time. The beach at Varadero is thought by many to be one of the very best in the Caribbean. Pinar del Rio provides beautiful scenery of a very different sort, tobacco fields and coffee plantations are punctuated by mogotes, limestone formations as tall as skyscrapers. Our day there will include a nature walk among unique animal and plant life and will conclude with a stay in a privately owned bed and breakfast, giving us another chance to connect with local people. Can you tell we are excited about that aspect of our tour?

In light of the number of you who have already expressed interest in this program, our advice is to sign on early in order to avoid disappointment. Cosmos, part of the Globus family of brands, has kindly reserved space for 24 of us on a Meredith alums and friends-only tour, but the fact of the matter is that Cosmos is getting calls already from travel industry folk keen to find places for their clients. For this reason, we are going to be operating under different protocols from our previous programs. We must tell Globus by September 10 where we stand.

The enclosed brochure details our itinerary, tour costs, cancellation policies, etc. Denise Parker stands ready to answer your questions and accept your deposits. A check for $1,000 will secure your place on the tour, one we are confident will be a memorable experience for all of us. Deposit final deadline, October 2, 2016. Final payment, December 11, 2016.

Betty Webb
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