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BEST SELLER

Cuba Libre!

CUBA - TRIP CODE CL
DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

In timeless Cuba, fifties-style American cadillacs roll through the faded colonial streets, while in the music halls rum flows freely. Beyond the island's iconic cities, find wild landscapes, from forests to dramatic limestone hills, as well as the beautiful Caribbean coastline.

- **Colonial Trinidad** - Music bursts from every corner of this colourful, cobbled old town; explore it from privately run homestays and get a deeper experience of local life
- **Escambray Mountains** - Walk through mountain forests, swim in fresh water pools and camp out under the stars
- **Revolutionary history** - Get underneath the revolution with visits to Castro and Che's mountain hideout as well as the Bay of Pigs museum.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 14
Lunch: 3
Dinner: 2



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



TRANSPORT
Bus



ACCOMMODATION
2 nights simple
camping
2 nights
comfortable casas
particulares
10 nights
comfortable hotel



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Havana

Arrive in Havana. Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive cities in the Americas. It's also one of the most exciting: the modern city is a fascinating mix of old and new, with crumbling tenement blocks and 1950s American Cadillacs rubbing shoulders with grand colonial buildings and monuments to the revolution.

Due to the number of evening flights into Havana, our local Leader plans to do the welcome briefing in the morning of day two, and will leave a message in reception with details on timings and everything else that you'll need for the day. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Havana at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Havana's Jose Marti International Airport (airport code: HAV) which is 23km, around 45 minutes from the airport. A representative from our local partners in Cuba will meet you at Havana Airport and assist you with the transfer formalities.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose head out to explore Old Havana, just a short walk from the elegant Capitolio building and the scenic Malecon sea esplanade with fine views of the city. There are several restaurants and bars within walking distance and you're likely to hear the hypnotic rhythms of salsa, trova and son being played along the Paseo del Prado.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sevilla Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Visit Havana's highlights, rum and tobacco pairing

We explore the city this morning, 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 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'll 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. It's a good place to start delving into Cuba's absorbing history. 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 bars of the city.

Later this afternoon, we will get into Cuba's quintessential culture with a rum and tobacco pairing, before having the evening free to sample some of the nightlife of the capital.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sevilla Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

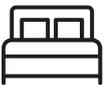




MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Travel to the limestone landscape of Vinales

Travelling west of Havana today, our destination 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 jungle 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 can look forward to a two-hour easy 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. After our cigar pairing yesterday it's interesting to compare the commercial cigar market with the farmers who actually grow the tobacco, and we'll meet some of these along the way. After this walk you may wish to visit the Cueva del Indio - one of the many caves in this area - or take a swim in the hotel pool.



ACCOMMODATION:

Rancho San Vicente (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Drive to Santa Clara, view the Che Guevara Memorial

We have a long drive of 450km today, past Havana and east to Santa Clara in the centre of Cuba. We'll stop regularly to break up the journey, notably at the stunning Soroa Rainforest where we take a walk to see the orchids. Nearer to Santa Clara, we'll visit the Che Guevara monument, with an enormous transcription of Che's last letter to Fidel - your tour leader can translate this for you - it's fascinating to read about how much the revolution meant to both of them.

The 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 and we'll explore some more of the Che Guevara sites tomorrow.



ACCOMMODATION:
Los Caneyes Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Visit Sancti Spiritus en route to Camaguey

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 to 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)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



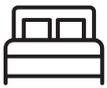
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - 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.

If the heat gets too much, you might 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)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

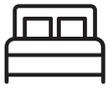


MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - 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. If there is time this evening, we'll head to El Morro Fort for the firing of the cannon, happening each night at sunset.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Las Americas (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 8 - See the sights of Santiago; drive to the beach at Santa Lucia

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. This morning, we'll have a brief tour of the city and will see the Moncada Barracks, which still have bullet holes on the outside after an unsuccessful attack by Castro and 118 students in 1953.

After our short overview of the city, we'll drive the 300km to Santa Lucia, approximately 5 hours, on Cuba's north coast. With 20km of golden sand, Santa Lucia is an idyllic Cuban beach perfect for an afternoon swim. The resorts in the area are typically Cuban - that is to say, somewhat past their best. However, the beach can't be beaten and the calm turquoise water is very inviting.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Roc Santa Lucia (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

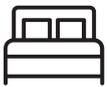


MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Morning on the beach; travel to Trinidad

After having a relaxing swim this morning, we leave Santa Lucia behind and head towards Trinidad. We stop at the Valle de los Ingenios, also known as the Valley of the Sugar Mills en route. This was the centre of sugar production for 100 years from the late 18th century, and 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.

By early evening, we will arrive at our casa particular just outside the beautiful Spanish colonial town of Trinidad. 'Casas particulares', or local guesthouses, are a style of accommodation unique to Cuba. The industry began in the early '90s when entrepreneurial homeowners rented out rooms in their houses for a little extra cash, a side hustle that was initially illegal in a country that did not allow for private enterprise. In 1997 the Cuban government legalised the business, and while you can now find some large casas that are run more as a typical bed and breakfast, the majority are still a couple of rooms in the owner's house. The beauty of the casas is that each one is very different. You will have ensuite bathrooms, hot water, a delicious breakfast and air conditioning across the board, but that is where the similarities end. Décor and aesthetics vary dramatically not just between cities but also between streets. Some are still the primary residence for the owners, which is a great opportunity to interact with local people, or practice your Spanish. In other cases, the owner may live elsewhere. In Trinidad, many (although not all) of the casas have some outdoor space, whether it is a terrace, balcony or courtyard. So while everyone's experience will be different, using casas gives us a great alternative to staying in standard hotels, and a new perspective on Cuban life.



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Explore Trinidad, the UNESCO World Heritage Site

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.

Nowadays it's a fantastic place to get lost in, with a small centre and shady plazas.

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, just a 15 minute taxi ride away, or explore some more of Trinidad's museums and local art galleries. There is also the opportunity to take a salsa lesson with a local teacher. Later, the open-air Casa de la Musica is a great place to listen to some live Cuban music, sipping a mojito under the stars.



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Journey to Topes de Collantes, forest walks and waterfall swimming

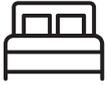
Today we travel inland to Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve Park, famous for its many endemic species of flora and fauna. We can look forward to a two-night stay here to explore this glorious area.

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 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 in tents, with male and female washing facilities in a block nearby. Foam mattresses are provided, but you will benefit from bringing a sleeping bag. 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)



Grade: Simple Camping



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

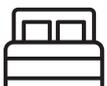
DAY 12 - Walks in Topes de Collantes National Park

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 Hacienda with the truck.

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 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)



Grade: Simple Camping



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 13 - Return to Havana via the Bay of Pigs Museum

Leaving the Escambray Mountains behind, we set off west, hugging the coastline with views over the sparkling turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. We plan to break our journey back to Havana with several stops, the first of which is at the colonial seaport of Cienfuegos. Here, we'll have a walking tour of the town, including the Marti Park overlooked by the grand Italian-style Tomas Terry theatre. Our journey continues to Playa Giron, arriving in the early afternoon, and here we'll 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. The final stop on the Zapata Peninsula is a wonderful swimming opportunity in a 'cenote' (pool) where the ceiling of an underground river has collapsed. By the evening we'll have arrived back in Havana at our hotel.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sevilla Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Free day in Havana

Today you are completely at leisure to enjoy the sights and sounds of Havana. Visit some of the city's museums, or perhaps one of the famous cigar factories. Walking around the city is easy, but there are also plenty of vintage cars that you can hire to see the city in style.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sevilla Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 15 - End trip in Havana

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Havana.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Havana at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Havana's Jose Marti International Airport (airport code: HAV) which is 23km, around 45 minutes from the hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and 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	Plugs	Religion	Language
-5	2 Pin Flat and 2 Pin Round	60% Catholic	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; Museo de la Revolucion & Arte Colonial CUC8 each; Rum museum CUC7.

Vinales - Cueva del Indio CUC8 plus transport

Soroa - Orchid Gardens CUC3

Trinidad - Excursion to Playa Ancon - CUC10 per taxi each way; Salsa classes CUC10 per hour.

Camaguey - Bicitaxi tour CUC6.

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 is 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

It's very difficult to buy goods in Cuba, so it's important to come prepared with everything you'll need. A torch (with spare batteries and bulb), filter water bottle, travel pillow, towel, sunblock, pocket knife, sunglasses, sun hat and swim gear are all useful items. You may wish to bring a walking pole for the Escambray Mountains, if you normally use one while walking. Insect repellent is also essential.

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 this stay.

You may also wish to bring your own mask and snorkel for your time in Santa Lucia.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline

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, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow CUC40 for group tipping

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

Please note tipping is also customary for musicians and for public conveniences so small notes and coins are always handy

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	Beer price	Water price
£12.00-15.00	£2	£1.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Cuban National Peso (CUP)

Recommended Currency For Exchange

The CUP is a closed currency so you will not be able to change your money in advance. You will be able to change at the airport on arrival. When changing money, just change a small amount for your first few days and cross-check the amount that you're given with the receipt. The exchange rate with the CUP is approximately CUP 33 to the British Pound. US dollars are not accepted in shops and other businesses, exchanging dollars you 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. Please check on line for up to date information The departure lounge Havana airport only accept US\$, Euros or CAN\$. Any spare CUP need to be spent or exchanged before entering the departure lounge.

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Please note ATM are not widely available

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 some places, but may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Accommodation notes

Accommodation in Cuba is a strange mix of run-down colonial buildings and slightly cheesy 'resort'-style locations. Sometimes the water and electricity supplies can be unreliable, and service levels in government hotels, shops and restaurants are variable and generally quite slow. This is not a service-oriented 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.

We use casas particulares in Trinidad, which is a Spanish term meaning private accommodation or homestay, specific to 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 between houses, which means that each one has a unique character of their own. Your Explore Leader will coordinate accommodation arrangements on tour.

You will also be spending two nights camping out at haciendas in the Escambray Mountains, a fantastic opportunity to experience the beautiful setting of the Topes de Collantes National Park. The haciendas are converted farmsteads with a dining area, bar, simple toilet and shower facilities and some flat terraces where our tents will be set up. In warmer weather it is also possible to sleep out on a camping

mat under the stars. Surrounded by beautifully tended flowerbeds, this is a wonderfully relaxing and peaceful place to stay.

Cuba

Food and drink

Food supplies to Cuba are sometimes in short supply as a result of their economic situation as well as the restrictions due to the US embargo. For this reason it is not uncommon for some restaurants and hotels to run short of ingredients. In addition, Cubans tend not to use much spice in their cooking and there can be a lack of variety resulting in the same meals being repeatedly offered. That said, local produce is usually very fresh and often organic.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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 citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

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 be able to apply 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.

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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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.

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.

Tourism in Cuba



Explore staff love Cuba!

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

Why book this trip

This comprehensive tour of Cuba is one of our most popular. A chance to explore Cuba beyond the classic beaches, you will stay in locally-owned and run homestays in the heart of colonial Trinidad and sleep out under the stars in Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve Park.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**