



Cuba: La Isla Grande (2018)

Trip Code: AUB
Edition No: AR 1 2018
Valid from: 01 Jan 2018 - 31 Dec 2018
Amended: Aug 2017

15 DAYS

AT A GLANCE

- Travel by comfortable air-conditioned private coach
- Some long journeys
- Group normally 5 to 18, plus local leader.
Min age 16 yrs
- 11 nights hotels and 3 nights in Casas Particulares
- All breakfasts, 4 lunches and 3 dinners included

HIGHLIGHTS

- Atmospheric Havana, with its faded charm and intoxicating salsa rhythms
- End the trip with two nights in the Hotel Nacional
- Enjoy the colourful World Heritage site of Trinidad, with its cobblestone streets and pastel houses
- Spend two nights in Baracoa, a lively coastal town surrounded by rainforest
- Cuban Tourist Cards included for all UK residents (with UK or EU passports)

cubaniatravel.com



SUMMARY

Discover the best of Cuba on a comprehensive tour that features many of the island's must-see highlights in a busy two-week itinerary. Cuba offers a unique cultural experience with its blend of African and Spanish influences, laid-back charm and socialist society. Marvel at the colonial grandeur of a bygone era in Old Havana, where the streets and buildings may be in dire need of repair, but the daily heartbeat of urban life manages to beat on regardless, albeit in a seemingly chaotic fashion. Traverse almost the entire island and visit the iconic destinations of Baracoa, Santiago and Trinidad, sampling the infectious music and dance that will provide the backdrop to your Caribbean adventure. Learn about the island's fascinating revolutionary history and follow in the footsteps of Fidel and Che on a walk in the Sierra Maestra mountain range. The tour includes an optional excursion to Viñales, plus the option to extend your stay with extra nights at the beach or in Havana. 'La Isla Grande' offers fun and insight in equal measure, and is sure to leave a lasting impression.



FACT BOX CUBA

Currency	Peso (CUP) & Convertible Peso (CUC)
Language	Spanish
Capital City	Havana
Population	11,200,000+
Dialing code	+53
Time zone	GMT/UTC -05:00hr
National Flag	

IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

This is a busy itinerary as we cover the full length of the island, but we do so in the comfort of a private air-conditioned coach. There are some long journeys, particularly during the first few days of the itinerary, the longest being on Day 3 (approx. 7 hours) and Day 4 (approx. 5 hours). The driving is broken up as much as possible with rest stops, and our wonderful Cuban tour leaders use this time to talk about everything and anything relating to their country! There are several two-night stays with free time built in to the trip itinerary in order to relax. The aim of the trip is to show you as much of the island as possible, so some driving is inevitable, particularly as we don't agree with using internal flights in Cuba.

IMPORTANT: If travelling in the months of May - August then please be prepared for very hot and humid conditions!

Please be aware that mobile networks don't make or receive calls particularly well in Cuba, and coverage may not be available in many locations. Not all networks work in Cuba, so please check with your service provider. Also, please note that few hotels have Wi-Fi. Some will have internet available in the lobby, or you will also find some Wi-Fi spots in the main plazas in towns. Using the internet in Cuba is relatively expensive, up to 2-3 CUC per hour when purchasing Wi-Fi cards at official shops, but these will always have long queues. Wi-Fi can be very slow, so it's best to assume that you won't be able to find a reliable internet connection whilst travelling.

The number of people travelling to Cuba has been growing considerably in recent years and this has put a strain on the country's tourism sector. A limited infrastructure on the island and lack of investment means that some hotels and other service providers are struggling to honour their agreements with tour operators. Last minute overbookings and price increases are becoming commonplace.

Fortunately, over the years Cubania have built strong working relationships with suppliers and we have managed to prevent any major problems from affecting our groups. Nevertheless, all travellers should be aware that last minute hotel cancellations are a possibility and could affect your trip, especially during the high season in Havana (Oct to March). In the event of any necessary changes we will endeavour to ensure a property of the same standard and similar location is used. On some occasions, an overnight hotel stay may be replaced with a night in a casa, or vice versa.

In addition to being prepared for potential last-minute hotel changes, it is possible that you will be confronted by other minor frustrations whilst travelling in Cuba. We encourage all travellers to go with an open mind, and with realistic expectations as to what a visit to Cuba entails. If your guide announces a change of plans then please be assured that everything possible has been done behind the scenes in order to make satisfactory alternative arrangements.

ITINERARY

The entries in bold at the end of each day indicate the type of accommodation normally used and any meals included. Please see the Accommodation section below for further information.

DAY 1

Start Havana

For those arriving on the Virgin Atlantic flight from London, this arrives in the afternoon and we will transfer to our hotel in the Miramar district of Havana. Anyone travelling independently should meet the group at the start hotel.

Standard Hotel

DAY 2

To Santa Clara then Sancti Spiritus

This morning we have a panoramic tour of Old Havana including the Capitolio building and Revolution Square. We then drive to Santa Clara, the site of the last battle of the Cuban Revolution. In December 1958 Che Guevara and his troops ambushed an armoured train carrying arms to Santiago de Cuba and this was a major turning point in the Revolution. We visit the train museum and the Mausoleum of Che Guevara and his comrades who died in Bolivia. The museum attached to the Mausoleum has many of his former belongings and is a fascinating insight into one of the 20th Centuries most revered icons. Our final destination today is Sancti Spiritus where we check into our hotel for the night.

Today's driving time is approx. 5 hours.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 3

To Bayamo

Today is another long driving day as we head to Bayamo in the south of the island. We pass through agricultural towns and sugar cane plantations, learning about the importance of sugar in Cuba's history. We stop to have our box lunch in Camaguey, Cuba's fourth largest city, to break up the journey.

Today's driving time is approx. 7 hours.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 4

To Baracoa

After breakfast we leave Bayamo and drive east, passing Guantanamo and stopping for a swim on the south coast before continuing to our destination – Baracoa. Founded in 1512, Baracoa was the first Spanish settlement in Cuba and served as the capital for three years. It's location on the easternmost tip of the island left it open to attacks from pirates, smugglers and the English, so three forts were constructed in the 18th Century for protection. Baracoa's has only been accessible by road since the 1960s and this has left it largely off the tourist route. Surrounding the quaint town are lush, tropical mountains and golden sand beaches. This area is renowned for cocoa growing and chocolate production. The Malecon on the northeast side of the town is known as the Caribbean's first ocean drive. There is still a strong Indian influence here and the El Yunque Mountain, (the anvil shaped mountain described by Christopher Columbus in his diaries) used to be the site of various aboriginal communities. We arrive in the late afternoon and spend some time exploring before checking into our hotel. *Today's driving time is approx. 7 hours.*

DAY 5

Baracoa

This morning we take a boat trip on the River Toa followed by a walk through a Biosphere Reserve to learn about the importance of cocoa production in the area. The afternoon is free to explore the town of Baracoa or visit the beach. If you would like to do a walk this afternoon, then there is an optional trek in the surrounding mountains with a local guide.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 6

To Santiago de Cuba

After breakfast we depart Baracoa for Santiago de Cuba, which is known as the 'city of heroes' for the important role it played in Independence and Revolutionary struggles. Santiago rivals Havana in literature, music and politics, and is rich in traditions, folklore and legends making almost every street corner in the city famous.

Today's driving time is approx. 5 hours.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 7

Explore Santiago de Cuba

This morning we explore Santiago de Cuba, visiting the Santa Ifigenia cemetery, where Fidel Castro is buried. Then Revolution Square, El Morro Castle and Moncada Barracks - where the opening shots of the Revolution were fired on 26 July 1953, when Castro and his men attacked the barracks. The afternoon is free for you to explore the city yourself.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 8

To the Sierra Maestra

Leaving the city behind we drive towards the green mountains of the Sierra Maestra, stopping to visit El Cobre, the most sacred pilgrimage site in Cuba. Our first choice is to stay in a hotel in the Sierra Maestra, however due to the popularity of the area we may stay in Bayamo, a charming colonial city with a recently renovated boulevard where the locals love to congregate in the evenings.

Today's driving time is approx. 5 hours.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 9

Visit Castro's hideout then travel to Camaguey

We spend this morning in the Gran Parque Nacional Sierra Maestra, a spectacular national park within Cuba's highest mountain range. This region is well known as Fidel Castro's base of operations during the Cuban Revolutionary War. High in the Sierra is Comandancia De La Plata, the secret mountain hideout of Castro and Che Guevara, used for planning the Revolutionary war in the 1950's and as the base of Radio Rebelde which provided information for the revolutionaries. We hike to the revolutionary base and may have time to bathe in the Yara River. After lunch we continue to Camaguey where we'll spend the night. After almost continuous attacks from pirates the original city (founded as Santa Maria del Puerto del Principe around 1515 on the northern coast) was moved inland in 1528. The new city was built with a confusing lay-out of winding alleys that made it easier to defend from raiders.

Today's driving time is approx. 5 hours.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



ITINERARY

DAY 10 To Trinidad

This morning there will be time to explore this historic city, characterised more recently by 'tinajones' - large, earthen jugs found in the squares, churches and gardens that were originally used to store water during drought periods. We then continue to Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1988 and perhaps the best-preserved colonial town on the island. Exploring Trinidad is like stepping back in time, the cobbled streets and horse drawn transportation whisks you back to colonial times. There are many interesting museums housed in old colonial buildings to visit in the daytime, but it is as the sun sets that Trinidad really comes alive. This evening we recommend a visit to Casa de la Trova for traditional Cuban music and dancing!
Today's driving time is approx. 5 hours.
Casa (Breakfast, Dinner)

DAY 11 Trinidad

Today is free to continue your exploration of Trinidad and its surroundings or simply spend the day relaxing.
Casa (Breakfast)

DAY 12 To Cienfuegos

After breakfast we set off for 'El Cubano' Nature Park, a reserve nestled in countryside on the outskirts of Trinidad. We'll walk through tropical forest to reach a waterfall where we can stop to take a refreshing dip. We then carry on to colonial Cienfuegos where we have a city tour of the main plazas and spend the night.
Today's driving time is approx. 1.5 hours.
Casa (Breakfast)

DAY 13 To Havana

Today we visit the Bay of Pigs, site of the attempted US invasion in 1961 and drive through the Zapata Peninsula back to Havana. We visit the museum at Playa Giron and stop for lunch and to swim at Caleta Buena, a protected cove that is great for snorkelling. On arrival in Havana we have a short walking tour of Old Havana's plazas before checking into your hotel in Vedado district – The famous Hotel Nacional.

Today's driving time is approx. 3.5 - 4 hours.
Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 14 Free day in Havana or Vinales day trip

Today is free for you to explore Havana by yourselves or take an optional day trip to Vinales. The Vinales Valley is filled with palm trees and tobacco farms, traditional farming methods are still used amid some of the most impressive scenery in Cuba. Huge limestone karsts (sheer-sided, flat-topped hills) rise from the valley floor, riddled with caves and covered in forest. In the evening there is an optional trip to the famous Tropicana Nightclub in Havana.
Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 15 Havana

This morning we'll have some more time to discover Old Havana with our guide. This is a busy and bustling, energetic capital. Old Havana is often described as a living museum with its marvellous monuments, cathedrals and palaces. It is the finest surviving Spanish colonial complex in the Americas, preserved by a combination of minimal war damage, post Revolution restoration work and the millions of dollars invested since it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1982. We meet to have lunch in the garden restaurant of The Nacional hotel. Those on The Virgin Atlantic flight to London will be transferred back together in time to the airport this afternoon.
(Breakfast, Lunch)

For those on the Virgin Atlantic flight to London, this departs in the evening and will arrive in the UK the following day.



ACCOMMODATION

For the majority of the trip we will stay in standard hotels, with en suite bathrooms. We also stay in some basic accommodation in order to access some of the more remote areas that are visited on this trip, so you should be prepared for this.

We use 'tourist class' hotels that range from 3 star equivalents, to simple rural hotels. Rooms are on a twin-share basis, with air-conditioning and en suite bathrooms. Some of the hotels will have swimming pools. You should be aware that occasional power cuts occur and hot water supplies are not always guaranteed.

HAVANA

At the start of the trip we stay in the Miramar district of Playa, on the outskirts of Havana. It is a reliable international style hotel with comfortable beds and a good swimming pool. At the end of the trip we stay in the historical 'Hotel Nacional' – Cuba's flagship hotel and an attraction in itself. Located right on the coastal malecon road in Vedado district, guests get to enjoy relaxing in the beautiful gardens that overlook the sea.

CASAS PARTICULARES

All of our itineraries in Cuba include staying in privately-run 'Casas Particulares' in at least one destination as an alternative to staying in standard hotels. These are traditional/normal Cuban properties that have been transformed into guesthouses.

All rooms have en suite bathrooms, hot and cold water, either a fan or air-conditioning, and breakfast is included. Water pressure can be temperamental, and decor is variable! The houses that we use will be on the same street or in close vicinity whenever possible, and we do our best to ensure that those in single room accommodation are always within a house where other group members are staying. However this cannot be guaranteed in all cases.

All properties that we use have been inspected and assessed by our local operator in Cuba. Some are large multi-room houses that are home to entire families, others are run by individuals, and in some cases the owners live elsewhere.

SINGLE ACCOMMODATION

We can arrange single rooms throughout the trip for a supplement (subject to availability). Please ask one of our sales staff for details.

EXTRA ACCOMMODATION

Pre and Post tour accommodation is available in Havana. Please contact us for a quote. We can also arrange beach extensions in a variety of destinations.



FOOD AND TRANSPORT

FOOD

Cuba is not renowned for its culinary excellence and some ingredients are just not possible to get hold of (due in no small part to the long trade embargo implemented by the US). As such, flavours tend to be relatively simple, with most mealtimes consisting of meat or fish accompanied by rice and salad/vegetables. Seafood is widely available on the coast, including cheap and abundant lobster! Vegetarians will probably find they have the most limited choice. Snack food is not freely available in Cuba so you may wish to consider taking some with you.

Paladares are likely to be a highlight of any visit to Cuba – they are one of the few types of private enterprise allowed (although still heavily regulated), where Cubans can set up a restaurant selling authentic, Cuban cuisine, usually with a better level of service.

We recommend that you allow CUC 30-40 per person per day for the lunches and evening meals on the days where food is not included. You may also spend money on bottled water, which will normally cost about CUC 1.50 per bottle.

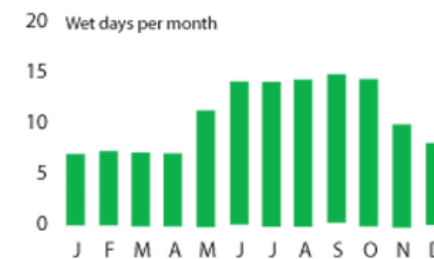
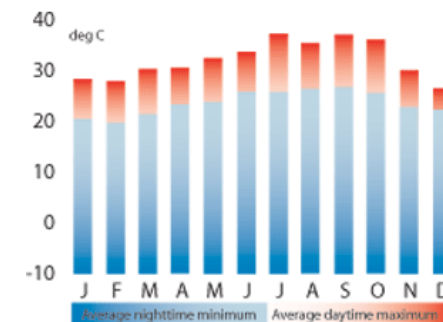
Please note that meal times can be different to what you may be used to. Breakfast will usually be served between 7 - 8am, lunch is usually served between 12 - 3pm and evening meals are generally taken around 7 - 9pm.

TRANSPORT

We use a private, air-conditioned coach throughout the tour.

WEATHER

The dry season runs from November through to April (with December to March being the peak holiday months for traditional tourism). It can be very humid between May and October, with heavy afternoon rains at times and the possibility of hurricanes. July and August are some of the most popular months to visit Cuba by sun-seekers from Europe and Canada but can be hot (average 28°C) and wet. Cuba has an average of 6 hours sunshine per day with a more or less constant humidity of 62%. Water temperature normally ranges from 24 to 28°C.



TRIP EXTENSIONS

Please call us for current prices.

CAYO LEVISA BEACH EXTENSION

Extend your time in Cuba by travelling just a few hours from Havana to the idyllic island of Cayo Levisa. Stay in an en-suite beach cabin and wake up each day to a beautiful 4km stretch of golden sand beach and inviting turquoise waters. There are no roads or other buildings on the small island just off the north west coast of Cuba, only the hotel and its bar and restaurant. All meals are included and for those who don't just want to relax in the sun, there are plenty of opportunities for water sports such as snorkelling and diving.

Extensions can be arranged for any length of stay. Transfers are not included but can also be arranged. Prices are available on request.

VARADERO BEACH EXTENSION

If it is a bit of indulgence and some more mojitos that you crave, then you may want to extend your stay with a few nights in an all-inclusive resort on the famous stretch of pristine beach at Varadero.

Extensions can be arranged for any length of stay. Transfers are not included but can also be arranged. Prices are available on request.

HAVANA PRE & POST TOUR NIGHTS

Why not spend some extra time in Havana before or after your tour? You can either choose to stay in the standard group hotel, alternatives in the Old Town and Miramar districts, or a casa particular. Book as many extra nights as you would like, depending on flight schedules this may restrict your choice of airline and flight route. Prices available on request.

JOINING: HAVANA

15 days, normally start Havana Thursday, end Havana Thursday

ITINERARY START

Your trip normally starts at our accommodation in Havana in the evening of Day 1 of the itinerary, however you won't necessarily meet up with the whole group and leader until the morning of Day 2. Details of how to reach the start point are provided in the Final Joining Instructions - sent approximately two weeks before departure.

AIRPORT TRANSFERS

We offer to include airport arrival and departure transfers on any flight for this trip, so no matter which flight you choose to arrive on you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

IMPORTANT: All those taking advantage of the included airport transfers must provide full flight details for both arrival and departure in advance; unless specified otherwise, the transfer will be to the start (or pre-tour) hotel; transfers to other hotels in the same city may attract an extra charge; transfers may be shared with other travellers on the same flight, or on a flight with similar arrival times.

If you arrive on the group flight then you will be met in the arrivals area by a Cubania Travel representative who will be clearly visible with a sign.

For those arriving on alternative flights, the transfer service (if requested with Cubania Travel and flight details provided) includes a pre-paid taxi from the airport. On arrival you need to go to the Cubanacan office at the airport and give your name (as there won't be someone waiting for you in arrivals). It can take a little time as there is often a queue. The Cubanacan office is located outside of Terminal 3 – you need to cross the road directly in front of the main terminal exit and enter the 'Boulevard' row of shops and offices, the Cubanacan office is on the left hand side. Most transfers are shared so please wait for your fellow travellers before departing.

The cost of a taxi is likely to be about £25 (30 - 35 CUC) should you decide to make your way independently.

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers will be sent to you as part of our Final Joining Instructions. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact us.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Tourism can be of real benefit to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment. Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Cubania Travel as a company.

LOCAL CRAFT AND CULTURE

We visit several important cultural and historical sites on this tour, where our entrance fees contribute towards the preservation of artefacts and monuments that commemorate events integral to Cuban heritage. We encounter small handcraft stalls in most towns, so guests are able to purchase local crafts. Trinidad is famous for ceramic and lacework and Havana's Almacenes de San Juan for art, crafts, shoes, clothes, hats, instruments and food. A huge part of Cuban culture is music and dance and there will be ample opportunity to experience this in local bars and clubs.

ACTIVITY

We aim to benefit Cuban communities as much as possible by frequently stopping to use local restaurants, cafes and services. For example, we encourage clients to take optional excursions where we hire local transfers, boats and guides. We operate on a strict 'leave no trace' policy and local guides enforce this through responsible tourism briefings. These should help visitor to better understand the living situation for many and the environmental issues in the area.

CHARITY

We sponsor two schools in the Matanzas Province. The first is the local Primary School in Playa Giron, where they have repainted the school and provided educational supplies such as notepads, pens and sporting equipment. The second school is the Special Needs School in Matanzas City. Here, we have made a number of donations- from school materials and clothes to fans and sheets. We discourage giving to beggars on the trip as we don't want to encourage this. Instead, our guides will help visitors to donate presents and supplies where the goods can really be utilised.

RECYCLING

Whenever possible we source large water containers and ask clients to refill one bottle rather than purchasing/using multiple plastic bottles. At the time of writing it is still difficult to reliably obtain large water containers in most destinations across Cuba. We support the small-scale recycling culture that exists on the island by storing empty plastic bottles on the tour bus to then be distributed at a series of locations/homes/small businesses across the country where our staff know that the bottles will be put to good use. At the moment there aren't any official centralised recycling schemes for hotels or companies to use.

For details of our Responsible Tourism Policy please visit:<http://cubaniatravel.com/about-cubania/responsible-travel/>

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for UK passport holders, and other nationalities should check with their travel agent or the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

British and most Western European passport holders do not require a visa but do require a tourist card. Your Cuban tourist card (valid for 30 days) is included and we will post it to you approximately 4 weeks before travel. Please make sure you have provided us with accurate details at the time of booking as any mistakes on the visa will result in you having to purchase a new card at a cost of £20.00 per person + postage.

We will send a tourist card free of charge as long as you live at a UK or Ireland address and are national of an EU country. If you are not national of one of these countries or are not resident in the UK or Eire you must contact your nearest Cuban Consulate to check what visa is required – we cannot provide a tourist card for you.

Passing through Cuban Immigration is a time consuming process and most visitors encounter delays when queuing for entry into the country.

All tourists visiting Cuba must have travel insurance to cover medical costs. You are likely to be asked to provide proof of your travel insurance policy when you arrive at Havana airport, so please ensure your documents are easily accessible.

Whilst we hope that things will change in the near future, due to present US policy, we cannot take US citizens on our trips to Cuba.

Visa regulations can change without notice: please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

VACCINATIONS AND HEALTH

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements for this trip.

Recommended vaccinations for this trip are: Tetanus, Hepatitis A.

We are advised that there is no risk of malaria on this trip.

Dengue fever, Zika and/or Chikungunya are known risks in places visited on this trip. Both are tropical viral diseases spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available for them, and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

The above information can change at short notice; as we are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health we strongly recommend you contact your Medical Professional or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information.

INSURANCE – are you adequately covered?

You must have adequate travel insurance, and if you are joining a trip which goes to high altitude, you must check that you are covered up to the maximum altitude of the trip. If you are resident in the UK we recommend Nomadic Travels as an insurance provider, they have coverage designed to cover all activities on your trip.

BAGGAGE AND BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE

At time of writing the standard weight limit for hold baggage on Virgin Atlantic is 23kg. We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage.

As advice about luggage allowances for both hand and hold luggage is subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest information prior to your departure.

LOCAL TIME

GMT -5 hrs.

GROUP, STAFF AND SUPPORT

The group will generally be between 5 and 18 people. There will be an English-speaking Cuban leader and a driver. We also use local guides as well for some activities or tours.

The minimum age of clients on this trip is 16 years. Please note that anyone aged under 18 must be accompanied by (and share accommodation with) a parent or legal guardian.

CURRENCY INFORMATION

The national currency of Cuba is the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), with an exchange rate at the time of publication of approximately 1.23 to the UK£ and 0.9 to the US\$.

Please note this is the official exchange rate, however in practice, the exchange rate on the ground at official 'cadecas', is roughly £1.13 - £1.18, this changes every day.

We strongly advise that you take all spending money in Euros or Sterling cash, which can be easily exchanged into local currency upon arrival in Cuba. Scottish currency is not accepted in Cuba. Travellers cheques are difficult to exchange and there is limited time to stop for this purpose. In addition, credit/debit cards drawn on US banks are not accepted anywhere in Cuba. The hotel in which we spend the first night in Havana has an exchange bureau situated in the back left of the lobby, around behind the main reception desk. Otherwise you can exchange money at the airport.

ATM AVAILABILITY

CREDIT CARD ACCEPTANCE

ATMs are increasingly available in Cuba, but are not yet widespread. They are presently confined to the larger cities and resorts and should not be relied on, hence why we suggest that you take cash with you. Credit cards may be accepted for expensive purchases in tourist shops, but acceptance is not widespread and like ATMs should not be relied upon.

IMPORTANT: Using cards for banks which are fully or partially US owned is not possible in Cuba. Australian and Canadian travellers in particular should check with their banks prior to travel if they intend to withdraw cash.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

EXTRA EXPENSES AND SPENDING MONEY

Drinks are generally around CUC 1-5. Supplies and shopping is very limited. Please note that most travellers find Cuba more expensive than they expect and we recommend that you bring more spending money rather than less!

TIPPING (LEADER AND LOCAL STAFF)

If you are happy with the services of the guide and driver, we recommend a tip of 40-50 CUC per person, which you can divide in favour of the guide.

Tipping is at your own discretion but is very much part of the culture in Cuba and is usually expected. Your tour leader will offer to arrange and look after a group tipping kitty which will be used to tip local guides at individual museums and attractions, musicians and waiting staff for included meals etc. throughout the holiday. The guide will collect 30 CUC from each group member at the start of the trip to cover this.

Tipping is also expected in restaurants - normally add about 10% to the bill.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

(approximate costs, depending on group sizes)

Note that all prices are correct at the time of writing but prices in Cuba can increase at short notice. All optional excursions are also dependent upon availability.

CATAMARAN TRIP IN TRINIDAD CUC 75 (incl lunch)

Departing from Playa Ancon, this is a full day trip on a Catamaran, sailing out to the Caribbean island of Cayo Macho or Cayo Blanco. A fresh seafood lunch is included.

OPTIONAL VIÑALES EXCURSION CUC 85 (per person)

This optional is offered on Day 14 of the itinerary when in Havana and requires a minimum of 5 pax participating in order to run. The trip will include; transportation in tour bus to and from Vinales, tour guide to accompany the group, visits to the Los Jazmines Lookout point, Cueva del Indio and a stop at a farmer's house (Wilfredo or other). Includes lunch in Finca Wilfredo.

TROPICANA NIGHTCLUB CUC 95

This created the blue print for original 'Las Vegas' style shows. Enter a 50's time warp and enjoy this kitsch salsa show! Entrance includes preferential seats, snacks and 1/4 of a bottle of rum per person.

PARISIEN NIGHTCLUB CUC 45

Located at Cuba's famous landmark the Hotel Nacional, where the likes of Frank Sinatra and Lucky Luciano would stay. Entrance includes tickets to the show, one cocktail and a buffet dinner.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Sunglasses

Sunhat

Sunscreen

Waterproof rain poncho or waterproofs

Clothing suitable for warm climate

Trainers

Swimming gear

Torch

Insect repellent

Hand sanitiser

OPTIONAL ITEMS

It is a good idea to bring some light clothes which cover the legs and arms to wear in the evenings: this will help to prevent the mosquitoes biting.

DONATIONS

If you would like to bring items to Cuba in order to donate, then items that are welcomed include: good condition second hand clothes and children's shoes, second hand mobile phones with chargers, school stationary such as pens/pencils/notebooks, toiletries, and small gifts such as toys or balls. Rather than spending lots of money, it is a good opportunity to find new homes for unused goods. We cannot guarantee that every departure will feature a scheduled stop at a school or community project, but if you bring items with you then the group leader will assist you by offering advice on where to take your donation.

Sanitary items, known locally as 'intimas', are on the ration list for Cubans and are often very hard to come by. If you would like to pack some sanitary towels in your luggage these will be hugely appreciated and can be left in your hotel room so that the cleaners/room attendants can benefit from these.

READING LIST

Cuba Handbook

Christopher P. Baker, Moon Publication

The best and most comprehensive guidebook available. Recommended reading.

Insight Guide to Cuba

APA Publications

Good photography, with a profile of Fidel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

In Focus: Cuba

Published by Latin America Bureau

A guide to the people, politics and culture by Emily Hatchwell & Simon Calder.

Guide to Cuba

Stephen Fallon, Bradt Publications

Good general guidebook – but not as useful as the Cuba Handbook.

The Rough Guide to Cuba

Good general guidebook

Travellers Survival Kit: Cuba

Simon Calder & Emily Hatchwell

Probably the most popular guidebook used by independent travellers in Cuba. Strong on practical advice for independent travellers.

Land of Miracles

Stephen Smith

Recently published account of travels in Cuba by a British journalist. Highly recommended.

Enduring Cuba

Zoe Bran, Lonely Planet Publications 2002

For novels based in or about Cuba try

The Old Man and the Sea

To Have and Have Not

Islands in the Stream

All by Ernest Hemingway

Our Man in Havana

Graham Greene

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL CLIENTS

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call us up so that we can talk through the itinerary together.

Although our leaders are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorise them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.

Although rarely enforced, by booking this trip you agree to our leaders having the authority to do this. In these circumstances we will ensure anyone sitting out is safely provided for and offered alternative options where possible. Refunds will not be provided for activities missed and customers may be liable for additional costs incurred.

In an emergency, please contact our 24 hour out-of-hours service on +53 5 287 0805

Please take the time to read the information sections of our website
<http://cubaniatravel.com/travel-information/useful-info/>

Full joining instructions including local telephone numbers, and details of how to reach the start point, will be sent to you approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact us.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary. Occasionally, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements that maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice Service advises British tourists on the potential dangers they might experience when travelling overseas. We liaise closely with them and adhere to their travel advice. For up-to-date advice on all countries, please visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. Should there be any change to advice prior to or during travel, we may have to cancel or curtail a tour at short notice, or re-route an itinerary part way through.

