

CUBA & THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS - CYCLE CUBA



INTRODUCTION

Leaving behind the old-world charm and vibrant atmosphere of Havana, cycle along dusty roads, past coffee and tobacco plantations, alongside vintage cars and horse-drawn carriages to discover what lies beyond. Forested hills, waterfalls, natural pools and limestone outcrops, not forgetting the vast stretches of white sand beaches and clear blue waters, are all waiting to be discovered.

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TRIP CODE

CUITCC

DEPARTURE

Mondays

DURATION

7 Days

LOCATIONS

Cuba




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DAY 1: Havana

Bienvenido a Cuba! To make your arrival into often chaotic Cuba a bit easier a complimentary transfer from the airport to your accommodation (guesthouse) is included with your trip. If you arrive early there are a wealth of options for you to enjoy. For a fascinating insight into the Cuban Revolution check out the Museum of the Revolution, indulge your inner literary fan on an Ernest Hemingway tour, join the locals for a stroll past the fading facades along the iconic oceanside Malecón or hire an open top vintage American car and simply cruise the streets and boulevards of Havana. There's no shortage of restaurants or bars either - the vibrant Obispo Street area of Old Havana is sure to delight. Today your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6 pm. As the group is sometimes spread between several (but nearby) guesthouses your leader will leave a note for you explaining where to meet and what to bring. During the group meeting, your trip leader will ask you if you would like to contribute to the snack kitty. This is usually 20CUC per person. The snack kitty is spent on water, fruits, and local-made snacks. It is not a compulsory kitty, although as these can sometimes be hard to come by in Cuba in remote areas, the kitty is designed to make the purchasing of snacks easier and more convenient for you. The left over funds will be returned at trip end. You can find out more information from your leader upon arrival. Your evening is then free to relax or enjoy an optional welcome dinner to get to know your riding companions a bit better - your leader will suggest some excellent options.




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DAY 2: Soroa

This morning you leave our guesthouse early with your bags and drive 15 mins to Vedado to meet your support crew and be fitted to your bike. Take a 2hr test ride from Outer Havana back to Old Havana to ensure everything is working smoothly. Along the way we pass by John Lennon Park, Jose Marti Memorial, Plaza de la Revolucion, the Grand Theatre and the Capitol building before ending back in Old Havana at the Parque Cespedes. While the distance is a short 12kms the pace is slow as we enjoy the city and get used to riding in Cuban traffic. Sate your appetite with lunch in a nearby café before enjoying a guided city walking tour of Old Havana, taking in the four most historic plazas, passing by Catedral de San Cristobal, Plaza de Armas, Plaza Vieja and Plaza de San Francisco. Finish your walk with a special ‘one-of-a-kind’ surprise before we bundle into the support vehicle to be transported (1.5hrs) down to Soroa. Known as the ‘rainbow of Cuba’, Soroa is a flourishing landscape of flora and fauna but this evening we arrive as the sun goes, with enough time to enjoy dinner then opt for sleep or meet at one of the guesthouses for Cuban cocktails and an introduction to the curious fascination Cuban’s have with the game of dominos. Be warned, the locals (and our support team!) are fiercely competitive and have spent countless hours honing their domino skills! Riding distance: approx. 12 kms/7 miles




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DAY 3: Soroa / Las Terrazas

This morning we drive a short distance before taking a guided tour of the spectacular Soroa Orchid Garden. Set in 7 acres this serene oasis of flora features 250 species of plants native to Cuba as well as numerous species of birds. From here you cycle west on good paved roads, sharing the streets with local traffic of tractors, bicycles, vintage American cars, old Ladas and horse drawn carriages to a picturesque hillside lake. Grab a quick drink or get your first taste of the famously strong Cuban coffee. Continue on to the San Juan River for a quick lunch then it's time to join the locals for a refreshing swim in the same bubbling waters of that irrigate the local coffee plantations. Continue by vehicle on to the small but renowned lakeside eco-village of Comunidad Las Terrazas, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve set in beautiful green surrounds and home to a lively art community. Grab a coffee near the main square then visit the former home of the celebrated Cuban musician Polo Montañes and current studio of the famous modern artist Lester Campa. After our visit to Las Terrazas, we drive (approx. 30 mins) back to Soroa. Tonight you can relax at guesthouse or head for drinks, pool, internet and of course, dominos. Riding distance: approx. 24kms/15 miles




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DAY 4: Vinales

Leave Soroa by support vehicle (approx. 1.5hrs) to hilly Cueva de los Portales, where the legendary Che Guevara stayed and trained the Western Army of the Cuban Revolution. This small cave gives you a fascinating insight into the life of the military mind of Che as well as the basic conditions he and his army lived in. From here cycle on to Vinales. Set amongst low-lying mountains, this beautifully remote area will surprise you, being reminiscent of the limestone karst scenery of Vietnam or Southern Thailand, and is a perfect place to ride with very little traffic on the roads. Today's cycling route is hilly and we rate it a medium to difficult day. After a 2 km ride on rough roads we hit the toughest climb we have on the tour. It's definitely steep but thankfully it's also short so it's over pretty quickly - and the views from the top definitely make the challenge worthwhile. On a clear day you can catch your first glimpse of the ocean! From here the road climbs and descends before leveling out as we hit the valley floor as we continue on to the cultural interaction highlight of the trip; the delightful Mama Luisa. A local farmer for many decades, as well as providing a delicious local meal Mama Luisa specialises in giving the best hugs in all of Cuba - yes, even to sweaty cyclists! From here the road improves as we head onwards to enjoy a short visit a tobacco farm, where a local farmer will show you how tobacco is dried and then rolled into cigars. Here you have the chance to purchase cigars direct from the maker and, if you're lucky, you may even get a taste of this famous Cuban tradition. Climbing back into the support vehicle we drive on a short distance to the UNESCO-listed town of Vinales, with enough time for a quick shower and perhaps a mojito before visiting a hillside farm restaurant for dinner (included). All of the food here is 100% organic grown locally and is truly delicious. Drinks aren't included here, but in a twist you only pay for the mixers - the rum is free. Classic Cuba! Riding distance: approx. 46kms/28 miles




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DAY 5: Vinales / Cayo Jutias

After breakfast we board our support vehicle and drive (approx. 10 mins) to the Diego Rivera-inspired Mural de la Prehistoria. Painted on a cliff at the foot of the Sierra de Vinales, the huge eye-catching mural took 18 people four years to finish! From here we cycle to the sublime Cayo Jutias. Retracing part of yesterday's route we soon leave the towering limestone karsts behind and enter smaller roads through dry and flat farmland, with barely a vehicle to be seen. We have frequent stops today to refresh and refuel - your driver is always here with cold water straight from the vehicle's fridge. Despite the flat terrain today is our hardest one the bike as the conditions of the road are the poor with frequent gravel and broken tarmac sections. However the destination is definitely worth the journey and the conditions improve as we cycle across the causeway and catch our first real views of the ocean. With its surreal white beaches and pale blue waters, Cayo Jutias is one of those perfect beaches you only dream about. After your ride stretch out on the sands and enjoy a packed lunch and fresh juice. Relax, go for a swim in the warm waters or walk away from the tourist crowd to the next beach along, where the locals often park those beautiful old cars on the beach itself. After some time to soak in the atmosphere and splash about take the support vehicle back to town. It's a 2hr journey so there's plenty of time to put your seat back and snooze all the way back to Vinales. The rest of the evening is free to take at your leisure- why not try one of the many live music venues or salsa the night away. For those craving internet access the entire main street is a wifi hotspot. Riding distance: approx. 63kms/39 miles




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DAY 6: Havana

After breakfast drive to the nearby lookout point for a view of the Vinales Valley before descending to the flat plains. From here we start our final ride, cycling through rural landscapes, passing through many small towns and communities on some of the smoothest tarmac in Cuba. Finish on top of a small hill – one last chance to be King of the Mountain. Celebrations are in order for finishing your own tour of Cuba as we enjoy one last delicious meal before re-boarding our transport for the short drive (approx. 2hrs) back to Havana. On arrival in Havana, we bid farewell to our bikes and our support team before checking into our guesthouse/s. Make the most of a free afternoon to reacquaint yourself with Cuba's charming capital. Perhaps visit the Jose Marti Memorial Tower or your guide can help organise a final group meal in one of the many paladars in Old Havana. Riding distance: approx. 42kms/26 miles



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DAY 7: Havana


Your Cycle Cuba adventure comes to an end this morning. There are no more activities planned and you're free to depart after breakfast.



INCLUSIONS & DETAILS	
Accommodation	Standard

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Inclusions	Meals 6 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 1 dinner Transport Bicycle, Support Vehicle Accommodation Guesthouse (6 nts) Included activities Havana - Bike fitting Cycling Outer Havana Havana - Guided walking tour of Old Havana Las Terrazas - Eco-village Visit Soroa - Orchid garden tour Vinales - Beach excursion to Cayo Jutias
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you’re visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu’s “Pass it on” programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures’ offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure’s internal processes are also structures to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.