

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Revolutionary Trails of Cuba (CU 2017)



TRIPDURATION
15
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Moderate

Trip Code: CU

Trip Highlights - Revolutionary Trails of Cuba

- ✓ Havana - Experience the faded colonial splendour and vibrancy of Cuba's capital
- ✓ Trinidad - Enjoy the laidback atmosphere of this colonial town. Dance at Casa de la Musica or sip a rum cocktail under the stars
- ✓ Topes de Collantes - Walk through the forests of the Escambray Mountains, swim in freshwater pools and camp out at haciendas
- ✓ Comandancia de la Plata - Trek through the jungle of the Sierra Maestra Mountains to Fidel's 1950's rebel headquarters
- ✓ Pico Turquino - Enjoy a three-day trek across the Sierra Maestra to the summit of Cuba's highest peak (1972m)

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 8 nights Standard Hotel
2 nights Simple Casas Particulares
2 nights Simple Camping
2 nights Simple Hut

Included Meals: 14 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 5 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Havana
End Point: Trip ends: Havana
Transport: Bus, Truck
Countries: Cuba

EXPLORE! Share your experiences with us



Revolutionary Trails of Cuba

Join us in Cuba as we uncover the island's revolutionary history. We explore colonial cities including Havana and Trinidad. We discover Fidel Castro's headquarters in the Sierra Maestra Mountains and visit Che Guevara's mausoleum in Santa Clara. We swim under waterfalls, climb forest trails and trek to the summit of Pico Turquino - Cuba's highest peak.

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.



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.

Trek Grade: Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.



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 Join tour in Havana

Arrive Havana, the capital of Cuba, and check-in at our hotel. Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive surviving colonial cities in the Americas.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Tour of Havana including the 'Vieja' district

A tour of this most fascinating of cities this morning takes in some of the highlights of Havana's Vieja district and the art deco architecture along the coastal Malecon and through the Vedado and Miramar suburbs, where kids play baseball below rusting street lights. On foot we'll investigate the Vieja district with its beautiful neoclassical buildings at the Plaza de Armas and its sumptuous baroque Cathedral. Havana truly is a city in which to immerse yourself fully and after our brief orientation tour this morning, the afternoon has been left free to continue exploring at your leisure. You may wish to visit the City Museum, or the captivating Museum of the Revolution, where you can find the revered hull of the Granma, the boat that brought Castro back from exile and onto the world stage in 1956. You may wish to return to Old Havana and enjoy a stroll through its cobbled streets, stopping to enjoy a mojito at a local bar, or perhaps wander through the stalls of the street markets in search of a bargain or two. Cooling breezes blowing in from the Caribbean freshen a lively sunset stroll along the Malecon, where fishermen and locals take in the magical setting beneath the imposing ramparts of its old Spanish forts.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to the colonial town of Trinidad via Bay of Pigs

Today we head east across Cuba, we drive through giant citrus and sugar plantations and out into the Zapata Peninsula. Further on cenotes or pools created by the ceiling collapse of the underground rivers dot the landscape and provide wonderful swimming opportunities. Later we visit the Playa Giron and the nearby museum dedicated to the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion, where a US supported attack by Cuban exiles failed to overthrow the Communist regime. Our journey then skirts the edge of the wooded Escambray mountains, hugging the coastline with views over the sparkling turquoise waters and arrive, where we will stay in homestays 'casas particulares' in the beautiful Spanish colonial town of Trinidad.

Overnight: **Simple Casas Particulares**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Explore Trinidad's colonial centre; free afternoon

This morning we wander through the old centre of Trinidad. In the early 19th century French settlers, fleeing a slave revolt in Haiti, landed and started to grow sugar cane in the Valle de Los Ingenios. This crop generated considerable wealth and consequently the town had to be regularly defended from pirates. The street layout is said to be deliberately complicated so as to confuse them. This afternoon is free to relax on nearby Playa Ancon, or continue to wander through Trinidad's lovely colonial streets: a paradise for photographers. Alternatively you may wish to take an excursion to Cayo Las Iguanas, to snorkel and relax however this is a full day excursion and will cut short your time in Trinidad.

Overnight: **Simple Casas Particulares**


 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Walk through the tropical forests of Topes de Collantes

This morning we drive beside the turquoise waters of the Caribbean on our right, before taking 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 board 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. 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 6 Explore more of the national park on foot

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 again 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 7 Visit the town of Sancti Spiritus en route to Bayamo

Today after a short ride to the entrance we have a full days drive to Bayamo in South East Cuba. En route we will have a brief stop in Sancti Spiritus for lunch before we continue to Camaguey. We continue towards the beautiful mountains landscapes of the Sierra Maestra to Bayamo. Lying in the Granma Province, this is a region infused with the revolutionary zeal that has been such an integral part of Cuban life since the late 19th century. It was on the beaches of Granma that Fidel landed in December 1956 to start his journey on the long road to freedom, and the mountains inland are scattered with reminders of its revolutionary heritage.


Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Walk through the jungle to Castro's rebel headquarters

This morning we will continue further into the Sierra Maestra to Bartolome Maso, a small village lying besides the Rio Yara, amongst the cloud forest landscapes of the Gran Parque Nacional Sierra Maestra, and provides us with an ideal base from which to explore these captivating mountains. On arrival we can either take an invigorating walk or 4WD vehicles up the steep asphalt road to Alto de Naranjo from where we start today's walk (950m). We follow in the famous footsteps of Che, Fidel and the rest of the revolutionary heroes, who for two years fought a protracted guerrilla war amongst these beautiful highlands. For much of 1957 the guerrillas kept on the move, playing a dangerous game of cat and mouse with Batista's troops, as they tried to gain a foothold after the unsuccessful uprising against Batista the previous year. Then in 1958 they set up a permanent base in the foothills of Pico Turquino, Cuba's highest peak. This base of operations came to be known as La Comandancia de La Plata (1000m) and its location deep in the heart of this lush jungle landscape makes it one of the country's most fascinating and authentic experiences. A remarkable testament to the resolve and spirit of the revolutionaries, it captures a snapshot in time of one of the most pivotal periods in Cuba's history, one that was to have worldwide repercussions in later years. It was here that Fidel Castro began to formulate his plans for the future of the country and the site presents us with a captivating glimpse of life during those dangerous and heady days of the late '50s. There is a small museum and press office, a field kitchen and the command centre itself, complete with a fridge with bullet holes. From here we trek back to Alto de Naranjo where you can walk or drive down depending on your energy levels to our accommodation. Total walking time: approx 4 hours.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available


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

DAY 9 Trek through the Sierra Maestra Mountains to refuge

Today we start with an early drive to Alto de Naranjo where we begin our trek up Pico Turquino (1972m), across the Sierra Maestra. Over the coming days we trek through landscapes that take us from high mountain ridges and through rain forest. Our first day sees

us heading east, following the La Plata trail up towards Pico Turquino, crossing landscapes blanketed in pines and mosses, giant ferns and wild orchids to our overnight stop at the Aguada do Joaquim. Please note tonight's accommodation is in basic dorm style rooms. (Your main luggage will be stored at the previous hotel, you will only need to carry the necessary for the trek).


Overnight: **Simple Hut**

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

DAY 10 Ascend Pico Turquino (1972m), Cuba's highest peak

This morning we start our ascent to Pico Turquino (1972m) the highest peak in the country, we will have several rest stops on this climb. If the weather conditions are favourable the views along this section are truly outstanding and at the top of Pico Turquino we can see the bronze bust of Jose Marti, dragged up here by Castro's charismatic mistress, Celia Sanchez in 1952. Marti was the 19th century hero of the Cuban independence movements and a man who to many is little short of a saint. From here we will return to the Aguada do Joaquim where we will spend our second night at the refugio.

Overnight: **Simple Hut**

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

DAY 11 Descend to Alto de Naranjo, explore the city of Santiago

This morning we will continue our descent to Alto de Naranjo (8km) from where we will meet our 4WD vehicles which will drive us to Bartolome Maso from where we will re join our bus and set out to Santiago which has been at the epicentre of revolutionary ideals since the time of Cespedes. Founded by Diego Velazquez de Cuellar in 1514 the city has been at the heart of Cuban culture and history since its inception. Briefly the country's capital, it rose to prominence during the 17th and 18th centuries, with first the arrival of Spanish settlers from Jamaica, then French plantation owners from Haiti. The region saw much of the fighting in both wars for independence and it was in Santiago that success against Batista's forces was finally, and very publicly, acknowledged by Fidel Castro on January 1st 1959. Little wonder then that the city has earned itself the moniker of Hero City of the Republic of Cuba. The city itself is an eclectic mix of Cuban life. Its colonial architecture glimmers in attractive shades of pastel, whilst its Afro-Caribbean mix affords it the unmistakable vibrancy of a true city of the revolution. This afternoon we will take a tour of Santiago city, taking in the Plaza de la Revolucion with its fine monument to the heroes of the Independence wars and the remarkable cemetery where independence hero José Martí is buried, the Santa Ifigenia cemetery. At the Moncada Barracks we visit the site of Castro's unsuccessful attempt to instigate a general uprising against Batista, an attempt that saw him tried and imprisoned.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Drive to the provincial capital Camaguey; free afternoon

This morning we head back north to the city of Camaguey. On arrival you may wish to take a city tour on one of the local bicitaxi's and we also recommend a visit to the bustling farmers market.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Visit Che Guevara's Mausoleum en route to Havana

This morning we will start on a full days drive to Havana, stopping on route at Santa Clara to visit Che's Mausoleum, one of Cuba's most revolutionary landmarks. We will then continue to Havana where we will enjoy a free evening to enjoy the vibrant night life of Havana Vieja.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Walk in Las Terrazas nature reserve, west of Havana

This morning we transfer to Las Terrazas perched on the edge of the Unesco Reserva Biosphera Sierra del Rosario. This entire region is a testament to reforestation, taking an area that has been ravaged by fire and agricultural incompetence and turning it into a bio reserve of staggering diversity. In Las Terrazas we discover some of Cuba's most diverse and verdant natural landscapes, where we have time to wander through tropical forest and swim in jungle waterfalls. We will have an included lunch here before a free afternoon to relax and explore further.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY **15** Tour ends in Havana

Our tour ends in Havana after breakfast, although clients travelling back on the group flight to London will have the day free before transferring to the airport later this afternoon.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

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.

The mountain refuge on Pico Turquino is very simple dormitory style accommodation, shared with other people also climbing the mountain. Facilities are basic and water for washing is limited, so it is recommended to bring wet wipes and hand sanitiser with you. You may also wish to bring snacks as there is little opportunity to purchase extra food.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 6 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 CUC8 each, CUC10 with guide; Rum museum CUC7, CUC10 with guide.

Trinidad - Cayo Las Iguanas Boat Excursion CUC60 (this is a full day so will shorten your time for Trinidad tour) plus transport 10CUC per taxi each way; Excursion to Playa Ancon CUC10 per taxi each way; Salsa classes CUC10.

Comandancia - Use of camera CUC5 and video CUC10.

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. CUC40 for gratuities for local staff. 10% is expected in restaurants.

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 not 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.

EXPLORE!
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 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.

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 certificate 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

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 5	12km	5km	4/3hrs
Day 6	8km	1.5km	4/1hrs
Day 7			
Day 8	6km		4hrs
Day 9	8km		4hrs
Day 10	10km		5hrs
Day 11	8km		3.5hrs
Day 12			
Day 13			
Day 14	6km		2hrs

Optional Walks

Trekking Details

Walks on 7 days for between 2 and 5 hours each day. The walking is mainly moderate with one challenging day ascending Pico Turquino. Although walking distances are not particularly far, heat is a factor to consider, especially in the summer. Maximum altitude 1972m.

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 would be useful except Dec-Jan when a heavier fleece and waterproof are recommended. An umbrella is useful in the rainy season. Please note it can be a lot cooler in the mountains particularly at night so also bring some warmer clothes for trekking.

Equipment

A torch (with spare batteries and bulb), filter water bottle, travel pillow, towel, sunblock, pocket knife, insect repellent, sunglasses, sun hat and swimgear. We highly recommend a walking pole.

A 2-season (temperature 0°C to 5°C) sleeping bag is essential 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.

In Cuba, food is still rationed. Many food products are controlled so therefore it can be quite difficult for restaurants to offer a varied

menu. Vegetarian meals can be quite basic. We recommend you take out with you energy bars and snacks as these are hard to find in Cuba.

Footwear

Bring comfortable walking boots, and shoes and trainers or sandals for relaxing. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them. Should your luggage be lost or delayed, your well broken-in boots are the one thing that are irreplaceable.

Luggage: On Tour

Bring one main piece of luggage, and a soft holdall and a good-sized daypack for the trek (at least 25-30 litres). On the trek mules will carry the food and cooking equipment for our overnight on the mountain. Normally there will be enough mules to carry your sleeping bags but in the event that not enough mules are available it may be necessary for members of the group to carry their own overnight kit (including sleeping bag). So please make sure your daypack is large enough to carry your sleeping bag, a lightweight waterproof, water, fleece and a toothbrush. Your main luggage will stay with the driver whilst you do the treks.

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

Time Difference to GMT: -5

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.

These trip notes were printed on 21/09/2017 01:34:33