

# EXPLORE!



## Cuba Libre!

This remarkable journey through Cuba explores the island's revolutionary history and its modern, vibrant Caribbean culture. Travelling across the breadth of the country, we will discover beautiful colonial architecture and a lively music scene in Trinidad and Cuba. Along the way we pass through glorious countryside, rich with exotic birds and flowers, and camp out in the forested Escambray Mountains. The sea is never far away, with spectacular coastlines and tropical islands to enjoy. We also stay with the locals in privately run *casas particulares* in Trinidad, an excellent way to get a deeper experience of local life. Now is undoubtedly a fantastic time to visit Cuba to see and experience the island. Visiting Cuba is like stepping back in time as little has changed over the past 50 years. To fully enjoy the Cuban experience you should travel with a willingness to expect the unexpected and, above all, an adventurous spirit. In our opinion go now and experience this unique destination before it changes.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Havana** - Experience the faded colonial yet vibrant Cuban capital
- ★ **Trinidad** - Enjoy the laidback atmosphere of this colonial town. Dance at the Casa de la Musica or sip a rum cocktail under the stars
- ★ **Topes de Collantes** - Walk through mountain forests, swim in fresh water pools and camp out in haciendas
- ★ **Casas Particulares** - Stay in locally-owned and run private homestays in the heart of colonial Trinidad
- ★ **Comandancia de la Plata** - Trek through the jungle to Fidel's 1950's rebel headquarters
- ★ **Vinales Valley** - Admire the peculiar but spectacular landscape of steep limestone hills (mogotes) rising from the valley floor
- ★ **White** - sand beaches - Enjoy Cuba's famous beaches, including those found on the spectacular Cayo Levisa Island

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

#### TRIP PACE:

##### Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join tour in Havana

We arrive in Havana and check-in to our hotel. Situated in 'Old Havana', it is well-placed for exploring the historical centre on foot. Built around a deep natural harbour, the capital of Cuba is one of the most impressive surviving colonial cities in the Americas. Thankfully, wars and revolution have done little to damage 500 years of heritage. Founded during the Spanish Conquest of the 1500s, Havana proved a convenient stopping-off point for the transport of looted treasures from the New World. Future centuries saw its wealth increase further from the trade of sugar, rum, tobacco and coffee.



**Accommodation: Sevilla Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Tour of Havana's highlights, free afternoon

Modern-day Havana is a mixture of restored and crumbling architectural marvels. Our morning tour explores the city, driving past art deco style buildings along the coastal esplanade of the Malecon and through the Vedado and Miramar suburbs. On our travels, we will doubtless see many brightly-painted vintage cars - the result of legislation enforced until 2011 ruling that only cars built before the 1959 revolution could be sold. We may also notice the lack of advertising - nothing but political exhortations are

allowed. On foot, we explore the Vieja (old) district, with its baroque cathedral, beautiful neoclassical buildings and the Plaza de Armas (main square). During your free afternoon you may choose to visit the fascinating Museum of the Revolution, housed in the impressive former Presidential Palace. The City Museum is also worth a visit, exhibiting art and historical artefacts in rooms preserved with their original Colonial decoration. Alternatively, you may prefer to visit the famous cigar factory or relax in one of the many vibrant bars of the city. Later this afternoon, we will enjoy a cocktail making class where we can learn to make some of Cuba's famous drinks including mojitos and pina colodas. This evening, we have the option to sample some of the capital's famous nightlife. El Floridita is as celebrated for its daiquiris as it is for having been a favourite hangout for Ernest Hemingway. Likewise, the Hotel Ambos Mundos is another Hemingway landmark where the 1954 Nobel Prize winner and author of 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' lived for several years. Its roof terrace serves up exceptional mojitos - the traditional Cuban cocktail.



**Accommodation: Sevilla Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Travel to Trinidad via the Bay of Pigs Museum

Today, we head east across Cuba, driving through giant citrus and sugar plantations and out on to the Zapata Peninsula. Our journey is broken up with a wonderful swimming opportunity in a 'cenote' (pool) where the ceiling of an underground river has collapsed. We plan to arrive in Playa Giron by mid-afternoon. Here we will visit the museum dedicated to the infamous 'Bay of Pigs' invasion - a US-supported attack by Cuban exiles which failed to overthrow the Communist regime in 1961. We then travel to Cienfuegos, a colonial seaport, where we take a walking tour of the town, including the Marti Park overlooked by the grand Italian-style Tomas Terry Theatre. Our journey continues, past the wooded Escambray Mountains and hugging the coastline, with views over the sparkling turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. By early evening, we will arrive at our homestay just outside the beautiful Spanish colonial town of Trinidad - our base for the next two nights.



**Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad** (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Explore Trinidad, optional boat trip to Cayo Las Iguanas

This morning, we wander through the cobbled streets of the old centre of Trinidad, discovering its fine palaces, churches and cafes. A paradise for photographers, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a perfectly preserved colonial settlement unlike any other. In the early 19th century, French settlers fleeing a slave revolt in Haiti, landed here and started to grow sugar cane in the Valle de Los Ingenios. This crop generated considerable wealth and consequently the town had to be regularly defended from pirates. Subject to opening hours, we will visit a local museum before our free afternoon. You may choose to relax on the six kilometres of Playa Ancon's white sand beach nearby, or take a boat trip to the equally stunning beach on Cayo Las Iguanas (this is a full day excursion). There is also the opportunity to take a salsa lesson with a local teacher. Alternatively, you might prefer to wander for longer through Trinidad's streets to soak up more of the unique atmosphere. Later, those keen to sample some of Cuba's famed nightlife can visit the open-air Casa de la Musica, just off the main square.



**Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad** (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 5 - Journey to Topes de Collantes, walk to waterfall

Today we travel inland to Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve Park, famous for its many endemic species of flora and fauna. We can look forward to a two-night stay here to explore this glorious area. After a ride in an old Russian military-style truck up a steep, switch-back road into the lush Escambray Mountains, we arrive at the park entrance. Here we meet our local guide who, along with our Tour Leader, will help us to explore the park. -There is an eight kilometre trek to our hacienda accommodation. Those who would prefer not to walk can continue with the truck to the hacienda. Our hike can vary slightly, depending on the weather and the group, but it is likely to take us into the coffee-growing valley of the Guayanara River. The paths are undulating and can be uneven underfoot, but the views and sense of remoteness are truly rewarding. Along our route, we see Cuba's highest lake, Embalse Hanabanilla, pass rural homes and watch shepherds minding their herds of goats. After about four hours' walking, we arrive at our hacienda, a small farmstead set in a rocky valley, for lunch. The afternoon is free. However, we recommend the five kilometre circular walk (approximately three hours) to the Salto de Rocio Waterfall - an area flush with trogons, hummingbirds and woodpeckers. To get to the waterfall we follow a riverside track where we are likely to see impressive tree fern, bromeliad and orchid species. On arrival at the spectacular waterfalls and lakes, adventurous swimmers can enjoy a dip, while others may choose to relax on the banks. The accommodation at the hacienda is simple. After supper, we sleep out under the eaves of the hacienda's veranda or on covered sleeping platforms, with male and female washing facilities in a block nearby. Foam mattresses are provided, but you will benefit from bringing a sleeping bag. Tents may also be available for those who prefer camping. The fresh mountain air and the peace and quiet of the night, with its canopy of stars, is usually enough to ensure a good night's sleep. Day 5 and 6 may be swapped around.



**Accommodation: Hacienda Gallega** (or similar)

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Simple Camping

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Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 6 - Walks in Topes de Collantes National Park

This morning, we start with a short drive in our Russian truck to the start of our four-hour trek (approximately eight kilometres). Again, anyone not wanting to make the walk can travel on to the night-stop with the truck. Today, we walk through an unspoilt land of forest, water-eroded valleys, rushing waterfalls and underground rivers. We trek through pine forest and along paths bordered by mahogany and hibiscus. If we're lucky, we may see brightly-coloured hummingbirds flash past, darting from flower to flower, searching for nectar. When we reach La Batata, there is an opportunity to swim in an open cave through which an underground river gently carves out rock pools. The water rarely exceeds 20°C, so it's exhilarating! We then trek on through the forest until we reach an isolated, century-old hacienda, set in a lush valley. This is our base for the night and where we will have lunch. In the afternoon, our local guide takes us on a circular interpretative trail (approximately one and a half kilometres), discussing the orchids and medicinal plants that we find en route. We are also taken down through a cave, La Cueva del Altar, emerging on the other side of the hill to beautiful views of the Caribbean. This evening, we are treated to more Cuban hospitality and we can expect our accommodation to be similar to the previous night.



**Accommodation: Hacienda Codina** (or similar)

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Simple Camping

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 7 - Visit Sancti Spiritus en route to Camaguey

Leaving the Escambray Mountains behind, we stop at the Valle de los Ingenios, also known as the Valley of the Sugar Mills. This was the centre of sugar production for 100 years from the late 18th century. At its peak, it was home to 30,000 slaves working in the mills and surrounding plantations. Today, the ruined sugar mills and mansions lining the valley bear witness to the previous prosperity in the area. We stop at the infamous Torre de Manaca Iznaga, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This seven floor tower was built to watch over the slaves working in the fields and had two bells. One was rung when the slaves could stop working and take a meal, the other when a slave escaped. For a lunch stop, we visit Sancti Spiritus, one of the original seven settlements founded by Diego Velasquez when he claimed Cuba for Spain, before continuing our drive across the flattest province in Cuba - Ciego de Avila. We pass through land predominantly used for cattle ranching, sugar growing and citrus fruit production. Continuing up into the hills of the Sierra de Cubitas, by late afternoon we reach the provincial capital of Camaguey - Cuba's third largest city and a cultural centre for music, ballet and art. Our hotel is near to the 'Old Town,' allowing for easy exploration on foot.



### Accommodation: Colon Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Explore Camaguey before heading to Bartolome Maso

The morning is free to wander around Camaguey. What may strike you about this city is its labyrinth street layout - a fascinating by-product of pirate-fighting. With more similarities to a Moroccan medina than the geometric street planning you might expect, legend has it that it was designed to confuse pillaging invaders and provide cover for its residents. Those who would prefer not to walk may prefer to explore the city's hidden plazas and baroque churches by bicitaxi. However you choose to get around, we recommend a visit to the bustling farmer's market - one of the largest in Cuba. In the afternoon, we travel to Bayamo, another of the original seven Spanish settlements. However the inhabitants burned it to the ground in 1869 in an act of rebellion against the Spanish, so there is little colonial architecture left to see. Our journey continues east towards the Sierra Maestra Mountains - the highest mountain range in Cuba, where we spend the night in a small hotel either in Bartolome Maso or Santo Domingo.



### Accommodation: Villa Santa Domingo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Visit La Comandancia de la Plata, drive to Santiago


This morning, a convoy of 4WD vehicles carry us up a steep asphalted road to El Alto de Naranjo, 950 metres above sea level. We then trek for three kilometres through virgin rainforest to La Comandancia de La Plata. The path is uneven and can be muddy, helping us to understand the appeal of its remoteness. It was here that Fidel Castro and Che Guevara took refuge after an unsuccessful uprising against the Cuban dictator, Batista, in 1956. As you walk around this hideaway, which became the revolutionaries' headquarters until Batista fled Cuba in 1959, you gain a real sense of their two year residency here. Castro's simple camp bed and fridge (which someone impressively carted up the mountain for him) still remain, along with a trap door for a speedy exit if under attack. Also, the original broadcast hut for 'Radio Rebelde' still stands, as well as Che's hospital hut where he worked as a doctor. Previously forbidden, it is now possible to take photos around the site for a small fee. After lunch at Villa Santo Domingo, we drive inland towards the lively former Cuban capital of Santiago, where we check-in to our hotel on the outskirts of the city.



### Accommodation: San Juan Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel

 Single room available

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

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## DAY 10 - See the sights of Santiago de Cuba, free afternoon

Surrounded by hills and looking-out over the Caribbean, Santiago is another of the original seven Spanish settlements, and has a wonderful architectural heritage from Spanish colonial, through to art deco influences. It has quite a different feel to Havana, but retains its own charm. Also known as the 'Heroic City', it has been the epicentre for revolutionary ideals since Cespedes made the declaration of Cuban independence in 1868, sparking the 10 Years' War. This morning, we will enjoy a guided tour of Cuba's second city, taking-in many of the colonial buildings which are painted in attractive, traditional pastel shades. We plan to stop-off at the Plaza de la Revolucion with its fine monument to the heroes of the Independence Wars, before visiting the remarkable cemetery where independence hero, Jose Marti, is buried. The Moncada Barracks are a particular highlight as you can still see the bullet holes on the outside of the building which Castro and 118 students unsuccessfully attacked in 1953. There may also be an opportunity to visit a rum factory. The afternoon is left free for you to explore in your own time. There are many museums, squares and churches to discover, or it may be possible to arrange dance lessons. This evening, we have the opportunity to experience Santiago's lively nightlife.




**Accommodation: San Juan Hotel** (or similar)

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 Standard Hotel

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 Single room available

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 11 - Drive to Santa Clara, view the Che Guevara Memorial

Today we have our longest drive of the tour as we travel through lush agricultural land from Santiago to Santa Clara, a distance of 600km. We stop approximately every two hours to break up the journey. The pleasant university town of Santa Clara was originally a prosperous agricultural area, well-placed on the island's trading route. Now, it is most famous as the site of the last battle of the Revolution in which Che Guevara's troops took the city, causing the Cuban dictator, Batista, to flee into exile. Because of this, the town was chosen as the final resting place for the national hero.



**Accommodation: Los Caneyes** (or similar)

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 Standard Hotel

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 Single room available

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 12 - Visit Che's Mausoleum then continue to Vinales

This morning, we visit the centre of Santa Clara and the Tren Blindado Memorial, before moving on to Che's Mausoleum. Guevara was buried here with full military honours in 1997 after his exhumed remains were discovered in Bolivia and returned to Cuba. A flame lit by Fidel Castro burns eternally to honour a man who played a key role in Cuba's revolution and whose image is routinely displayed throughout the country. We will also visit the museum dedicated to Guevara's life, containing many interesting letters and artefacts. Back on the road, we continue another 450km past Havana to what is arguably the most picturesque part of Cuba - the Vinales region. Here, surreal mountains jut out of the landscape, formed by the erosion of limestone over millions of years. These 'mogotes' translate as 'haystacks' - a good word for them considering their steep sides and rounded, jungly tops. Around them, the iron-rich, red soil creates a patchwork of fields growing some of the best tobacco in the world - the raw material for Cuba's celebrated cigars. We will get an opportunity to explore this fascinating landscape in more detail on our way back through the region on day 14 of our tour. Our hotel accommodation for the next two nights is situated just outside the town of Vinales.



**Accommodation: Rancho San Vicente Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Boat trip to Cayo Levisa; time to relax or snorkel

A short hop on a ferry takes us to the spectacular Cayo Levisa, part of the Archipelago los Colorados on the north coast of Cuba. Here, mangroves and pristine white sand welcome us for a day's relaxation on the beach. The more active among us may choose to take an optional snorkelling trip to explore the colourful marine flora and fauna on the reef. Today's included lunch is provided by a small cafe on the island. Late in the afternoon, we head back to Vinales.



**Accommodation: Rancho San Vicente Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 14 - Walk through Vinales countryside, return to Havana

This morning, we can look forward to a two-hour trek through the valleys of this remarkable landscape to the village of El Palmerito. Mogotes tower above us as we pass through tobacco fields and past drying barns. Before this walk you may wish to visit Cueva del Indio. Alternatively, you may choose to relax in the grounds of the hotel before our return to Havana. Our journey is broken-up with a stop in the stunning Soroa Rainforest to take-in a short visit to see the orchids. This evening, we can look forward to a dinner, and probably a dance, together in old Havana as we reminisce over our highlights from the tour.



**Accommodation: Sevilla Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

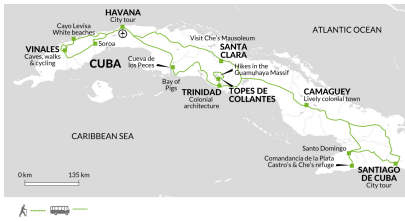
## DAY 15 - Tour ends Havana

Our tour ends this morning, after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

# Free Single Room Upgrade



Book any departure before the 20th December 2017 and you'll get a free single room upgrade.

[Find out more details here](#)

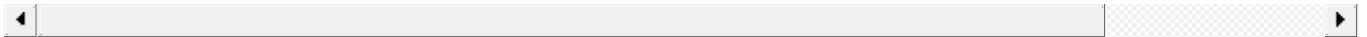


## Tourism in Cuba

Now is undoubtedly a fantastic time to visit Cuba to see and experience the island. Little has changed over the past 50 years, and a visit is like stepping back in time. Although general service levels have been improving recently, travel in Cuba can sometimes be frustrating with limited tourism infrastructure. To fully enjoy the Cuban experience you should travel with a willingness to expect the unexpected and, above all, an adventurous spirit. In our opinion go now and experience this unique destination before it changes.

## Why book this trip

This comprehensive tour of Cuba is one of our most popular. You will stay in locally-owned and run private homestays in the heart of colonial Trinidad and sleep out under the stars in Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve Park.





# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 14  
Lunch: 4  
Dinner: 2



## Transport

Bus



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



## Accommodation

2 nights simple camping  
2 nights simple casas  
particulares  
10 nights standard hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Holidays to Cuba

#### Climate

The dry season is from November to April. Average temperatures are 22-26C. Though the sky is often cloudless during the dry season, cold wet snaps do come in from North America especially in Dec and Jan, when the temperatures can drop to as low as 5C at night. From May to October there are normally fine mornings and clear evenings, afternoon rains tend to be short & heavy. Temperatures are hot and humid.

#### Time difference to GMT

-5

#### Plugs

2 Pin Flat and 2 Pin Round

#### Religion

60% Catholic

#### Language

Spanish

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Havana - Museo de la Ciudad CUC3; Museo de la Revolucion & Arte Colonial CUC8 each; Rum museum CUC7. Trinidad - Cayo Las Iguanas Boat Excursion CUC60 (this is a full day so will shorten your time for Trinidad tour) plus transport 10CUC per taxi each way. Excursion to Playa Ancon - CUC10 per taxi each way Salsa classes CUC10 per hour. Camaguey - Bicitaxi tour CUC6. Vinales - Cueva del Indio CUC8 plus transport Sorroa - Orchid Gardens CUC3 Please note - most museums in Cuba charge for use of cameras and camcorders, this can be up to 7 CUC per usage.

### Clothing

Include light cotton clothing plus something warmer for the evenings in the hills when it can get cool. A light fleece and waterproof would be also be useful except December-January when a heavier fleece and waterproof are recommended. An umbrella may also be useful in the rainy season.

## Footwear

Trail boots are essential, plus trainers/ sandals for the evening.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a small rucksack for day use. Remember you are expected to carry our own luggage between hotels and transport - don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

A torch (with spare batteries and bulb), filter water bottle, travel pillow, towel, sunblock, pocket knife, insect repellent, sunglasses, sun hat and swimgear. You may wish to bring a walking pole. A lightweight 1-season sleeping bag is recommended for the two night stay in the haciendas (mattresses are provided). Due to the limited availability of bedding (and other goods) in Cuba, the bedding provided in Topes may not be up to the standards you are used to. Accordingly, we strongly recommend you take your own sleeping bag for these night's stay. You may also wish to bring your own mask and snorkel (see day 4). Camera equipment is not available to buy in Cuba.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive. Please note tipping is also customary for musicians and for public conveniences so small notes and coins are always handy

### Local crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow CUC40 for group tipping. 10% is expected in restaurants

## Country Information

### Holidays to Cuba

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Dinner price

£12.00-15.00

##### Beer price

£2

##### Water price

£1.5

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC).

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

US dollars are no longer accepted in shops and other businesses, tourists and Cubans exchanging dollars will have to pay a 20% commission. We recommend you take clean Euro, Canadian dollars or Sterling cash as these are easier to exchange. Please note that Scottish Pounds are not accepted in Cuba.

##### Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Available in major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Please note credit and debit cards associated with American Banks are not accepted. Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

**Travellers Cheques**

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques. Amex Travellers Cheques are not accepted.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Accommodation and service levels in Cuba have improved in recent years but there is an ongoing trade embargo and lack of investment in infrastructure. Accommodation can be basic, particularly in some rural areas, occasionally with unreliable water and electricity supply. Service levels in government hotels, shops and restaurants are generally poor as this is not a service-oriented western culture. Of course, this is all part of seeing the 'real Cuba' and while we think you'll be pleasantly surprised by most of the hotels we use, you should be prepared for simply furnished rooms, some out-dated furniture and varying levels of service. Most of the hotels do have air conditioning and en-suite facilities. Casas particulares - This is a Spanish term meaning private accommodation or homestay in Cuba. Staying in a casa offers the visitor a unique opportunity to experience Cuban hospitality in local accommodation adapted for tourism. The number of rooms, quality, facilities and access to other areas of the house such as the living room varies massively but as a general rule the majority of Casas are clean, basic, centrally located and can host only a handful of guests. Casas are generally run by the owner and members of the family that live there and the standard of English spoken will vary from zero to fluent, which is a good opportunity for you to practice your Spanish. Virtually all of the rooms have private facilities but on rare occasions it may be necessary to share. Your Explore Leader will coordinate accommodation arrangements on tour.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

**Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Cuba: Visas or Tourist cards are required by all nationalities travelling to Cuba. Explore can only supply the Cuban Tourist Cards to

citizens of the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand who are resident in the UK. This currently costs £15. Please contact Explore or your Travel Agent to arrange this service and we will send your tourist card with your final documentation. Alternatively they can be obtained directly through Cuban embassies and consulates. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. Due to US Treasury Department Regulations we are unable to accept bookings from US passport holders. These Regulations set out different categories under which it is possible for US citizens to travel to Cuba; our trips do not fall under any of the permissible categories. As a tour operator we have an obligation to follow legal procedures, and as such we are unable to sell our trips to US passport holders. Travelling for tourism reasons directly from the USA to Cuba isn't allowed under US law. The law applies to US nationals and all foreign nationals who are either resident in the USA, or travelling through the USA en route to Cuba. Those travelling on direct flights between the UK and Cuba, or via other countries excluding the USA, are unaffected by this US legislation. Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Holidays to Cuba

**Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, TB, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

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