

EXPLORE!



Highlights of Cuba by Bicycle

8 days

Cuba - Trip code CSC

Highlights of Cuba by Bicycle

Cycling on quiet roads we explore Cuba's verdant countryside, colonial towns and revolutionary history. From Havana we cycle past the historic Bay of Pigs and inviting tropical beaches to charming Trinidad where we experience Cuban hospitality in Casas Particulares. Along the way we learn about modern day Cuba and excellent live music is never far away. Finally we visit Che Guevara's Mausoleum in Santa Clara. 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

- ★ **Cycle Cuba** - With very little traffic this is the ideal way to see the island Tropical Island - Cycling with a backdrop of lush vegetation, pristine beaches and mountains Havana Vieja (Havana Old Town) - Explore this atmospheric UNESCO Heritage Site Spanish Colonial Towns - Including the beautiful original founding towns of Remedios and Trinidad Casas Particulares - Stay in locally-owned and run private homestays in the heart of colonial Trinidad Historical Sites - Cycle beside the infamous 'Bay of Pigs'; visit Che Guevara's mausoleum in Santa Clara

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.

CYCLING GRADE:

Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate rides on the same tour. You'll be cycling through flat or gently undulating terrain, with the occasional more energetic ascent.

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 - Join tour in Havana

Our tour begins in Havana. Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive colonial cities surviving in the Americas today. Crumbling tenement buildings and 1950s American Cadillacs rub shoulders with white marble grandeur and the still audible echoes of the Cuban Revolution. The largest city in the Caribbean and Cuba's political and cultural heart, it is the perfect place to start this remarkable journey. In Havana we stay in 'casas particulares' - family-run guesthouses. On arrival to the main joining point casa in the old centre of Havana (as detailed in your Joining Instructions) you will be met by your host and shown to your room in one of the local guesthouses in the surrounding area.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Cycle the Bay of Pigs. Drive to Yaguanabo via Cienfuegos

This morning we depart the city and drive (3 hours) to the Zapata Peninsula and the Bay of Pigs - the infamous site of a failed US-backed invasion by Cuban exiles in 1961. We then enjoy a relatively easy warm-up ride along the flat, following the Caribbean coast from Boca de Guama our route ends at the Cueva de los Peces - a flooded tectonic fault (or cenote) with resident tropical fish which provides a great swimming opportunity. There is time for an optional visit the museum dedicated to the failed invasion before we resume our journey by road, travelling on to the colonial city of Cienfuegos. We have a chance to take in some of its impressive 19th century architecture on a short walking tour of the centre, before continuing by bus (45 mins) to our hotel at Yaguanabo beach. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 28 kilometres



Accommodation: Villa Yaguanabo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Coastal ride to Trinidad. Afternoon walking tour and cocktail making

Continuing south-east this morning we cycle along the Caribbean coast to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Trinidad, one of the best preserved colonial towns in the country. Founded in 1514, the town was a haven for pirates and slavers before the arrival of the French in the early years of the 19th century and today remains one of Cuba's cultural gems. This afternoon we enjoy a walking tour around the town, taking in the lovely setting of the central square and the cathedral. For the next two nights we will enjoy local hospitality staying in casas particulares - private houses. Later this afternoon, we will enjoy a cocktail making class where we can learn to make some of Cuba's famous drinks such as mojitos and daiquiris. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres (Total ascent and descent 150 metres)



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Free day in Trinidad for additional rides or relaxation

We have a chance to enjoy Cuba's beautiful Caribbean coastline today. Options include a day relaxing on the beach, or perhaps a trip on a catamaran out into the azure waters that lie off the coast. For those still wanting to stretch their legs we also have the option to cycle out to the Ancon Peninsula (30 kilometres return). Alternatively, you can simply relax on the white sands of nearby Playa Ancon, or perhaps return to wander through Trinidad's charming colonial streets. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres (optional, unescorted)



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Ride through the 'valley of the sugar mills'

Today's cycle ride through the scenic Valle de los Ingenios (valley of the sugar mills), with its ruined mills and infamous slave watchtower, is possibly the most rewarding (and longest!). By the middle years of the 19th century the valley was responsible for a third of all Cuba's sugar production, before the wars of independence saw the mills destroyed. We cycle to the watchtower of Manaca Iznaga, before continuing through the valley. Re-joining our bus we drive a short distance to the colonial town of Sancti Spiritus where we stop to pay a short visit to the old town, before returning to our casas in Trinidad by bus. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 60 kilometres (Total ascent 150 metres, total descent 250 metres)



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Scenic downhill ride from Topes de Collantes; bus to Santa Clara

Just a few miles behind Trinidad looms the Sierra Escambray, one of the three main mountain chains in Cuba. It has peaks up to 1100 metres, an incredible abundance of tropical and semi-tropical vegetation on its slopes, and some of the best Cuban coffee is also produced here. Climbing up into the Sierra on the road from Trinidad is an experience, with slopes as steep as 20% (don't worry, we do this by bus!). Those wishing to do the toughest cycling challenge to be found in Cuba may want to try by leaving in the early hours of the day and being picked up by the group later. We start cycling on the highest sections of the road, near Topes de Collantes, a village and mountain retreat built in the early 1950s. From here it is one of the most scenic downhills through the jungle to be found anywhere in Cuba. Before leaving the mountains we can stop at a local coffee farmer's home to enjoy a meal (not included) and see the process of coffee tasting and of course we will try it as well! Then heading north, passing through the village of Jibacoa we finally reach the provincial town Manicaragua where we finish our final ride. We will take a short bus transfer to our hotel on the outskirts of Santa Clara. The town of Santa Clara is less visited by tourism and therefore has the authentic feel of a busy Cuban provincial town. It town played an important role in the Cuban revolution, as it was here that Ernesto 'Che' Guevara won a decisive battle in December 1958 which led to the fall of Havana a few days later. Depending on the time we finish our ride and arrive here we will either visit the sites today or tomorrow morning. The 'Tren Blindado' site explains the decisive battle to take Batista's armoured train. The most remarkable site is the Che Guevara monument and mausoleum together with a museum dedicated to the life of this hero of the Cuban revolution. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres (350 metres ascent)



Accommodation: Hotel Los Caneyes (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Visit Che Guevara Mausoleum. Afternoon tour of Havana

There is no cycling planned today and depending on our activities yesterday we will either drive straight off after breakfast or visit the remaining places of interest. The Che Guevara Monument is the final resting place of one of the world's most iconic figures and one of the country's most emotive shrines to its revolutionary heritage. Continuing on to Havana (three hours), we then spend this afternoon wandering through the heart of the old capital, exploring the neo-classical architecture of the Vieja district and taking in the baroque grandeur of the 18th century Catedral de San Cristobal de la Habana among other fine buildings from another age. No cycling today.



Accommodation: Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Tour ends in Havana

The tour ends in Havana this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

DAILY DISTANCES



Optional Rides

General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 198 km over five days (an average of 40 km per day). One of the cycling days is circular and therefore optional. The terrain is mostly flat and on tarmac, although this is in poor condition in places. Cuban roads have little traffic. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as easy to moderate.

Bike included

27 gear Stevens Galant SX or similar hybrid bikes.

Bike information

Your included bike will be a 27 gear Stevens Galant SX Hybrid or similar make and model with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

EasyToModerate



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
Bicycle



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Cycle
guide
Driver(s)



Accommodation

5 nights simple casas
particulares
2 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 3 CUC, Museo de la Revolucion 8 CUC, Museo de Arte Colonial 8 CUC, Museo Bellas Artes 5 CUC, Rum museum 7 CUC Bay of Pigs invasion museum - 2 CUC Cayo Las Iguanas catamaran excursion near Trinidad - 55 CUC Please note - most museums in Cuba charge for use of Camera's and Camcorders, this can be up to 7 CUC per usage.

Clothing

Pack for warm and hot conditions. Bring cycling gear such as padded shorts, cycle gloves and quick drying cycle shirts. Remember weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool and wet in the high altitude of the Sierra Escambray or even on some evenings in Havana, so bring some warmer clothing too. Wet weather gear is essential at all times in case of rain. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour 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 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 approx. CUC 25 for gratuities for local staff. 10% is expected in restaurants. Please note tipping is also customary for musicians and for public conveniences so small notes and coins are always handy

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, Bicycle

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](#)

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.