

CUBA & THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS - CUBA EXPLORER



TRIP CODE

CUITCEX

DEPARTURE

Weekly Thursday
Departure

DURATION

10 Days

LOCATIONS

Cuba



INTRODUCTION

Lose yourself in the rhythm of vivacious Havana before setting out to explore Cuba's stunning coastline and weathered historical villages. Discover the unique combination of Spanish and Caribbean influences that shaped this country on a visit to rambunctious Santiago de Cuba. Learn whether you do, in fact, have two left feet in a salsa class and then brush up on your Spanish under the tutelage of your learned leader. Wander through the purposefully labyrinthine streets of Camaguey or marvel at the views from atop Trinidad's northern ranges. Whether you want to dance up a storm at one of Cuba's plentiful nightclubs or simply lie on its idyllic beaches, this emerging Caribbean hotspot has something for everyone.

ITINERARY

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DAY 1: Havana

Bienvenido a Cuba! Welcome to Cuba. Attend a welcome meeting at approximately 6 pm. Please expect a letter from your leader in the afternoon of Day 1 to confirm the place of your meeting (if by 5 pm you cannot locate this letter then please ask your guesthouse owner if one has been delivered, or ask to call our assistance line listed in the 'Problems and emergency contact information' section of this document). We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so ensure you have all these details to provide to your leader. The tour briefing is generally followed by an optional group dinner. As there's a great deal to do in Havana, we recommend staying a few extra days to make the most of this exciting city. If you need help booking extra accommodation, our reservations team will be happy to assist. If you arrive early, please note most activities in Cuba can only be booked through the tourist desk in the lobbies of the larger hotels or direct with the venue. Otherwise, there are plenty of good museums to check out, including the Museo de la Revolucion and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.



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DAY 2: Havana

Take a walking tour of Old Havana, a perfect first taste of the city. Your local guide will show you the cathedral, Plaza de Armas, San Francisco de Asis, Plaza Vieja and Central Park. After the tour you will have an casual Spanish lesson to help with blend in with the locals. Then, enjoy your free afternoon exploring Havana further.



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DAY 3: Santa Clara / Camaguey

After lunch, start heading to the East of the island which overall will take about 8 hours without stops. On the way (approximately 3 hours), stop in Santa Clara, one of the first major cities to be liberated by Castro's army in December 1958. Today a number of monuments commemorate this important period of Cuba's history, including the mausoleum of the legendary Che Guevara. After this stop you will have an casual Spanish lesson on the bus to help pass the time before the included dinner and to prepare you to blend in with the locals. After another four or so hours driving, arrive in Camaguey at approximately 9pm. This is simply a stop for you and the driver to rest before continuing on tomorrow; so don't stress as you'll have time to explore Camaguey on the way back.



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

DAY 4: Santiago de Cuba

Stop somewhere along the way for breakfast before arriving in Santiago de Cuba (5-6 hours drive) around lunch, hopefully at check in time for your guesthouses. Head out for an orienation tour then enjoy some time for further exploration. Santiago is the cradle of the revolution and home of the traditional son music, a mix of Spanish guitar and African percussion. With a strong Afro-Cuban heritage it's no surprise that Santiago has a vibrant music scene that will entice the shyest, most left-footed dancer out to learn some salsa moves. The city is also well known for its vibrant and energetic Carnival celebrations, and its lively Festival of Caribbean Culture. Later, discover whether you were born with two left feet in a salsa class.



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DAY 5: Santiago de Cuba

Today your leader will take you on a three-hour city tour of Santiago. You'll visit El Morro Castle, Ifigenia cemetery and the Moncada barracks. For nearly a century, the city was the island's seat of power and it holds the title of 'Hero City of the Republic of Cuba' for its leading role in significant events during the Revolution. The people of Santiago were the first to rise up in arms against government troops in 1956, and it was in Santiago on January 1st 1959, that Fidel Castro declared the triumph of the revolution in a broadcast message to the country and the world. Santiago's half million residents are proud of their cultural traditions, so you'll find many museums and cultural clubs around the city. Enjoy a free afternoon to soak up the best that Santiago has to offer - explore the city's incredible contributions to music and literature at one of its many museums, or pop in at Barrita de Ron Havana Club to sample some authentic local rum.



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DAY 6: Camaguey

Today head east along the Carretera Central back to Camaguey. You will get a chance to stroll around Bayamo along with lunch to break it up. If there is time on arrival into Camaguey, you will be shown around the city by bicycle taxi, otherwise you'll do this tomorrow morning. Despite its size, Cuba's third largest city has managed to retain much of its colonial heritage, and exploring the city's winding streets is half the fun. The city was planned in a deliberately irregular and confusing pattern hoping to disorient any would-be assailants. As you walk through the city you may still see tinajones, large clay pots used for collecting water. On your explorations, stop by the Iglesia de Nuestra Senora de la Soledad with its baroque frescoes. Camaguey is also home of the Ballet de Camaguey, the second most important dance company in Cuba.



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DAY 7: Trinidad

Drive approximately six hours to Trinidad. Get accustomed to the slow pace of island living on an orientation walk. For most visitors to Cuba, the World Heritage site of Trinidad is their standout favourite destination. No other colonial city in Cuba is so well preserved, and the local residents are extremely friendly and festive. The town rose to prominence during the sugar boom and the wealth generated by the industry remains visible in the town's once grand mansions, colourful public buildings, wrought iron grill-work and cobble-stoned streets.



DAY 8: Trinidad

Trinidad is also steeped in religion, such as Santeria, which is one of the Afro-Cuban religions (related to voodoo). In your free time today, why not pay a visit to a Santeria priest and learn more about this fascinating religion. Alternatively, soak up the sun in beautiful Playa Ancon, a postcard-perfect coastal spot. A hike to the northern mountains is also highly recommended.



DAY 9: Havana


Leave behind the picture-perfect beaches and mountains of Trinidad and return to Havana. There is still time to visit a cigar factory, learn more about Ernest Hemingway or simply to take the time to appreciate the city's diverse architecture. Perhaps celebrate the last night of the tour with a show at one of Havana's famous cabaret clubs such as Tropicana. Or show off your moves at one of the many salsa clubs.



DAY 10: Havana

Your trip comes to an end this morning after breakfast. Check-out time is 10 am.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard
Inclusions	Meals 8 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner Transport Private vehicle Accommodation Standard guesthouse (8 nights), Overnight bus (1 night) Included activities Havana - Guided walking tour of Old Havana Santa Clara - Visit to the Che Guevara Mausoleum and Museum Informal Spanish Lesson with tour leader Santiago de Cuba - Salsa lesson Bayamo - Orientation Walk Camaguey - Bicycle taxi city tour Trinidad - Orientation walk
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

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

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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.

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