



Cycling Cuba (2017)

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

15 DAYS

AT A GLANCE

- o 11 days cycling with full vehicle support
- o 90% tarmac, 10% unpaved tracks
- o Routes mainly follow quiet roads
- o Group normally 5 to 18, plus leader and staff.
Min age 16 yrs
- o 10 nights hotels, 4 nights Casas Particulares
- o All breakfasts, 11 lunches and 5 dinners included

HIGHLIGHTS

- o Cycle the length of idyllic Cuba through the country's key historic colonial and revolutionary areas
- o 100% vehicle support throughout the trip with two vehicles for groups of nine or more
- o High quality, well-maintained bikes and mechanical support for the initial cycling stages of every trip
- o Cycling leaders trained to UK leadership standards (CTC Bike Tour Leader Award)
- o Vibrant culture with its rum, mojito's and salsa beats!
- o Cuban Tourist Cards included for all UK residents (with UK or EU passports)

cubaniatravel.com



SUMMARY

Cuba's music, beaches, atmosphere, striking architecture and revolutionary history combine to make the perfect cultural cycling destination with a lively atmosphere. Our relaxed route passes through stunning countryside with a patchwork of plantations, fields and jungle, allowing us to appreciate the traditional way of life that continues today. Out of the saddle we can experience Trinidad's vibrant music scene, the crumbling colonial buildings of Havana and learn about the revolutionary history of Santiago. After a day of cycling you'll no doubt welcome one of Cuba's specialities – a refreshing mojito!



IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

This is a road cycling trip with rides of a moderate nature. There are some climbs and long distances. You should be comfortable riding a bike for extended distances in hot conditions for consecutive days, and a good level of fitness is required.

Average daily distance: 58km

Number of days cycling: 10

Vehicle Support: 100%

Terrain and route: surface 90% tarmac, 10% dirt roads, some hills.

This tour covers some remote parts of the island. Though many of the roads are in good condition you should expect potholes and poor road conditions in some sections. The roads are generally free of heavy traffic, except when cycling in some of the bigger towns/cities. Traffic in Cuba is a lot quieter than most other countries.

Terrain varies from flat around Las Tunas province to hilly, and mountainous in the eastern Sierra Maestra. On the harder days there are some fairly long climbs, requiring good fitness, (particularly as Cuba is invariably hot and humid), and also some fast descents. Day 9 is particularly strenuous as we are cycling in a mountainous region.

Please remember to drink lots of water when cycling as the heat and humidity can be high (applies especially to June/July/August departures). We have added departures over the UK summer due to the popularity of the trip. This is one of the best times to visit Cuba for sun-seekers but not necessarily if you don't like hot conditions! Levels of humidity over the summer months can be high, so it's important to bear this in mind. Some group members may want to do a slightly reduced distance each day in order to avoid cycling in the middle of the day. If this is the case our back up vehicle will be available. It is possible for the rest of the group to continue on the itinerary as planned, but please don't forget to drink plenty of water to keep hydrated. We always set off as early as possible in the mornings, however this is often dictated by breakfast serving times.

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 reached unprecedented levels in 2016 & 2017. Imminent changes to US government policy will soon enable US citizens to also travel freely to the country along with the rest of us. Demand is therefore only set to grow as the world's spotlight shines on Cuba. A limited tourism infrastructure on the island means that some hotels and other service providers are struggling to honour their agreements. Last minute overbookings and price increases are becoming commonplace.

Fortunately, over the years we 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.

All ascents, descents and distances listed below have been measured by our staff or tour leaders. Please note that different GPS measuring devices can give differing results dependent on the barometric pressures at the time. Measurements stated throughout these trips notes are given to help you understand the types of terrain and distances you will encounter.

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

Havana

In the morning we will have our trip briefing, followed by bike fitting before we set off on a warm up ride round Havana. Traffic is remarkably light for a capital city. We cycle through the Miramar and Vedado districts of Havana to reach the dominating Plaza de la Revolucion, whilst Buicks and Pontiacs cruise past with gleaming chrome. We finish our sightseeing with a walking tour in the heart of Old Havana and a stop for lunch in a local restaurant. In the afternoon we transfer to Matanzas for dinner and stay overnight.

Cycle approx. 25km.

Transfer approx. 105km

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)

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



DAY 3

Bay of Pigs

We leave the hotel by bike and ride through Matanzas province. The landscape here is full of sugar cane and citrus plantations with the occasional sleepy village. This pretty ride takes us through rural communities to the Autopista Nacional where we load the bikes on the bus and drive to lunch. Once we pass the Australia Sugar Factory (where Fidel Castro set up his headquarters for the Bay of Pigs crisis) we enter the Cienaga de Zapata. The road is flat and is skirted by a swamp, once full of crocodiles. After lunch we continue on to the Bay of Pigs where we stay overnight in casas within the town of Playa Larga. This was the site of the failed invasion by CIA-backed Cuban Americans. Many of the beaches here are ideal for snorkelling and swimming.

Cycle approx. 63km.

Transfer approx. 90km

Casa (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 4

To Cienfuegos

Continuing south to cross the island, our route today covers a variety of landscapes. We ride through the biggest swamps in Cuba (Zapata's Peninsula), and then cut through agricultural routes to reach the main road towards Cienfuegos. This is a day for discovering the rural heart of Cuba as we pass through small communities dedicated to agriculture and charcoal production. A stop at Playa Giron gives us the chance to learn about CIA backed invasion of Cuba in the early 60's. From here we have a short ride to lunch in Caleta Buena, a natural sea pool teeming with tropical fish. There should be the opportunity to have a dip upon arrival. Afterwards we continue by bus to Cienfuegos.

Cycle approx. 43km

Transfer approx. 90km

Casa (Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 5

Trinidad

Today's ride takes us further along the coastline to Trinidad. Trinidad is beautiful; a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1988 and perhaps the best-preserved colonial town on the island. Exploring Trinidad can feel like entering a time warp, its colourful, cobbled streets and horse drawn transportation whisking us back to colonial times. There are many interesting museums housed in old colonial buildings and music drifts through the streets and plazas.

Cycle approx. 80km

Casa (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 6

Trinidad

Today is free to soak up the atmosphere of Trinidad or join an optional excursion to explore the surrounding areas. For example you can walk the 'El Cubano' trail in the nearby national park. This evening we recommend a visit to Trinidad's Casa de la Trova (the 'House of Music') for traditional Cuban music and dancing. **Casa (Breakfast)**



DAY 7

To Sancti Spiritus

We ride inland towards the city of Sancti Spiritus. The road rises and falls through the beautiful scenery of the Alturas de Banao, where coffee plantations and farms adorn the landscape, passing the Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills) which was once Cuba's most important sugar producing area. At the village of Manaca Iznaga we can stop to visit the farmhouse and the famous 'run away slaves' tower; for a small entrance fee you can climb the 136 steps and enjoy the view. Upon arrival in Sancti Spiritus, we enjoy some free time in the town's colonial centre and then transfer to Camaguey.

Cycle approx. 67km

Transfer approx. 200km

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)



ITINERARY

DAY 8 To Bayamo

Our day starts with a transfer to Las Tunas, where we saddle up to ride across this lively city. We continue to Bayamo, located in the province of Granma, one of the island's most important regions from a revolutionary perspective and consisting mainly of the floodplain of the river Cauto (Cuba's longest). The area contains many sugar cane and rice plantations, and lies below the Sierra Maestra Mountains. The charming city of Bayamo is the capital of the province, and has a pleasant, relaxed ambience full of poignant monuments and revolutionary atmosphere.

Cycle approx. 68km

Transfer approx. 180km

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 9 Sierra Maestra

A challenging ride from Bayamo into the Sierra Maestra. As we head deep into the mountains, today's route is dominated by Pico Bayamesa (at 1,730m above sea level it is Cuba's third tallest peak). This is an area of stunning natural beauty and is rarely visited by tourists. After passing through numerous villages we reach our hotel where we can relax after probably our hardest day's ride.

Cycle approx. 75km.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

**See Accommodation section for occasional tour alteration that affects today and tomorrow.*

DAY 10 To Santiago

This morning we take a short break from the saddle to enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Sierra Maestra. Starting early, we take a gentle stroll into the mountains with a local, passing through tropical forest and coffee plantations before stopping for coffee and fruit in a local farmer's home and returning to the hotel for lunch. We take a transfer from Salton to just beyond Palma Soriano, then it's back on the bikes to ride to El Cobre. After visiting Cuba's most important Holy Shrine, we transfer to Santiago de Cuba. The city is rich in traditions, folklore and legends, making almost every street corner famous. But it is at night that Santiago really comes alive with legendary Cuban music and dancing.

Cycle approx. 35km

Transfer approx. 70km

Comfortable Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 11 Santiago

Santiago de Cuba is known as the city of heroes, for the important role it played in Independence and Revolutionary struggles. The morning is spent sightseeing, including the Moncada Barracks - where the opening shots of the Revolution were fired on 26 July 1953 when Castro and his men attacked the barracks. There is a rich tradition of dance, music and festivals, largely based on the Afro-Cuban population. Afternoon transfer to Gibara.

Transfer approx. 135km.

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Dinner)

DAY 12 To Camaguey

Today we cycle directly from our hotel in the morning and head for Aguas Claras, where we turn right and head towards Puerto Padre where we stop for a picnic lunch. From here we transfer to Camaguey, the capital of the province.

Cycle approx. 72km

Transfer approx. 145km

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)

DAY 13 Mayajigua

We transfer after breakfast to the town of Majagua and enjoy a final cycle ride to the rural setting of Mayajigua, our base for tonight. The route today will be challenging as we make our way over the northern range of hills, but the support vehicle is on hand just in case!

Cycle approx. 60km

Transfer approx. 180km

Standard Hotel (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 14 Havana via Remedios and Santa Clara

Today is a long day so we leave Mayajigua early in the morning and return by road to Havana via Remedios, one of the earliest Spanish settlements in Cuba, and then Santa Clara to visit the Che Mausoleum and armoured train exhibition. The evening is free to soak up the vibrant atmosphere of charming Havana.

Transfer approx. 350km

Standard Hotel (Breakfast)

DAY 15 End Havana

Today there is a city tour of old Havana, described as a living museum, with its marvellous monuments, cathedrals and palaces. We will lunch at the famous Hemingway haunt La Bodeguita del Medio, and have the chance to try his favourite Mojito cocktail (made with rum, lime, mint and sugar). 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

Havana – We stay in the Miramar district of Playa, in the outskirts of Havana. The hotel is reliable and of an international standard with comfortable beds and a good swimming pool. From here it is a 15-20 minute taxi ride to the Old town.

SIERRA MAESTRA

Despite confirmed reservations for our groups, it occasionally occurs that we cannot stay in our usual choice of hotel in the Sierra Maestra on day 9. When this happens we instead transfer at the end of the ride to Santiago and compensate for the change with an upgraded hotel for this two night stay in the city. The following morning we ride approx. 20km from Santiago to El Cobre, before returning for lunch and an afternoon at leisure. This change does however mean that there isn't the opportunity to go for a short walk in the Sierra Maestra as per the usual itinerary.

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.

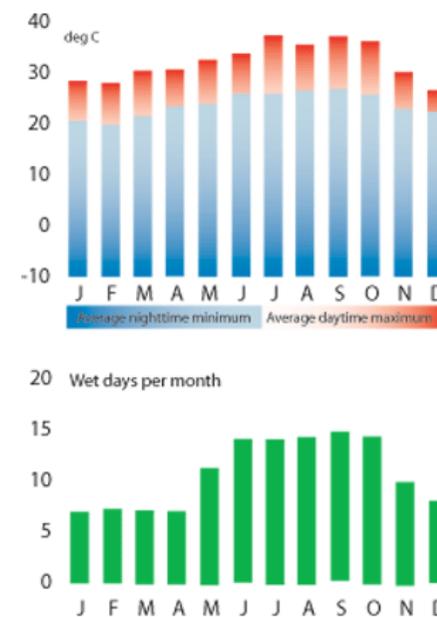
Please note that meal times can be different to what you may be used to. Breakfast will usually be served between 7 - 8am, lunch is usually served between 12 - 3pm and evening meals are generally taken around 7 - 9pm.

TRANSPORT

The support vehicle will carry all of your luggage and personal belongings, and will follow the group all of the time, allowing you to cycle as much or as little as you like. The majority of the tour is spent on two wheels but the shape of the island does mean we have a long drive on the return to Havana on day 14 – transfers are done by private, air-conditioned coach.

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 an 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 handicraft 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!

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 55 (including lunch) per person

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 seafood lunch is included amongst the tame iguanas and tree rats.

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.

El Cubano Excursion

CUC 35

'El Cubano' Nature Park is 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.

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. You can give this tip collectively and the guide and driver will share it between themselves, alternatively we recommend that you divide it in favour of the guide. The guide will also collect a further CUC 30 from each group member at the start of the trip to cover tips for local guides at individual museums and attractions, musicians, waiting staff for included meals etc.

Tippling is also expected in restaurants – normally add about 10% to the bill.

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.

WHAT TO TAKE

LOCAL BIKE DETAILS

Trek 8.3 DS 2015 Hybrid bikes with front suspension, included in the trip price.
Discount for bringing your own bike - £90.

At the time of booking we will take your height in order to reserve equipment. There may on occasions be insufficient bikes available in the correct size; we will endeavour to find suitable alternative equipment but this cannot be guaranteed. We will tell you before you book whether suitably sized bikes are available.

CONDITIONS

1. The equipment remains the property of the supplier and you may not sell, hire out or part possession with the equipment.
2. You must not misuse the equipment and must return it in the same condition as when received (ordinary wear and tear excepted). The supplier is entitled to charge for any damage caused to the equipment during the period of hire.
3. You must ensure that the equipment is adequately secured when not in use. In the event of the equipment being lost or stolen, you may be liable for the replacement value of the equipment
4. You must not use the equipment whilst under the influence of drink or drugs and should immediately notify the Supplier in the event of breakdown or loss.

BRINGING YOUR OWN BIKE

If you prefer the familiarity of your own bike, you may of course bring it along. Please advise us at the time of booking and you will receive a discount off the price of the holiday, as specified above. You will be responsible for any extra baggage charges. Any clients bringing their own bike should ensure they have adequate cover for loss, damage or theft under their travel, home contents or a specialist insurance policy. If Cubania Travel are confident that we have taken all reasonable care to ensure the safety of your bike, in the rare event of loss, damage or theft you will need to claim under your own insurance policy.

EXTRA BIKE BITS

You may like to bring your own pedals and saddle (excluding the seat post) or gel saddle cover to fit to the hire bikes. We encourage this, if it is your preference. However, please note that you are responsible for your own equipment, and removing your saddle/pedals at the end of the trip. We cannot guarantee the return of any bike parts left behind.

POLICY ON CYCLING HELMETS

Wearing a helmet is mandatory for anyone taking part in any Cubania Travel cycling holiday. Group members must bring their own helmets, as they are not available for hire.

Cycling of all kinds has its dangers and accidents can happen from time to time. Please ensure that you are properly prepared for the riding you are going to undertake.

RECOMMENDED CYCLING CLOTHING

Padded cycling shorts (with loose 'over-shorts' where recommended), breathable clothing, and a lightweight waterproof/windproof top. Shoes with relatively stiff soles are better for biking, but are not essential unless. Most people want to carry certain items with them during the day while cycling, for this we recommend a bum-bag or small day-sack.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Cycling helmet (compulsory on this trip)

Water bottle

Cycling shorts

Waterproof jacket

High factor sun cream

Sun hat

Sunglasses

Hand sanitizer

Insect repellent

Long sleeved shirts and light trousers are good for helping to keep mosquitoes off during the evenings. Mosquito repellent containing DEET is generally thought to be the most effective deterrent.

OPTIONAL ITEMS

Your own saddle

Your own pedals

Cycling gloves

Walking shoes

Torch

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.

