

Cycle Cuba



Duration: 9 days

Cuba, described as the pearl of the Caribbean, is a gem of an island known as much for its unique, colourful culture and history as for its golden beaches. Vintage cars, art deco mansions, colonial plazas and Baroque churches, set against a backdrop of salsa music and captivating street-life – and that's just the first day!

Our challenge takes us from Havana, the cultural and historical heart of the island, out west through traditional rural Cuba. The route is stunningly beautiful, taking us through picturesque limestone hills, tropical forests and sugarcane fields, finishing in the renowned tobacco plantations where the world's most famous cigars originate.

This is a challenging yet beautiful ride on hilly roads miles from the tourist track, indulging us with a true taste of Cuba's vibrant culture. You will not forget this island in a hurry!

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart UK, arrive Havana

We fly from London to Havana. Transfer to our hotel. After dinner and a detailed briefing, we prepare our kit for tomorrow and get a good night's sleep! Night hotel.

Day 2: Havana Bike Tour

After breakfast and a bike fitting, we explore Havana, one of Hemingway's favourite cities, by pedal power. This is a great warm-up ride, mainly flat, which allows us to get used to the heat and ensure our bikes are set up comfortably. It's also a great way to discover the landscapes of this unique city; the street life is as captivating as the colonial buildings and former seafront grandeur. After lunch on the coast at Santa Fé, you'll have some free time to explore this vibrant capital and soak up the atmosphere. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 40km

Day 3: Havana – Las Terrazas

Our first full day in the saddle! We leave Havana's bustle and head west through suburbs before joining the coast, passing the fishing town of Playa Baracoa and Mariel, a small port. Today is a day of two halves – the morning sees us cruising flat roads, mainly along the coast. Once we turn inland, we approach the first foothills of the Sierra del Rosario mountain range and it's not long before we're tackling our first significant hill. The afternoon's route is more undulating as we take quiet back-roads through fields of sugarcane and palm trees; the tranquillity is broken only by the occasional farm vehicle and 1950s Cadillacs. The bumpy, broken road surface adds to the challenge, but the views are stunning – this is a memorable day in beautiful rural Cuba. More climbing takes us on twisting roads towards the densely-wooded Las Terrazas Biosphere Reserve, whose hardwood forests are known for abundant birdlife. Our hotel has fabulous views across the reserve. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 80km

Day 4: Las Terrazas – San Diego de Los Baños

More spectacular scenery awaits us today, with some inspiring views across the lush, tropical forest. We start off with a short downhill – enjoy it while it lasts! – and cross the lake and village before taking a very quiet, undulating back road through the forests of the Sierra del Rosario. The tocororo (Cuba's national bird), with its dramatic black, white, red and blue plumage, is seen fairly commonly along here. We continue through the Reserve, following the crest of the hills; there is very little flat, and our toughest climb sees us gaining some 300m in the space of 4km. The hardest part of the day over, we enjoy a fabulous descent to San Cristobal, which brings us out of the mountains and down towards the central plain. From here it's a fairly flat afternoon as we ride along an old road used only by local traffic; you're likely to be passed by horses and carts, American vintage cars, Chinese bicycles, Russian tractors and Czech motorcycles, all testament to Cuba's story through the 20th Century. San Diego de los Baños, a sleepy former spa town, is our destination for today. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 80km

Day 5: San Diego de Los Baños – Mil Cumbres

The distance is shorter today, but don't be deceived – this might be your most challenging day yet! Climbing almost from the start, we cross part of La Guira National Park, once the estate of a wealthy landowner who was forced into exile in 1959. This is a tough start to the morning; though our surroundings are beautiful. A long descent brings us out of the Park and we pass close to the Cuevas de las Portales – home to Che Guevara during the Cuban Missile Crisis. If our cycling pace allows, we'll make time to stop and visit Che's Headquarters before continuing, where a 2km steep climb awaits, known locally as *loma del Americano* (American's hill). Our road takes us predominantly downhill towards La Palma, but the route is scattered with small climbs, some of them steep; there is simply no easy section on today's ride! We break our journey at an artist's home for some traditional country hospitality, and again for lunch, before accepting the inevitable and riding up into the mountains again. Although the highest hills are behind us, it's still a tough ascent up towards Mil Cumbres (literal meaning 'a thousand peaks'), where we stay tonight at a simple eco-lodge in the Cuban forest. This is a beautiful place to

finish a ride that should leave you feeling tired but enormously elated! The small community living here is always delighted to have guests, and an evening here will have a strong cultural flavour, and is often a real highlight of the ride.

Cycle approx 51km

Day 6: Mil Cumbres – Viñales

Our last day in the saddle will feel considerably less challenging after the last few days – though there are still plenty of undulations! A good freewheel down the mountain sets us off in high spirits, and we follow the undulating route back towards La Palma. A quiet back-road then takes us along the rolling valley floor of the Sierra de los Organos. Yet more varied scenery awaits us; these landscapes are dominated by *mogotes*, steep-sided karst rock formations clad in lush vegetation which rise dramatically from the valley floor. It's an unforgettable backdrop to our ride, which draws to a close as we near the famous tobacco-growing area around Viñales. One final hill takes us to a viewpoint with magnificent vistas across the Viñales Valley. On arrival at our hotel, we enjoy a well-deserved cocktail to celebrate the end of our ride. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 62 km

Day 7: Viñales – Havana

Today we head back to the city, but first we make the most of our time in this beautiful area. You're in the home of the Cuban cigar, and we enjoy a gentle walk through the countryside famous for producing the world's finest tobacco. The scenery is beautiful, and it's an enjoyable change to be exploring on foot! We visit local fruit and tobacco farmers, earning an authentic glimpse into their traditional way of life – you might even get the chance to learn how to hand-roll a cigar! We then drive back to Havana, where an afternoon's guided tour of Old Havana is yet another highlight. The faded charm and impressive monuments of Cuba's capital forms a real contrast after the natural beauty and small communities we've become used to. We then head out for an evening to celebrate all our achievements of the past week. Night hotel.

Drive approx 3 hours

Day 8: Depart Havana

This morning is free to relax, or head out and explore more of Havana's sights, or shop for souvenirs, before we transfer to the airport in time to catch our international flight home.

Lunch and dinner not included

Day 9: Arrive UK

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All transport from London to Havana return
- All meals except where specified, and accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; local guides/mechanics and cooks
- Vehicle support and backup equipment on the trip
- 21-speed Mountain bike (Trek/Giant or equivalent)
- Entrance to any sites visited as part of the itinerary

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and water bottle
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Airline taxes: we cap these so £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Tips for the local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Cuba entry visa
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. Not all support crew will speak English well, but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in many countries may be less than you would spend on an average night out.

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick on scheduled airlines and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your journey may involve a transit en route; details of route and flight times will be confirmed several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination; if you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

We stay in a variety of hotels/lodges ranging from quite simple, friendly guesthouse-style to more international-style hotels in larger towns or cities. Standards are generally good, in great locations, but there may be a night or two where facilities are more basic, as you'd expect in very remote, untouristed or rural areas.

Roomshare Arrangements

Accommodation is usually on a twin-share basis. Occasionally we may use hostel-style accommodation. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge. Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months

before your departure date.

Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for

the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the [FCO's advice](#) on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you with all necessary information 6 weeks prior to departure to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check [Fit For Travel](#) for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click [here](#).

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges

– all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!

Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by post or email. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration fees and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

CHALLENGE EXTENSIONS



TRINIDAD & BAY OF PIGS EXTENSION

Known for being an island rich with culture, music and the arts, a trip to Cuba isn't complete without a visit to the stunning colonial town of Trinidad and the Valley de los Ingenios, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988. Trinidad has barely changed since 1850 and the buildings have been beautifully conserved, giving the impression that you have travelled to a bygone era. With its rich history, cobbled streets, architecture and friendly locals, set against a backdrop of the Sierra del Escambray Mountains and overlooking the Caribbean Sea, Trinidad is a one of a kind destination!

During this extension, a guided city tour of Trinidad is included and you will have free time to spend as you wish. On our return journey to Havana, we stop at the historic site of the Bay of Pigs, a beautiful UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, also made famous for the failed CIA military Invasion in 1961.

This is a great opportunity to extend your stay after your main trip and enjoy the unforgettable sights of central Cuba.

Min 2 pax

Single supplement: £425



Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 26 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.