

Cuba Mixed Activity

Cuba



16 MIN AGE **12 DAYS** FLIGHT INC. **11 DAYS** LAND ONLY **AUY** TRIP CODE



Summary

Pack your bags for an adventure of a lifetime and discover the natural beauty of a Caribbean island steeped in romance and intrigue. This new active adventure features a combination of Cuba's 'must see' sights amid a fun-packed itinerary of outdoor activities. We'll soak up the history and musical heritage of Havana and Trinidad, cycle in Vinales Valley, swim at the Bay of Pigs, hike in Topes de Collantes, and receive a warm welcome from the Cubans by staying in Casas Particulares and eating in privately-run Paladares. Variety is the name of the game - a perfect way to see the real Cuba!

At a glance

- Travel by comfortable air-conditioned private coach
- Some long journeys
- Group normally 4 to 18, plus leader. Min age 16 yrs
- 5 nights Casas Particulares, 4 nights hotels and 1 night in river huts
- All breakfasts, 6 lunches and 3 dinners included

Highlights

- Go snorkelling in the Caribbean Sea at the Bay of Pigs
- Cycle and hike in Pinar del Rio and central Cuba.
- Explore caves and go zip lining (optional) in a biosphere reserve
- Enjoy a Cuban salsa class in Trinidad
- Stay in traditional homestays and eat in local paladares
- Cuban Tourist Cards included for all UK residents
- Direct flights with Virgin Atlantic when available



IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

This trip is a Mixed Activity trip with an activity level grading of 3 (Moderate). Please see the introductory pages of the Discovery & Wildlife brochure or our website for more important information on classification and grading.

Number of days cycling: 4 (including Havana city ride) You should be comfortable riding a bike up to 45km but there is a support vehicle for anyone wanting to ride in the bus. 3 litres of mineral water per person on cycling days is included.

Vehicle Support during cycling: 100%

Number of days walking: 3. The first is within Vinales valley through tobacco growing countryside. The second is a morning walk in Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve, and the third is within Topes de Collantes National Park featuring a waterfall swim.

Other activities: snorkelling, cave tour, zip-lining, salsa class, swim at waterfall. You should be comfortable in water for several of the activities.

Overall the trip is not too strenuous but a basic level of fitness is required.

This tour features some remote parts of the island. Though many of the roads are in good condition you should be prepared to encounter occasional potholes and poor road conditions in some sections. The roads are generally free of heavy traffic, except in some of the bigger towns/cities.

We provide good quality mountain bikes with hybrid road tyres and flat bars and have experienced local staff to help out with any mechanical issues.

Please be aware that mobile networks don't make or receive calls particularly well in Cuba, and coverage may not be available in many locations. Not all networks work in Cuba, so please check with your service provider. Also please note that few hotels have Wi-Fi. Some will have internet cafés, and you will also find some Wi-Fi spots in the main plazas in towns. Using

the internet in Cuba is relatively expensive, up to 5-6 CUC per hour, unless you purchase Wi-Fi cards at official shops, but these will always have long queues. Wi-Fi can be very slow, so it's best to assume that you won't be able to find a reliable internet connection whilst travelling.

The number of people travelling to Cuba reached unprecedented levels in 2016. Imminent changes to US government policy will soon enable US citizens to also travel freely to the country along with the rest of us. Demand is therefore only set to grow as the world's spotlight shines on Cuba. A limited tourism infrastructure on the island means that some hotels and other service providers are struggling to honour their agreements. Last minute overbookings are becoming commonplace.

Fortunately, over the years we have built strong working relationships with suppliers and we have managed to prevent any major problems from affecting our groups. Nevertheless, all travellers should be aware that last minute hotel cancellations are a possibility and could affect your trip, especially during the high season in Havana (Oct to March). In the event of any necessary changes we will endeavour to ensure a property of a similar standard and location is used. On some occasions an overnight hotel stay may be replaced with a night in a casa, or vice versa.

In addition to being prepared for potential last minute hotel changes, it is possible that you will be confronted by other minor frustrations whilst travelling in Cuba. We encourage all travellers to go with an open mind, and with realistic expectations at what a visit to Cuba entails. If your guide announces a change of plans then please be assured that everything possible has been done behind the scenes in order to make satisfactory alternative arrangements.

More information can be found on the Cuba destination guide which will be sent with your final joining instructions.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

The entries in bold at the end of each day indicate the type of accommodation normally used and any meals included. Please see the Accommodation section below for further information.

Day 1 - Havana

The group flight arrives in the evening and we transfer to our hotel. Land only clients will meet the group at the start Casa Particular in Havana. **Standard Hotel**

Day 2 - Maria La Gorda

This morning the group will meet in the hotel lobby after breakfast for a welcome briefing and bike fitting before setting off on our two-wheeled city tour. Traffic is remarkably light for a capital city as most people don't own a car in Cuba. We cycle through the Miramar and Vedado districts of Havana to reach the dominating Plaza de la Revolucion, whilst Buicks and Pontiacs cruise past with gleaming chrome. We continue towards Old Havana and stop at El Capitolio, the famous



National Capitol Building, which is superficially similar to the Capitol in Washington D.C. After lunch we start our westward journey and drive out of the city towards the lush countryside of Pinar del Rio. The drive to Maria La Gorda on the far western coast is approx. 300 km and will take around 5 hours, we will have several stops en route before arriving in time for dinner.

Cycling Distance: approx. 26km **Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)**

Day 3 - Maria La Gorda

In the morning we transfer by bus (distance 15km) to Guanahacabibes Park entrance. Here we will meet a local nature guide who will accompany us on cycle trip into the park. Cycling in this region takes us through some of the most uninhabited terrain on the island of Cuba. There's a good chance that you will see the smallest bird in the world, the bee hummingbird, as well as spotting some of the more common species of endemic birds such as the brilliantly coloured Toco-ro, Cuba's national bird. The Guanahacabibes peninsula is a protected area and nesting ground for turtles. After approx. 45km cycling and exploring the peninsula, we will load the bikes on to the bus and head back to the hotel. In the afternoon you can enjoy fantastic snorkelling, either from the beach or a dive boat.

Cycling Distance: approx. 45km **Standard Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 4 - Viñales Valley

Today we have an early start in order to drive 2 hours to the starting place for our route down a little known road to Viñales via Guane. The peaceful ride will enable us to spend time in unspoilt and spectacular undulating scenery. We take a packed lunch to eat along the way and arrive into Viñales town in the late afternoon. Accommodation tonight will be in 'Casas Particulares' homestays all on the same quaint street in the town. Dinner is included this evening at Wilfredo's farm, beautifully situated atop a hill offering stunning sunset views across the valley. Local musicians and cuisine make this an evening to remember.

Cycling Distance: approx. 50km **Casa (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 5 - Viñales Valley

Today we will set out to explore some of Viñales Valley, a world heritage site and producer of the world's finest tobacco. Included we will visit the Cueva de Santo Tomas, the biggest cave network in Cuba. Tours last for two hours and a specialist guide as well as helmets and headlamps are provided, although you might want to bring a more powerful torch if you have one. The cave is spectacular and has 45 kilometres of galleries on eight levels - we will visit 2 or 3 of the levels.

Around midday we'll head back to Viñales for lunch and then have some time to explore the little town. In the late afternoon we'll set off on a walk through the valley, visiting farmers and seeing how they grow tobacco. Tonight's evening meal will be at leisure and we recommend that you try one of the Paladar restaurants on the main drag of Viñales. Afterwards you could go to the Polo Montanez club, an open air meeting spot where locals gather to chat and dance to live music.

Trekking Distance: approx. 7km **Casa (Breakfast)**

Day 6 - Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve

We set off this morning on our bikes and take the backroads out of Viñales valley, passing the spectacular mogotes which rise up from the valley floor. Our destination today is Cueva de los Portales, where Che Guevara had his headquarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We enjoy a picnic lunch there and explore the cave before getting onto the bus and heading for Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve. Upon arrival, if weather permits, there will be a chance to try out Cuba's only zip lining course! The course is over 5 lines and for approximately 1.5kms you soar over the forest and the community getting a bird's eye view of the environment below. (Cost per person CUC25) This evening we will have dinner at Tito's Farm and spend the night in simple cabins beside by the River San Juan.

Cycling Distance: approx. 45km **Basic Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 7 - Playa Larga

What better way to start the day than with a refreshing swim in the Rio San Juan! After breakfast we drive to the start of our trail for today's walk. La Serafina Trail is relatively easy going but gives you a great introduction to the reserve. Expect to see plenty of natural flora and endemic birdlife in the area. We then set off towards the centre of the island, with a quick lunch stop in Havana, on what is a 4-5 hour journey to the Bay of Pigs. Tonight we stay in casas particulares in the small coastal town of Playa Larga, where the CIA backed troops attempted a coup d'état on Fidel Castro's Revolutionary Government. This evening we recommend you trying some of the region's seafood.

Trekking Distance: approx. 6km **Casa (Breakfast, Lunch)**

Day 8 - Trinidad

After breakfast we head straight out to the welcoming Caribbean Sea for a morning of snorkelling. The Bay of Pigs is one of Cuba's most spectacular snorkelling spots with a wonderful array of soft and hard corals which can be reached easily from the shore. We will snorkel in Caleta Buena and have lunch before driving along the shimmering coastline (approx. 2 hour journey) to Trinidad. This lively and colourful town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one Cuba's most famous destinations. Entering Trinidad is like stepping back in time; cobbled streets and pastel coloured houses haven't changed since they were built at the peak of Trinidad's Sugar producing years. In the early evening we will enjoy a fun introductory salsa class with local teachers in a Cuban home close to the casas particulares where we will be based. The class will last about 1 hour and will give you the confidence to try your moves tonight in the many dance bars! The town is a wonderful place to discover live music, handicrafts, Paladar restaurants and beautiful colonial squares. This evening we will have a meal together in the patio of Alberto and Osmar's lovely house. **Casa (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 9 - Trinidad

In the morning we will drive from Trinidad to Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve. Our destination is the starting point of the Caburní trail, which will take us to some magnificent waterfalls and a lovely swimming spot. Then continue on a steep path to visit the Vegas Grandes waterfalls where you can also enjoy a swim and have a picnic lunch. We finish the 12km trek at El Chorrillo community where we are picked up and transfer back to Trinidad. The rest of the afternoon is free time to relax, explore, shop or go to the beach. Playa Ancon is 12km away and a perfect Caribbean beach with white sand and calm blue waters. Tonight is the perfect opportunity to eat in one of the local paladars and then sample some mojitos in the town.

Trekking Distance: approx. 12km **Casa (Breakfast, Lunch)**

Day 10 - Havana

We wave goodbye to Trinidad after breakfast and begin our journey back towards Havana, stopping on route for a visit to Che Guevara's Mausoleum in Santa Clara. We will arrive in Havana early evening and check into our casas. The evening

is at leisure and we have included a transfer to and from the Old Town. You can enjoy a final Cuban dinner and an evening out if you want to make your own way back to the hotel. **Standard Hotel (Breakfast)**

Day 11 - Havana

This morning we'll do some sight-seeing in Havana (old and new parts of town) including walking tour of Old Havana. There is time for lunch and then those on the group departure flight will transfer to airport. **(Breakfast)**

For those on group flights, these depart in the afternoon and will arrive in the UK the following day.

ACCOMMODATION

For the majority of the trip we will stay in standard hotels, with en suite bathrooms. We also stay in some basic accommodation in order to access some of the more remote areas that we visit on this trip, so you should be prepared for this. We use standard hotels that range from 3 star equivalents to simple rural hotels. Rooms are on a twin-share basis, with air-conditioning and en suite bathrooms. Some of the hotels will have swimming pools. You should be aware that occasional power cuts occur and hot water supplies are not always guaranteed.

Casas Particulares - All of our Cuban itineraries include staying in privately-run 'Casas Particulares' in at least one destination as an alternative to staying in standard hotels. These are traditional Cuban properties that have been renovated into guesthouses. All rooms have en suite bathrooms, hot and cold water, either a fan or air-conditioning, and breakfast is included. Water pressure can be temperamental, and decor is variable! The houses that we use will be in close vicinity whenever possible, and we do our best to ensure that those in single room accommodation are always within a house where other Exodus clients are staying. However this cannot be guaranteed in all cases.

All properties that we use have been inspected and assessed by our local operator in Cuba. Some are large multi-room houses that are home to entire families, others are run by individuals, and in some cases the owners live elsewhere.

Single Accommodation

We can arrange single rooms throughout the trip for a supplement (subject to availability) from £260. Please ask your sales consultant for details.

Key to Accommodation

We indicate in the itinerary what type of accommodation is provided on each day. The descriptions are guidelines only and are used to give an idea of the accommodation offered, rather than an exact description.

Standard Hotel, Lodge or Gite - reasonable quality standard accommodation in single, twin or double rooms, the vast majority with en suite facilities. Some properties have added



amenities such as Wi-Fi, but facilities are generally simpler and meet 2/3 star standards. These properties are chosen for their value, location or character.

Basic Hotel - could also be a Lodge, Teahouse, Gite, Mountain Hut, Homestay or Village House. Facilities are often communal and may be limited depending on location. North American and Western Europe standards are often higher than Central or Eastern Europe, or in destinations outside of Europe. Rooming could be dorm with bunk beds, or one large shared sleeping area. Bed linen is not always provided while running water, flushing toilets and electricity may be inconsistent or non-existent in the remotest areas.

FOOD AND TRANSPORT

Food

Cuba is not renowned for its culinary excellence and some ingredients are just not possible to get hold of (due in no small part to the long trade embargo implemented by the US). As such, flavours tend to be relatively simple, with most mealtimes consisting of meat or fish accompanied by rice and salad/vegetables. Seafood is widely available on the coast, including cheap and abundant lobster! Vegetarians will probably find they have the most limited choice. Snack food is not freely available in Cuba so you may wish to consider taking some with you.

Paladares are likely to be a highlight of any visit to Cuba - they are one of the few types of private enterprise allowed (although still heavily regulated), where Cubans can set up a restaurant selling authentic, Cuban food.

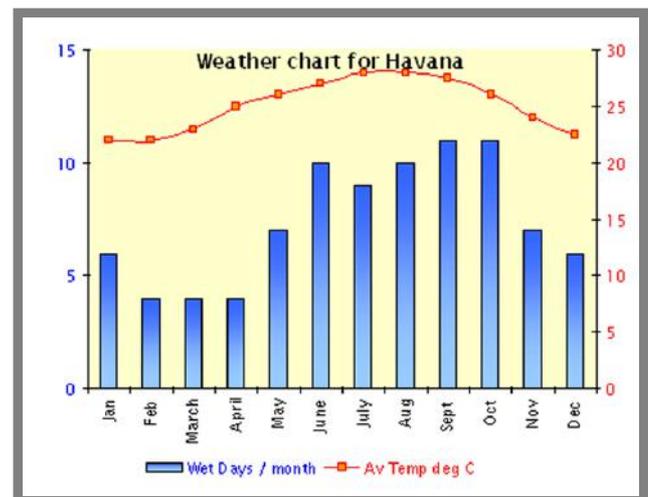
We recommend that you allow CUC 30 per person per day for the lunches and evening meals on the days where food is not included. You may also spend money on bottled water, which will normally cost about CUC 1.50 per bottle if bought from the coach (less if you purchase from local shops).

Please note that meal times can be different to what you may be used to. Breakfast will usually be served between 7 - 8am, lunch is usually served between 12 - 3pm and evening meals are generally taken around 7 - 9pm.

Transport

We use a private, air-conditioned coach throughout the tour.

WEATHER AND SEASONALITY



The dry season runs from November through to April (with December to March being the peak holiday months for traditional style tourism). It can be humid between May and October, with heavy rains at times and the possibility of hurricanes. July and August are some of the most popular months to visit Cuba by sun-seekers from Europe and Canada but can be hot (average 28°C) and wet. Cuba has an average of 6 hours sunshine per day with a more or less constant humidity of 62%. Water temperature normally ranges from 24 to 28°C.

CUBA EXTENSIONS

Cayo Levisa Beach Extension

Extend your time in Cuba by travelling just a few hours from Havana to the idyllic island of Cayo Levisa. Stay in an en-suite beach cabin and wake up each day to a beautiful

4km stretch of golden sand beach and inviting turquoise waters. There are no roads or other buildings on the small island just off the north west coast of Cuba, only the hotel and its bar and restaurant. All meals are included and for those who don't just want to relax in the sun, there are plenty of opportunities for water sports such as snorkelling and diving. Extensions can be arranged for any length of stay. Transfers are not included but can also be arranged. Prices are available on request.

Varadero Beach Extension

If it is a bit of indulgence and some more mojitos that you crave, they you may want to extend your stay with a few nights in an all-inclusive resort on the famous stretch of pristine beach at Varadero. Extensions can be arranged for any length of stay. Transfers are not included but can also be arranged. Prices are available on request.

Havana Pre & Post Tour nights

Why not spend some extra time in Havana before or after your tour? You can either choose to stay in the standard group hotel, alternatives in the Old Town and Miramar districts, or a casa particular. Book as many extra nights as you would like, depending on flight schedules this may restrict your choice of airline and flight route. Prices available on request.

JOINING THE TRIP IN THE UK

12 days, normally depart London Mon, return Fri

Itinerary Start

The group flight from London is a daytime flight departing on Day 1 of the itinerary.

Flights from London

We normally use the scheduled services of Virgin Atlantic (depending on availability). As flight timings and schedules change regularly we recommend you call one of our specialist sales staff or your agent to confirm up-to-date timings. Please note timings may change at a later date and cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

UK Regional Flights

The Flight Inclusive price is based on a London departure, but we are happy to tailor this to your local or regional airport. Please visit www.exodus.co.uk/regionaldepartures for a useful overview of the options available, and contact our sales team for expert advice.

If booking regional flights other than with Exodus, you must allow a minimum connecting time (in addition to the international check in time) of 1 hour at Gatwick, and 1½ hours at Heathrow; this is longer than the official minimum, but baggage handling is known to be subject to delays.

Free Transfers

Exodus offers free airport arrival and departure transfers on any flight for this trip: please see the Free Transfers section below for more details.

JOINING: HAVANA

11 days, normally start Havana Mon, end Havana Thu

Itinerary Start

Your trip normally starts at our accommodation in Havana in the evening of Day 1 of the itinerary. Details of how to reach the start point are provided in the Final Joining Instructions - sent approximately two weeks before departure.

Free Transfers

Exodus offers FREE airport arrival and departure transfers on any flight for this trip, so no matter which flight you choose to arrive on you will be met and transferred to your hotel. All those taking advantage of the free airport transfers must provide full flight details for both arrival and departure in advance; unless specified otherwise, the transfer will be to the Exodus start (or pre-tour) hotel; transfers to other hotels in the same city may attract an extra charge; transfers may be shared with other Exodus customers on the same flight, or on a flight with similar arrival times.

If you arrive on the group flight then you will be met in the arrivals area by an Exodus representative who will be clearly visible with a sign.

For those arriving on alternative flights, the free transfer service (if requested with Exodus and flight details provided) includes a pre-paid taxi from the airport. On arrival you need to go to the Cubanacan office at the airport and give your name (as there won't be someone waiting for you in arrivals). It can take a little time as there is often a queue. Most transfers are shared so please wait for your fellow travellers before departing.

The cost of a taxi is likely to be about £25 (30 CUC) should you decide to make your way independently.

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers will be sent to you as part of our Final Joining Instructions. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment. Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Exodus as a company.



Local Craft and Culture:

We visit several important cultural and historical sites on this tour, where our entrance fees contribute towards the preservation of artefacts and monuments that commemorate events integral to Cuban heritage. These include Che Guevara's Mausoleum in Santa Clara and a cigar factory in Vinales Valley. We encounter small handicraft stalls in most towns, so guests are able to purchase local crafts. Trinidad is famous for ceramic and lacework and Havana's Almacenes de San Juan for art, crafts, shoes, clothes, hats, instruments and food. A huge part of Cuban culture is music and dance and there will be ample opportunity to experience this in local bars and clubs. We have a one-on-one salsa class in Havana using local dance students as partners. This is a great earning opportunity for the students and an equally valuable learning opportunity for visitors.

Activity:

We aim to benefit Cuban communities as much as possible by frequently stopping to use local restaurants, cafes and services. For example, we encourage clients to take optional excursions where we hire local transfers, boats and guides. We operate on a strict 'leave no trace' policy and local guides enforce this through responsible tourism briefings. These should help visitor to better understand the living situation for many and the environmental issues in the area.

Charity:

Our local operator sponsors two schools in the Matanzas Province. The first is the local Primary School in Playa Giron, where they have repainted the school and provided educational supplies such as notepads, pens and sporting equipment. The second school is the Special Needs School in Matanzas City. Here, they have made a number of donations- from school materials and clothes to fans and sheets. We discourage giving to beggars on the trip as we don't want to encourage this behaviour. Instead, our guides will help visitors to donate presents and supplies where the goods can really be utilised.

Recycling:

Whenever possible we source large water containers and ask clients to refill one bottle rather than purchasing/using multiple plastic bottles. At the time of writing it is still difficult to reliably obtain large water containers in most destinations across Cuba. We support the small-scale recycling culture that exists on the island by storing empty plastic bottles on the tour bus to then be distributed at a series of locations across the country where our staff know that the bottles will be put to good use. As the moment there aren't any official centralised recycling schemes for hotels or companies to use.

For full details of our Responsible Tourism Policy please visit:

www.exodus.co.uk/responsible-travel

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for UK passport holders, and other nationalities should check with their travel agent or the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

British and most Western European passport holders do not require a visa but do require a tourist card. Your Cuban tourist card (valid for 30 days) is included and will be posted to you by Exodus approximately 4 weeks before travel. We will send instructions on how to fill it in but please be careful doing this as any mistakes may result in you having to purchase a new card at a cost of £15.00 per person.

We will send a tourist card free of charge as long as you live at a UK or Ireland address and are national of an

EU country, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Japan. If you are not national of one of these countries or are not resident in the UK or Eire you must contact your nearest Cuban Consulate to check what visa is required - Exodus cannot provide a tourist card for you.

The Cuban entry immigration is time consuming and most visitors encounter delays when queuing for entry into the country.

All tourists visiting Cuba must have travel insurance to cover medical costs. You are likely to be asked to provide proof of your travel insurance policy when you arrive at Havana airport, so please ensure your documents are easily accessible.

Whilst we hope that things will change in the near future, due to present US policy, we cannot take US citizens on our trips to Cuba.

Visa regulations can change without notice: please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

Vaccinations and Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements for this trip.

Recommended vaccinations for this trip are: Tetanus, Hepatitis A.

We are advised that there is no risk of malaria on this trip.

Dengue fever and/or Chikungunya are known risks in places visited on this trip. Both are tropical viral diseases spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available for either, and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

The above information can change at short notice; as we are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health we strongly recommend you contact your Medical Professional or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information.

Insurance - are you adequately covered?

You must have adequate travel insurance, and if you are joining a trip which goes to high altitude, you must check that you are covered up to the maximum altitude of the trip. If you are resident in the UK we strongly recommend Exodus travel insurance, which is specifically designed to cover all activities on your trip.

Local Time

GMT -5 hrs.

Group, Staff and Support

The group will generally be between 4 and 18 people. There will be a local leader and drivers and local guides where needed.

The minimum age of clients on this trip is 16 years. Please note that anyone aged under 18 must be accompanied by (and share accommodation with) a parent or legal guardian.

MONEY MATTERS

Currency Information

The national currency of Cuba is the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 1.23 to the UK£ and 0.9 to the US\$.

Please note this is the official exchange rate, however in practice, the exchange rate on the ground at official 'cadecas', is roughly £1.13 - £1.18, this changes every day.

We strongly advise that you take all spending money in Euros or Sterling cash, which can be easily exchanged into local currency upon arrival in Cuba. Scottish currency is not accepted in Cuba. Travellers cheques are difficult to exchange and there is limited time to stop for this purpose. In addition, credit/debit cards drawn on US banks are not accepted anywhere in Cuba. The hotel in which we spend the first night in Havana has an exchange bureau situated in the back left of the lobby, around behind the main reception desk. Otherwise you can exchange money at the airport.

ATM availability/Credit Card Acceptance/Travellers cheques

ATMs are increasingly available in Cuba, but are not yet widespread. They are presently confined to the larger cities and resorts and should not be relied on, hence why we suggest that you take cash with you. Credit cards may be accepted for expensive purchases in tourist shops, but acceptance is not widespread and like ATMs should not be relied upon.

Important Note: Using cards for banks which are fully or partially US owned is not possible in Cuba. Australian and Canadian travellers in particular should check with their banks prior to travel if they intend to withdraw cash. Banking in Cuba is not developed at all, meaning it is a highly costly process with a worst exchange rate.

Extra Expenses and Spending Money

Drinks are generally around CUC 1-5. Supplies and shopping is very limited. Please note that most travellers find Cuba more expensive than they expect and we recommend that you bring more spending money rather than less!

Optional Excursions (approximate costs, depending on group sizes)

Tropicana Nightclub in Havana CUC 75 - 95:
This created the blue print for original 'Las Vegas'

style shows. Enter a 50's time warp and enjoy this kitsch salsa show! Entrance includes preferential seats, snacks and 1/4 of a bottle of rum per person.

Parisien Nightclub in Havana CUC 45:

Located at Cuba's famous landmark the Hotel Nacional, where the likes of Frank Sinatra and Lucky Luciano would stay. Entrance includes tickets to the show, one cocktail and a buffet dinner.

Tipping (leader and local staff)

If you are happy with the services of the guide and driver, we recommend a tip of 30-40 CUC per person, which you can divide in favour of the guide.

Tipping is at your own discretion but is very much part of the culture in Cuba and is usually expected. Your tour leader will offer to arrange and look after a group tipping kitty which will be used to tip local guides at individual museums and attractions, musicians and waiting staff for included meals etc. throughout the holiday. The guide will collect 20 CUC from each group member at the start of the trip to cover this.

WHAT TO TAKE

Essential Equipment and Clothing

Cycling helmet (compulsory on this trip)

Water bottle

Sunglasses

Sunhat

Sunscreen

Waterproof or rain poncho

Short trousers

Swimming costume

Walking shoes

Hand sanitiser

Whilst snorkels can be provided in Cuba for the activities, you may prefer to purchase your own snorkel and mask before travelling and bring them with you. There are restrictions on what items can be imported in to Cuba in bulk, and therefore the quality of snorkelling equipment found on the island is not fantastic.

On day 6 when staying in the river huts at Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve, the tour leader will recommend that you should pack an overnight bag for tonight and leave your main luggage in the bus. This is because the entrances are fairly steep and there isn't a huge amount of space inside the shelters.

Optional items

It is a good idea to bring some light clothes which cover the legs and arms to wear in the evenings: this will help to prevent the mosquitoes biting.

Donations

If you would like to bring items to Cuba in order to donate, then items that are welcomed include: good condition second hand clothes and children's shoes, second hand mobile phones with chargers, school stationary such as pens/pencils/notebooks, toiletries, and small gifts such as toys or balls. Rather than spending lots of money, it is a good opportunity to find

new homes for unused goods. We cannot guarantee that every departure will feature a scheduled stop at a school or community project, but if you bring items with you then the group leader will assist you by offering advice on where to take your donation. Sanitary items, known locally as 'intimas', are on the ration list for Cubans and are often very hard to come by. If you would like to pack some sanitary towels in your luggage these will be hugely appreciated and can be left in your hotel room so that the cleaners/room attendants can benefit from these.

Baggage and Baggage Allowance

At time of writing the standard weight limit for hold baggage on the recommended international carrier for this trip is 23kg. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage.

As advice about luggage allowances for both hand and hold luggage is subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

Reading List

Cuba Handbook,

Christopher P. Baker, Moon Publication

The best and most comprehensive guidebook available.

Recommended reading.

Insight Guide to Cuba

APA Publications

Good photography, with a profile of Fidel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

In Focus: Cuba

Published by Latin America Bureau

A guide to the people, politics and culture by Emily Hatchwell & Simon Calder.

Guide to Cuba

Stephen Fallon, Bradt Publications

Good general guidebook - but not as useful as the Cuba Handbook.

The Rough Guide to Cuba

Good general guidebook

Travellers Survival Kit: Cuba

Simon Calder & Emily Hatchwell

Probably the most popular guidebook used by independent travellers in Cuba. Strong on practical advice for independent travellers.

Land of Miracles

Stephen Smith

Recently published account of travels in Cuba by a British journalist. Highly recommended.

Enduring Cuba

Zoe Bran, Lonely Planet Publications 2002)

For novels based in or about Cuba try:

The Old Man and the Sea, To Have and Have Not and Islands in the Stream.

All by Ernest Hemingway.

Our Man in Havana
Graham Greene.

The Island that Dared, Journeys in Cuba
Dervla Murphy.

JOIN THE EXODUS ONLINE COMMUNITY

Don't forget to visit the Community area on our website. You can view the range of Exodus videos and podcasts, read trip write-ups which have featured in the national media and take advantage of some special deals on travel gear and equipment.

In the Community Travel Forum you'll find the Departure Lounge where you can discuss your trip with fellow travellers before you depart. When you get back from your holiday remember to upload your images to the relevant trip page on our website. This helps other people see what our holidays are really like and you'll be entered automatically into our monthly photo competition.

To make full use of the Community you'll need to join My Exodus. It's free, registration is simple and easy, so what are you waiting for?

<http://www.exodus.co.uk/community>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL CLIENTS

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call the Exodus office and ask to speak to one of the experts on this itinerary.

Although our leaders are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorise them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.

Although rarely enforced, by booking this trip you agree to section 16 of our Booking Conditions which clearly states that our leaders have the authority to do this. In these circumstances we will ensure anyone sitting out is safely provided for and offered alternative options where possible. Refunds will not be provided for activities missed and customers may be liable for additional costs incurred.

In an emergency, please contact our 24 hour out of hours service on +44 (0) 844 326 7041.

Every time that you travel abroad you should take the time to read the warnings in the essential information in the brochure or at www.exodus.co.uk/about-exodus/essential-information

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers, and details of how to reach the start point, will be sent to you approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure or website, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure and website. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary. Occasionally, as stated in our brochure, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons - climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements that maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

As fuel prices, airport taxes and exchange rates fluctuate, and airlines manage their rates to match demand, it is proving harder than ever to guarantee our Flight Inclusive prices. Although we endeavour to keep our website as accurate as possible, daily fluctuations mean that our Flight Inclusive price may be out of date. For accurate prices we recommend that you contact one of our Travel Experts, or your Travel Agent.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice Service advises British tourists on the potential dangers they might experience when travelling overseas. We liaise closely with them and adhere to their travel advice. For up-to-date advice on all countries, please visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. Should there be any change to advice prior to or during travel, we may have to cancel or curtail a tour at short notice, or re-route an itinerary part way through.

Prices and exchange rates were correct at the time of publication. The most up-to-date prices can be found on the Exodus website.

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HOW TO BOOK YOUR TRIP

1. Check availability

Go online to check availability, or contact us by phone or email.

2. Secure your place

You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between three and seven days.

3. Complete your booking and payment

When you're ready to book, go to www.exodus.co.uk for online booking, book over the phone or you can complete a booking form (available online or on request by calling us). We accept all major credit and debit cards, or you can pay by cheque. Book with confidence: Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) and ABTA - The Travel Association. This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.

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