CUBANIA

TRIP NOTES (edited: 17.11.23)

BIKE CUBA

A cycling holiday through Cuban countryside visiting the tobacco fields of Viñales Valley and a pristine Caribbean beach.

DURATION
6 DAYS

ACTIVITY LEVEL
MODERATE

CARBON EMISSIONS
17.7 kg CO2e per day

INCLUDED

HIGHLIGHTS

- Get to know Cuba's exciting and picturesque capital city, Havana.
- Cycle through the beautiful Las Terrazas Biosphere.
- Explore the dramatic scenery of the Viñales Valley and visit a tobacco farm.
- Relax on a pristine Caribbean beach at Cayo Jutías.
- Learn all about this unique country, it's history and way of life.

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: 5 nights in casas particulares
- Meals: all breakfasts, 4 lunches, 4 dinners. Lunches will be in restaurants or picnics depending on the day.
- Entrance to Las Terrazas Biosphere, visits to Las Terrazas community and tobacco farm in Viñales, salsa lesson in Viñales.
- Staff: Local English–speaking Cuban guide/ mechanic throughout, and driver. Professional mechanic for bike fitting on Day 2. For groups of 8 pax or more, the mechanic will accompany group throughout.
- Transport: all bus transfers in private air–conditioned bus.
- 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.
- Travel / medical insurance (compulsory to provide proof of cover for entry into Cuba).
- Personal expenses (drinks, laundry, phone calls etc).
- Vaccinations.
- Visas (Tourist Cards).
- Cycling Helmet (compulsory) and water bottle.
- Tips for guide, driver and local staff. We recommend that each participant contributes a minimum of EUR 30–40 to be shared between the local staff.

IS THIS TOUR RIGHT FOR ME?

- Group Size 2 – 18 people of mixed nationalities and cycling ability. Minimum age 16 years (accompanied by an adult).
- Mostly on paved, quiet rural roads, with some potholes. Hot and humid conditions, especially during summer months.
- A moderate level of fitness is required.

DAY 1

Casa particular, Havana Dinner

ARRIVAL IN HAVANA

Welcome to Cuba! Touch down in Havana and make your way through the airport to be greeted by a Cubania airport rep waiting in the arrivals area. From here you'll have a private taxi ride into the city (approx. 30 minutes) where you'll check into a casa particular, Cuba's version of privately run BnB properties. At an agreed time, our Cubania guide will pass by the accommodation to introduce themselves and answer any questions that you may have. Dinner in a local paladar restaurant to enjoy your first meal in Havana together.

DAY 2

Casa Particular, Soroa Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

HAVANA CITY CYCLING; TRANSFER TO LAS TERRAZAS

This morning we'll get fitted with our allocated bikes. 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.

The Cubania guide will give a safety briefing in which they introduce the bikes that we use and give an overview of safe cycling techniques when in a group. Departing Miramar district, we'll embark on a fun and insightful exploration of Havana on two wheels. The ride will feature the following distinct parts of the capital; Playa, Rio Almendares, Plaza de la Revolución, Vedado, Centro Habana, La Habana Vieja, La Bahía de Habana. We'll be accompanied on today's city ride by member(s) of the Cuban 'Masters' veteran cyclists club, so you'll have the chance to ride side by side with Cuban cycling enthusiasts with stories to tell. The ride ends next to the Bay of Havana and from here we'll continue on foot to arrive at a paladar (private restaurant) where we'll have lunch together.

Afterwards we'll transfer out of Havana in our tour vehicle and head westwards into Artemisa Province. Our destination is Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve where we'll have a quick visit before transferring to Soroa for dinner and overnight.

24 km ↓↑ +163m –169m

DAY 3

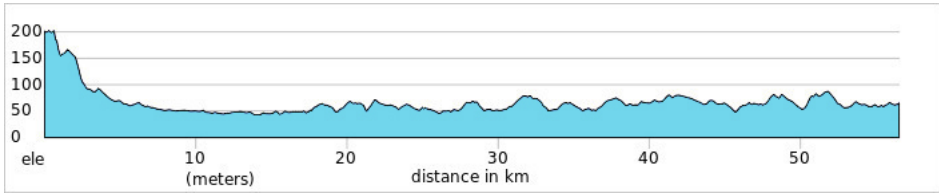
Casa Particular, Soroa Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

CYCLE FROM LAS TERRAZAS TO SAN DIEGO DE LOS BAÑOS

Departing on our bikes we'll descend from Soroa and leave the mountains behind with a fast descent to Candelaria. We then take the Carretera Central to San Diego de Los Baños. The ride is flat and involves passing through a series of small bustling towns where we'll be able to soak up the sights and sounds of rural Cuban life. At the end of the ride we'll stop for lunch in a Casa Particular and then transfer for approx. 1 hour to the mountain town and activity hub of Viñales. The short drive ends with some spectacular views as we enter Viñales Valley with its dramatic limestone karst rock formations. Meet local farmers and eat dinner at an organic farm overlooking town tonight.

In Viñales we'll be staying in *casas particulares*.

57km ↓↑ +307m –443m



DAY 4

Casa Particular, Viñales Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

CYCLE TO BEACH AT CAYO JUTÍAS

Cycling out westwards from Viñales we'll ride via Pons and make our way to the north coastline of Pinar del Rio Province. Today's route involves some short climbs and some sections of very poor quality road surface with some stunning views from the winding road. The last section of the route to Cayo Jutías is a causeway with water on both sides. Whilst the causeway is full of potholes, it can still be cycled and the reward at the end is the beautiful golden sands of Cayo Jutías beach. Here we'll have lunch and spend some time relaxing on the beach before driving back to Viñales. Back in the town we'll walk out to a nearby tobacco farm known as a 'vega' and learn about the growing process of Cuba's most famous export. This is the best region of Cuba for tobacco production and so what better place to try our hand at rolling a cigar! In the evening we'll have a salsa class with local dance teachers showing us some steps. Dinner in town in a local paladar.

56km ↓↑ +530m – 669m

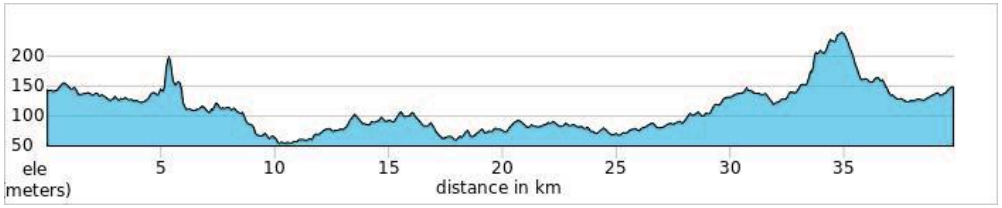
DAY 5

Breakfast, Lunch

CYCLE FROM VIÑALES TO SAN ANDRES; TRANSFER TO HAVANA

After breakfast we'll cycle northwards out of Viñales passing through some beautiful scenery as we wind between mountains and pass agricultural pastures. The first half of the route is on paved roads and the second part on rougher terrain. Our ride ends at Casa Maria, a small farm property in the village of San Andres where we'll visit their family–run organic farm and have a delicious meal cooked with food sourced entirely from their property. Afterwards, time permitting, we'll take a visit to the nearby Cueva de Los Portales cave system, where Che Guevara camped out during the 1962 Cuban 'missile crisis'. From here it is approximately 2.5 hours drive back to Havana where the tour ends at the Montehabana hotel in Miramar district. For anyone who has booked extra accommodation nights in Havana through Cubania the bus will take you to your accommodation.

40km ↓↑ +488m –483m



DAY 6

Breakfast,

DEPARTURE DAY; END

After breakfast enjoy free time until your taxi transfers you to Havana's Jose Marti Airport. And so it's Adios or Hasta Luego! as we prefer to say in Cuba!

THE CYCLING

- Mostly on paved, quiet rural roads, with some potholes and sections of rough road conditions.
- Moderate difficulty: Undulating terrain with some short climbs and descents (see daily ride profiles in itinerary)
- No. of days cycling: 4
- Total Distance: 195 km
- Average Daily Distance: 49 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.
- 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.
- Insect repellent – tropical strength.
- Long sleeved shirts and light trousers for the evenings.
- 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 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!

Hotel La Moka in the Las Terrazas Biosphere is a 3 star hotel with en suite bathrooms and air conditioning. The accommodation in Havana and Viñales will be in Casas Particulares; 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 and 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. Some people bring snacks such as protein bars from home, but this is not strictly necessary as we provide local snacks such as fresh fruit and peanuts on all our rides.

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 2 – 6 EUR 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, 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 sometimes 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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