

Trip Dossier for Cuba – Cuba Libre!

Trip Code: FCCL Issue date: 17 December 2009 Valid from: 1 January 2010

Soak up the intoxicating Cuban spirit, as you explore the lively city of Havana; see classic American cars, beautiful colonial buildings and learn about the city's history and culture, which has shaped Cuba. From here, we discover the rest of the island, first visiting the limestone caves in beautiful Vinales NP, before following rainforest trails and staying in an eco-lodge. Then you'll take a boat trip around the Bay of Cienfuegos, and learn about Cuba's revolutionary past at the Bay of Pigs and Santa Clara's Che Guevara Mausoleum. Finally its on to the delightful city of Trinidad, where you can explore a winding maze of quaint cobbled streets, plus learn how to salsa, enjoy beautiful waterfall walks, and end this exciting adventure with a few days relaxing on the beautiful sandy beaches of Varadero.

Day 1 – Fly to Havana

Departing from London to Havana. On arrival in Havana your local tour leader will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel to check-in. There will be a short briefing meeting and then time to relax and unwind after your flight.

2 nights - Hotel (breakfast)

Day 2 – Havana City Tour

Havana (La Habana) has been the capital of Cuba since 1607; it is one of the largest and most vibrant cities in the Caribbean with a population of over two million. It has been through major upheavals since it was founded in 1519, with revolutions and uprisings leading to a large number of its beautiful buildings being left to decay over the years. Now, many of these buildings are slowly being restored and the city is alive with music, dance and laughter – often the friendly 'Habaneros' (residents of Havana) can be seen singing and dancing in the streets, the atmosphere is infectious! Old Havana, the historical centre of the city, preserves a wealth of Spanish colonial architecture and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. American novelist Ernest Hemingway lived in Havana for the last 22 years of his life, famously writing the *Old Man and the Sea*, which is based on his time in Havana.

This morning, your tour leader will meet you in the hotel reception, ready to take you on a walking tour of La Habana Vieja (Havana's old district). Havana is built around a deep natural harbour, and is one of the most impressive Spanish colonial cities, with beautiful neo-classical buildings such as *El Capitalo*, similar in style to the American House of Representatives, the *Museo de Nationale*, the ornate *Grand Theatre*, and the baroque *Catedral de San Cristobel* – all standing in contrast to the faded grandeur of surrounding buildings, which are still people's homes. Your tour will include a visit to the sixteenth century fortress, and to the *Plaza de la Revolucion*. There is an option to visit the *Museo de la Revolucion* (entrance fee extra) and learn how the history of the Revolution has shaped the country.

This rest of the afternoon is free to relax and explore, perhaps pay a visit to La Floridita bar, a popular haunt of Ernest Hemingway, where the adults can enjoy his favourite tippie, a strawberry daiquiri, or visit Ambos Mundos Hotel, where Hemingway wrote the first part of his book 'For Whom the Bell Tolls'. In the evening, there is an option to see a traditional Cuban cabaret show at the famous Tropicana nightclub; your tour leader can assist with these arrangements.

Day 3 – Walks in Vinales National Park & visit a tobacco plantation (1.5hr drive)

The following morning we head west towards the lush Valle de Vinales, a UNESCO World Heritage site. It is one of the most beautiful landscapes of Cuba, full of contrasts; from the large limestone formations amid the intense red soil valley, to distant pine forest covered mountains. Vinales is a peaceful rural region where impressive limestone 'mogotes' rise vertically from the ground, impassively guarding rich tobacco plantations. This picturesque valley is popular for hiking, exploring caves or simply relaxing and taking in the surroundings. It is also where the world's best dark tobacco is processed into its finest cigars.

Cuban black tobacco is said to be the best in the world and the finest tobacco is cultivated in Pinar del Río. You'll see fields of tobacco trees and we'll stop at a plantation and curing barn to see how tobacco leaves are dried and fermented in preparation for the cigar factories. You'll continue your journey to the picturesque 19th century town of Vinales, stopping for lunch (own expense) before checking-in to your hotel. The rest of the afternoon and evening is at leisure. There are a range of local activities from cycling to horse-riding or simply taking a walk and exploring the area. You may wish to order a picnic lunch for the following day from the hotel (extra at 8-10 CUC).
Hotel (breakfast)



FAMILIES

WORLDWIDE
Experiencing your World Together

Day 4 – Visit Santo Tomas Caves and drive to the eco-lodge (1.5hr drive)

Following breakfast, we set off to Santo Tomas Caves, located in the Vinales Valley. We have a short visit here, exploring the second largest cave system in Cuba. Armed with a spotlight, a local specialist takes you through a section of this underground system. Safety helmets are provided however, you may wish to take your own torch as well, as some areas are a little dark.

We continue our journey, passing by distant pine forest, tobacco fields and curing barns as we head towards our next night stop, La Moka Ecolodge. Situated in the foothills of the Sierra del Rosario Reserve it blends harmoniously into the surroundings of the San Juan Valley. The rooms are large and airy and simply decorated, the classic feature of the hotel is a tree growing up through the hotel lobby with its branches disappearing through holes in the roof. This afternoon is at leisure to explore the area around the lake, great for spotting hummingbirds, waterfowl, with the possibility of sighting the rare Cuban Trogon, the national bird of Cuba. You have an option of taking a canopy tour at Las Terrazas (17CUC).

Eco-lodge with swimming pool (breakfast)

Day 5 – Drive to Cienfuegos (6hrs drive)

Today is a rather long driving day, as we retrace our steps back to Havana and then bear south passing through the Matanzas province and onto Cienfuegos. En route you'll visit the beautiful Zapata Peninsula and stop at the Pío Cuíá Restaurant for lunch (own expense). Feeling refreshed, we visit the Bay of Pigs. Besides being a beautiful marshland, this is where a force of CIA-trained Cuban exiles landed in 1961 and the failed mercenary invasion took place. The story of the invasion together with exhibits are on display at the small Playa Girón museum, where you can hear how the invasion of the Bay of Pigs failed to overthrow Castro and the communist regime. We arrive in Cienfuegos in the afternoon with time to check-in and freshen up before exploring the old colonial heart of Cienfuegos. Located on the south coast it is a pleasant city with a deep harbour, as well as legends of pirates on the high seas. Cienfuegos has a relaxed Caribbean feel, and the French immigrants of the 19th century influenced the development and architecture of the city. The evening is at leisure to dine in town.

Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)

Day 6 – Boat trip around the Bay of Cienfuegos; drive to Trinidad (1.5 hr drive)

Today you'll set off to the marina for a pleasant boat ride around the bay of Cienfuegos. You'll cruise past small fishing villages and the Castillo de Jagua, built by the French in the 18th century to defend the entrance of the harbour from English smugglers. Legend has it that the castle is haunted by the ghost of the Blue Lady (La Dama Azul), and each night is the eerie sight of a raven flying around the castle before returning to the spectre... We return briefly to the hotel to collect our belongings and travel to Trinidad.

During the afternoon, you will have a guided tour of this wonderfully charming city. Trinidad is nestled between the mountains of the Escambray Range and the Caribbean Sea. Founded in 1514 by Conquistador Diego Velazquez, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1988. Trinidad is steeped in a colonial slavery past with the advent of sugar cane production and trade from ships docking at Cienfuegos. The city is an infusion of a Neo-Classical, Baroque and Moorish architecture, laced together with a maze of narrow cobblestoned streets - a fascinating city to explore.

During your stay here you will have the opportunity to learn how to salsa at the Paradiso Dance Agency. Cuban Salsa, also known as 'casino salsa' where you dance as couples in a large group, is great fun for adults and children. Salsa is a fun, lively and sensual dance with great Cuban music - you will be twirling and tapping your toes to the music in no time. An optional salsa class (5 CUC per person) can be arranged through your tour leader; the more people the more fun!

Alternatively, you may wish to spend some time snorkelling around the reefs from Ancon Beach. Ancon Beach is 8km from Trinidad, with lovely white sandy beaches and deep turquoise blue sea. A taxi to the beach is approximately 20 CUC each way. At the local dive centre, you can join a one-hour boat ride with basic instruction and snorkelling gear. Please advise your tour leader if you are going to Ancon Beach. Dinner this evening is served at the hotel. **2 nights - Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 7 – Waterfall and Mountains Walk

Today we drive the short distance to the beautiful Topes de Collantes and the lushly vegetated mountains of Guanayara Park in the Escambray Mountain range. We follow the Guanayara trail, walking through unspoilt pine forest, passing hibiscus flowers and mahogany trees, as the trail winds its way through valleys following the Melodioso River leading to the beautiful El Rocío waterfall. The river is full of natural swimming pools, so remember to pack your swim wear and a towel. Stopping for lunch en route, we wind our way back and return to Trinidad mid-afternoon. The rest of the day is free to explore, or relax around the hotel pool. **2 nights - Hotel (breakfast, lunch and dinner)**



FAMILIES

WORLDWIDE
Experiencing your World Together

Day 8 – Santa Clara; drive to Varadero (4.5 hrs drive)

This morning we set-off early and visit Santa Clara, the site of the last battle of the revolution, approximately a two-hour drive away. You'll see the famous armoured train, on which Che Guevara and his troop of rebels arrived, ultimately toppling the former president of Cuba, Fulgencio Batista, in December 1958. We'll also stop by Che Guevara's Mausoleum and museum to see Che's infamous beret and leather jacket. Stopping for lunch at a restaurant (own expense) we carry on our adventure, travelling north-west to Varadero, passing by small villages, tobacco and sugar cane fields, journey time approximately two and half hours.

Varadero is Cuba's principal beach resort, built on Peninsula de Hicacos, a narrow 20km sand spit, a touristy area with hotels and villas dating back to the 1950s. In recent years, with overseas investment, there has been a resurgence in building many large palatial 4 and 5 star hotels. Varadero is blessed with palm-fringed sandy beaches and gently lapping turquoise sea, the perfect location to relax, unwind and enjoy the sunshine. **3 nights – Resort with pool (all-inclusive)**

Days 9 & 10 Chill out in Varadero

The next few days are at leisure to relax and enjoy the facilities offered at your hotel.

Day 11 – Depart

Sadly, it is time to leave. Your tour leader will meet at the hotel and transfer back to Havana Airport for your overnight flight home. Remember, if you have purchased boxes of cigars or Cuban art keep these in your hand luggage with the purchase receipt for customs and immigration. You also require 25 CUC per person departure tax, this is payable at a small kiosk next to the check-in desks. Overnight flight to London.

Day 12 – Arrive London

Extension in Varadero

Why not extend your stay on the beautiful palm fringed white sandy beaches of Varadero? Spend an extra three nights soaking up the sun and enjoying the facilities at the all-inclusive hotel. Please ask for your travel consultant for details.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets. Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Optional Extras

These excursions, if available, can be arranged through your tour leader (approx. per person cost shown below)	
Havana Museo de la Ciudad	5 CUC
Havana Museo de la Revolucion	5 CUC
Havana Museo de Art Colonial	5 CUC
Buena Vista Social Club Dance / Cabaret Show in Havana – show only not including dinner	25 CUC
Visit to Partagas Cigar Factory	10 CUC
La Moka Lake Tour	15 CUC
Canopy Tour in Vinales	25 CUC
Taxi from Trinidad to Ancon Beach – approx each way	20 CUC
Snorkelling in the reef from Ancon beach – 1 hour inc boat ride, equipment and instruction	8 CUC
Optional Salsa dance lesson in Trinidad – 1 hour with Paradiso Agency in Trinidad	5 CUC

Is this right for your family? An exciting trip combining culture, activities from walks, zip wires (optional), swimming, opportunity to go snorkelling, salsa dancing and time at the beach. Accommodation is based in comfortable hotels including breakfast, except in Varadero, where you will be staying in an all-inclusive resort.

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel



FAMILIES

WORLDWIDE
Experiencing your World Together

Accommodation The hotels and guesthouses we use are generally 3 – 4 star equivalent, they are well-located with private facilities. The external appearance of most buildings appear tatty and in need of decoration, but the accommodation we select is clean and comfortable with families in mind. Please note, Cuba has an on-going trade embargo and lack of investment, accommodation particularly in rural areas can be rather basic with occasional unreliable water and electricity supply. Cuba has to ration all consumer goods so things have to last and may appear a little faded. Of course, this is 'real Cuba' and we think you will be pleasantly surprised with the level of accommodation, however, rooms are simply furnished and furniture may be out of fashion. The mention of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

Climate Cuba has a hot sub-tropical climate all year round. The dry season is between from November to April, rains are likely in December and January. From May to October, is the 'rainy season', the mornings are dry and clear evenings but afternoon rains tend to be short and heavy. Tropical storms or hurricanes are possible from July to November, but these are rather infrequent. Generally the temperatures are hot and humid.

Average climate in Havana

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	26	26	27	29	30	31	32	32	31	29	27	26
Min °C	18	18	19	21	22	23	24	24	24	23	21	19
Rainfall (mm)	71	46	46	58	119	165	125	135	150	173	79	58

Food and Drink Meals included as per itinerary. Please remember to drink plenty of bottled water during your trip. Food is rather limited in Cuba, rice, beans, chicken are the staple meals. Breakfasts are generally a selection of fruit, pastries, bread, scrambled eggs or omelettes, Frankfurt sausages and beans. For adults only we recommend sampling a cheeky rum and lime based cocktails; Mojitos, Margaritas, Daiquiris, and Cuba Libre – enjoy!

Local Costs *Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	1 CUC
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	1.50 CUC
A can of coke (soft drinks)	1.50 CUC
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	2 CUC
Tea / Coffee	1 CUC
A bottle of beer	2 CUC
Local cocktail	4 – 6 CUC
Light lunchtime snack – sandwich	4-6 CUC
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	20 CUC
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	25 CUC

Currency The unit of currency is Cuba is the Cuban Peso (CUP) for locals and international travellers use the Convertible Peso (CUC). We recommend you take cash - Pounds Sterling (not Scottish Pounds) or Euros, this can be changed at local banks and hotel bureau de change. At the time of writing UK£1 = 1.53 CUC and the Euro €1 = 1.39 CUC (Dec 2009). Use of credit cards (Visa & Mastercard provided they have not been issued by an American bank), in hotels, shops and restaurants is limited and there is a fee for using them. ATMs are unreliable and commission charges are charged at 12% commission. Payment made by credit card must exceed 100 CUC, otherwise payment should be made in cash. US Dollars are not readily accepted and are charged a 20% commission fee. Please note Mastercard-Maestro, Cirrus, American Express and Diners Cards are not accepted in Cuba.

Tippling is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousy in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service, including a few coins for hotel maids and drivers. Please remember that your tour leader works hard and for long hours to make your holiday run smoothly, a suitable reward for good service would be £1-£2 from each person/per day – approximately CUC 30 per person for the tour. It is usual to collect this between yourselves as a group and present it to the leader on completion of the tour. A 10% tip is expected in restaurants.



Language The official language in Cuba is Spanish, although English is widely spoken in tourist areas.

Time Cuba is GMT -5 hours

Passports and visas British nationals do require a visa or Cuban Tourist Card (Tarjeta del Turista) to enter Cuba. These can be purchased from the Cuban Consulate (approximately £15). Passports should have a validity of more than six months from the date of entry. You require your passport when making any payments with your credit card or Travellers Cheques. In case you purchase a box of cigars from a cigar shop you will be issued with a purchase receipt and your passport number will be required (photocopies are acceptable in this incidence).

Travel Insurance This is compulsory for travelling. From 01 May 2010 the Cuban government has declared that travel insurance (which includes medical expenses and repatriation) is compulsory for all travellers to Cuba. Immigration officials will request at proof of travel insurance on arrival at all Cuban Airports. Travellers failing to produce a valid document will be required to purchase a new policy at the airport, before being granted access to Cuba.

Departure tax: CUC25 per person is payable in cash on leaving the country.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.



Clothing & Equipment List for Cuba Libre!

In general pack lightweight, loose fitting and comfortable clothing plus some warmer windproof items for cooler mornings/evenings at altitude. Lightweight cotton clothing is recommended in this climate with a wrap or sweater for the cooler evenings.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Soft side bag 50 – 80litres	
Walking shoes	optional		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3 +		Personal First Aid Kit – it is difficult to obtain ointments/medicines in Cuba	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2 +		Insect Repellent with high DEET content	
Shorts/ Short Trousers	2		Torch and Batteries	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2 +		Camera, memory cards and accessories	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	1			
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	2			
Swim Wear	1		Towel or Sarong	

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport / Cuban Tourist Card		Guide Book & map	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Pound Sterling or Euros – Cash /Travellers Cheques		Binoculars - optional	
Credit cards – Visa and Mastercard		Sunscreen – lots of it	
Insurance Documents		Money Security Belt/Pouch	
Trip Information and Itinerary			

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com