EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Highlights of Cuba by Bicycle (CSC 2014)

CYCLING

TOUR DURATION **8** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Easy to Moderate
Tour Code: CSC

Tour Highlights - Highlights of Cuba by Bicycle

- ✓ Cycle Cuba - With very little traffic this is the ideal way to see the island
- ✓ Havana Vieja (Havana Old Town) - Explore this atmospheric UNESCO Heritage Site
- ✓ Spanish Colonial Towns - Including the beautiful original founding towns of Remedios and Trinidad
- ✓ Casas Particulares - Stay in locally-owned and run private homestays in the heart of colonial Trinidad
- ✓ Historical Sites - Cycle beside the infamous 'Bay of Pigs'; visit Che Guevara's monument in Santa Clara
- ✓ Carribean Islands - Cycle the causeway over tropical waters to the islands of Cayo Santa Maria

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	5 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Simple Homestay
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Havana
End Point:	Tour ends: Havana
Included Bike:	24 or 27 gear Conor Avenue or Stevens Galant SX hybrid bikes with front suspension
Transport:	Bus, Bicycle
Countries:	Cuba

Highlights of Cuba By Bicycle

Experience cycling on quiet roads through the verdant countryside and along the stunning coastlines of Cuba. En route we explore the colonial towns of Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus, Remedios and Trinidad - where we experience Cuban hospitality in Casas Particulares. We also visit the historic Bay of Pigs, the monument to Che Guavara in Santa Clara and the vibrant capital Havana

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 208 km over five days (an average of 42 km per day). One of the cycling days is circular and therefore optional. The terrain is mostly flat and on tarmac, although this is in poor condition in places. Cuban roads have little traffic. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as easy to moderate.

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.

Tour Comfort: 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.

Cycling Grade: Easy to Moderate

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.

Your tour 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 Join tour in Havana

Our tour begins in Havana. Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive colonial cities surviving in the Americas today. Crumbling tenement buildings and 50s style American Cadillacs rub shoulders with white marble grandeur and the still audible echoes of the Cuban Revolution. The largest city in the Caribbean and Cuba's political and cultural heart, it is the perfect place to start this remarkable journey.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 Cycle from Guama to Bay of Pigs; bus to Cienfuegos

This morning we depart the city and head towards the infamous Bay of Pigs on the eastern edge of the Bahia de Cochinos. At Boca de Guama we leave the bus and cycle on to Cueva de los Pecas on the Caribbean Coast. A relatively easy warm-up ride, we have a chance for a swim later, before resuming our journey by bus onto Cienfuegos. After taking a look around the city, taking in some of its impressive 19th century architecture, we then drive the short distance onto our night stop in Guajimico. Total cycling distance approximately 28 km.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 3 Morning ride to Trinidad; afternoon walking tour

Continuing south along the Caribbean Coast this morning we cycle on to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Trinidad, one of the most bewitching heritage sites in the country. Founded in 1514, the town was a haven for pirates and slavers before the arrival of the French in the early years of the 19th century. This afternoon we enjoy a walking tour around the town, taking in the lovely setting of the central square and the cathedral. In Trinidad we enoy the local hospitality staying in casas particulares - private house. Total cycling distance approximately 40 km. +/-150m

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 4 Free day in Trinidad for additional rides or relaxation

We have a chance to enjoy Cuba's beautiful Caribbean coastline today. Options include a day relaxing on the beach, or perhaps a trip on a catamaran out into the azure waters that lie off the coast. For those still wanting to stretch their legs we also have the option to cycle out to the Ancon Peninsula (30 kilometres). Alternatively, you can simply relax on the white sands of nearby Playa Ancon, or perhaps return to wander through Trinidad's charming colonial streets.

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 5 Ride through the 'valley of the Sugar Mills' to Mayajigua

Resuming our journey this morning we head next towards the ruined mills of the Valle de los Ingenios, just a few kilometres to the east of Trinidad. By the middle years of the 19th century, the valley was responsible for a third of all Cuba's sugar production, before the wars of independence saw the mills destroyed. We cycle to the slave watchtower of Manaca Iznaga, before continuing east towards the city of Sancti Spiritus. Meeting our bus again en route, we stop to pay a short visit to the old town, before continuing on to our night stop in Mayajigua. Total cycling distance approximately 60 km. +150m/-250m

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 6 Drive to Remedios stopping for a ride to Cayo Santa Maria

Driving north towards Cuba's Atlantic Coast this morning we head for the Gulf of Mexico and the island of Cayo Santa Maria. Cycling out across the causeway, our ride today covers some 50 kilometres (mainly on the flat). On arrival to the island, we have time to swim and relax before continuing by bus onto the colonial town of Remedios (one hour). Founded in 1524 and considered by many to be one of Cuba's most picturesque towns, Remedios still retains something of the flavour of its 17th century heritage, when it served as the regional capital. Overnight here or in Santa Clara a short 40 minute drive away. Total cycling distance approximately 50 km.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 7 Visit Che Guevara Monument; tour of Havana

A short drive brings us to Santa Clara and the Che Guevara Monument, the final resting place of one of the world's most iconic figures and one of the country's most emotive shrines to its revolutionary heritage. Continuing on to Havana (three hours), we then spend this afternoon exploring the heart of the old capital, wandering through the neo-classical architecture of the Vieja district and enjoying the baroque grandeur of the 18th century Catedral de San Cristobal de la Habana.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 Tour ends in Havana

The tour ends in Havana this morning after breakfast.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

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.

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 whilst 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.

Due to tourism demands and central government decision making in Cuba, occasionally there may be some last-minute changes to the accommodation which we are unable to foresee or prevent. We will endeavour to ensure it is of the same standard however sometimes this may be in an alternative location but this will not affect your included itinerary.

Your Accommodation in Trinidad - Casa Particular Casa Particular (Spanish for ‘private house’) is a term meaning private accommodation or private homestay in Cuba. Introduced in the 1990s, Casas offer the visitor a unique opportunity to experience Cuban hospitality while staying 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 will vary 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 house’s owner(s) and members of the family that live there and the standard of English spoken will vary from zero to fluent. Virtually all of the rooms have private facilities but on rare occasions it may be necessary to share. Your tour leader will coordinate accommodation arrangements on tour

In Cuba certain foods are still rationed and some are controlled therefore it can be quite difficult for restaurants to offer a varied menu. Vegetarian food can be quite basic.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 1 lunch,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

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

International Departure Taxes

airport taxes approx. CUC25 Convertible Peso (approx. £20)

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

Catamaran Trip near Trinidad - 55 CUC
Museo Bellas Artes in Havana - 5 CUC
Please note - most museums in Cuba charge for use of Camera's and Camcorders, this can be up to 7 CUC per usage.

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Tipping - 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. CUC25 for gratuities for local staff. 10% is expected in restaurants.

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

Foreign Exchange

Cuba

ATM Availability: There are ATM's in all major cities however do not totally rely on the use of your card as these sometimes do not work.

Credit Card Acceptance: Please note credit cards drawn on American Banks are not accepted. Please do not rely on using your credit card.

Travellers Cheques: We do not recommend Travellers cheques. Places to exchange Travellers cheques are very limited. 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: Havana, Trinidad, Santiago.

Joining your Tour

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

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

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 joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Cuba: Visas are required by all nationalities travelling to Cuba. Explore can arrange a Cuban visa for UK residents when making a booking with us, 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 through Cuban embassies and consulates.

Due to US Treasury Department Regulations we are unable to accept bookings from US passport holders.

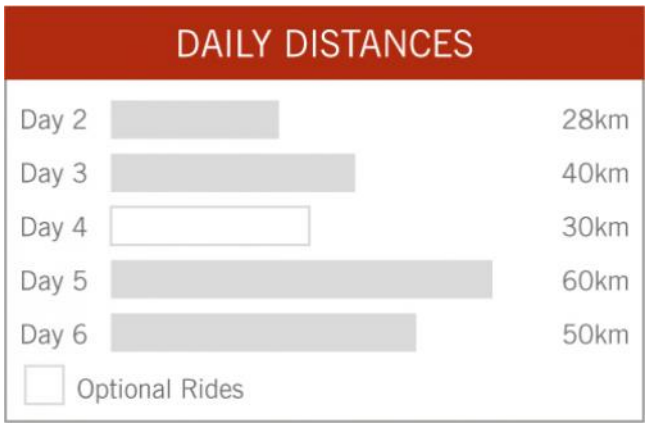
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Cuba

Nothing compulsory, although we recommend vaccination against tetanus, infectious hepatitis, typhoid and polio. 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 Tour



Bike Details

Your included bike will be a 24 or 27 gear Conor Avenue, Stevens Galant SX or Radon TCS hybrid with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. A pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

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

Pack for warm and hot conditions. Bring cycling gear such as padded shorts, cycle gloves and quick drying cycle shirts. Remember weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool and wet in the high altitude of the Sierra Escambray or even on some evenings in Havana, so bring some warmer clothing too. Wet weather gear is essential at all times in case of rain. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Equipment

We strongly recommend you take a cycle helmet, cycle water bottle, torch, sunhat and suncream. For added comfort you may like to bring a gel seat cover. Panniers are provided. Please consider carrying all or some of your cycling equipment, e.g. helmet, as part of your hand luggage.

Footwear

Lightweight walking shoes/trainers for cycling and comfortable shoes/sandals for evenings and visiting the sites.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of luggage and a daysac. Total allowance: 44lbs/20kgs.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and 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. 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 £: 9.00

Dinner £: 15.00

Drink

Cuba

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.00

Country details

Cuba

Population: 11,241,894

Size of Country: 109,884 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: 60% Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -5

Electric Supply & Plugs

Cuba

2 Pin Flat

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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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, elephant, 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.

Our commitment to the environment

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 and traditional, 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: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO_2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

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 http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

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.

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 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour 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: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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