

# EXPLORE!



**Classic Cuba**  
15 days

Cuba - Trip code DCL

## Classic Cuba

Based in comfortable hotels and characterful 'casas particulares', or homestays, we explore this fascinating Caribbean island. The homestays in Trinidad are often full of history, family photos and memorabilia, giving us a deeper insight into Cuban life. We tour the capital, Havana, and travel to the spectacular landscape of 'mogotes' in Vinales. We discover Fidel Castro's revolutionary headquarters, deep in the Sierra Maestra Mountains; visit the infamous Bay of Pigs and explore attractive colonial towns including Trinidad. We end with a couple of days' relaxation on the sandy beaches of Cayo Ensenachos.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Havana** - Experience the faded colonial splendour and vibrancy of Cuba's capital
- ★ **Vinales Valley** - Admire the spectacular scenery and steep limestone 'mogotes' rising from the valley floor. Learn how Cuba's famous cigars are made
- ★ **Trinidad** - Enjoy the laidback atmosphere of this colonial town. Dance at Casa de la Musica or sip a rum cocktail under the stars
- ★ **Comandancia de la Plata** - Trek through the jungle to Fidel's 1950's rebel headquarters
- ★ **Relaxation** - Enjoy the pristine beach setting of Cayo Ensenachos
- ★ **Casas Particulares** - Stay in locally-owned and run private homestays in Trinidad

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Premium

Our premium accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

#### 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:

##### 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

Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive surviving colonial cities in the Americas. The modern city presents an overwhelming feast for the senses, where crumbling tenement buildings and 50s style American Cadillacs rub shoulders with colonial grandeur and revolutionary zeal, and all to the hypnotic beat of salsa music.

Founded in 1519, the city's fame and prestige only came about with the Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru, when its strategic location at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico saw it eclipse Santiago as the country's capital. For two centuries, this remote outpost of the Spanish Empire played a pivotal role in the expansion of Spain's colonial interests in the Americas and, at one time, it was the most fortified city in the New World. The rise of American influence, in direct opposition to the fall of Spain's power in the region, saw the city hurl headlong into the 20th century, becoming a haven for the worst excesses of western decadence. This all came to an end in 1959, when Fidel Castro expelled the Americans and set the country on its socialist course into the history books.

#### Hotel Nacional

Spectacularly located in the Vedado district of central Havana, the Nacional is something of a landmark in Havana. Evoking the elegance and sophistication of the 1930s this historical institution has seen the likes of Churchill, Sinatra and Ernest Hemingway grace its neoclassical hallways. Even today the rich combination of Art Deco features it assures guests of a level of service that harks back to the golden days of Havana's glory years, and its expansive gardens and Moorish arcades present a truly unique vantage point overlooking the Florida Straits.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

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

This morning, our tour explores the highlights of Havana's Vieja (Old) district; the art deco architecture of coastal Malecon and the Vedado and Miramar suburbs, where kids play baseball below rusting street lights.

After taking in the opulent marbled grandeur of the Capitolio and the symbolic expanse of the Plaza de la Revolucion, we take a stroll through old Havana. Here we will find beautiful neoclassical buildings at the Plaza de Armas (main square) and an impressive baroque cathedral, before a lunch visit to the famous La Bodeguita del Melia, home to Hemingway's favourite Mojito.

Havana truly is a city in which to immerse yourself and, after our brief introduction this morning, the afternoon has been left free to continue exploring at your leisure. You may wish to visit the City Museum, or the captivating Museum of the Revolution, where you can find the revered hull of the Granma, the boat that brought Castro back from exile and onto the world stage in 1956.

Alternatively, you may wish to return to Old Havana to enjoy a stroll through its cobbled streets, stopping to enjoy a mojito at a local bar.

In the late afternoon, once the freshening cool breeze blows in from the Caribbean, you may be tempted to enjoy a lively sunset stroll along the Malecon, where fishermen and locals take in the magical setting before the imposing ramparts of its old Spanish forts.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

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## DAY 3 - Full day trip to the picturesque Vinales countryside

This morning we head into what is arguably the most picturesque part of Cuba - the Vinales Valley. In this World Heritage Site, 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 walk through this spectacular landscape to El Palmaito, with mogotes towering above us as we pass tobacco and coffee plantations. This remarkably diverse area contains endemic flora and a rich selection of birdlife, including hummingbirds, Cuban trogons and mockingbirds. We will stop to have lunch before visiting the Cueva del Indio - the largest cave system in the country, filled with surreal rock formations and subterranean pools. Later this afternoon, we return to Havana.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 4 - Travel to Trinidad via the Bay of Pigs Museum

Today, we head east on our journey to Trinidad, driving through giant citrus and sugar plantations and out onto the Zapata Peninsula. Our journey is broken up with a wonderful swimming opportunity in a 'cenote', 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.

Upon arrival in Trinidad, you will have some free time to wander through the old centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here, cobblestone streets and colonial architecture make it one of the most bewitching heritage sites in the country.

Please note that the specified hotel in Trinidad is our preferred option, but is subject to last minute changes. If it changes prior to your trip we will inform you, and if we are unable to accommodate you in a hotel of premium standard, we will advise you of any refund payable.

### Casa Particulares - Trinidad

Casas Particulares are private accommodation or homestays. Each one is unique and can vary from a local home to a converted colonial building. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience another culture and learn more about the Cuban way-of-life (please note that not all casa owners will speak English). We work with a selection of casas, and will choose one of these for your stay.



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



Simple Casas Particulares



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Explore Trinidad; optional excursion to Playa Ancon

This morning, a walking tour takes us 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 Blanco. 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



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Stop in Camaguey en route to Bayamo

Today's drive to Bayamo in South East Cuba takes us via two of the original seven settlements founded by Diego Velasquez when he claimed Cuba for Spain. After a brief stop in Sancti Spiritus, we continue to Camaguey for lunch. Cuba's third largest city is a cultural centre for music, ballet and art. It has a beautiful colonial heritage hidden amongst a labyrinthine network of narrow streets that we will have time to wander through during our time here.

Bayamo, our base for the night, is another of the original seven Spanish settlements. Despite its inhabitants burning much of it to the ground in an act of rebellion in 1869, it has retained some of its colonial architecture. Today, it is known for its laid back atmosphere and its chess players, who while away hours playing the game in the main square.

### Royalton Hotel

Located in Bayamo's old quarter, close to the Cathedral of San Salvador and Parque Cespedes, the Royalton Hotel dates back to the 1940s and affords some great opportunities for people watching from its street and rooftop terraces. This hotel cannot be categorised as 'premium' but it does provide a good base for our explorations at 'La Plata' - the unmissable highlight of eastern Cuba.



### Accommodation: Royalton Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Visit La Comandancia de la Plata, drive to Santiago

An early start sees us heading into the beautiful mountain landscapes of the Sierra Maestra to enjoy one of the country's most fascinating and authentic experiences - a trek deep into the jungle to the revolutionary headquarters of La Comandancia de La Plata. We transfer into 4WD vehicles at Bartolome Maso to allow us to ascend the steep asphalt road to Alto de Naranjo, 950 metres above sea level. From here, we trek for three kilometres through virgin rainforest. The path is uneven and can be muddy, helping us to understand the appeal of our destination's remoteness. Upon reaching the hideaway where Fidel Castro and Che Guevara took refuge for two years, we discover what seems like a snapshot in time of one of the most pivotal periods in Cuba's history. It was here that Fidel began to formulate his plans for the future of the country and the site presents us with a captivating glimpse of life during those dangerous days. 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.

We will complete our day with a journey to Santiago - Cuba's second city and the epicentre of revolutionary ideals since the time of Cespedes. Founded by Diego Velazquez de Cuellar in 1514, the city has been at the heart of Cuban culture and history since its inception. Briefly the country's capital, it rose to prominence during the 17th and 18th centuries, with first the arrival of Spanish settlers from Jamaica, then French plantation owners from Haiti. The region saw much of the fighting of both wars for independence and it was in Santiago that success against Batista's forces was finally, and very publicly, acknowledged by Fidel Castro on 1st January 1959. Little wonder then that the city has earned itself the moniker of 'Hero City of the Republic of Cuba'. Santiago itself is an eclectic mix of all the best and worst of Cuban life. Its colonial architecture glimmers in attractive shades of pastel, whilst its Afro-Caribbean mix affords it the unmistakable vibrancy of a true city of the revolution.

### Melia Santiago

Melia Santiago is located in the heart of one of the most elegant areas of Santiago de Cuba also known as the capital of the Caribbean. This modern hotel is situated only a couple of kilometres away from the town centre and hosts four great restaurants and three pools around which you will be able to relax during your free time.



### Accommodation: Melia Santiago (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 8 - See the sights of Santiago de Cuba, free afternoon

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 museum / shop.

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: Melia Santiago (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Drive to Sancti Spiritus, free time to explore

Today we have a long drive to return to Sancti Spiritus, where we can spend the remainder of the day wandering through the colonial architecture remnants from the great days of the sugar cane production in the area.

Please note that the specified hotel in Sancti Spiritus is our preferred option, but is subject to last minute changes. If it changes prior to your trip we will inform you, and if we are unable to accommodate you in a hotel of a premium standard, we will advise you of any refund payable.

### Hotel Del Rijo

Hotel Dell Rijo is a small charming hotel located in the centre of the old town with the Museum of Colonial Art, The Main Parochial (national monument) and the bridge on the Río Yayabo are all within walking distance. This hotel cannot be categorised as 'premium' but it does provide a good base for our exploration of Sancti Spiritus.



## Accommodation: Hotel Del Rijo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Head to Cayo Ensenachos on the Sabana archipelago

Our destination today is the all-inclusive resort of the Iberostar Ensenachos on the island of Cayo Ensenachos, lying close to the spectacular Caribbean jewels of the Archipelago de Sabana. The island is connected to the mainland by a causeway. On arrival, there will be time to relax and enjoy the luxurious pleasure of two of Cuba's most pristine beaches.

### Iberostar Ensenachos

A 5-star all-inclusive resort set amidst 100 hectares of lush tropical gardens, the Iberostar Ensenachos (formerly Royal Hideaway) is located along 2 kilometres of some of the best beaches in Cuba. Occupying three separate buildings, built around a central courtyard, the rooms enjoy views of the gardens, ocean or pool and each offers a private balcony or terrace. In addition, a range of international cuisine, a water sports centre, heated pool, health club and gym are just some of the other facilities on offer.



**Accommodation: Iberostar Ensenachos** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 11 - Free in Cayo Ensenachos to relax on the beach

Today is left free for you to do as you wish. Whilst enjoying the many water-based activities on offer, you are likely to see interesting birdlife, such as flamingos, who make a home for themselves on the small sandy islands that dot this archipelago. On dry land, activities such as tennis and volleyball can be enjoyed. Alternatively, you may choose to simply relax on one of the glorious beaches or in a hammock while sipping a Cuban cocktail.



**Accommodation: Iberostar Ensenachos** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 12 - In Cayo Ensenachos, optional water based activities

Once again, today is left free to enjoy at your leisure.



**Accommodation: Iberostar Ensenachos** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 13 - Return to Havana via Santa Clara

After a last free morning at the resort, we return to Havana. En route, we will visit Che's Mausoleum in Santa Clara, the final resting place of one of the world's most iconic and recognisable revolutionary figures. 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 him. We will also visit the museum dedicated to Guevara's life, containing many interesting letters and artefacts.

On arrival in Havana, you will have a free evening to wander the streets of the Vieja district, enjoying the live music and perhaps a final Cuban cocktail, or two.

Please note that the specified hotel in Havana is our preferred option, but is subject to last minute changes. If it changes prior to your trip we will inform you, and if we are unable to accommodate you in a hotel of premium standard, we will advise you of any refund payable.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - To Las Terrazas; walks and birdwatching

Today we will spend the day at Las Terrazas - a fascinating eco-tourism centre where valuable biodiversity research is being undertaken. Here, we can enjoy interesting walks through old coffee plantations within a picturesque hill setting. Bird watching opportunities abound and we hope to sight the rare Cuban trogon, Cuba's national bird, as well as small songbirds, including nightingales. Other wildlife includes reptiles, such as water lizards, and one of the smallest species of frog in the world. You may also choose to enjoy an optional zip wire ride in the canopy or swim in the San Juan River before our return to Havana.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 15 - Tour ends Havana

Our tour ends in Havana after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Explore staff love Cuba!

Read about their experiences and what you can expect from your trip.

## Why book this trip

This trip is an excellent opportunity to visit Cuba in style, before changes start to happen. We use premium hotels across most of the island, including the Hotel Nacional in Havana, and the 2 nights in Casas Particulares offer a deeper experience of Cuban life - often an unexpected highlight of the trip.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 14  
Lunch: 6  
Dinner: 3



### Transport

Bus



### Trip staff

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



### Accommodation

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

## Trip information

### Country information

### 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

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Havana - Museo de la Ciudad CUC3, CUC8 with guide; Museo de la Revolucion & Arte Colonial CUC8 each, CUC10 with guide; Rum museum CUC7 .

Trinidad - Cayo Blanco or 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.

Comandancia de la Plata - Camera charge CUC5 and video CUC10.

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 useful except December-January when a heavier fleece and waterproof are recommended. An umbrella is useful in the rainy season. Please note there is a smart dress code for the Iberostar Ensenachos which includes no shorts and closed shoes in the restaurants

## Footwear

Comfortable walking boots. Shoes and trainers or sandals.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a shoulder bag or daysac. Remember you may be expected to carry your own luggage, so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

A torch, water bottle, good quality sunglasses, insect repellent and high factor sunscreen are all essential. You may also wish to bring a pocket-knife with you, and your own mask and snorkel for your stay at the Iberostar Ensenachos.

## 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 approx. CUC40 for gratuities for local staff. 10% is expected in restaurants.

## Country Information

### 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. Even the premium-rated accommodation can occasionally suffer 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.

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 Casas are clean, 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. They are often full of history, family photos and memorabilia, providing you with a deeper insight to Cuban life. 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.

## Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## 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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

## Non refundable permits

### 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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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