

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Family Viva Cuba! (FCLT 2017)



TRIPDURATION
15
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: FCLT

Trip Highlights - Family Viva Cuba!

- ✓ Havana by classic car - Cruise round Cuba's captivating capital in a 1950s American car
- ✓ Las Terrazas - Discover the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve - and a chance to zip-wire through the treetops
- ✓ Viva la Revolution! - Visit the most iconic reminders of the Cuban Revolution, including the Che Guevara Memorial and the Bay of Pigs
- ✓ Topes de Collantes - Wildlife walks and swimming in jungle pools in the Escambray Mountains
- ✓ Golden sand beaches - Relax and swim on Playa Ancon

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 11 nights Standard Hotel
2 nights Simple Camping
1 night Premium Hotel

Included Meals: 14 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Havana City
End Point: Trip ends: Havana

Transport: 4WD, Bus, Car

Countries: Cuba
Minimum Age: From 8 years

Family Viva Cuba!

An action-packed holiday for adventurous families. We swim in jungle pools, shower in waterfalls and hike along forest trails. We camp out at traditional haciendas in the mountains and have the opportunity to experience the thrill of zip-wiring through the tree tops. From cruising around the vibrant capital city of Havana in a 1950s American car to snorkelling in the warm waters in the Caribbean, Cuba is the ideal destination for a fun-filled family holiday.

Now is undoubtedly a fantastic time to visit Cuba to see and experience the island. Visiting Cuba is like stepping back in time as little has changed over the past 50 years. However, the recent relaxation of US sanctions is making Cuba an ever more popular destination placing increasing demands on the local tourist infrastructure. As a result, all tour operators to the island are experiencing occasions where previously confirmed accommodation is changed at short notice. To fully enjoy the Cuban experience you should travel with a willingness to expect the unexpected and, above all, an adventurous spirit. In our opinion go now and experience this unique destination before it changes.

Why Book this trip

This adventure is designed for families who want to discover one of the most unique countries in the world and a must do before the culture and ethos of the nation changes. You will travel to iconic reminders of the Cuban Revolution including the Che Guevara Memorial and the Bay of Pigs, enjoy Havana with its salsa dancing, music and colour and relax on the golden beaches of Playa Ancon and the Caribbean Island of Cayo Levisa. An adventure where we explore, learn and discover with time on the beach.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.



Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Arrive Havana

Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive cities in the Americas. It's also one of the most exciting: the modern city is a fascinating mix of old and new, with crumbling tenement blocks and 1950s American Cadillacs rubbing shoulders with grand colonial buildings and monuments to the revolution. Wherever you go there is music - the hypnotic rhythms of salsa, trova and son can be heard in every bar, street corner or 'casa de la musica'. Founded in 1519 the city became the gateway for the Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru, when its strategic location at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico saw it eclipse Santiago as the country's capital. American influence in the 20th century came to an abrupt end in 1959, when Fidel Castro and his fellow revolutionaries expelled the Americans and set the country on its socialist course into the history books. Today we arrive and check into our city centre hotel.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**



Included Meals: None

DAY 2 In Havana; tour the city in 1950s American cars and take a salsa lesson

What better way to get a feel for this vibrant and fascinating city than to cruise the streets in classic 1950s American cars, a colourful legacy of pre-revolutionary days? Our route takes in the beautiful, neoclassical architecture of Havana's Vieja (Old) district and the art deco buildings along the waterfront (Malecon) as well as driving through the Vedado and Miramar suburbs, where kids play baseball below rusting street lights. In the afternoon we get active with a salsa dance lesson: a chance to learn the basics of Cuba's most characteristic dance style.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Vinales to discover this World Heritage Site

Leaving Havana we head west to the beautiful Vinales valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to some of the most famous tobacco fields in the world. The valley sits in the Sierra de los Organos mountains, where millions of years ago underground rivers cut tunnels through the soft limestone hills leaving behind strange hills or 'mogotes' that rise like cliffs from the rich, red soil of the valley floor. We take a short guided walk through this remarkable landscape, passing immaculate tobacco fields and beautifully tended fruit and vegetable gardens, pausing to visit local farmers and see for ourselves the intricate process of harvesting, drying and finally rolling the classic Cuban cigars (tobacco growing season is between Oct-April). The valley floor is dotted with simple, colourful farmhouses, each with its characteristic thatched-roof tobacco drying barn. Most of the farming is still very traditional and you can expect to see the fertile soil still being ploughed by oxen.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Relax on the white sand beaches of Cayo Levisa

Today we journey by ferry to the beautiful white sand beaches of the island of Cayo Levisa on the north coast of Cuba. Here, mangroves and pristine white sand welcome us for a day's relaxation on the beach. The more active among us may choose to take an optional snorkelling trip to explore the colourful marine flora and fauna on the reef. As there is little civilization on the island, you may like to bring your own snorkel and mask although they are often available for hire locally

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Drive to Soroa visiting an orchid garden including a flower that smells of chocolate

Today we head east into the Sierra del Rosario at Soroa. We visit the beautifully tended orchid garden here, located on a steep hillside with views over the surrounding mountains. More than 700 orchid species are grown here (including one that smells of chocolate!) along with many other quite fascinating plants. This afternoon you may wish to take a walk to a beautiful nearby waterfall surrounded by dense, green forest which is rich in birdlife and home to many butterflies or you may wish to just relax by the pool

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Guided walk in Las Terrazas with an option to try out a zipwire

We start our day with a drive to Las Terrazas a small village in the heart of the Sierra del Rosario, a UNESCO biosphere reserve. The region used to be severely deforested so in 1968 an ambitious regeneration project was started. The hillsides were terraced (to reduce rain erosion) and millions of trees were planted. Now the area is covered in thick tropical vegetation, with the distinctive tall, white trunks of the majestic royal palm standing out against its rolling green hillsides. We set out this morning with a local naturalist guide to walk through the rich flora and fauna of Las Terrazas, finishing two or three hours later at a small waterfall with rock-pools, perfect for a refreshing swim (water-shoes are useful as there can be lots of scrambling over rocks). The rest of the day is left free to enjoy this beautiful area. A popular option is to do the exhilarating zip-wire course: three long wires take you flying over the tree-tops, the lake and even over the red-tiled rooftops of Las Terrazas village (it is easy to sit out the zip-wire course if not all family members want to participate). We will return to Soroa for the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Drive to Cienfuegos via the Bay of Pigs

Heading east across Cuba, we drive through giant citrus and sugar plantations and out into the flat marshlands of the Zapata Peninsula. We stop at the Cueva de los Peces (Cave of the Fish), a 70 metre deep flooded natural pool with subterranean tunnels connect it with the nearby sea. We stop for lunch here and a swim and snorkel before continuing to the infamous Playa Giron - the Bay of Pigs. This seemingly quiet, rural area propelled Cuba onto the world stage when the CIA backed an abortive coup attempt by Cuban exiles that resulted in humiliation for the Kennedy administration, the death and capture of some 1400 soldiers and the immediate elevation of Fidel Castro to hero status. We visit the museum here to learn how a 20th century superpower was humbled by a supposedly ragtag army of disorganised rebels, an event that practically threw Cuba into the waiting arms of the Soviet Union. We then drive to Cienfuegos, another beautifully preserved colonial city with UNESCO World Heritage status.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**



Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 In Cienfuegos with optional boat cruise

This morning we will start the day with a short city tour around the colonial heart of Cienfuegos. This city is often referred to as the 'Pearl of the South', originally founded by the French it boasts the impressive Terry Theatre where they host operas and ballet. This afternoon has been left free either to relax by the hotel pool or you may wish to take an optional boat excursion out to one of the local bays.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Drive to Topes; Walk and swim in the nature reserve

This morning we skirt the edge of the wooded Escambray Mountains with the turquoise waters of the Caribbean on our right, we then take a short drive on steep, switch-back roads which leads us into the densely wooded Escambray Mountains, to the Topes de Collantes nature reserve. We transfer onto an open-sided 4WD truck which takes us deeper into the reserve, then set off on foot through the forests with our naturalist guide. Our trail takes us along a ridge with panoramic views on all sides, then into a valley cut deep by the Guayanara River. Our guide will point out the rich and varied flora and fauna along the way, including the rare Cuban trogon, Cuba's national bird, whose red, white and blue plumage mirrors the national flag. After a walk of around 3 to 4 hours we arrive at our 'hacienda', set in a beautiful valley. Lying alongside a river with bathing pools, Hacienda de Gallega is a converted farmstead with a dining area, a bar, simple toilet and shower facilities and some flat terraces where our tents will be set up. Surrounded by beautifully tended flowerbeds and the forests of Topes de Collantes, this is a wonderfully relaxing and peaceful place to stay. After lunch there's the chance to walk along the river to the Salto de Rocio waterfall, a 3 hour round trip, through an area rich with trogons, hummingbirds and woodpeckers. Close to the waterfall there are rockpools where we can swim and - for the intrepid - swing out Tarzan-style on a liana overhanging the deepest pool. In the evening we eat a wholesome dinner at the hacienda then settle down to sleep overnight in our tents. Generous 2-man tents are provided along with foam mattresses and blankets, but we recommend



you bring your own sleeping bag (or at least a sleeping sheet) in addition. If you prefer you can sleep out on the verandahs at the hacienda, under the eaves, rather than in a tent. Please note you can travel by truck to the hacienda if you prefer not to walk today.


Overnight: **Simple Camping**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10 In Topes de Collantes nature reserve

A full day in the Escambray Mountains, exploring more of the Topes de Collantes nature reserve. In the morning we drive by truck to the start of our 3 to 4 hour walk. We follow a trail through forests and valleys, past streams and glades with flowers, butterflies and darting hummingbirds. Further on we reach La Batata, a cave through which an underground river gurgles, gently carving out rock pools. The water rarely exceeds 20°C so the swimming is exhilarating here! We walk on until we reach the beautiful, isolated Hacienda Codina, set in a green valley with manicured gardens all around. The traditional hacienda has a pleasant bar and verandah, with rocking chairs to sit back and enjoy the view. We enjoy a leisurely lunch in the dining area, surrounded by colourful flowers and birds, then rest through the heat of the day. Later in the afternoon we explore a short nature trail close to the hacienda, with rare orchids and unusual medicinal plants. At one point the trail actually passes through a cave (Cueva del Altar), emerging on the other side of the hill to beautiful views over the distant Caribbean. Later we have dinner, enjoying another traditional home-cooked meal, before settling down for the night in our tents (or, like last night, you can choose to sleep on the verandahs of the hacienda). Once again you can skip the walk today and travel to the hacienda by truck if you prefer.

Overnight: **Simple Camping**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 11 Visit Trinidad in the morning, with a free afternoon

This morning we drive to Trinidad - A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the cobbled streets and Spanish architecture of Trinidad make it one of Cuba's most impressive and best preserved colonial towns. It was founded in 1514 but only came to prominence when French settlers fleeing the slave revolt in Haiti began arriving in the early years of the 19th century. These plantation owners built sugar mills in the nearby Valle de los Ingenios and the region quickly became responsible for a third of all Cuba's sugar production, generating huge wealth for the town. We will walk through the lovely streets, squares and markets of the old town and visit the cathedral, this afternoon we will head out to our hotel at the beach.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 


 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12 Time to relax at Playa Ancon (near Trinidad)

These two days have been left free to make the most of the idyllic beaches near Trinidad, and the surrounding area. Relax on the beach and enjoy the facilities of the hotel which has an entertainment programme, traditional music band, aerobics classes, beach sports or just relax on the beach. Catamaran, wind-surfing, kayaking, and scuba diving are all possible.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 


 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 13 Time to relax at Playa Ancon (near Trinidad)

There are various options available during our time here, giving you the chance to be as active or relaxed as you like. You may wish to head into the Escambray mountains for a 4 hour trek (approx 8km) up through an unspoilt land of forest and water-eroded valleys. The trek is to an isolated hacienda where we would have lunch, before returning to Trinidad.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 14 Drive to Havana via Santa Clara

In the morning we drive west back to Havana. We will stop on route at the historically important city of Santa Clara. Here we visit the Che Guevara Mausoleum and Museum, the final resting place of one of the world's most iconic and recognisable revolutionary figures. We will then continue onto Havana where the rest of the day is free either to enjoy exploring more, perhaps wandering through some of the artisan markets looking for souvenirs to take home, or relax around the lovely pool at our hotel.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Our tour ends today in Havana after breakfast. Those on the group flight will have more free time to Explore before they are transferred to the airport in the afternoon.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Ability to swim required

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

Due to the recent increase in tourism in Cuba following the relaxing of US sanctions, we are finding that a number of hotels and guesthouses are cancelling or moving our reservations at short notice. Unfortunately, these changes aren't something we can predict, or prevent, but we'll do our utmost to ensure that any replacements we provide you are of an equivalent standard. On occasions this may be in an alternative location but this should not affect your included itinerary. We'll let you know if we receive notification of changes within a reasonable amount of time, but please do be prepared that you might find out about changes to your accommodation on arrival or during your trip.

Accommodation and service levels in Cuba have improved in recent years but there is an ongoing trade embargo and lack of investment in infrastructure. Accommodation can be basic, particularly in some rural areas, occasionally with unreliable water and electricity supply. Service levels in government hotels, shops and restaurants are generally poor as this is not a service-oriented western culture. Of course, this is all part of seeing the 'real Cuba' and while we think you'll be pleasantly surprised by most of the hotels we use, you should be prepared for simply furnished rooms, some out-dated furniture and varying levels of service. Most of the hotels do have air conditioning and en-suite facilities.

Casas particulares - This is a Spanish term meaning private accommodation or homestay in Cuba. Staying in a casa offers the visitor a unique opportunity to experience Cuban hospitality in local accommodation adapted for tourism. The number of rooms, quality, facilities and access to other areas of the house such as the living room varies massively but as a general rule the majority of Casas are clean, basic, centrally located and can host only a handful of guests. Casas are generally run by the owner and members of the family that live there and the standard of English spoken will vary from zero to fluent, which is a good opportunity for you to practice your Spanish. Virtually all of the rooms have private facilities but on rare occasions it may be necessary to share. Your Explore Leader will coordinate accommodation arrangements on tour.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Cuba

Lunch £: 4.00 - 6.00

Dinner £: 12.00-15.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Cuba

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.50

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Havana - Museo de la Ciudad CUC3, CUC8 with guide; Museo de la Revolucion & Arte Colonial CUC7 each, plus CUC2 with guide; Colonial Art Museum CUC5, CUC7 with guide

Cienfuegos - Boat excursion inc. transport CUC20 (lunch additional CUC10) - minimum 7 people

Viñales - Cueva del Indio CUC8; Laguna de la Piedra walk CUC8;

Soroa - Waterfall visit CUC3, Orchid garden CUC3

Las Terrazas - Zip-wire course CUC25 for three wires or CUC35 for all 6

Trinidad - Cayo Las Iguanas Boat Excursion CUC60 plus transport 10CUC per taxi each way;

Tipping - Tour Leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Please note tipping is also customary for musicians and for public conveniences so small notes and coins are always handy

Tipping - Local Crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly you should allow approx. CUC30 for gratuities for local staff. In addition 10% is expected in restaurants and it is usual to tip musicians at restaurants and bars.

Foreign Exchange

Cuba

ATM Availability: Available in major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Please note credit and debit cards associated with American Banks are not accepted. Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: We do not recommend Travellers Cheques. Amex Travellers Cheques are not accepted.

Local Currency: Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC).

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US dollars are no longer accepted in shops and other businesses, tourists and Cubans exchanging dollars will have to pay a 20% commission. We recommend you take clean Euro, Canadian dollars or Sterling cash as these are easier to exchange. Please note that Scottish Pounds are not accepted in Cuba.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Cuba: Visas or Tourist cards are required by all nationalities travelling to Cuba. Explore can only supply the Cuban Tourist Cards to citizens of the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand who are resident in the UK. This currently costs £15. Please contact Explore or your Travel Agent to arrange this service and we will send your tourist card with your final documentation.

Alternatively they can be obtained directly through Cuban embassies and consulates. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

Due to US Treasury Department Regulations we are unable to accept bookings from US passport holders. These Regulations set out different categories under which it is possible for US citizens to travel to Cuba; our trips do not fall under any of the permissible categories. As a tour operator we have an obligation to follow legal procedures, and as such we are unable to sell our trips to US passport holders.

Travelling for tourism reasons directly from the USA to Cuba isn't allowed under US law. The law applies to US nationals and all foreign nationals who are either resident in the USA, or travelling through the USA en route to Cuba. Those travelling on direct flights between the UK and Cuba, or via other countries excluding the USA, are unaffected by this US legislation.

You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the

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official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>
Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Lone Parents

Cuba

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the Cuban embassy for further information on exactly what may be required.

Vaccinations & Protection

Cuba

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, TB, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Cuba

The dry season is from November to April. Average temperatures are 22-26C. Though the sky is often cloudless during the dry season, cold wet snaps do come in from North America especially in Dec and Jan, when the temperatures can drop to as low as 5C at night. From May to October there are normally fine mornings and clear evenings, afternoon rains tend to be short & heavy. Temperatures are hot and humid.

Clothing

Include light cotton clothing plus something warmer for the evenings in the hills when it can get cool. A light fleece and waterproof are also recommended, except during Dec-Jan when you will need a heavier fleece and waterproof.

Equipment

A torch (with spare batteries and bulb), filter water bottle, travel pillow, towel, sunblock, pocket knife, insect repellent, sunglasses, sun hat and swimgear. You may wish to bring a walking pole.

A 2-season (temperature 0°C to 5°C) sleeping bag is recommended for the two night stay in the haciendas (mattresses are provided). Due to the limited availability of bedding (and other goods) in Cuba, the bedding provided in Topes may not be up to the standards you are used to. Accordingly, we strongly recommend you take your own sleeping bag for these night's stay.

You may also wish to bring your own mask and snorkel (see day 4). Camera equipment is not available to buy in Cuba.

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots or shoes are recommended, although the walking trails can be tackled in trainers.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of luggage and a shoulder bag or daysac. Remember you will be expected to carry your own luggage, so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Cuba

Population: 11,241,894

Size of Country: 109,884 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: 60% Catholic

Electric Supply & Plugs

Cuba

2 Pin Flat and 2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to - and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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