

# Cuba Guided Walking Holiday

**Tour Style:** Worldwide Multi-Centre

**Destinations:** Cuba & Caribbean

**Trip code:** CUWHW

**Trip Walking Grade:** 2



## HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

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Explore this colourful Caribbean island with a fascinating history. The cobbled colonial streets of Havana, Cienfuegos and Trinidad stretch out before you, winding their way through peaceful plazas filled with cultural cues from Spanish, African, French and Asian influences. The tobacco fields and rainforests of Viñales contribute a rich biodiversity, while the peaks, waterfalls, white sand beaches and plantations of central and western Cuba offer a variety of landscapes ripe for exploration.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

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- A full programme of guided walks and sightseeing led by Local Guides
- 'With flight' holidays include return flights from the UK and hotel transfers
- Full Board with en-suite accommodation - 14 breakfasts, 13 lunches, 13 evening meals
- All entrance fees
- All walks transport and tips

## HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a walking tour of historic Habana Vieja and explore the city in a classic car
- Walk in Viñales among limestone 'mogotes', tobacco fields and rainforest
- Go in search of the perfect cigar and learn how to roll a *tobacco criollo* with an expert
- Follow in the footsteps of Hemingway and discover his favourite haunts
- Debate the legacy of Che Guevara and revolutionary history in Santa Clara
- Explore the Caribbean coast in the Northern Cays and enjoy a dose of barefoot luxury
- Walk out on *senderos* in Cuba's countryside to reveal the timeless heart of the country
- Discover Trinidad, a Spanish colonial treasure frozen in time
- Enjoy a stay in a homestay (casas particulares) for an authentic Cuban experience



## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrive Havana

On arrival in Havana you'll meet your local guide and driver who, depending on your arrival time, will take you to your hotel for a welcome drink and, later, a typical Cuban dinner at La Barraca in the gardens of the Hotel Nacional. You will stay at either the Hotel Nacional de Cuba or the Hotel Capri.

### Day 2: Havana

We take a walking tour to the historic heart of Havana. Granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 1982, the old town, or 'Habana Vieja', has been handsomely restored and is the largest colonial centre in Latin America. Our tour will take in many of Havana's sights, including a visit to Plaza de Cathedral, Plaza Vieja and the old City Walls. Lunch will be in a local paladar restaurant.

The day will also include a visit to the Finca Vigia, Ernest Hemingway's home in Cuba and now lovingly kept as it was when he lived there, and a visit to the Hotel Ambos Mundos where the author lived for more than two years.

We'll also ride out by bus to Cojimar, where Hemingway moored his boat 'El Pilar', and enjoy a refreshing drink at one of his favourite restaurants, 'Las Terrazas', which overlooks the ocean. The fishing village is full of

memories of the great American novelist and he kept a home close by for more than 20 years. We round off the day with a tapas dinner and cocktail making class.

### **Day 3: To The Viñales Valley - Cuban Tobacco Country**

Distance – approx 210km

We drive west, past plantations and cultivated fields, to the beautiful Viñales Valley. We'll enjoy lunch and a cigar rolling demonstration at a typical Cuban farm.

Our afternoon walk along the Palmarito trail takes in the spectacular scenery of the valley, with its limestone mogotes and their sheer cliffs. This is a traditional farming area and we stop at a small community to see how they cultivate tobacco, root vegetables and coffee. Distance: 4 miles (6½km), no ascent.

In the evening, a further walk along the Sendero Valle del Silencio in this enchanting countryside will prepare your appetite for dinner at Wilfredo's Organic Farm. Set in a beautiful hilltop location overlooking the town we will hopefully witness a marvellous sunset as we enjoy our meal. Distance: approx. 2 miles (3km), no ascent.

### **Day 4: Viñales Valley**

Today we start early and with a packed breakfast to walk along the Acuaticos trail, heading up into the hills around Viñales for sunrise. Distance: approx. 5 miles (8km) with 800 feet (243m) of ascent.

We continue into the heart of Cuban tobacco country and drive through the provincial capital, Pinar del Rio, to visit a tobacco factory where famous cigars are hand-rolled according to traditional methods. We head to the 'vega' of a famous Cuban tobacco producer, where we visit the farm and learn about the subtle art of producing fine tobacco. We'll have lunch at the 'vega' before returning to Viñales, where the rest of the day is at leisure before dinner at a local paladar.

### **Day 5: Santa Clara**

Today is mostly a travel day (approx. 6 hours over approx. 500km) as we head towards central Cuba. We'll visit Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve to learn about the reforestation programme started in the 1970s and take a short trail, La Serafina, in the hopes of spotting local birdlife. Distance: approx. 4 miles (6km).

After lunch on an old coffee plantation, we continue to Santa Clara. If time allows today, we'll visit the Che Guevara memorial, resting place for Che and sixteen of his men who were killed in action in 1967 in Bolivia, and have dinner at the hotel.

### **Day 6: To Remedios And Cayo Santa Maria**

If we didn't have time to visit the Che Guevara memorial, we'll do this today before departing for the city of Remedios, located about an hour to the northwest of Santa Clara.

Well off the beaten path and forgotten by most tour operators, Remedios is one of the oldest towns in Cuba – now a National Monument town – and the 17th century colonial architecture dominates this peaceful town. We'll take in the city and its historic centre on a relaxed tour. The key attraction is the main square with its colonial church, 'Iglesia Mayor' of San Juan Bautista, which possesses thirteen beautifully decorated gold altars.

We continue to the beautiful Northern Cays of Cuba and our all-inclusive hotel, where we'll have lunch and the remainder of the day is at your leisure.

### **Day 7: Free Day**

Today, take some time to relax in the resort. Enjoy the hotel's facilities or explore the nearby area – perhaps a swim in the sea or a short walk along the white sand beaches or through the nearby tropical woodland.

## Day 8: To Trinidad

Driving distance – approx. 180 km in total.

After breakfast we travel to the Escambray Mountains, where we'll walk along the banks of the Hanabanilla Reservoir, along the Guanayara Trail, and through coffee and fruit plantations. This is the least accessible – we travel to the start of the walk by truck – but by far the most rewarding hike from Topes de Collantes, and there is a steep descent to the El Rocio waterfall.

We'll arrive at La Gallega ranch, a traditional rural hacienda, in time for a simple country lunch before we continue our journey to Trinidad and our accommodation. This evening we'll have dinner at Alberto's House and enjoy an authentic Cuban experience. Distance: 3 miles (5km).

## Day 9: Trinidad

Today we travel out of Trinidad to visit the Valley of the Sugar Mills ('Valle de los Ingenios'). This fertile plain, with the Sierra del Escambray in the distance, is carpeted in the green hues of sugar cane. The valley is dotted with ruins of 19th century sugar mills.

We visit the Manaca Iznaga estate where we can wander through the ruins and climb the seven-storey tower for wonderful views. The tower was once a lookout for supervising the slaves. The estate is a telling reminder of the days of colonisation.

We also take a walking tour of the historic heart of Trinidad and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Founded in 1514 by Diego Velazquez, Trinidad is one of the most stunning colonial towns in the Americas. The city was once the centre for the sugar trade and its cobbled streets and lovely architecture bear witness to its former glories.

Tonight, you have a free evening to explore at your own pace and enjoy dinner at a restaurant of your choice surrounded by the colourful evening atmosphere of the town.

## Day 10: Trinidad

Today is a free day. There are many options including taking a visit to Playa Ancon, joining a catamaran trip to the offshore cayes, or exploring the charming streets of Trinidad a little further. A picnic lunch is provided today, and dinner will be together as a group at a local paladar.

## Day 11: To Cienfuegos

Driving distance approx. 90km

After breakfast we drive to the Hanabanilla Hotel and begin our walk around Hanabanilla Reservoir, this time along the La Atalaya trail. During the walk you will see typical country houses of the area, before finishing at Lago Hanabanilla from where we will be taken by boat to Rio Negro for lunch. Distance approx. 4.5 miles (7km), with some rough sections of ascent and descent.

After lunch, transfer 1½ hours to Cienfuegos Bay, and check into our hotel.

## Day 12: Cienfuegos

After breakfast we set off for visits to the city, Cienfuegos Botanical Garden and the Orchid Garden Macradenia, Palmira.

Cienfuegos is one of Cuba's most charming cities. Set on the shores of a huge natural bay, the city was originally one of Cuba's most important harbours. It was settled by French immigrants fleeing the slave uprisings of Haiti, the city has elegant boulevards and classical homes, as well as spacious squares and one Cuba's most famous theatres (Teatro Terry).

We will explore the city with a sightseeing tour, including visits to the theatre and the main square before having lunch in a local restaurant. After lunch you'll have some free time before returning to your hotel and our evening meal in a local paladar.

### **Day 13: Bay Of Pigs And To Havana**

Driving distance approx. 260km

Today we return to Havana. We stop en route at the Zapata Swamp and in Caleta Buena; here, we can see a natural sea pool with tropical fish, enjoy a swim and have lunch.

We continue to Playa Giron, or the Bay of Pigs, the site of the final battle between Fidel Castro's forces and the counterrevolutionary army and visit its museum to learn about the US/CIA involvement in the anti-Castro movement.

This evening we'll enjoy a cocktail at El Floridita, one of Hemingway's old hangouts, and round off the evening with a special lobster dinner in Old Havana.

### **Day 14: Havana**

A final day in Havana is free for independent exploration. Perhaps explore Habana Vieja further, or head out to Havana's other main areas, Centro Habana – offering a glimpse into real-life Cuba – or the Vedado neighbourhood. You might enjoy a walk along the Malecon, Havana's atmospheric waterfront promenade. This is a favourite gathering spot for the residents of Havana.

In the evening we enjoy a 1-hour tour in classic American cars before our last group meal in a centrally located paladar.

### **Day 15: Departure Day**

Our final morning is at leisure before lunch and transfer to the airport for the flight home.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

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### **Hotel Capri, Havana - Cuba**

The Capri Havana is located in the heart of Havana and offers an outdoor swimming pool on the top floor with panoramic views of the city. The hotel also has a gym, sauna and Turkish bath. The air-conditioned rooms feature a flat-screen satellite TV, a safe, a seating area, a minibar, a coffee machine and a bathroom with a shower, a hairdryer and free toiletries. Wi-Fi is available for a fee. The property has 2 restaurants and 2 bars. There are also other dining options just 2 minutes' walk away. In addition, the hotel offers a massage area, a barber shop, a laundry service, medical assistance and a car rental service.

### **Hotel Nacional De Cuba, Havana - Cuba**

87 years of history give prestige to the classic for distinction Gran Caribe hotel chain. The Hotel Nacional de Cuba is considered a symbol of history, culture and Cuban identity. The guns that made up the old Santa Clara Battery are on exhibition at the garden, they were declared part of the World Heritage Site. The Hotel Nacional de Cuba was declared a National Monument and it was inscribed in the World Memory Register. With its privileged location in the middle of Vedado, the centre of Havana, it stands on a hill just a few metres from the sea, and offers a great view of the Havana harbour, the seawall and the city.

### **Los Jazmines, Viñales Valley - Cuba**

Our accommodation in the beautiful Viñales Valley; its comfortable rooms and pool make it the perfect place

to relax after our walks. If we are not in Los Jazmines, then we'll be staying at Casas Particulares (bed & breakfast) with evening meals in local Paladars.

### **Hotel La Granjita, Santa Clara - Cuba**

The 3-star Hotel La Granjita features a restaurant and bar, outdoor pool and garden. The en-suite rooms are equipped with a desk, flat-screen TV and air-conditioning. Should you need currency exchange, the hotel offers this service.

### **Hotel Iberostar Cayo Los Ensenachos, Cayo Santa Maria - Cuba**

This is a luxury, all-inclusive 5\* hotel resort on the northern coast of Cuba. Within a short distance of some of the island's finest beaches, you're sure to enjoy spending time here relaxing before your journey continues.

### **Casas Particulares, Trinidad - Cuba**

At Casas Particulares we enjoy wonderful local hospitality and get a real insight into Cuban culture. Guests will be accommodated in different properties on the same street; those booked in a single room will be staying in a house where other HF guests are staying. All bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms with hot and cold water. They have fans and/or air conditioning. Each house will have its own character and will be decorated according to the tastes of their owner. Food will be hearty home cooking and breakfasts will be in the house where you sleep. Dinner will be in different homes/restaurants each evening. Please note, it is likely that beds may not be made during your stay.

### **Hotel Faro Luna, Cienfuegos - Cuba**

On to the modern facilities and city scenes of Hotel Faro Luna, or similar, at Cienfuegos.

### **Hotel Iberostar Parque Central, Havana - Cuba**

Right in the urban heart of Havana, we end our holiday at the Hotel Iberostar Parque Central, an elegant 5\* hotel with colonial-style architecture.

## **USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION**

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### **Weather & Seasonality**

Temperatures in Cuba are fairly constant year-round with sub-tropical heat being cooled by north-easterly trade winds. Average temperatures are 27°C (81°F) in February and 26°C (78°F) in November; these are averages only and could be higher. Cuba has 80% humidity year-round and a wet season running from May to September and this is the main hurricane season.

### **Joining Instructions (With Flights)**

For those travelling on our HF Holidays' group flight, please proceed to the arrivals hall once you have passed through passport control, customs and baggage reclaim, when you arrive at your destination. Your leader or local leader will assemble the group in the arrivals hall. Look out for the HF Holidays' sign.

### **Joining Instructions (Without Flights)**

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and

place to meet the group. If your flight arrives before the group flight and you would like to join the transfer to the first hotel, please contact our Abroad Administration team on (0)20 8732 1261. They will have a list of the relevant transfer costs.

## Essential Information

As you'll be carrying your own luggage at airports and between your transport and hotels we recommend you try to keep your luggage to a minimum.

These items are a general suggestion of what to pack for an active outdoor and walking holiday; depending on your destination, you may need more of some things and less – or none! – of others. You'll know best what you prefer to wear when out walking or while taking part in other outdoor activities.

- Walking boots (worn in), with good ankle support and spare bootlaces
- Walking socks
- Walking sandals
- Lightweight fleece, waterproof trousers and jacket
- Shorts and short-sleeved t-shirts
- Long trousers and long-sleeved light-coloured shirts with collars to protect from the sun.

We recommend wearing walking boots on all our walks, as these provide the best ankle support and grip. Modern 'approach shoes' offer appropriate levels of grip and may be worn on some low-level walks, but users should be aware that they offer less ankle support. Lightweight trainers are not recommended for any walks.

Your clothing should ideally be pre-treated with insect repellent and in-built sun protection (available from specialist clothing stores such as Rohan, Cotswold Outdoor).

- Warm fleece, scarf/buff hat and gloves
- Torch
- Comfortable clothes and shoes for evenings and sightseeing
- Sun protection – sun hat, sunglasses, high factor sunscreen and lip protection
- Water bottle – at least 2-litre capacity
- Lightweight survival bag
- Small/medium rucksack (30 litre) and a liner or cover to keep contents dry
- Insect repellent
- Personal first aid kit including: personal medication, tissues, plasters, blister kit, painkillers, antiseptic wipes, Imodium, rehydration sachets

**Essential:** Passport (and copies); booking confirmation; insurance cover note; HF Holidays' registration form.

Please ensure you have access to emergency funds should you need them; carrying a credit card is probably the most convenient method.

**Optional:** trekking poles (especially if you find these useful); camera; umbrella; binoculars; high energy food bars; hand sanitizer gel; universal sink plug

Please note that your HF Holidays' leader reserves the right to refuse to take any guest on a walk should they consider that a lack of suitable clothing/footwear may affect safety

## Safety On Your Holiday

Insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We have negotiated special holiday insurance and full details of this cover can be found in our brochure or at [www.hfholidays.co.uk](http://www.hfholidays.co.uk).

If you would like to purchase insurance from us, please call us on 020 8732 1220 or email [holidayservices@hfholidays.co.uk](mailto:holidayservices@hfholidays.co.uk).

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: [www.dh.gov.uk/travellers](http://www.dh.gov.uk/travellers).

If you are arranging your own travel insurance, please ensure it is adequate for your specific itinerary. Generally, this should include cover for walking at altitudes over 2,000m - the highest point on the harder walks may go up to 2,700m.

Once you have made your booking, you will receive a pre-holiday questionnaire where we ask for details of next of kin and insurance details. You must complete and return this to us - we need to have this from you at least 10 weeks before travel.

Please also inform us of any medical situation which may affect your enjoyment of the holiday. This is important because our leaders have to consider both group and individual safety at all times.

Whilst out with the group, we respectfully request that you:

- Please listen to any safety instructions from the leader
- Keep group members in view, especially if weather or visibility is poor
- Please stay where you are if you become separated from the group. The leader will retrace their steps to find you.

Each leader carries a first aid kit but is not allowed to supply any medication including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream. You may wish to bring these items with you in your own kit (see Suggested Kit List).

In the unlikely event that your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call emergency services on 911. Please then call our emergency number (sent in your final dispatch) and let us know there is a problem.

## Dietary Requirements

Please contact us as far in advance as possible if you have any specific dietary requirements; we will do our best to accommodate you. Provision in Cuba may be quite basic and repetitive, so you may wish to consider bringing some snacks with you.

If you require a specific meal on the flight, please let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 96 hours before travel.

## Vaccinations & Health

### Vaccinations & Health Information For Cuba

This information is subject to change. We **highly recommend** that you consult your doctor before travelling. For further information on country specific advice, visit [www.travelhealthpro.org.uk](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk)

- Hepatitis A and Tetanus vaccinations are recommended. Diphtheria, Rabies and Typhoid vaccines are sometimes recommended too.
- Dengue fever, Zika virus, meningitis and Chikungunya may also occur in-country. Please take suitable measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

Please note: the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is banned in some countries. If you will be carrying medication, please check with the country's embassy/consulate prior to travel. As an extra precaution, it is recommended to:

- Keep medication in its original packet
- Take a copy of your prescription

If possible, ask your chemist to write the name of your medication in the language of the country you're visiting.

General standards of health and health services in Cuba are of a high standard. However, there is no reciprocal agreement with the UK. As with all international travel, medical insurance is essential.

Cuban authorities have strengthened their health screening at entry ports; if you show symptoms of a temperature or infectious disease you may be subjected to a medical examination. The Cuban authorities are carrying out chemical fumigation across the island to control the spread of mosquito-borne diseases; the chemicals used may cause some discomfort if you come into contact with them.

## Passports & Visas

### Passports

British nationals require a full valid passport with six months validity from the date of departure from Cuba, and a visa or tourist card to enter Cuba. Other passport holders please check with your nearest Cuban embassy or consulate for entry requirements.

### Visas

A visa/tourist card is required. The tourist card is included in the price of your holiday for UK passport holders. **Please send a colour copy of your passport at least 10 weeks before departure to enable us to apply for your tourist card for you.** The tourist card is then sent with your final holiday documents.

Those who do not have British passports, or British passports with full right of residence in the UK ('British Citizen') should check entry requirements with a Cuban Embassy or Consulate. We will post your Cuban tourist card to the address you provide us.

US citizens should check the current legislation controlling travel to Cuba for the purposes of tourism, what entry requirements are needed and how to get the tourist card directly with the US State Department.

## Useful Information

Spanish is the predominate language – many casa particular owners, for example, speak only limited or no English and most museums only print explanations in Spanish. Cubans working in the tourist industry are generally quite proficient in English but knowing even some basic greetings in Spanish won't go amiss:

- Good day - 'Buenos días'
- Good afternoon - 'Buenas tardes'
- Good evening - 'Buenas noches'

Cubans typically greet strangers with a handshake, and if you've met them before may greet you with a kiss on the cheek (men to women and women to women)

## Introduction To Accommodation In Cuba

Cuba's infrastructure cannot be compared to that of other Caribbean destinations. While city hotels are generally good 3 and 4-star standard, accommodation in rural areas is in guesthouses where the facilities are more basic. All star ratings are the Cuban rating and should not be compared against more internationally recognised star ratings.

Despite Cuba's increasing popularity, it is still a developing country and some of the accommodation is not of a standard that is perhaps expected from a Caribbean destination. The accommodation is all air conditioned

and in excellent locations and what it may lack in some respects, you know you're enjoying an authentic Cuban experience with all the warmth of a Caribbean welcome.

**As Cuba becomes more popular, hotels are generally only confirmed 2 or 3 days prior to travel. Even then, things could change during the tour: we recommend not to have your heart set on staying in particular hotels in case of changes and you'll have a fantastic time.**

Many of the hotel facilities are still as they were 60 years ago, and money is only recently and slowly being invested in improving the hotels or the infrastructure. If you can see past the accommodation problems, and really travel with a sense of adventure, then the locals and the scenery will more than win you over.

Although we use the best available hotels in these areas, standards of service can be leisurely, but this is easily compensated by the warm welcome and Cuba's unique culture and scenery.

## Food

Until recently the simple answer to any question about Cuban food was to say that it was not great! Meals of rice, beans with chicken or pork and a cabbage salad is what the Cubans have eaten for decades so it's easy to see why Cuban chefs have got into a bit of a rut. Things are changing, however, and there are now some decent paladars (private restaurants) in most towns. True, the menus can be a bit repetitive but what's not to like about cheap lobster?!

Don't expect spicy food as Cubans hate anything with a hint of 'picante' but do expect plenty of gutsy home cooking with an emphasis on creole cooking: black beans, fresh fish, lobster, roast pork and chicken dishes are the staples with more and more restaurants trying to do something a little different with the limited range of ingredients available locally.

Vegetarianism is a relatively new concept in this part of the world, and vegetarian cuisine may therefore be rather basic.

## What Is Cuba Really Like?

The following is some information to help you be prepared for your trip to Cuba, the country that is ready to simultaneously delight and confound.

Havana is no longer frozen in time, at least not completely. With Cuba's guarded openness to private enterprise taking hold, classic American cars and salsa singers now share the cityscape with new and inventive offerings in food, culture, night life and hospitality. No other city in Latin America, or perhaps the world, can claim to be having just the kind of moment that Havana has been experiencing in recent years after so long in isolation from the rest of the world.

For visitors, the capital is a mash-up of past and present, freedom and restriction. It's a city of architectural decay, but also creativity, where artists have turned a defunct cooking-oil factory into a performance space, bar and music venue that on any given night makes Brooklyn look as cool as a suburban IKEA. It's a city where finding ingredients for a stellar menu requires feats of Promethean ingenuity; where opera is subversive, and kitschy too; where the Internet is just arriving, fully formed and censored; and where young Cubans without money are fleeing, while those with connections and ideas await great success.

Until recent changes, Americans were flocking to the island, wanting to savour the "forbidden fruit" before Starbucks and McDonalds arrived. Adventurous Europeans have been travelling to Cuba for years but it's only recently that Cuba has become so popular that travellers might mistake it for a mainstream destination.

## Expect The Unexpected

The first rule of any trip to Cuba is that nothing is set in stone. Even though your booking may have been made a year ago and HF Holidays has confirmed that all is in place, things can change quickly and at the last minute. Please understand that we and our local agent in Cuba will do everything within their respective and collective power to get the best possible solution and most enjoyable holiday experience for you.

The Cuban tourism industry continues to be controlled almost entirely by the State and its reservations systems are fallible and rickety. By law, most of your services will have to be booked through the central reservations systems – designed for the good old days when barely a European or an American came to the island. Now that Cuba is so popular, the system is critically overstretched, and things do have a frequent tendency to go wrong. To enjoy the holiday to its fullest, we recommend you go with the flow and take it as part of the authentic Cuban experience.

Cuba really is buzzing at the moment and you will probably come across your fair share of frustrations and hotel cancellations - enjoy Cuba for what it is, a gloriously disorganized, original and off beat place. If your guide does announce a last-minute change of plans, rest assured that everything possible has been done to try and avoid it.

As you will be staying in Casas Particulares (Cuban bed & breakfasts) and eating meals in paladars then you will experience the beginnings of private enterprise in Cuba and you'll appreciate how efficient, warm and hospitable Cubans can be when they are given the opportunity to run things for themselves.

## Health And Safety

Generally speaking, health and safety hasn't come to Cuba yet. The basics are there so you don't need to worry about whether your bus is safe to travel in: it is. In general, there is no obsession with health and safety and many of the safeguards we take for granted are not in place, so expect some or all of the following:

**Potholes** - part and parcel of any road trip in Cuba.

**Cracked pavements** - most pavements have their fair share of cracks and uneven surfaces so take care when walking – even in the centre of Havana – and wear comfortable shoes.

**Jineteros** - this is the local Cuban word for a hustler. Offering to take you to eat at their cousin's paladar, to drink a mojito in their home or offering you cut price cigars they are the most charming band of hustlers in the world and can usually be batted off with a polite "No thanks".

**Electricals** - loose wires and electric showers are part and parcel of a Cuban home. It's not unusual to see loose wires in hotels and some of the Casas Particulares still use the electric showers. We would love to eliminate all of them but these risks to health and safety will probably be part of Cuba for several years to come.

**Dehydration** - it's quite easy to get seriously dehydrated, especially during the first few days of your trip as you acclimatize to the heat and humidity. Make sure you drink plenty of mineral water, more if you'd like to enjoy a few mojitos!

**Standards of hygiene** – Cubans are extremely clean and house proud but lack the cleaning products which we take for granted. This can make it extremely hard to give the impression of a well cleaned bathroom when, for example, the bathtub is stained by hard water deposits.

Replacement taps, toilet seats or broken tiles can be very difficult or impossible to buy due to importation embargos which still makes importation prohibitively expensive; some hotels even sometimes lack the basics or fail to replace leaking taps or faulty toilets.

This can give the impression that high standards of hygiene are not being demanded of cleaning staff, but they are. No matter what standard of accommodation you're staying in, expect some of the equipment to be

faulty!

## Luggage

### Luggage Allowance

1 piece checked-in luggage (max 23kg).

Please check details of your airline's baggage allowance, as shown on your e-ticket. Remember to also check any connecting flights you may have booked.

### Lost Or Damaged Luggage

If your bag or its contents are damaged or lost while in the airline's care, this should be reported to the baggage service agents at the airport on arrival. They will assess the damage; in some cases, the airline may decide to settle your claim immediately.

You will be given a reference to quote to your insurance company if an immediate settlement is not possible - in many cases, baggage claims can only be accepted in writing. A baggage claim form must be obtained from the airport.

## Local Currency

There is a dual currency system in operation in Cuba, and tourists and foreign visitors are required to use the Convertible Peso (CUC). Cuban Pesos, or 'moneda nacional', can be used in small shops, cafeterias and street stalls away from the tourist centres, although this is a rare occurrence.

It is prohibited to enter or leave Cuba carrying Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) currency. Please make sure you have spent or exchanged any remaining CUC prior to passing through immigration when you leave Cuba. You can do this at the CADECA exchange office at the airport but it is recommended that you do this before reaching the airport as queues can be long and only a maximum of CUC300 can be exchanged into another currency. Any drinks, snacks, duty free or souvenirs will now need to be paid for using a credit card or cash (GBP, CAD, AUD, USD, EUR etc.)

Since 2004 US Dollars are no longer legal tender in Cuba. It is possible to exchange US Dollars cash but there are charges of around 20% to do so. MasterCard and Visa are increasingly accepted, provided they are not issued by a US bank, or a bank with links to the USA, but hefty fees are often added. ATMs are more common but not everywhere.

Pounds Sterling, Euros and Canadian Dollars are readily changeable. CUC notes can be exchanged for other currencies on departure at the airport. Credit cards can be taken as back-up although they incur a commission of over 10%.

## Local Time

GMT/UTC -4 hrs

## Electricity

110V, 2 pin flat or round blade plugs. 220V may be achieved in more built up areas.

## ATM Availability

ATMs are more common but not everywhere

## Suggested Reading & Maps

- Lonely Planet, Cuba (2017)
- Sasha Korniak, Cuba Wanderer (2015)
- James Kavanagh, Cuba Birds (2016)
- Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, The Motorcycle Diaries (2004)

Although you won't need them, if you'd like any maps of the destination, you can obtain some in advance from The Map Shop: [www.themapshop.co.uk](http://www.themapshop.co.uk)

## Tipping

Tips have been included in your holiday price for key services such as local guides/driver, restaurants, hotel porters and maids. Any additional tips are at your own discretion

## HOW TO BOOK

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When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 7pm Saturday: 9am – 1pm Sunday & Bank Holiday Monday: closed

### PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

### NON-MEMBER FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying a Non-Member's fee of £30 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full membership is available from £100 – visit [hfholidays.co.uk/membership](http://hfholidays.co.uk/membership) for details.

### BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ) Account Name: HF Holidays Ltd Account Number: 35923304 Sort Code: 40-51-62 IBAN: GB92HAND40516235923304 Swift / Bic Code: HANDGB22

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

### MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

### YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance

by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit [hfholidays.co.uk/insurance](http://hfholidays.co.uk/insurance)

## PEACE OF MIND

### ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website [atol.org.uk](http://atol.org.uk)

### MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

## TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

## PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

**Document produced:** 24-06-2021

