CUBANIA

TRIP NOTES (edited: 18.03.2021)

CUBAN DISCOVERY

A week long adventure to experience vibrant Havana, discover dramatic Viñales and explore colonial Trinidad.

DURATION
8 DAYS

ACTIVITY LEVEL
LEISURELY

CARBON EMISSIONS
15.4 kg CO2e per day

INCLUDED

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover contemporary Cuba at your own pace with this independent itinerary.
- Explore rural life in dramatic Viñales Valley in Western Cuba.
- Watch the sunrise over Los Organos mountain range.
- Step back in time with a ride in a 1950s classic car and in Trinidad, Cuba's best preserved colonial town.
- Listen to Cuba's captivating music and learn to dance salsa.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Transfers to and from airport in a shared taxi.
- Accommodation in *casas particulares* on B&B basis.
- Meals: all breakfasts, 4 dinners.
- Classic American car tour in Havana; sunrise trek in Viñales, walking tour of Trinidad, salsa class in Trinidad.
- Transport: all transfers by air–conditioned tourist bus service.
- Local guide in Havana, Viñales and Trinidad.
- Cubania office support.

WHAT ISN'T INCLUDED?

- Flights to and from Cuba.
- Travel/medical insurance (compulsory to provide proof of cover for entry into Cuba).
- Personal expenses (drinks, laundry, phone calls etc).
- Vaccinations.
- Visas (Tourist Cards).
- Tips for guide/local staff. We recommend that you tip local guides CUP250 for a job well done.

IS THIS TOUR RIGHT FOR ME?

- Travel style: Cultural trip
  Exploring vibrant Havana, spectacular scenery in the Viñales valley and Trinidad, Cuba's best–preserved colonial town.
- Group Style: Small, English speaking
  2 – 18 people of mixed nationalities.
  Minimum age 18 years.
- A perfect introduction to Cuba for those who enjoy independent travel but would like hotels, transportation and some activities booked ahead of time.

DAY 1

Casa Particular, Havana Dinner

ARRIVAL IN HAVANA

¡Bienvenidos! Arrive at Havana airport and take a shared taxi to your *casa particular*. Depending on your arrival time today, you should be able to start exploring Havana. We'll leave one of our city maps in your accommodation so that you can head out as soon as you arrive. Meet the rest of the group for dinner at a local *paladar* (private restaurant) and get to know your travel companions as your Cuban adventure begins. Your first cocktail is on us!

DAY 2

Casa particular, Havana Breakfast, Lunch

FULL DAY IN HAVANA

After breakfast we set off in classic 1950s American cars on a panoramic tour of the city. Drive along Havana's famous sea front, pass the impressive mansions built by the sugar barons in the 1920s, stop in Revolution Square where Fidel gave his fiery speeches, and go through the leafy, upmarket Miramar district. Finish the tour in the Old Town where you can explore its narrow cobbled streets and atmospheric squares on foot and at your own pace. Sit in a café with live music and have a Cuban coffee or homemade lemonade whilst watching the world go by. If you love history visit the Museum of the Revolution, or art lovers will enjoy the Cuban collection at the Museo de las Bellas Artes. In the evening, check out one of Havana's *paladar* restaurants, then go for cocktails in a local bar.

DAY 3

Casa particular, Viñales Breakfast, Dinner

HAVANA TO VIÑALES

After breakfast we'll get the tourist bus service to Viñales, arriving around midday. Check into your *casa* and get some lunch on Viñales high street. This afternoon is free to explore this beautiful valley famous for its dramatic landscape of *mogotes* which are rocky limestone outcrops that rise up from the valley floor. Traditional methods are still used to farm the fertile red soil: oxen can be seen ploughing the fields and palm fronds are used as thatching for houses and barns. A wide range of activities are on offer in Viñales: ziplining, horse riding, cycling and visits to some of the caves that riddle the mountains. If you like walking, take a guided walk to learn about rural life, tobacco growing and see how to roll one of Cuba's famous cigars. You can book these activities directly through your host at your *casa*, or ask us to organise them if you prefer. This evening we'll enjoy a sunset dinner at *Finca Wilfredo*, an organic farm that uses its own produce to cook delicious Creole food.

DAY 4

Casa particular, Viñales Breakfast

FULL DAY IN VIÑALES

Today we'll get up before dawn and a local guide will take us on a trek by torchlight up to a mountain community called Los Aquaticos. From a view point we'll watch the sun rise over the spectacular Sierra de los Organos mountain range and then stop at a farm for some Cuban coffee. After the trek, go back to your *casa* for breakfast and a rest. You can choose another of the activities on offer in Viñales or continue to explore the valley by yourself. Some of you may want to book a taxi to take you to Cayo Jutías, a picture perfect white sand beach about an hour away from Viñales. Others may prefer to relax in Viñales Valley and enjoy the gentle pace of life.

DAY 5

Casa particular, Trinidad Breakfast, Dinner

VIÑALES TO TRINIDAD

We'll get up early this morning to catch the tourist bus service to Trinidad, Cuba's finest colonial town. The journey will take us east of Havana, through Cienfuegos and along the coast road to Trinidad, arriving in the late afternoon. Arriving in Trinidad's immaculately–preserved colonial centre, it's hard to imagine that any time has passed since the town was founded at the height of the sugar trade over 500 years ago. We'll check into our *casas* and freshen up before dinner. Everyday life in Trinidad is full of music and dancing, and this is a great place to learn how to dance "*a lo cubano*". We've included an introductory salsa class with local teachers in a home close to your *casa particular*. This evening we recommend you meet new friends at *Casa de la Musica* for a Cuban–style *fiesta*.

DAY 6

Casa particular, Trinidad Breakfast

FULL DAY IN TRINIDAD

This morning we will have a walking tour of Trinidad with a local guide to learn about the town's history and highlights. Afterwards we can organise a wide variety of activities for you: hike in El Cubano National Park or the Escambray mountains, spend the day at the beach, horse ride, or explore Trinidad by yourself. We will all meet up again in the evening to see the rumba show at El Palenque de los Congos Reales.

DAY 7

Casa particular, Havana Breakfast, Dinner

BACK TO HAVANA

This morning we'll get up early to take the bus back to Havana, arriving at the beginning of the afternoon. Enjoy continuing exploring this vibrant city, perhaps visiting some of the recommended sites on our Cubania map. This evening we'll have a farewell dinner in a local *paladar* and probably head out to sample some of Havana's famous nightlife... your first drink's on us!

DAY 8

Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY

And so it's *adiós*, or, as we prefer to think of it, *hasta luego* – see you later! If you have an afternoon flight, spend your final morning doing some last–minute shopping and sightseeing, or simply relaxing in a café enjoying the last of the Caribbean sunshine and streetlife. Your transfer to Jose Marti International airport will be for check–in three hours before your flight. Have a safe onward journey and we very much hope to see you in Cuba again soon.

WHAT TO BRING?

ESSENTIAL PACKING LIST

- Light walking boots or sturdy trainers with a good tread.
- High factor sun cream (50+), sunglasses and sun hat.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Insect repellent – tropical strength.
- Long sleeved shirts and light trousers for the evenings.
- Small day pack.
- A sense of humour and patience are useful in Cuba!

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Torch.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Please see our Destination Guide or website for all Cuba–related practical advice and travel information on our need to know section. Check with your doctor prior to travel & also your government's official advice.

YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Cubania has made responsible travel part of everything we do since we first started organizing trips to Cuba; from the local ground staff we employ to the family–run restaurants and B&Bs we use, **we aim to ensure that your money stays in Cuba and supports local businesses.**

We're now going one step further by making a commitment to further reducing our carbon footprint by **measuring the CO2 emissions on each and every trip we offer.**

We teamed up with ecollective , a carbon consultancy specialising in the travel industry to accurately measure the footprint of our trips and our business operations. To do this we looked into the carbon footprint of our entire supply chain from hotels, activities, guide accommodation, included meals and we even included the footprint of our website to name a few. It not only enables our clients to see the carbon footprint of every tour that we run, but it will also show us what we can change in order to further reduce trip based emissions year on year.

Read more about our commitment to sustainability on our website; cubaniatravel.com/sustainability

ACCOMMODATION

Throughout the tour we stay in private accommodation (*Casas particulares*).

It's fair to say that the standard of Cuban accommodation is not always comparable to that which you would expect in other countries owing to years of isolation, under–investment in the country's infrastructure and effect of the US trade Embargo. Anyone travelling to the island should be prepared to rough it a bit at times! Décor tends to be a little dated, there might be the occasional power cut, and you may find that your water pressure isn't all it could be. Fortunately, it's warm enough most days that the lack of hot water is not a major problem!

Most people love the opportunity this gives to stay in a relatively normal Cuban home and see how Cubans live. These homes are simple compared to ours but the welcome is warm and rooms clean. All the *casas* also have air conditioning an en suite bathrooms. You'll be spoilt at breakfast in the mornings.

FOOD & DRINK

Cuba doesn't have the same variety of international cuisine we might be used to although in recent years lots of privately run restaurants (*paladars*) have opened (particularly in Havana) offering a wider choice and better quality food than the government run establishments. Think soul food – rice, black beans, slow roast pork and chicken, fresh fish, lobster and plenty of tropical fruit.

For those with special dietary requirements, be prepared for a very limited menu while you are in Cuba. There are very few vegetarians and vegans in Cuba so there are sometimes misperceptions as to what you can eat. Vegetarians often bring snacks and spreads to liven up their meals.

Cuba is the land of the Mojito, Daiquiri and Cuba Libre. You'll find that plenty of rum–based drinks all over the country with prices ranging from 50–150 CUP for most cocktails. But beware, they don't use measuring glasses, so they might be stronger than the ones you have tried at home!

GUIDES

On this trip we use local guides in Havana , Viñales and Trinidad to give you an introduction to each area before you head off to explore independently.

All our local guides are Cuban nationals who are licensed to lead groups and individuals in their home towns and are experts in their particular field. They come from all kinds of different personal and professional backgrounds. They've been teachers, I.T. professionals, bakers, vets, army officers and even underwear salesmen! What they have in common is that they are passionate about guiding and proud of their beautiful country. They all speak good English.

INTERNET ACCESS

Cuba is one of the last countries on Earth to join the mobile internet so be prepared for a digital detox! 3G Wifi was only introduced in December 2018, followed by 4G in 2019, and is only accessible through buying and Etecsa Prepaid Internet Card. The cards come in 1 hour and 5–hour denominations and cost CUP25/ hour (so that's CUP25 for 1–hour card and CUP125 for a 5–hour card) and are sold at ETECSA offices and hotels across the country. Each ETECSA card has a unique Username (*Usuario*) and Password (*Contraseña*), which you need to log into the

ETECSA internet service. You can use the cards on your laptop and your phone.

Make sure you check roaming costs with your service provider before travelling to Cuba. It can be very expensive to connect via roaming.

Since internet access is slow and expensive we recommend you download the following apps before travelling to Cuba:

MAPS.ME
Offline map of Cuba which uses phone grid to pinpoint your location. Great for finding your way round Havana and for navigating your way round the rest of Cuba.

A LA MESA
Offline restaurant and food delivery app. Reviews and contact details of the best places to eat in Havana and other cities throughout Cuba.

SHAZAM
Name that song! Next time you hear that *reggaetón* hit that's become the soundtrack to your holiday, play it to Shazam and find out what it's called and who sang it.

WHATSAPP/FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM
Cubans are as in love with these apps as you were 15 years ago! They all have them and love using them.

TRIP EXTENSIONS

PRE OR POST TOUR NIGHTS IN HAVANA
- Choose between hotels in Old Town, Vedado, or Playa district.
- Range of hotels or boutique *Casas Particulares*.

VARADERO BEACH EXTENSION
- Transfers to and from Havana (2 hours) to your choice of all–inclusive hotel at Varadero beach.

CAYO LEVISA BEACH EXTENSION
- Transfers to and from Havana (3 hours) to quiet island retreat in the western Pinar del Rio province.

Please contact us for prices & availability:
sales@cubaniatravel.com

DESTINATION GUIDES

We have created a separate destination guide full of general and practical information relating to visiting Cuba. You can find this in your confirmation email, or ask a member of our staff to send you a copy via email.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Please refer to our website for a full transcript of Cubania Travel booking Conditions:
cubaniatravel.com/need–to–know/booking–conditions

CUBANIA TRAVEL CONTACT DETAILS

sales@cubaniatravel.com
or visit our website cubaniatravel.com

LONDON OFFICE
Office hours: 10.00 – 18.00 (GMT)
Telephone: +44 (0) 208 355 7608

HAVANA OFFICE
Office hours: 09.00 – 17.00 (GMT–5)
Telephone: +53 7 206 9966

CUBANIA TRAVEL,
Oficina 502, Ed. Santa Clara,
Miramar Trade Center,
Calle 3ra, e/ 76 y 78,
Miramar,
Ciudad de la Habana,
Cuba
24–hour emergency
Telephone in Cuba: +53 5 287 0805

Caribbean Biking Company Ltd (Cubania Travel)
UK Registered Company Address: 2 Minton Place, Victoria Road, Bicester, OXON, OX26 6QB
Company Registration No: 08205075 (England and Wales)
VAT Registration Number: 161 2552 34
ABTA: Caribbean Biking Company Ltd is a Member of ABTA with membership numbers Y6409 (UK Office) and Y6408 (Cuba Office)