

## CUBA HIGHLIGHTS



### TRIP CODE

CUTSCUH

### DEPARTURE

Saturdays

### DURATION

13 Days

### LOCATIONS

Cuba



## INTRODUCTION

A two week itinerary is a great amount of time to become acquainted with the vivid Caribbean island of Cuba. This small group tour combines nature, culture and leisure to a varied backdrop. Start and end your journey in Havana before travelling to the opposite end of the island, Santiago de Cuba - steamy in both temperature and atmosphere! Visit Camaguey, Trinidad and the French touched Cienfuegos before stepping into rural life in Vinales. Your tour concludes in true style with a ride through Havana's historic streets in a vintage American car.


## ITINERARY

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## DAY 1: Havana

Welcome to Cuba! Bienvenido a Cuba! Arrive at Havana's Jose Marti International airport, where you'll be transferred to your hotel. There will be a welcome meeting at approximately 6pm this evening. After checking in please look for a collection of folders opposite reception where companies can leave communication for their travellers. The folder should be named "Peregrine Adventures" and inside there will be a copy of the welcome letter for you to read. The welcome letter will detail where the pre-tour briefing will take place. If by 5pm you cannot locate this letter then please ask reception, or ask to call our assistance line listed in the "Problems and emergency contact information" section of this document. Please come to this meeting with your passport, travel insurance and next of kin information. The briefing is usually 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

This morning at 9am you will be picked up from the infamous Hotel Nacional to see outer-Havana in a convoy of classic American vintage cars (1 hour urban adventure) that cruises via points of intrerest such as the Malecon, Revolucion Square, Vedado and ending in Old Havana. Next, your leader will take you on a walking tour of the lovely Old Havana (approximately 2.5 hours). Go to the cathedral, Plaza de Armas, San Francisco de Asis, Plaza Vieja and Central Park. Now that you are orientated in Old Havana you have the rest of the afternoon to lunch at leisure and explore futher. Your leader can assist you to take a taxi if you wish to return to the hotel.



## DAY 3: Generic Homestay

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## DAY 3: Santiago de Cuba


You have a very early start this morning (4am) to take a two hour flight to the opposite end of the island. Santiago de Cuba is the hottest place in Cuba – both with respect to the temperature and the atmosphere! After an orientation walk in the afternoon, dive into the sultry rhythms with an informal salsa class. As well as being the 'cradle' of the revolution, Santiago has a large Afro-Cuban population and a vibrant music scene. It is the home of son music, which is a mix of Spanish guitar and African percussion. This is great place for even the shyest dancer to learn some salsa moves.



## DAY 4: 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. Santiago's half million residents are proud of their cultural traditions, so you'll find many museums and cultural clubs around the city. The city is also famous for its energetic Carnaval celebrations and its lively Festival of Caribbean Culture. In the evening get a slice of real Cuban life with dinner in a very humble average Cuban home. Here you will sample local food on the beautifully decorated patio of a simple family home far from the touristic centre of town and a place where foreigners generally do not visit. Perhaps you will listen to a local Cuban band, dance to the energetic rhythms, or just sit in the rocking chairs watching the neighbours go about their business as evening falls.




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## DAY 5: Camaguey

Today, head west along the Carretera Central to Camaguey. Today is the longest travel day of the trip. Depending on how many stops are made, this usually takes six to seven hours but it will be broken up with a walk around Bayamo, plus your leader may utilise the bus time for your informal Spanish lesson. Despite its size, Cuba's third largest city Camaguey has managed to retain much of its colonial heritage. Exploring the city's winding streets is half the fun. The city was planned in a deliberately confusing pattern 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 to see its baroque frescoes. Camaguey has a rich tradition of cultural and technological leadership within Cuba. It is the birthplace of poet laureate Nicolas Guillen and home of the Ballet de Camaguey. Cuba's first radio and television emissions were broadcast from Camaguey, and the country's first airport and commercial flights were planned and executed here.




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## DAY 6: Camaguey

Today you'll take a tour of Camaguey by bicycle taxi. Cycling is a popular form of transport in Cuba, and bicycle taxis are very common. In the confusing streets of Camaguey, it's a particularly good way to get around. On the tour, you'll visit a local market, parks, plazas and an art gallery. Each taxi carries two passengers and the tour is led by an English-speaking local guide. Your leader may suggest visiting a local farmers' market, where you'll get a fascinating insight into daily Cuban life and the local economy. This is where farmers can sell their produce after meeting the quota they have to sell to the state. There are separate areas for produce sold by the state and produce sold by farmers directly to the public. There are plenty of interesting tropical fruits, vegetables and herbs available. This is where the locals come to buy their food once their monthly food ration runs out. Then you will take a marvellous tour of the famous ballet school in Camaguey, the precursor to the National School of Ballet. From here the majority of dancers go onto the National Ballet company or other large national and international dance companies. Meet some of the important people who keep this school running: the directors, the dancers (we can sit in on a rehearsal) the seamstresses, the shoe makers, the costume designers - it takes a large team of people to keep the ballet school operating. As it is not possible to purchase things such as ballet shoes in Cuba, everything for the ballet school is made on the premises. This is a truly fascinating experience.




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## DAY 7: Ciego de Avila / Santa Clara / Trinidad

Today travel through the centre of the country to Trinidad (approximately 5-6 hours), which sits on the scenic Caribbean coast. Stop on the way at Ciego de Avila to visit a well-known local gallery. The Pauyet group was founded by Víctor Rafael Blanco Montaña in 1998 and showcases sculptures made with silver cutlery peices. Next head to the final resting place of Cuba’s most famous son. In Santa Clara, you’ll visit the Che Guevara mausoleum and memorial. Che’s remains were brought here after they were found in a remote corner of Bolivia in 1997, where he was assassinated by the CIA-backed Bolivian army. Here you’ll get a rare insight into the legacy of the revolutionary leader, with some interesting ephemera and artefacts on display – letters, firearms, even medical devices. Continue on to Trinidad – for many visitors to Cuba, this is a standout destination. No other colonial city in Cuba is as well preserved, and the local residents are extremely friendly and festive. Trinidad is steeped in religion, including the Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria, which has connections to Voodoo. You’ll have the following day to explore the area and soak up the atmosphere. At some point while you’re here, why not take in a folklore show at one of the town’s numerous open-air venues. Cuba has a hugely rich and varied dance and musical tradition that draws its roots from Africa and France. Many styles that have greatly influenced music worldwide originated in Cuba, such as Mambo, Cha-cha-cha, son and rumba.



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## DAY 8: Trinidad

There's no doubt Trinidad is one of Cuba's most alluring destinations – a great place to wander around, with almost every scene offering a photo opportunity. Watch as locals casually smoke their huge cigars on the doorsteps of their homes, and hear the old Chevrolets rumbling by. Start with an orientation walk today, see the former wealth generated by the sugar industry in the town's once-grand mansions, colourful public buildings, wrought iron grill-work and cobble-stoned streets. Then spend your day snorkelling and swimming at Playa Ancon (just watch carefully for sea urchins, which can be a problem here), or simply wandering the cobblestoned streets in town and photograph some of the colourful buildings. No other colonial city in Cuba is so well preserved, and the local residents are very friendly.



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DAY 8: Generic Homestay

DAY 9: Cienfuegos

It's a short drive south (approximately 1 hour) to Cienfuegos, known affectionately as 'The Pearl of the South'. Have a short orientation of this port town who's unique culture is attributed its ancestry as a French enclave. The final stop for the day is the Palacio del Valle where you will hopefully get to rest with a drink while watching the sun beam on to the ocean from the rooftop bar. Perhaps walk along the promenade or stroll alongside the broad colonnaded avenues then reunite for an included dinner.



DAY 10: Generic Accommdoation

DAY 10: Havana


First stop is at the peaceful sandy arc of either Playa Giron or Playa Larga (approximately 2 hours), which sits on the eastern side of the Bahia de Cochinos, better known as the Bay of Pigs. It was famously here that the CIA sponsored a failed invasion by exile forces in 1961. You'll discover the story of the Cuban victory at the Museo Giron, which holds displays of various military equipment and photos of the men who fought here. It's not just the history that's the attraction here - with crystal clear Caribbean waters, a deep underwater wall, and an outstanding variety of coral and fish, it's a lovely place for a swim. There are beach-side restaurants that provide a perfect opportunity to reflect on the history that took place here while enjoying an optional lunch. Return to Havana for the evening.



DAY 11: Havana / Vinales / Havana

Take a day trip to another province, beautiful Pinar del Rio. Vinales is where tobacco and agricultural fields lie side by side and limestone outcrops dot the landscape. This is some of Cuba's best scenery. Enjoy a walking tour of the verdant farmlands for an insight into rural life and see the tobacco destined for the most expensive cigars. Dine at an organic eco-farm for lunch with sweeping views over the valley. Spend the afternoon here before returning to Havana.



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## DAY 12: Havana


Enjoy a full free day in Havana. Your leader will be able to help you book any optional activities.



## DAY 13: Havana

Your trip comes to an end after breakfast this morning as there are no activities planned for today.



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## INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard
Inclusions	Accommodation in hotels and guesthouses Meals as specified in itinerary Transportation by private vehicle Arrival transfer on Day 1 only One way flight Havana to Santiago de Cuba Sightseeing tours as specified in itinerary Services of local guide <b>EXCLUSIONS:</b> International flights Visas Travel Insurance Beverages Personal Expenses Gratuities for tour guides/drivers Any items not mentioned as included
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request

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<b>Notes</b>	Please note this small group tour only operates from October - July
<b>Price Dependent upon</b>	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 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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