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BEST SELLER

Highlights of Mexico and Cuba

CUBA, GUATEMALA, MEXICO - TRIP CODE MXCN

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

This adventurous journey takes us from the sprawling capital of Mexico City out towards the Yucatan coast at Playa del Carmen, with only a short onwards hop to the culturally unique island of Cuba. Explore indigenous villages and vast canyons in Mexico, and discover the magnificent Maya architecture of Chichen Itza. Flying on to Cuba, sip mojitos under the stars in Trinidad and learn to salsa in Havana. As well as the lively city-life and revolutionary history, discover Cuba's spectacular natural beauty, taking in its pristine beaches, unspoilt forests and the dramatic landscape of Vinales.

- **Chichen Itza** - Discover the ancient ruins at one of the New Seven Wonders of the World
- **Havana** - Experience the classic cars and infectious music that fills the streets
- **Vinales** - Walk through the vast and bizarre 'mogotes'; the steep-walled limestone hills that rise from the

					
INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 12	TRIP STAFF Explore Tour Leader Boat Crew Driver(s) Local Guide(s)	TRANSPORT Bus Boat	ACCOMMODATION 7 nights simple casas particulares 8 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 tour in Mexico City

Arrive in Mexico City, the capital of Mexico and truly the heart and soul of the country. With so much rich history to discover, the city is filled with historic buildings, landmarks and the largest number of museums in the world.

Due to the number of evening flights into the international airport, your Leader plans to do the welcome meeting on 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 activities planned today, so you are free to arrive into Mexico City at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Mexico City International Airport (MEX) which is approximately a 30 minute drive from the hotel.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to have a stroll around Alameda Central, Mexico City's oldest municipal park, or visit the Templo Mayor Museum, which is known for its exhibits relating to the Aztec civilization.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Fontan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Visit the Teotihuacan Pyramids; city tour of Mexico City

On our first day in Mexico City we will drive out to the mysterious pyramids of Teotihuacan. Although abandoned thirteen centuries ago, they are still an unbelievable sight. Once the largest city in the Americas with perhaps 100,000 inhabitants, its influence continued through Middle America, and Maya craftsmen borrowed its decorative motifs and building designs. Centuries later the Aztecs revered Teotihuacan as 'the Place of the Gods'. Returning to the downtown area, we have time for a city tour of the huge Zocalo (main square) area, the cathedral and the National Palace with its murals of the famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera, depicting Mexican Independence. Many of these key sights were build on top of Tenochtitlan, the old Aztec capital.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Fontan (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Fly to Tuxtla Airport; boat trip through the Sumidero Canyon en route to San Cristobal

This morning we fly to Tuxtla airport, in the state of Chiapas, and set off for the spectacular Sumidero Canyon, a unique rift 41km long and up to 1000m deep, cut by the Rio Grijalva. This is the spot where, allegedly, in the 16th century, some 1000 Chiapa peoples committed suicide rather than submit to Spanish rule. We take a trip on a speed boat to fully appreciate the towering gorge, before driving up a scenic mountain road to San Cristobal de las Casas, the small colonial and indigenous town located high in the tree-lined Chiapas range. At 2210m above sea level, it can get quite cold at night!



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Arrecife (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 4 - Visit nearby indigenous villages; free afternoon to explore San Cristobal

Setting out northwest of San Cristobal, we drive to the traditional villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan to discover a completely different side to Mexico. These two villages are strongly indigenous, and practice an interesting blend of Catholicism and traditional Maya beliefs, which is evident from a visit to the local churches. After exploring the villages we head back to San Cristobal for free time to spend wandering around the shops, squares and markets of the small town. Indigenous groups from the surrounding hills fill the town and marketplace with their colourful dress, including the distinctive Tzotzil people who still retain much of their Maya customs and language. They are noted for their bright textiles and weavings in bold designs, and this is the place to barter for some colourful souvenirs. This afternoon you may wish to visit the Na Bolom, the House of the Jaguar, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Lacandon tribe and displays many of their artefacts, or the Kakaw museum where you can learn about the history and production of chocolate in the area.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Arrecife (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Travel to Palenque via the Roberto Barrios waterfalls

Leaving the highlands, the road is slow and winding, but there are scenic views as we descend to the jungles of Palenque. We'll be driving via the town of Villahermosa, planning to bathe at the waterfalls of Roberto Barrios before driving onto our hotel. The river at Roberto Barrios tumbles over a series of

limestone hills, forming a number of natural pools with overhangs, caves and numerous waterfalls to swim under.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Maya Tulipanes (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Discover the important Maya site of Palenque; continue by bus to Campeche

One of the highlights of our trip is today's guided visit to the famous jungle ruins of Palenque, a fascinating and important Maya site. Once the choking forest was cleared, the ruins revealed the tomb of the high priest Pakal, his body adorned with a marvellous jade death mask - one of the most prized relics of the Maya culture, discovered only in 1952. The entire site, shrouded by the steamy rainforest, has an aura of deep mystery. After our visit we continue to the stunningly well-preserved colonial city of Campeche, which we explore on foot. This UNESCO Heritage city was constantly sieged by pirates and is thus the only walled city in Mexico. It is almost so well maintained that it feels like a storybook town, and we will wander the walled ramparts, narrow cobblestoned roads, boulevard and pastel coloured buildings this afternoon. Beyond the walls of the old city, there is a bustling coastal town, with frenetic market activity, an inviting waterfront and old fishing docks to walk around.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Mision Campeche (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 7 - Visit the ancient Maya city of Uxmal and drive to Merida

The next stop on our journey is the ancient site of Uxmal. Encircled by hills, Uxmal is expansive in its design with majestic palaces and pyramids. Long geometrical friezes rank among the most splendid examples of ancient American Art. The incredible Pyramid of the Magician and the beautiful Governor's Palace are two of the finest examples of Maya art anywhere. Later in the day we drive to Merida, famed for its beautiful Spanish-Moorish style architecture, where we have time to wander along the narrow streets watching the horse-drawn carriages rattle past. Alternatively there is an option to visit the Mundo Maya Museum, with its interesting displays and artefacts from the Maya culture.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Colonial (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Explore Chichen Itza and head to Playa del Carmen

This morning we drive to Chichen Itza. Founded in AD432, re-founded in 987 and conquered by the Toltecs in the 10th century, the culture of the Maya and the Toltec gradually fused. The pyramids, palaces, temples and ball court (where death was the penalty for defeat) are adorned with astonishing sculptures. Under the pressure of the civil war, the great monuments deteriorated and the Maya civilisation collapsed. Chichen Itza remains one of the most outstanding sites in the Americas. After a lengthy visit we drive to our final hotel in Playa del Carmen.





ACCOMMODATION:
Hacienda Del Caribe (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 9 - Transfer to Cancun airport and fly to Havana

We have our final breakfast in Mexico this morning, before heading up to Cancun Airport for our flight to Havana. Some members of our Mexico group may be returning to the UK, but anyone continuing to Havana will be booked onto the same flight. This day is unguided, as your Cuban trip Leader will not join you until tomorrow morning, along with the rest of our 'Best of Western Cuba' tour group. Arriving in the late afternoon, you will journey to your centrally located 'casa particular', or local guesthouse. On arrival to the main 'reception casa' in Havana, you will be met by the host and shown to your room in one of the other casas located nearby. Each casa can only accommodate a handful of guests, giving you a great opportunity to immerse yourself in the local culture.

Havana is a fascinating city. In 'Old Havana', Spanish grand colonial buildings rub shoulders with those of glorious art deco style, as the ubiquitous old American cars and taxis cruise past. After years of neglect some of these magnificent buildings are being restored, and it is not hard to imagine back to Havana's glamorous heyday when it was a popular haunt of the rich and famous. One of the first to be restored was the impressive art deco style Bacardi Building. Today Havana has something for everyone including museums, shopping and street cafes. At night the city's legendary music and cocktail bars come into their own.



ACCOMMODATION:
Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Tour of Havana's highlights, free afternoon

Today, we explore modern-day Havana, with its mixture of restored and crumbling architectural marvels. Walking through the Vieja (old) district, we will discover the baroque cathedral, beautiful neoclassical buildings and the Plaza de Armas (main square). On our travels, we will doubtless see many brightly-painted vintage cars - the result of legislation enforced until 2011 ruling that only cars built before the 1959 revolution could be sold. We may also notice the lack of advertising - nothing but political exhortations are allowed. Passing by the famous Capitolio building, modelled on the White House, we are likely to see kids playing the hugely popular game of baseball in its grounds.

During your free afternoon, you may choose to visit the fascinating Museum of the Revolution, housed in the impressive former Presidential Palace. The City Museum is also worth a visit, exhibiting art and historical artefacts in rooms preserved with their original Colonial decoration. 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. Alternatively, you may prefer to visit the famous cigar factory.

Later this afternoon, we will get into Cuba's quintessential culture with a rum and tobacco pairing. We follow this with a salsa class, where you can learn some steps to Cuba's classic dance.

This evening, we have the option to sample some of the capital's famous nightlife. El Floridita is as celebrated for its daiquiris as it is for having been a favourite hangout for Ernest Hemingway. Likewise, the Hotel Ambos Mundos is another Hemingway landmark where the 1954 Nobel Prize winner and author of 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' lived for several years. Its roof terrace serves up exceptional mojitos - the traditional Cuban cocktail.



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Full day trip to the picturesque Vinales countryside

After travelling a couple of hours west, we reach what is arguably the most picturesque part of Cuba - the Vinales region. Here, surreal mountains jut out of the landscape, formed by the erosion of limestone over millions of years. These 'mogotes' translate as 'haystacks' - a good word for them considering their

steep sides and rounded, jungly tops. Around them, the iron-rich, red soil creates a patchwork of fields growing some of the best tobacco in the world - the raw material for Cuba's celebrated cigars.

Before our return to Havana for the night, we have the option of a two-hour trek through the valleys of this remarkable landscape to the village of El Palmarito. Mogotes tower above us as we pass through tobacco fields and past drying barns.



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Drive to Trinidad via the Bay of Pigs Museum

Today, we head east across Cuba, driving through giant citrus and sugar plantations and out on to the Zapata Peninsula. Our journey is broken up with a wonderful swimming opportunity in a 'cenote' (pool) where the ceiling of an underground river has collapsed. We plan to arrive in Playa Giron by mid-afternoon. Here we will visit the museum dedicated to the infamous 'Bay of Pigs' invasion - a US-supported attack by Cuban exiles which failed to overthrow the Communist regime in 1961.

Our journey continues, past the wooded Escambray Mountains and hugging the coastline, with views over the sparkling turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. By early evening, we will arrive at our hotel just outside the beautiful Spanish colonial town of Trinidad - our base for the next three nights, where we will enjoy local hospitality staying in casas particulares (private houses).



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 13 - In Trinidad; tour of this pretty colonial town

This morning, we wander through the cobbled streets of the old centre of Trinidad, discovering its fine palaces, churches and cafes. A paradise for photographers, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a perfectly preserved colonial settlement unlike any other. In the early 19th century, French settlers fleeing a slave revolt in Haiti, landed here and started to grow sugar cane in the Valle de Los Ingenios. This crop generated considerable wealth and consequently the town had to be regularly defended from pirates.

Subject to opening hours, we will visit a local museum before some free time where you may wish to wander for longer through Trinidad's streets to soak up more of the unique atmosphere. Mid afternoon we will enjoy a salsa dancing class where you can learn some basic steps to perhaps try out later that evening at the open-air Casa de la Musica, just off the main square.



ACCOMMODATION:
Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



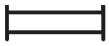
MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Free day; optional trip to Topes or boat trip to Cayo Las Iguanas

Today is free for you to enjoy more of Cuba's beautiful landscapes and fascinating culture at your own pace. You may wish to take the short train journey out to the Sugar Mills Valley to Manaca Iznaga where you will have the opportunity to visit the Hacienda of the Family Iznaga, one of the richest in Trinidad during Colonial Times. Another option is to head into the Escambray Mountains to the Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve Park. With its unspoilt forests and water-eroded valleys, this area is famous for its many endemic species of flora and fauna. There are several different options involving short walks through the coffee growing area and rainforest. Most trips will drive up to some incredible viewpoints and several of the options offer an opportunity of a refreshing swim in one of its waterfalls finished off with a traditional creole lunch in one of the local haciendas. Your leader will run through these different options with you.

Alternatively, you may wish to visit the deserted island of Cayo Las Iguanas. Here you can eat fresh paella, relax on the beach and snorkel in the coral wilderness. Snorkelling equipment is not always available, so keen snorkelers might prefer to bring their own.





ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Trinidad (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 15 - Return to Havana via Santa Clara

Today we bid farewell to Trinidad and make our way back to Havana, via Santa Clara. This pleasant university town 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.

After visiting the Tren Blindado Memorial commemorating this historic event, we move 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 national hero 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.

This evening, we return to Havana to enjoy a final dinner and probably a dance.



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Particulares - Havana (or similar)



Grade: Simple Casas Particulares



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 16 - Trip ends in Havana

Our trip ends in Havana after breakfast.



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

Guatemala

Climate

In the high plains (1524m-1981m) the climate is temperate all year round. In lower areas the climate is semi-tropical. The mountains can be cool especially at night. In general, the dry season in Guatemala lasts from Nov - April. From May to October there are often fine mornings and clear evenings but afternoon rains tend to be heavy. The Peten lowlands tend to be rainy all year round though less so from February to April.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Catholic and Protestant	Spanish

Mexico

Climate

Mexico is a vast country whose weather varies by season and region. The optimum time to travel is generally between December and April when rainfall is at a minimum. Temperatures are coolest between December and February and temperatures start to rise from March and the hottest months are May, June and July. The rainy season runs from May until October when humidity and temperatures are highest. The rains tend to be intense and short, clearing the humidity before building up again. The Caribbean coast can be affected by hurricane season between June and November. Please bear in mind that at altitude the temperatures can drop considerably at night and sudden changes can occur at any time.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion
-6	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic, Protestant

Language

Spanish is the official language, but around 50 languages/dialects are also spoken by the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

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.

Mexico City - Folkloric Ballet US\$80-120; Frida Kahlo Museum US\$14 (plus transport to Coyoacan)

San Cristobal - Na Bolom US\$5; Kakaw Museum US\$2 ; Kakaw Chocolate workshop US\$20

Merida - Mundo Maya Museum US\$20

Havana - Museo de la Ciudad CUC 4; Museo de la Revolucion and Arte Colonial CUC 8 each, CUC 10 with guide. Rum museum CUC 7, CUC 10 with guide; American Car excursion CUC25 per hour

Trinidad - Cayo Las Iguanas boat excursion CUC 60 plus CUC10 per taxi (upt to 4); Salsa classes CUC10 per hour; Half day visit to Playa Ancon - CUC 10 per taxi each way; Half day Train journey to Manaca Iznaga CUC10 (min 2 pers.)

Topes de Collantes - Trinicubano Half day trip to El Cubano (swim/ hanging bridges) CUC25(min. 2 pers.) ; Full day on truck to El Nicho inc. lunch CUC50 (min 4 pers); Full day Jeep Safari to El Nicho CUC59 (min. 2 pers.); Trinitopes (3km moderate trail) inc. lunch CUC30 (min 8 pers.); Half day Jeep safari Trip to Hacienda La Gallega inc. lunch CUC55 (min 2 pers.)

Please note - most museums in Cuba charge for use of cameras and camcorders, this can be up to CUC 7 per usage.

Clothing

Warmer clothing is needed in the highlands (San Cristobal and Mexico City), which are mostly mild, but

temperatures can drop dramatically at night. Pack a fleece and some long sleeved clothing for protection from sun and insects. Lightweight rainwear is essential. In general, winter is dry and summer wet. Casual clothes are acceptable. Shorts are acceptable everywhere except in churches.

Footwear

Bring walking boots if you have them, otherwise comfortable shoes/trainers with a good grip and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysack. Remember - you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

An umbrella is useful for tropical downpours. A torch and waterbottle are recommended. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen and a sunhat.

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 US\$ 40, approx. 760 pesos for group tipping on the Mexico section and CUC25 for the Cuba section of your trip

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

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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 Convertible Peso (CUC)

Recommended Currency For Exchange

The CUC 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 CUC is approximately CUC 1.26 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 CUC 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.

Guatemala

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
£8.00 - 10.00	£2.00 - 4.00	£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Quetzal (GTQ)

Recommended Currency For Exchange

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the GTQ is approximately GTQ 9.7 to the British Pound. Please check on line for up to date information

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in Guatemalan Quetzal. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

Mexico

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.

Breakfast price	Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£5	£7	£13	£2	£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Mexican New Peso (MXN)

Recommended Currency For Exchange

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the MXN is approximately MXN 25 to the British Pound. Sterling can only be exchanged in Mexico City. We recommend you take some emergency cash in USD as the GBP exchange isn't very good. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they may not be accepted. Please check on line for up to date information. MX/Y - For those continuing to Guatemala we recommend you change approximately GBP 50-60 into Guatemalan Quetzals at Mexico city airport as there is no longer an exchange at the border crossing into Guatemala.

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in MXN. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat

Accommodation notes

During your stay in Cuba you will be staying in casas particulares - this is a Spanish term meaning private accommodation or homestay. 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. They are often full of history, family photos and memorabilia, providing you with a deeper insight to Cuban life than a hotel stay. 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.

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 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development 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

Mexico: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand, US and Canada require a Mexican Tourist Card to enter. This is obtained on arrival, at some check-in desk of the airline you are travelling with or online in advance from the following website - <https://www.inm.gob.mx/fmme/publico/en/solicitud.html> . Please note that due to the requirements of the online system, the advance option is only possible if your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your intended date of entry to Mexico. You must take a printed copy with you which you will present on arrival with your passport. You will need to be kept this on you until you exit Mexico.

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

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.

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely be refused boarding.

You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the

passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover.

If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit)

For further information please check out the US embassy website.

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.

Guatemala

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, 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.

Mexico

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, 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.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

Visiting not just one but two of Latin America's most diverse countries, this adventurous journey is perfect for someone who has only two weeks holiday but wants to explore as much as possible. In Cuba you will stay in Casas Particulares (homestays) throughout, which is an excellent way to see the country.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**