EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Cycle Cuba! (CCC 2015)

CYCLING

TOURDURAT
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Moderate
tour Code: CCC

Tour Highlights - Cycle Cuba!

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Viñales - Striking Karst scenery with jungle-clad sawtooth mountains amid tobacco plantations
- ✓ Casas Particulares - Stay in locally-owned and run private homestays in the heart of colonial Trinidad and in Viñales
- ✓ Trinidad - Well-preserved Spanish colonial town
- ✓ Cycle Topes De Collantes - Spectacular ride through the central Sierra Escambray Mountains

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	8 nights Standard Hotel 6 nights Simple Homestay
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 1 dinner
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

Cycle Cuba!

Cycle with us through Cuba as we tour the colonial capital of Havana, explore tropical forests and pedal past the striking limestone landscape of Viñales. In Viñales and historic Trinidad we go local and stay in privately run Casas Particulares. We also ride through the forests of Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve and along the Caribbean coast to Trinidad, stopping to swim in tropical pools and see the infamous Bay of Pigs.

Why Book this tour

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 335 km over ten days (an average of 34km per day) with further optional rides available. The terrain is mainly on flat, tarmac roads, although the surface can be in poor condition in places. There are some uphill sections particularly in the Viñales and Soroa area. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. Road conditions are ideal as Cuba has little traffic. We have graded the route as 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.

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.

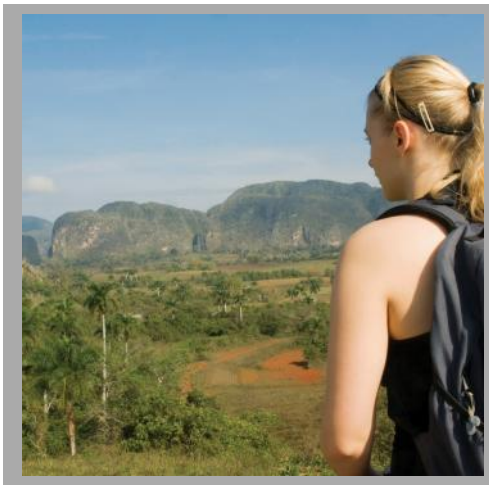
Cycling Grade: Moderate

Medium length rides are suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. You'll be cycling mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

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 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 our journey.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Visit Old Havana; drive to Soroa

Havana boasts a sheer abundance of great buildings that reflect its importance centuries ago when all the Spanish galleons passed through with their freight of gold and silver, brought in from colonies in the Americas. During a relaxed walk through the old town we will take in the most important sites and buildings. After lunch we head off by bus to Soroa, nestling in the forested hills about an hour west of Havana. After checking in there may be time to strectch our legs on a walk, perhaps up to the top of a hill with views over the surrounding mountains and towards the sea.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Cycle through tropical forests to Las Terrazas

Today we take our first bike ride with an excursion into the surrounding hills. The cycling is very rewarding - through almost tropical forests with plenty of flowers and interesting plants along the way - eventually leading us to the enchanting settlement of Las Terrazas, perched on the edge of a lake and the UNESCO biosphere reserve of Sierra de Rosario. This is an internationally acclaimed reforestation project and model '70s communist settlement, set in the mountains at altitudes of around 500 metres where pine forests alternate with old coffee plantations. There is the chance for a swim in a natural pool in the San Juan river before we have lunch. You have the chance to try Cuba's most original, community-run vegetarian restaurant. Afterwards we head back to our hotel in Soroa by bus. Keen cyclists can do a few more miles if they wish. The support bus can only accompany short sections at the beginning and end of today's cycle route due to road conditions. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 24 kilometres (300 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Cycle to the Cuban spa town of San Diego de los Banos

Early this morning there is a chance to visit the splendid Soroa orchid garden. We start cycling downhill out of the Sierra, using smaller roads and a quieter section of Cuba's Carretera Central. We will cycle through picturesque countryside with rolling hills, palm trees and farmhouses in small hamlets, eventually arriving in the Cuban spa town of San Diego de los Baños. The surrounding virgin countryside and forests are fabulous. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 55 kilometres (100 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Ride past banana and coffee plantations to Vinales

We continue cycling along Cuba's dramatic western mountain range, passing banana and coffee plantations and tobacco fields in one of the most remote rural areas of this trip. We will stop at the Cueva de los Portales - a famous site in the jungle where Che Guevara set up headquarters during the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962. Soon we will see the first views the Viñales Valley - one of Cuba's natural highlights and an area of outstanding beauty. The area is home to some of the most spectacular and colourful scenery in Cuba. Millions of years ago underground rivers cut tunnels through the limestone hills and when the roofs collapsed, strange hills or 'Mogotes' were left sticking up from the otherwise flat valley floor. In between the jungle-clad saw tooth karst mountains the rich, red soil has been

worked into a patchwork of fields growing some of the best tobacco in the world - the raw material for the famous Havana cigars. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 to 65 kilometres (100/400 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Orientation tour of the Vinales Valley

We spend two entire days in this strikingly beautiful area. Today we will start the day with an orientation tour of the Vinales Valley by bike, exploring the valley in depth as well as taking some time to stroll through Vinales itself - a small laid back town with a charming main street built in neo classical style, leaving the afternoon free to explore the area further. Those interested can visit the limestone cave 'Cueva del Indio' and the Botanical Gardens in Vinales. The support bus does not accompany the ride today but is on call in case needed. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Free day to relax or explore the island of Cayo Levisa

Today is left free for taking it easy or perhaps by booking an excursion to Cayo Levisa, an island near Vinales just off the north coast with lovely beaches. Alternatively you may wish to take the bikes for some further exploration of the area. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 15 kilometres (optional)

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8 Drive to Cienfuegos via Bay of Pigs

We commence the day with a bus ride (approx. 5hrs) across western Cuba to the Bay of Pigs - infamous for the ill-fated invasion attempt by Cuban exiles who landed here in April 1961 with the help of the US government. The result is well known and successful Cuban resistance, together with the missile crisis a year later, led the Americans to conclude that only a total trade embargo against the island could hope to discredit and ultimately oust Castro. Castro's Cuba keeps on resisting, however. We will visit Cueva de Los Peces for a quick swim in this sinkhole or cenote that is connected to the warm Caribbean waters and has resident tropical fish. We continue by bus to the elegant town of Cienfuegos which was founded in 1819 by French farmers who had abandoned their plantations in Haiti after a slave rebellion led to formal independence there. The French brought their classical construction style of houses and quite an entrepreneurial spirit, thus triggering the sugar boom in the area. After a short visit we continue by bus for 15 minutes to our hotel on the outskirts of town in Cienfuegos playa. No cycling today.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Cycle to Trinidad via Yaguanabo beach

We start our day with a quick exploration of Cienfuegos before driving for about 1 hour to Guajimico where we commence today's cycling with the backdrop of the Sierra Escambray Mountains getting ever more impressive as we get closer to Trinidad. We will have a chance to stop en route for a swim in the Caribbean at Yaguanabo beach before continuing by bike to Trinidad. The town became incredibly wealthy in the 18th and 19th century and almost all the palaces and stately homes of the rich families remain, their grandeur undiminished by time and the cobbled stone streets add extra charm to this colonial gem. In the evening we should go out in town to sample the great live music to be found everywhere in Trinidad. One of the best spots is the Casa de la Trova where they play 'Trova' (Cuban Folk Music) and 'Son', the essence of Salsa. Those with some basic knowledge in Latin dancing or at least the willingness to try it will be most welcomed. On arrival we will have a short orientation walk in town exploring the central square and surroundings. In Trinidad we enjoy local hospitality for three nights as we stay in Casas Particulares - Private houses. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres (150 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Visit the sugar cane valley and old sugar mills by bike

We have two full days to explore this wonderful town and its surroundings. Today we take a ride into the very scenic Valle de Ingenios (sugar cane valley) towards Santi Spiritus where we can see the old sugar mills. The support bus does not accompany the ride today but is on call in case needed. This afternoon we will visit the colonial heart of Trinidad on foot and hopefully have the opportunity to hear some live music. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres (100 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Free day for a boat trip, snorkelling and relaxation

Today is left free to take a very rewarding Catamaran trip to the small island of Cayo Las iguanas - where you can snorkel on the reef and enjoy a seafood lunch on the island. Alternatively you can relax on the beaches south of Trinidad.

Overnight: **Simple Homestay**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 Scenic downhill ride from Topes de Collantes; bus to Santa Clara

Just a few miles behind Trinidad looms the Sierra Escambray, one of the three main mountain systems in Cuba. It has peaks up to 1100 metres, an incredible abundance of tropical and semi-tropical vegetation on its slopes, and some of the best Cuban coffee is also produced here. Climbing up into the Sierra on the road from Trinidad is an experience, with slopes as steep as 20% (don't worry, we do this by bus!). Those wishing to do the toughest cycling challenge to be found in Cuba may want to try by leaving at the early hours of the day and being picked up by the group later. We start cycling on the highest sections of the road, near Topes de Collantes, a village and mountain retreat built in the early 1950s. From here it is one of the most scenic downhills through the jungle to be found anywhere in Cuba. Before leaving the mountains we can stop at a local coffee farmer's home to enjoying a meal and see the process of coffee tasting and of course we will try it as well! Then heading north, passing through the village of Jibacoa we finally reach the provincial town Manicaragua where we finish the cycling for today. We will take a short bus transfer to the hotel in Santa Clara. This town is one of the most important of the Cuban revolution, as it was here that Che Guevara won the decisive battle in December 1958 which led to the fall of Havana a few days later. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres (100 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Drive to Havana via Yumuri valley

The town of Santa Clara is less visited by tourism and therefore has the authentic feel of a busy Cuban provincial town. Its most remarkable site is the Che Guevara monument and mausoleum which we will visit together with a museum dedicated to the life of this hero of the Cuban revolution. We continue by bus to Matanzas where we get back onto the bikes for an afternoon ride into the Yumuri Valley, surprisingly still unknown to most western visitors. Abundant vegetation, palm trees, crops and plenty of birds are to be enjoyed while cycling through our last stretch of rural Cuba. Once on the coastal road we continue to the stunning Bacunayagua canyon with a great viewpoint and allegedly the best Pina Colada served anywhere in Cuba. The support bus can only accompany short sections at the beginning and end of today's cycle route due to road conditions. Later we continue by bus on to Havana. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 21 kilometres (150 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Explore Havana on foot or by bike

Today is left free to explore Havana however you may wish to take an optional cycle to explore the capital. In spite of growing traffic this is still a wonderful way of getting to know different parts of town. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 15 kilometres (100 metres ascent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 Tour ends Havana

The day is free for more exploration and perhaps shopping in Havana.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Your accommodation in Trinidad and Vinales
In Trinidad, you will stay in casas particulares (private accommodation or homestay). 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 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 Tour Leader will coordinate accommodation arrangements on tour.

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.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches,1 dinner 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.

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 £: 9.00

Dinner £: 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 £: 1.00

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 - Entrance to the Tobacco factory CUC12, Capitolio CUC3, Revolution Museum CUC3, Museum of Modern Art CUC4.
Soroa - Entrance fee to Orchids garden CUC3;
Viñales - Excursion to Cayo Levisa approx. CUC35.
Trinidad - Catamaran trip to nearby islands: CUC50, Entrance to Town Museum CUC3.
Havana - Optional cycle CUC10.

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 50 Convertible Peso (CUC) for group tipping.

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

Credit Card Acceptance: Please note credit cards drawn on 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 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

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.

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.

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

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. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

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.

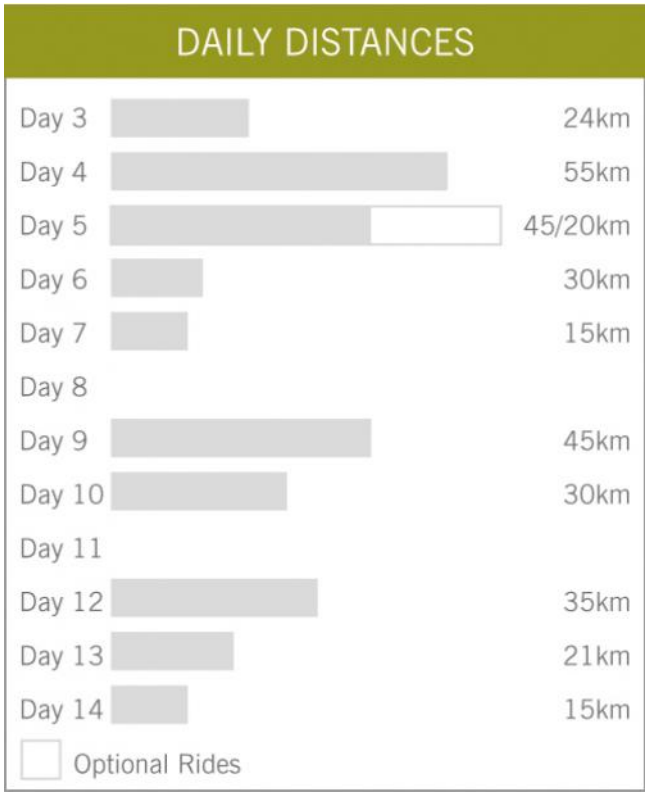
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Cuba

There are no compulsory vaccinations needed for Cuba, however 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 wherever road conditions allow, except

on the circular rides on days 6 and 10. 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

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, self-guided, private journeys & 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: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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

- 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 andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ 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 LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â 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 2014 and 31st December 2015.

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: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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