CUBANIA

TRIP NOTES (edited: 25.03.2021)

RUN AND CYCLE IN CUBA

A two week cycling holiday discovering the culture, natural beauty and Revolutionary history of Western and Central Cuba.

DURATION
12 DAYS

ACTIVITY LEVEL
LEISURELY
(ex. the marathon!)

CARBON EMISSIONS
17.0 kg CO2e per day

INCLUDED

HIGHLIGHTS

- Run the marathon in Cuba's beautiful and vibrant capital, Havana.
- Learn about Cuba's fascinating history and culture.
- Cycle on uncrowded and scenic backroads.
- Ride through Zapata Peninsula and visit the infamous Bay of Pigs.
- Step back in time in colonial Trinidad, Cuba's most famous provincial town.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Arrival transfers from airport in private air–conditioned vehicle if required.
- Transfer of luggage throughout but not hotel porterage.
- Bike Hire: Trek hybrid 8.3 DS bikes with front fork suspension.
- Accommodation: 9 nights in *casas particulares*, 2 nights in a hotel.
- Meals: all breakfasts, 8 lunches and 2 dinners. Lunches will be in restaurants or picnics depending on the day.
- Entrance to Che Guevara Memorial and Playa Girón Museum.
- Staff: Local English–speaking Cuban guide/ mechanic throughout, and driver. Professional mechanic for bike fitting on Day 5. For groups of 8 pax or more, the mechanic will accompany group throughout.
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- Professional mechanic for bike fitting on Day 5. For groups of 8 pax or more, the mechanic will accompany group throughout.
- Support: 100% vehicle support during rides.
- Local snacks and 3 litres drinking water per person per cycling day. Bring your own refillable bottle, and preferably an additional bottle with built–in water filter.

WHAT ISN'T INCLUDED?

- Flights to and from Cuba.
- Registration for Marabana Cuba Event (www.maratondelahabana.com).
- Travel / medical insurance (compulsory to provide proof of cover for entry into Cuba).
- Cycling Helmet (compulsory) and water bottle.
- Personal expenses (drinks, laundry, phone calls etc).
- Vaccinations.
- Visas (Tourist Cards).
- Tip for guide, driver and local staff. We recommend that each participant contributes a minimum of CUP 1000–1250.

IS THIS TOUR RIGHT FOR ME?

- Group style: Small
  English speaking group with 2 – 18 people of mixed nationalities. Minimum age 18 years.
- You want the experience of running the marathon in a new city and exploring Cuban history and culture whilst you are in Havana.
- Walking tour of Havana on the day before the marathon and on day after the marathon.
- Cycle tour taking in the highlights of Central Cuba.

DAY 1

Casa Particular, Havana

THURSDAY 19TH NOVEMBER – ARRIVAL IN HAVANA

Welcome to Cuba! A Cubania representative will meet you upon arrival in Havana before transferring to the start hotel. The largest island in the Caribbean, Hemingway's much–loved abode and one of the last planned economies in the world. You're soon to discover that Cuba is all that and much, much more, but first sit back, relax and enjoy your first night in enchanting Havana.

DAY 2

Casa Particular, Havana Breakfast, Lunch

FRIDAY 20TH NOVEMBER – EXPLORING HAVANA

This morning we will start the day doing a yoga class with a local instructor at your *casa particular* before going to collect the registration documents and race bibs from the Marathon organisers. After the formalities have been completed, your guide will take you on a short walking tour of the Old Town 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. We will have lunch together in a restaurant in the Old Town, after which you have an afternoon at your leisure. We will meet up again for an early evening tour of greater Havana. Setting off in classic 1950s American cars, we'll drive along the picturesque Malecón coast road to 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. The cars will drop us back in town for dinner (not included).

DAY 3

Casa Particular, Havana Breakfast

SATURDAY 21ST NOVEMBER – FREE DAY TO PREPARE FOR MARATHON

Today is free for you to prepare for the race tomorrow.

DAY 4

Casa Particular, Havana Breakfast, Dinner

SUNDAY 22ND NOVEMBER – MARABANA CUBA

Early start today to run the "Marabana Cuba"! Registration for participation in the marathon or other distance events has to have been made independently in advance of travel to Cuba. After finishing the race, the rest of the day is for you to relax. If you would like a massage (optional), this can be arranged at your *casa particular*. This evening we will have a celebratory dinner in one of Havana's best loved *paladares*.

DAY 5

Casa particular, Playa Larga Breakfast, Lunch

MONDAY 23RD NOVEMBER – CYCLE TO PLAYA LARGA

This morning we'll get fitted with our allocated bikes. The bike–fitting session will take place outside Cubania's bike workshop in the Miramar district of Havana and should you need to fit any pedals or other bike parts our mechanics will be on hand to assist with a full array of tools.

We'll then depart Havana driving southeast into Matanzas province. We'll jump on the bikes just outside of Jaguey Grande once off the main highway and take a flat leisurely ride down in to the Zapata Peninsula, a wildlife haven and the most low–lying region of Cuba. Along today's short route we'll stop to eat a packed lunch and visit a community project for young talented dancers called Korimakao where we'll meet some of the students. Back on the bikes for the short distance before arriving at our destination for the night, the sleepy seaside town of Playa Larga where we'll check into our beachfront *casas particulares* and enjoy the beach for the rest of the afternoon.

28 km

DAY 6

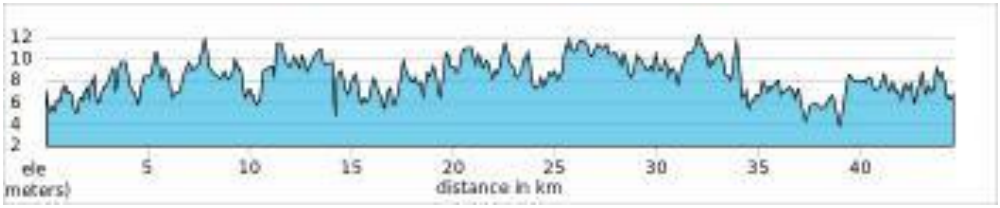
Casa Particular, Cienfuegos Breakfast, Lunch

24TH NOVEMBER / PLAYA LARGA – CIENFUEGOS. CYCLE THE BAY OF PIGS

Today we'll have a variety of experiences as we cycle through the Zapata Peninsula, a vast marshland home to Cuba's most important bird species and world–renowned as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The road is flat, clinging to the Bay of Pigs, and giving us views of the emerald Caribbean Sea. A stop at the small museum in Playa Girón gives us the chance to learn about the failed CIA backed invasion of Cuba in April 1961. From here we have a short ride to lunch and a swim in the natural sea pool at Caleta Buena. After lunch we continue by bus to Cienfuegos and check into our accommodation for the night. Cienfuegos is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is renowned for its stylish French architecture and its mini malecón, a seawall that goes all around the city's bay. Wander through its beautifully restored central area and have some dinner in one of the local restaurants (not included).

45 km



DAY 7

Casa Particular, Trinidad Breakfast, Lunch

25TH NOVEMBER / CIENFUEGOS – TRINIDAD. CYCLE TO "LA VEGA"

After breakfast we will meet with some members of a local Cienfuegos cycling club who'll be accompanying us for today's ride. We set off along an undulating coastal road followed by some short, sharp, hills through beautiful pasture lands. After approximately 20 km we stop to enjoy stunning views of the Escambray mountains across a valley of sugar cane. The road then sweeps up and over gentle hills until we stop for lunch at La Vega farm restaurant. This afternoon you can either cycle the remaining 39 km to Trinidad enjoying views of the Caribbean Sea as the road follows the coastline, or transfer to Trinidad in the bus. Upon arrival we will have a walking orientation tour of the centre of town.

Trinidad has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1988 and is probably Cuba's most famous provincial town. It's picture–perfect with cobbled streets, pastel painted colonial homes and very little traffic in the centre – other than horse drawn carts and the occasional vintage car. Walking around is like stepping back in time! This evening you can eat in your *casa* or in one of the many restaurants (not included). Trinidad comes to life in the evenings welcoming visitors with live music and local bars where you can enjoy a rum cocktail or practise your salsa steps.

50 km

OPTIONAL CYCLE RIDE TO CONTINUE UNTIL TRINIDAD 39 km

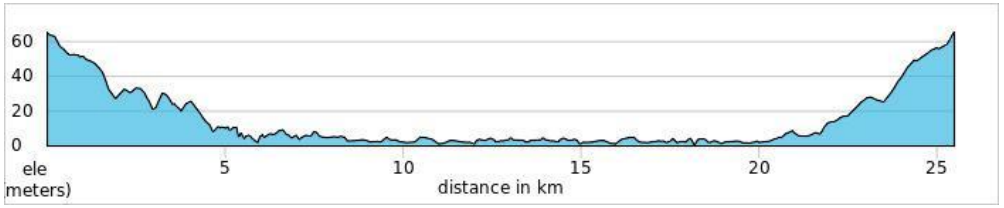
DAY 8

Casa Particular, Trinidad Breakfast, Packed Lunch, Dinner

26TH NOVEMBER – TRINIDAD

This morning we will set off for a short ride to down to Playa Ancon, a classic white sand Caribbean beach via the small fishing village of La Boca. We will have time to relax on the beach and swim before having lunch and cycling back to Trinidad. This afternoon is free for you to explore this picturesque town. Its small scale makes it easy to explore, and the many cafés, museums, handicrafts markets and shops are perfect for browsing and whiling away an afternoon. We will meet for dinner at a local restaurant.

25 km



DAY 9

Sagua La Grande Hotel Breakfast, Packed Lunch

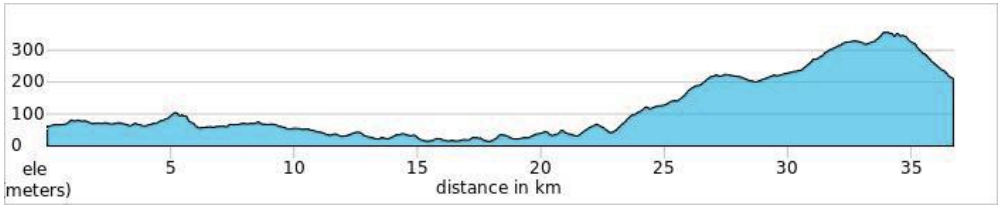
27TH NOVEMBER / CYCLE THE OLD SUGAR MILL VALLEYS; TRANSFER TO SAGUA LA GRANDE

Leaving Trinidad we will ride into the "Valley of the Sugar Mills", an area once covered in the sugar plantations that generated the enormous wealth that financed Trinidad's beautiful colonial buildings. We will see the Manaca Iznaga bell tower that once regimented the life of the slaves who toiled on the plantation. After the village of Condado, the road climbs as passes through the lush countryside that

skirts the Escambray mountains. At the end of the ride the road drops down to Rio Seibabo where we will get off our bikes and transfer to the Che Guevara Mausoleum and museum in Santa Clara.

The Mausoleum is a giant memorial and Che's official resting place since his remains were brought to Cuba from Bolivia in 1997. Located on Santa Clara's impressive Revolution Square, the mausoleum embodies the Cuban revolution and its legacy. The museum has many of his former belongings and is a fascinating insight into one of the 20th Century's most revered icons. We will then transfer to Sagua la Grande where we will check into our hotel for the night.

37 km



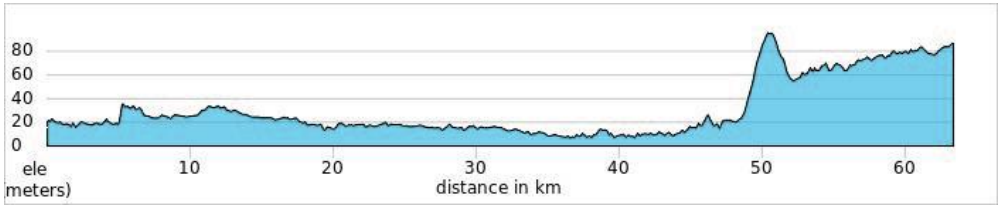
DAY 10

Hotel Velasco (or similar), Matanzas Breakfast, Lunch

28TH NOVEMBER / SAGUA LA GRANDE – MATANZAS. CYCLE FROM MARTI TO FINCA COINCIDENCIA

This morning we will have a 1.5 hour transfer to Marti town where we will get into our saddles and cycle to Finca Coincidencia. Our route passes through the bustling town of Cardenas. Finca Coincidencia is a charmingly eccentric organic farm in the heart of Matanzas province where you can gorge yourself on the farm's varied produce served in ceramic dishes made by the farmer himself. After lunch and a poke around this fascinating farm we transfer to the province's capital, Matanzas. "The City of Bridges", the streets of Matanzas span three different rivers, earning it a reputation as the Venice of Cuba. It has also been called the Athens of Cuba because of the many prominent writers and poets it has produced. Not only this, Matanzas is also the birthplace of two Cuban dances; rumba and danzón, as well as several religions of African origin, making it a vital contributor to Afro–Cuban culture. Though most holidaymakers by–pass Matanzas on their way to Varadero, this small city has plenty to offer.

63 km



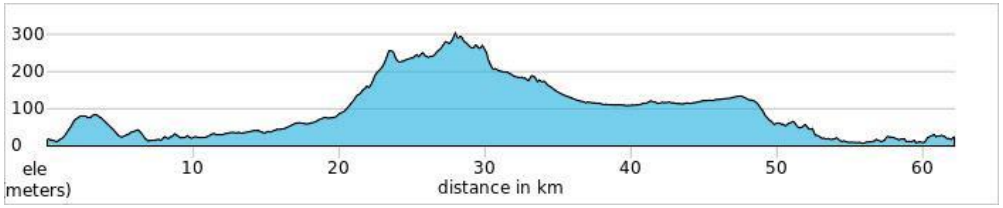
DAY 11

Casa Particular, Havana Breakfast, Lunch

29TH NOVEMBER / MATANZAS – HAVANA. CYCLE TO PLAYA JIBACOA

This morning we'll be getting straight on our bikes and climbing out of Matanzas. Though we may encounter some traffic on the first stretch of our ride, its gets a lot quieter once we turn off at the small town of Ceiba Mocha. From here we ascend the Picadura Valley with gorgeous views, we might stop at one of the small villages along the way to snack on fresh tropical fruit. Our ride ends at the beautiful Jibacoa beach where we'll stop for lunch and of course a dip in the sea! After a relaxing afternoon at the beach we will transfer back to Havana in time for a night out.

62 km



DAY 12

Breakfast

30TH NOVEMBER / END HAVANA

The morning is free for last minute sightseeing in the Old Town or shopping. Check out of your accommodation at midday, so it's *adiós*, or, as we prefer to say *hasta luego*, see you later! Have a safe onward journey and we very much hope to see you in Cuba again soon.

THE CYCLING

- Mostly on paved, quiet rural roads, with some potholes.
- Leisurely / Moderate rides (see profiles).
- No. of days cycling: 7.
- Total Distance: 310 km.
- Average Daily Distance: 44 km.
- Moderate Pace: approx. 20–25 kmph
- 100% vehicle support throughout rides—jump on the bus whenever you like!

WHAT TO BRING?

ESSENTIAL PACKING LIST

- Cycling helmet compulsory.
- Your sportswear for running the marathon in a tropical climate, and all other items that you will require for the race as these will not be available locally.
- Cycling helmet compulsory.
- Water bottle.
- Padded cycling shorts (with loose 'over–shorts' if you prefer).
- Lightweight waterproof /windproof top or jacket
- Breathable clothing.
- High factor sun cream (50+), sunglasses and sun hat.
- Hand sanitizer.

- Swimwear & towel.
- Camera.
- Insect repellent – tropical strength.
- Long sleeved shirts and light trousers for the evenings and a jacket/fleece.
- A sense of humour and patience are useful in Cuba!

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Most people bring a small back pack which they keep on the bus for easy access during the day. Typically they will carry a spare T shirt, their valuables, snacks and a camera.
- Shoes with relatively stiff soles are better for biking but are not essential.
- Cycling gloves.
- Comfortable trainers for walking.
- Torch.
- You may like to bring your own pedals and saddle (excluding the seat post) or gel saddle cover to fit to the hire bikes. However, please remember to retrieve your own equipment at the end of the trip!

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 hotels and private accommodation (*Casas particulares*). It's fair to say that the standard of Cuban accommodation is not always comparable 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 can 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!

On 9 nights we will be staying in private accommodation (*Casas particulares*). In Havana these range from family homes with a few rooms to larger guesthouses that operate more like small privately–run hotels. All have air conditioning and en suite bathrooms. The *casas* in the Old Town are in beautifully renovated old colonial buildings with ornate metalwork, small roof terraces, balconies or little internal courtyards. Those located in the quieter, greener Vedado area are usually in houses that were built during the early 20th century as a result of the wealth created by the booming sugar trade. Many have high airy ceilings, porches with rocking chairs or roof terraces, and are furnished with an eclectic mixture of beautiful antiques, art deco and contemporary furniture. In the provinces (Playa Larga, Cienfuegos and Trinidad) the *casas* particulares are more like family homes. 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 these *casas* also have air conditioning and en suite bathrooms. You'll be spoilt at breakfast in the mornings.

In Sagua Grande and Matanzas we will stay in 3 star hotels with en suite bathrooms and air conditioning.

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

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.

We are especially proud of the training that we have given our bike guides. We are the first travel company in Cuba to take cycling safety seriously and all our bike guides have received Bike Leader certification from British Cycling. Their staff travel to Cuba annually to deliver the training exclusively to our guides. These high standards have been maintained for more than a decade meaning that we are recognised as the most experienced and well–respected cycling company on the island.

For larger groups (over 8 people), a bike mechanic will cycle with the group throughout the itinerary fixing punctures and small mechanical issues on the spot and supporting the lead guide in managing differences in pace between group members.

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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