CUBANIA

TRIP NOTES (edited: 22.03.2021)

FAMILY ACTIVE ADVENTURE

An eight day family holiday adventure exploring the best of Cuban culture and nature.

DURATION
8 DAYS

ACTIVITY LEVEL
LEISURELY

CARBON EMISSIONS
17.5 kg CO2e per day

INCLUDED

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit 2 UNESCO World Heritage sites – Havana and Viñales.
- Discover Havana in American vintage classic cars.
- Swim in the San Juan river at Las Terrazas and go zip–lining through the canopy.
- Explore an underground river and cave system.
- Enjoy relaxing and fun family time on the beautiful beaches of Cayo Levisa.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Transfers from airport upon arrival and departure.
- Transfer of luggage throughout but not hotel porterage.
- Accommodation: 2 nights in hotel, 5 nights in *casas particulares* on B&B basis.
- Meals: all breakfasts, 5 lunches and 2 dinners.
- Havana Classic Car tour, entrance to Las Terrazas Biosphere reserve, zip–lining, Cueva del Indio, Mural de la Prehistoria, maritime transfer to Cayo Levisa.
- Staff: English–speaking Cuban guide throughout. Driver.
- Transport: all bus transfers in private air–conditioned vehicle.

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 each participant contributes a minimum of CUP 625 – CUP 750 to be shared between the local staff.

IS THIS TOUR RIGHT FOR ME?

- Travel style: Family holiday
  Family holiday offering a variety of activities for all ages whilst exploring the best of Cuban culture and nature.
- Group Style:
  Small English speaking.
  4 – 18 people of mixed nationalities.
- The tour offers a balance between fun and varied activities for people of all ages whilst seeing the best of Cuban culture and nature. There is also free time built into the itinerary for you to relax or continue exploring as a family.
- If travelling with older children and teenagers, please be aware that accessing the internet will be extremely difficult.
- Hot and humid conditions during summer months.

DAY 1

Casa Particular, Havana

ARRIVAL IN HAVANA

Welcome to Cuba! A Cubania representative will be waiting for you on arrival at Jose Martí International Airport in Havana. Once you've collected your luggage you'll be transferred to your accommodation with time to relax after your long flight. You can have dinner in town a short walking distance away.

DAY 2

Casa particular, Havana Breakfast, Lunch

GUIDED TOUR OF OLD AND NEW HAVANA

After breakfast, your guide will take you on your city tour of old and new Havana, Cuba's capital and the largest city in the Caribbean. Setting off in classic 1950s American cars, we'll visit the well–to–do 1950s Miramar district, home to some of Havana's most striking 20th century architecture. Keep an eye out for the imposing Russian embassy and the elegant neoclassical homes, many of which are now embassies. We will drive through the beautiful residential district of Vedado where wealthy sugar barons built elegant mansions in the early 20th century and stop in Revolution Square where Fidel made his famous speeches. Driving back along the picturesque coast road (the *Malecón*), the classic cars will drop us off in the Old Town where we will continue on foot, concentrating on the four original squares around which the city was founded. Old Havana was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and millions of dollars have gone into this area in order to bring it back to its original splendour. It has the finest surviving Spanish colonial architecture in the Americas preserved by a combination of little war damage, post Revolution restoration work and the current restoration project. After lunch we have the option of taking a relaxing drive in one of the horse–drawn carriages or you can enjoy time for shopping before heading back to our accommodation. This evening you can eat dinner at a local restaurant in town.

DAY 3

Casa particular, Viñales Breakfast, Lunch

SWIMMING AND ZIP–LINING AT LAS TERRAZAS IN THE SIERRA DE ROSARIO BIOSPHERE RESERVE

After breakfast, we head for Las Terrazas, an eco–community tucked away in the Sierra del Rosario biosphere reserve where large numbers of endemic and migrating birds can be spotted in the woods that have been planted here. After visiting the community we go to the San Juan River, a popular swimming spot with the locals because of its crystal–clear waters. We have lunch in the reserve and then have some time afterwards for the adventurous to have a go at zip–lining. This is an 1500m course with 5 wires that takes you flying through the canopy over the Las Terrazas community and lake. In the afternoon we drive to Viñales and check into our accommodation. You can have dinner at your *casa* or walk to the main street where there is a selection of restaurants.

DAY 4

Casa particular, Viñales Breakfast, Lunch

EXPLORE THE UNDERGROUND RIVER AND CAVE SYSTEM AT CUEVA DEL INDIO AND WALK THROUGH TOBACCO GROWING COUNTRYSIDE IN VIÑALES

Viñales is famous for its dramatic scenery that is found in only two other places in the world – Southern China and Thailand – and for its world–famous tobacco plantations. We visit La Cueva del Indio, a cave that is 4 km long with an underground river where we also take a short boat ride, and *El Mural de la Prehistoria*, Cuba's largest mural depicting Cuba's first indigenous inhabitants. We'll have a relaxed lunch at the restaurant near the mural where they serve delicious roast pork. Along the way to these destinations we'll be passing farms where *malanga*, maize, coffee, yucca and of course, the world's finest tobacco is grown. The evening is free to enjoy at your leisure and you can either have dinner at your casa or head into town.

DAY 5

Hotel Cayo Levisa Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

TAKE A BOAT TO THE STUNNING ISLAND OF CAYO LEVISA WITH SANDY WHITE BEACHES AND TURQUOISE SEAS

This morning we drive to Palma Rubia where we take the morning boat to Cayo Levisa, an island with stunning white sand beaches and turquoise seas. A little slice of Caribbean heaven for you to relax and enjoy with the family for the next 2 days. You'll be staying at the only hotel on the tiny island with full board service.

DAY 6

Hotel Cayo Levisa Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

FULL DAY ON CAYO LEVISA ISLAND TO ENJOY THE BEACH

Spend the day relaxing on the beautiful beach at Cayo Levisa.

DAY 7

Casa particular, Havana Breakfast

RETURN TO HAVANA WITH FREE AFTERNOON FOR FINAL SOUVENIR SHOPPING OR EXPLORING

We take the morning boat back to Palma Rubia where our bus will be waiting to take us to Havana for our last day in Cuba. The rest of the day is free to do some last minute souvenir shopping or exploring the old town and re–visiting some of your favourite spots. Alternatively, (and time permitting) if you fancy another beach day you can head to the eastern beaches of Havana which are around a 40 minute drive out of the city.

DAY 8

Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY

On the final morning of your stay in Cuba you'll have the morning free to enjoy at your leisure before your transfer to the airport for check–in 3 hours prior to flight departure

WHAT TO BRING?

ESSENTIAL PACKING LIST

- Small day pack.
- Swimming things and beach towel (consider UVA tops for the children on the beach).
- Trainers or comfortable shoes to walk in.
- Light trousers/shorts.
- Lightweight cotton/linen clothes suitable for tropical climates. A jacket or fleece for the cooler evenings from November to March. Avoid bringing expensive or flashy jewellery.
- Sunglasses and cap or sunhat (wide-brimmed hats are best).
- High factor sun cream (SPF 50+), lip salve and mosquito repellent.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Small personal first-aid kit and some tropical strength insect repellent and antihistamines in case of insect bites.
- Camera.
- A sense of humour and patience are useful in Cuba!

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Snacks that your children enjoy (for example cereal or fruit bars).
- Card games for the evening.
- Torch.
- Binoculars.

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 a range of accommodation typical to any trip to Cuba, with a mixture of hotels and 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!

You will stay in the full board 3 star hotel on Cayo Levisa that has ensuite bathrooms and air conditioning. In Havana and Viñales we use *casas particulares* – Cuban homestays. 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.

It can also be difficult to find a decent sandwich in Cuba so please don't give your guide a hard time if he recommends a proper sit-down meal for lunch! Cubans generally eat two full meals a day and don't have many places that cater for snack lunches yet, so the sandwiches tend to be pretty basic. Snacks such as biscuits and crisps are also less varied (and often more basic) than those at home. Whilst there is plenty of fresh fruit, you may want to bring a few snacks that your children particularly enjoy. Beware of ones containing chocolate as it will melt!

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

All our guides at Cubania are Cuban nationals who are registered with and trained by Cuba's Ministry of Tourism. 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 all highly educated graduates who are passionate about guiding and proud of their beautiful country. They all speak excellent English and receive annual training in first aid.

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 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

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