

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Cuba Highlights on Foot
8 days

Cuba - Trip code SCU



Cuba Highlights on Foot

On this walking trip of Western Cuba experience local hospitality whilst staying in family-run guest houses, and hike through some of Cuba's best natural tropical reserves. Discover the glamorous past of Old Havana, the lively musical nightlife of colonial Trinidad and learn about modern day Cuba and its complex past, culminating in a visit to the mausoleum of the national hero Che Guevara.

Trip highlights

- ★ Casas particulares - Stay in family guesthouses
- ★ Havana - Discover the fading glamour of 'Old Havana'
- ★ Topes de Collantes - Hike through this region of mountainous tropical forest
- ★ Vinales - Walk amongst the tobacco fields and limestone landscapes
- ★ Trinidad - Explore this fascinating historic town. Learn how to make local cocktails and enjoy music and dancing at the Casa de la Musica

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Easy

Suitable for most people in good health, these easy walks are predominantly on good paths, at low altitude and on undemanding terrain. Previous walking or trekking experience is not necessary.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

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 - Tour starts Havana

Tour starts in Havana. Throughout this tour we stay in casas particulares, family-run guesthouses. On arrival to the main guesthouse in 'Centro Habana' (as detailed in your Joining Instructions) you will be met by your host and shown to your room in one of their three local guesthouses. Havana is a fascinating city. In 'Old Havana' Spanish grand colonial buildings rub shoulders with those of glorious art deco style, as the ubiquitous old American cars and taxis cruise past. After years of neglect some of these magnificent buildings are being restored, and it is not hard to imagine back to Havana's glamorous heyday when it was a popular haunt of the rich and famous. One of the first to be restored was the impressive art deco style Bacardi Building. Today Havana has something for everyone including museums, shopping and street cafes. At night the city's legendary music and cocktails bars come into their own.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walk and optional swim in Las Terrazas.

After breakfast in the main guesthouse, we make a short city tour of Havana as we drive out of the city. En route sights we will see include Plaza de la Revolucion and the grand mansions of Miramar district. We then drive to Las Terrazas a small community and nature reserve to the west of the city, and part of the UNESCO Biosphere of Sierra del Rosario. Here we take a walk in the reserve, the result of an extensive regeneration project. We take a picnic lunch and have the opportunity to swim in the nearby natural pools of River San Juan, surrounded by lush, tropical forest. Later we drive to the small town of Vinales where we have a short walk around the centre and meet our homestay hosts for the next two nights. Vinales is situated in one of the most picturesque areas of Cuba - the Valle de Vinales is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The area is known for its distinctive landscape of limestone mogotes (steep sided dome formations) rising out from the floor of the valley, and for using traditional techniques to grow some of the best tobacco in the world in its red, iron rich soil. This tobacco is used in the famous Cuban cigars. Today's 6km walk is expected to take around 2hrs with 50m ascent and 100m descent. The terrain is mainly forest trails.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Vinales (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 3 - Vinales: Mogotes, tobacco and cigars

This morning we take a walk in the Valle de Vinales, through the mogotes and tobacco fields, where the green of the vegetation contrasts with the red of the soil and the grey of the limestone. En route we visit a small-holding growing local crops. We learn how the tobacco is grown and harvested, and how the celebrated cigars are made. The afternoon is free to relax in Vinales, visit the local small botanical garden or take an optional local walk with our Tour Leader. Today's 5km walk is expected to take around 3hrs with 150m descent. The terrain is mainly on unmade paths and access roads. The optional walk will be between one and three hours, and on similar terrain.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Vinales (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Drive past the Bay of Pigs. Explore Cienfuegos. Enjoy the music of Trinidad

Starting out early we drive east for approximately six hours towards the Bay of Pigs. We drive through large citrus and sugar plantations and down onto the Zapata Peninsula to the coastline where the infamous 1961 'Bay of Pigs' attack (Cuban exiles supported by the US) failed to overthrow the Communist regime. After an optional lunch and swim in the area we continue on for another two hours to Cienfuegos, where we take a walking tour of this sheltered colonial seaport. Another hours drive by the foothills of the wooded Escambray Mountains and along the Caribbean coast brings us to the beautiful colonial town of Trinidad where we meet our homestay hosts for the next three nights. Trinidad was founded in 1514 by the Spanish and was strategically important for their conquest of Latin America. However during the 18th Century the sugar industry became well established in the nearby Valle de Los Ingenios and Trinidad prospered, leaving a legacy of beautiful 18th and 19th century buildings now in varying states of repair. During this time the town was regularly attacked by pirates and it is said that the street layout is deliberately complicated so as to confuse attackers. Today the winding streets of Trinidad still have their own charm and encourage both exploration of the town and relaxation in the street cafes, while the nearby sand beaches can easily be reached by taxi. Just off the main square is a great place to enjoy a cocktail and dance the night away under the stars on the steps of the local Casa de la Musica.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Hike through the jungle in Topes de Collantes

This morning we drive inland to Topes de Collantes Natural Park in the beautiful, wooded Escambray Mountains, famous for its many endemic species of flora and fauna. After a short bus ride up a steep, switch-back road into the forest we arrive at the park entrance. Here we meet our local guide, who along with our tour leader will accompany us in the park, and climb into an old Russian military style truck for the journey to the start of our walk. Our hike may vary depending on the weather and the group but will take

us well off the beaten track and reward our efforts with great views. We walk through tropical forest, and along rivers to arrive to Hacienda Codina, a small isolated lodge in the forest with beautiful gardens visited by hummingbirds, where we can relax and take refreshments. We then return to Trinidad for a short city tour, including a cocktail making lesson, and an optional evening of music and dancing. Today's 10km walk is expected to take around 4hrs with 200m ascent and 400m descent. The terrain is unmade forest trails.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Walk in El Cubano Reserve. Free afternoon

Today we take a walk in the nearby local El Cubano Reserve, following the river as it leads up into the tropical forest. We'll look out for local flora and fauna en route before reaching a waterfall and one of the best natural swimming pools in Cuba. We have plenty of time for a swim and to relax at this beautiful place before retracing our steps to where our bus is waiting for us. The afternoon is free to explore Trinidad at your own pace, visit the beach or take a salsa lesson. Today's 4km walk is expected to take around 1.5hrs with 120m descent. The terrain is mainly unmade forest trails.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Visit Che Guevara's Memorial. Explore Havana on foot

Driving north we travel for a couple of hours to Santa Clara, home to the monument and mausoleum of Cuba's national hero Che Guevara. We visit the mausoleum and small museum before continuing our journey for approximately another four hours. We arrive to Havana in time for an afternoon walk around 'Old Havana' visiting Capitol, Parque Central, and the main squares before returning to our Centro Habana guesthouses for our last night. Our Tour Leader will organise an optional last dinner in 'Old Havana'.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Tour ends Havana

Our tour ends today after breakfast, in Havana.

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	6km
Day 3	7km
Day 4	
Day 5	12km
Day 6	4km

Walking grade

Easy

Trek details

On this holiday we walk on 4 days for between 1.5 and 4 hours. There is also the option of additional walk on Day 3. The terrain is mainly unmade paths. We have graded this walking tour as easy.

Max walking altitude (m)

820

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

Gain a unique insight into Cuban life staying with local families in casas particulares, family-run guesthouses.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
Truck



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

7 nights simple casas
particulares

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

Salsa lesson in Trinidad: 10 CUC per hour Excursion to beach in Trinidad: approximately 7 CUC per person

Clothing

Bring light, quick dry clothes to walk in. A light fleece and long trousers may be useful for early mornings and evenings. Light waterproofs are also recommended.

Footwear

Well broken in walking shoes/hiking boots with good ankle support are recommended, and shoes, trainers or sandals for relaxing. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of luggage, and a day sack. It may be necessary to carry your luggage at times when moving to your homestays so please pack as lightly as possible. A 20-30 litre day sack is recommended, you will need to carry what you need for the day which may include a raincoat, jumper, camera, sun-cream, picnic lunch etc. On hot days you will carry fewer clothes but more drinking water.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle, torch, sunblock, sunhat, sunglasses and insect repellent. You may also wish to bring walking poles, swimming things and binoculars.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

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 Explore Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip. Accordingly you should allow approx. CUC40 for gratuities for local staff. 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, Truck

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 the trip.

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. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure. 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 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.

Maximum altitude (m)

820

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.
