EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Classic Cuba (DCL 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Premium
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Comfortable
tour Code: DCL

Tour Highlights - Classic Cuba

- ✓ Havana - Experience the faded colonial splendour and vibrancy of Cuba's capital
- ✓ Vinales Valley - Admire the spectacular scenery and steep limestone 'mogotes' rising from the valley floor. Learn how Cuba's famous cigars are made
- ✓ Trinidad - Enjoy the laidback atmosphere of this colonial town. Dance at Casa de la Musica or sip a rum cocktail under the stars
- ✓ Comandancia de la Plata - Trek through the jungle to Fidel's 1950's rebel headquarters
- ✓ Relaxation - Enjoy the pristine beach setting of Cayo Ensenachos

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	12 nights Comfortable Hotel 2 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 3 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Havana
End Point:	Tour ends: Havana
Transport:	Bus
Countries:	Cuba

Classic Cuba

Based in comfortable hotels, we explore this fascinating Caribbean island. We tour the capital, Havana, and travel to the spectacular landscape of 'mogotes' in Vinales. We discover Fidel Castro's revolutionary headquarters, deep in the Sierra Maestra Mountains; visit the infamous Bay of Pigs and explore attractive colonial towns including Trinidad. We end with a couple of days' relaxation on the sandy beaches of Cayo Ensenachos.

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: Comfortable

Hand-picked and chosen for their character, location or local importance, these properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

Tour Style: Premium

These tours are perfect if you want to combine an original, off-beat classic adventure with the added comfort of hand-picked accommodation chosen for its character, location or local importance. Revel in adventurous days followed by relaxing nights.

Tour Pace: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.

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

Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive surviving colonial cities in the Americas. The modern city presents an overwhelming feast for the senses, where crumbling tenement buildings and 50s style American Cadillacs rub shoulders with colonial grandeur and revolutionary zeal, and all to the hypnotic beat of salsa music. Founded in 1519, the city's fame and prestige only came about with the Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru, when its strategic location at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico saw it eclipse Santiago as the country's capital. For two centuries, this remote outpost of the Spanish Empire played a pivotal role in the expansion of Spain's colonial interests in the Americas and, at one time, it was the most fortified city in the New World. The rise of American influence, in direct opposition to the fall of Spain's power in the region, saw the city hurl headlong into the 20th century, becoming a haven for the worst excesses of western decadence. This all came to an end in 1959, when Fidel Castro expelled the Americans and set the country on its socialist course into the history books.

Hotel Nacional
Spectacularly located in the Vedado district of central Havana, the Nacional is something of a landmark in Havana. Evoking the elegance and sophistication of the 1930s this historical institution has seen the likes of Churchill, Sinatra and Ernest Hemingway grace its neoclassical hallways. Even today the rich combination of Art Deco features it assures guests of a level of service that harks back to the golden days of Havana's glory years, and its expansive gardens and Moorish arcades present a truly unique vantage point overlooking the Florida Straits.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Tour of Havana's highlights, free afternoon

This morning, our tour explores the highlights of Havana's Vieja (Old) district; the art deco architecture of coastal Malecon and the Vedado and Miramar suburbs, where kids play baseball below rusting street lights. After taking in the opulent marbled grandeur of the Capitolio and the symbolic expanse of the Plaza de la Revolucion, we take a stroll through old Havana. Here we will find beautiful neoclassical buildings at the Plaza de Armas (main square) and an impressive baroque cathedral, before a lunch visit to the famous La Bodeguita del Melia, home to Hemingway's favourite Mojito. Havana truly is a city in which to immerse yourself and, after our brief introduction 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. Alternatively, you may wish to return to Old Havana to enjoy a stroll through its cobbled streets, stopping to enjoy a mojito at a local bar. In the late afternoon, once the freshening cool breeze blows in from the Caribbean, you may be tempted to enjoy a lively sunset stroll along the Malecon, where fishermen and locals take in the magical setting before the imposing ramparts of its old Spanish forts.

Hotel Nacional
Spectacularly located in the Vedado district of central Havana, the Nacional is something of a landmark in Havana. Evoking the elegance and sophistication of the 1930s this historical institution has seen the likes of Churchill, Sinatra and Ernest Hemingway grace its neoclassical hallways. Even today the rich combination of Art Deco features it assures guests of a level of service that harks back to the golden days of Havana's glory years, and its expansive gardens and Moorish arcades present a truly unique vantage point overlooking the Florida Straits.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3 Full day trip to the picturesque Vinales countryside

This morning we head into what is arguably the most picturesque part of Cuba - the Vinales Valley. In this World Heritage Site, surreal mountains jut out of the landscape, formed by the erosion of limestone over millions of years. These 'mogotes' translate as 'haystacks' - a good word for them considering their steep sides and rounded, jungly tops. Around them, the iron-rich, red soil creates a patchwork of fields growing some of the best tobacco in the world - the raw material for Cuba's celebrated cigars. We will walk through this spectacular landscape to El Palmaito, with mogotes towering above us as we pass tobacco and coffee plantations. This remarkably diverse area contains endemic flora and a rich selection of birdlife, including hummingbirds, Cuban trogons and mockingbirds. We will stop to have lunch before visiting the Cueva del Indio - the largest cave system in the country, filled with surreal rock formations and subterranean pools. Later this afternoon, we return to Havana.

Hotel Nacional
Spectacularly located in the Vedado district of central Havana, the Nacional is something of a landmark in Havana. Evoking the elegance and sophistication of the 1930s this historical institution has seen the likes of Churchill, Sinatra and Ernest Hemingway grace its neoclassical hallways. Even today the rich combination of Art Deco features it assures guests of a level of service that harks back to the golden days of Havana's glory years, and its expansive gardens and Moorish arcades present a truly unique vantage point overlooking the Florida Straits.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4 Travel to Trinidad via the Bay of Pigs Museum

Today, we head east on our journey to Trinidad, driving through giant citrus and sugar plantations and out onto the Zapata Peninsula. Our journey is broken up with a wonderful swimming opportunity in a 'cenote', where the ceiling of an underground river has collapsed. We plan to arrive in Playa Giron by mid-afternoon. Here we will visit the museum dedicated to the infamous 'Bay of Pigs' invasion - a US-supported attack by Cuban exiles which failed to overthrow the Communist regime in 1961. We then travel to Cienfuegos, a colonial seaport, where we take a walking tour of the town, including the Marti Park overlooked by the grand Italian-style Tomas Terry Theatre. Our journey continues, past the wooded Escambray Mountains and hugging the coastline, with views over the sparkling turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. Upon arrival in Trinidad, you will have some free time to wander through the old centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here, cobblestone streets and colonial architecture make it one of the most bewitching heritage sites in the country.

Iberostar Trinidad
The Iberostar Trinidad is a stunning colonial building which has been recently restored. Located in the heart of the cultural town of Trinidad, it is within walking distance of all the main sights in the old city. The property has an excellent restaurant serving Cuban specialities and international cuisine, and free internet access. The hotel does not have a pool, however local Ancon beaches are a 15 to 20 minute drive away.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Explore Trinidad; optional excursion to Playa Ancon

This morning, a walking tour takes us through the cobbled streets of the old centre of Trinidad, discovering its fine palaces, churches and cafes. A paradise for photographers, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a perfectly preserved colonial settlement unlike any other. In the early 19th century, French settlers fleeing a slave revolt in Haiti, landed here 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. Subject to opening hours, we will visit a local museum before our free afternoon. You may choose to relax on the six kilometres of Playa Ancon's white-sand beach nearby, or take a boat trip to the equally stunning beach on Cayo Blanco. There is also the opportunity to take a salsa lesson with a local teacher. Alternatively, you might prefer to wander for longer through Trinidad's streets to soak up more of the unique atmosphere. Later, those keen to sample some of Cuba's famed nightlife can visit the open-air Casa de la Musica, just off the main square.

Iberostar Trinidad
The Iberostar Trinidad is a stunning colonial building which has been recently restored. Located in the heart of the cultural town of Trinidad, it is within walking distance of all the main sights in the old city. The property has an excellent restaurant serving Cuban specialities and international cuisine, and free internet access. The hotel does not have a pool, however local Ancon beaches are a 15 to 20 minute drive away.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Stop in Camaguey en route to Bayamo

Today's drive to Bayamo in South East Cuba takes us via two of the original seven settlements founded by Diego Velasquez when he claimed Cuba for Spain. After a brief stop in Sancti Spiritus, we continue to Camaguey for lunch. Cuba's third largest city is a cultural centre for music, ballet and art. It has a beautiful colonial heritage hidden amongst a labyrinthine network of narrow streets that we will have time to wander through during our time here. Bayamo, our base for the night, is another of the original seven Spanish settlements. Despite its inhabitants burning much of it to the ground in an act of rebellion in 1869, it has retained some of its colonial architecture. Today, it is known for its laid back atmosphere and its chess players, who while away hours playing the game in the main square.

Royalton Hotel
Located in Bayamo's old quarter, close to the Cathedral of San Salvador and Parque Cespedes, the Royalton Hotel dates back to the 1940s and affords some great opportunities for people watching from its street and rooftop terraces. This hotel cannot be categorised as 'premium' but it does provide a good base for our explorations at 'La Plata' - the unmissable highlight of eastern Cuba.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Visit La Comandancia de la Plata, drive to Santiago

An early start sees us heading into the beautiful mountain landscapes of the Sierra Maestra to enjoy one of the country's most fascinating and authentic experiences - a trek deep into the jungle to the revolutionary headquarters of La Comandancia de La Plata. We transfer into 4WD vehicles at Bartolome Maso to allow us to ascend the steep asphalt road to Alto de Naranjo, 950 metres above sea level. From here, we trek for three kilometres through virgin rainforest. The path is uneven and can be muddy, helping us to

understand the appeal of our destination's remoteness. Upon reaching the hideaway where Fidel Castro and Che Guevara took refuge for two years, we discover what seems like a snapshot in time of one of the most pivotal periods in Cuba's history. It was here that Fidel 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 days. Castro's simple camp bed and fridge (which someone impressively carted up the mountain for him) still remain, along with a trap door for a speedy exit if under attack. Also, the original broadcast hut for 'Radio Rebelde' still stands, as well as Che's hospital hut where he worked as a doctor. Previously forbidden, it is now possible to take photos around the site for a small fee. We will complete our day with a journey to Santiago - Cuba's second city and 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 of 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 1st January 1959. Little wonder then that the city has earned itself the moniker of 'Hero City of the Republic of Cuba'. Santiago itself is an eclectic mix of all the best and worst 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.

Melia Santiago
Melia Santiago is located in the heart of one of the most elegant areas of Santiago de Cuba also known as the capital of the Caribbean. This modern hotel is situated only a couple of kilometres away from the town centre and hosts four great restaurants and three pools around which you will be able to relax during your free time

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 See the sights of Santiago de Cuba, free afternoon

This morning, we will enjoy a guided tour of Cuba's second city, taking in many of the colonial buildings which are painted in attractive, traditional pastel shades. We plan to stop-off at the Plaza de la Revolucion with its fine monument to the heroes of the Independence Wars, before visiting the remarkable cemetery where independence hero, Jose Marti, is buried. The Moncada Barracks are a particular highlight as you can still see the bullet holes on the outside of the building which Castro and 118 students unsuccessfully attacked in 1953. There may also be an opportunity to visit a rum factory. The afternoon is left free for you to explore in your own time. There are many museums, squares and churches to discover, or it may be possible to arrange dance lessons. Later, we recommend a visit to El Morro Fort. One of the best preserved forts in Cuba, it affords remarkable views over the harbour right across to the Sierra Maestra and there is a cannon firing ceremony at sunset. This evening, we have the opportunity to experience Santiago's lively nightlife.

Melia Santiago
Melia Santiago is located in the heart of one of the most elegant areas of Santiago de Cuba also known as the capital of the Caribbean. This modern hotel is situated only a couple of kilometres away from the town centre and hosts four great restaurants and three pools around which you will be able to relax during your free time

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Drive to Sancti Spiritus, free time to explore

Today we have a long drive to return to Sancti Spiritus, where we can spend the remainder of the day wandering through the colonial architecture remnants from the great days of the sugar cane production in the area.

Hotel Del Rijo
Hotel Dell Rijo is a small charming hotel located in the centre of the old town with the Museum of Colonial Art, The Main Parochial (national monument) and the bridge on the Río Yayabo are all within walking distance. This hotel cannot be categorised as 'premium' but it does provide a good base for our exploration of Sancti Spiritus.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Head to Cayo Ensenachos on the Sabana archipelago

Our destination today is the all-inclusive resort of the Iberostar Ensenachos on the island of Cayo Ensenachos, lying close to the spectacular Caribbean jewels of the Archipelago de Sabana. The island is connected to the mainland by a causeway. On arrival, there will be time to relax and enjoy the luxurious pleasure of two of Cuba's most pristine beaches.

Iberostar Ensenachos
A 5-star all-inclusive resort set amidst 100 hectares of lush tropical gardens, the Iberostar Ensenachos (formerly Royal Hideaway) is located along 2 kilometres of some of the best beaches in Cuba. Occupying three separate buildings, built around a central courtyard, the rooms enjoy views of the gardens, ocean or pool and each offers a private balcony or terrace. In addition, a range of international cuisine, a water sports centre, heated pool, health club and gym are just some of the other facilities on offer.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 11 Free in Cayo Ensenachos to relax on the beach

Today is left free for you to do as you wish. Whilst enjoying the many water-based activities on offer, you are likely to see interesting birdlife, such as flamingos, who make a home for themselves on the small sandy islands that dot this archipelago. On dry land, activities such as tennis and volleyball can be enjoyed. Alternatively, you may choose to simple relax on one of the glorious beaches or in a hammock while sipping a Cuban cocktail.

Iberostar Ensenachos
A 5-star all-inclusive resort set amidst 100 hectares of lush tropical gardens, the Iberostar Ensenachos (formerly Royal Hideaway) is located along 2 kilometres of some of the best beaches in Cuba. Occupying three separate buildings, built around a central courtyard, the rooms enjoy views of the gardens, ocean or pool and each offers a private balcony or terrace. In addition, a range of international cuisine, a water sports centre, heated pool, health club and gym are just some of the other facilities on offer.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 12 In Cayo Ensenachos, optional water based activities

Once again, today is left free to enjoy at your leisure.

Iberostar Ensenachos
A 5-star all-inclusive resort set amidst 100 hectares of lush tropical gardens, the Iberostar Ensenachos (formerly Royal Hideaway) is located along 2 kilometres of some of the best beaches in Cuba. Occupying three separate buildings, built around a central courtyard, the rooms enjoy views of the gardens, ocean or pool and each offers a private balcony or terrace. In addition, a range of international cuisine, a water sports centre, heated pool, health club and gym are just some of the other facilities on offer.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 13 Return to Havana via Santa Clara

After a last free morning at the resort, we return to Havana. En route, we will visit Che's Mausoleum in Santa Clara, the final resting place of one of the world's most iconic and recognisable revolutionary figures. Guevara was buried here with full military honours in 1997 after his exhumed remains were discovered in Bolivia and returned to Cuba. A flame lit by Fidel Castro burns eternally to honour him. We will also visit the museum dedicated to Guevara's life, containing many interesting letters and artefacts. On arrival in Havana, you will have a free evening to wander the streets of the Vieja district, enjoying the live music and perhaps a final Cuban cocktail, or two.

Hotel Nacional
Spectacularly located in the Vedado district of central Havana, the Nacional is something of a landmark in Havana. Evoking the elegance and sophistication of the 1930s this historical institution has seen the likes of Churchill, Sinatra and Ernest Hemingway grace its neoclassical hallways. Even today the rich combination of Art Deco features it assures guests of a level of service that harks back to the golden days of Havana's glory years, and its expansive gardens and Moorish arcades present a truly unique vantage point overlooking the Florida Straits.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 To Las Terrazas; walks

Today we will spend the day at Las Terrazas - a fascinating eco-tourism centre where valuable biodiversity research is being undertaken. Here, we can enjoy interesting walks through old coffee plantations within a picturesque hill setting. Bird watching opportunities abound and we hope to sight the rare Cuban trogon, Cuba's national bird, as well as small songbirds, including nightingales. Other wildlife includes reptiles, such as water lizards, and one of the smallest species of frog in the world. You may also choose to enjoy an optional zip wire ride in the canopy or swim in the San Juan River before our return to Havana.

Hotel Nacional
Spectacularly located in the Vedado district of central Havana, the Nacional is something of a landmark in Havana. Evoking the elegance and sophistication of the 1930s this historical institution has seen the likes of Churchill, Sinatra and Ernest Hemingway grace its neoclassical hallways. Even today the rich combination of Art Deco features it assures guests of a level of service that harks back to the golden days of Havana's glory years, and its expansive gardens and Moorish arcades present a truly unique vantage point overlooking the Florida Straits.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 15 Tour ends Havana

Our tour ends in Havana after breakfast.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 6 lunches,3 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.

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

International Departure Taxes

Airport departure tax is CUC25, (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

Havana - Museo de la Ciudad CUC3, CUC8 with guide; Museo de la Revolucion & Arte Colonial CUC8 each, CUC10 with guide; Rum museum CUC7 .
Trinidad - Cayo Blanco Boat Excursion CUC50 (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.
Santiago de Cuba - Visit to El Morro Fort CUC12, CUC14 inc transport.
Comandancia de la Plata - Camera charge CUC5 and video CUC10.
Please note - most museums in Cuba charge for use of cameras and camcorders, this can be up to 7 CUC per usage.

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

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

Tipping - Local Crew

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

Accordingly you should allow approx. 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 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 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.

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 are required by all nationalities travelling to Cuba. Explore can arrange a Cuban visa for UK residents, 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

Climate

Cuba

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

Clothing

Include light cotton clothing plus something warmer for the evenings in the hills when it can get cool. A light fleece and waterproof would be useful except December-January when a heavier fleece and waterproof are recommended. An umbrella is useful in the rainy season. Please note there is a smart dress code for the Iberostar Ensenachos which includes no shorts and closed shoes in the restaurants

Equipment

A torch, water bottle, good quality sunglasses, insect repellent and high factor sunscreen are all essential. You may also wish to bring a pocket-knife with you, and your own mask and snorkel for your stay at the Iberostar Ensenachos.

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots. Shoes and trainers or sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

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

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 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 www.explore.co.uk/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.

These tour notes were printed on 13/10/2015 18:34:14