

Viva Cuba

Visiting: Cuba
Code: GSVC

Tour price from **GBP 820.00** for **12 days** - Land Only

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Viva Cuba Trip Notes

At Imaginative Traveller we always aim to provide accurate information for our travellers.

Unfortunately information such as the price of optional activities is occasionally subject to change, and this means that we are constantly revising our trip notes. In order to ensure that you have the most up to date information for your trip we suggest that you check the trip notes for your tour around one month before departure.

Trip code: GSVC

Trip valid from: 01/02/2012

Trip valid until: 31/12/2013

Trip length: 12 days

Trip starts in: Havana

Trip ends in: Havana

Maximum group size: 16



Highlights

UNESCO World Heritage-listed Old Havana

Camaguey's Labyrinthine Streets And Alleys

Santiago De Cuba's Afro-Cuban Culture

Havana's El Malecon Sea Wall

Ernesto Che Guevara Monument In Santa Clara

Havana's Fortress, Cigars And Rumba

Cuba never fails to fascinate and stir the soul. Discover what makes Havana so exhilarating. Follow in the footsteps of such revolutionary heroes as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. Move your feet to the rhythm of Cuban 'Son' in the music capital, Santiago de Cuba, and discover the backstreets of Trinidad one of Cuba's oldest and most charming towns. Your visit to this enigmatic island nation will leave you wanting to come back, time and time again.

Itinerary

**Day
1**

Havana

Our trip starts today in Havana, but with no activities planned you may arrive at any time. There is a pre-departure meeting with your English-speaking Cuban tour guide at 7pm this evening. Please check the notice board in the foyer of your joining hotel for the exact time of this meeting and any other messages regarding your tour. Please bring your passport and travel insurance documents to the briefing.

**Day
2**

Havana

After breakfast we begin our exploration of La Habana Vieja (Old Havana). A common reaction of travellers exploring the city for the first time is to think they are on a Hollywood movie set! Old cars cruise the wide tree-lined boulevards and small alleyways, old men in straw hats puff on enormous Cuban cigars and lilting Cuban 'son' music fills the air. It's an intoxicating atmosphere and it is not hard to get caught in the rhythm of the city. Havana is a delightful place to explore on foot and is home to many beautiful galleries, museums, churches and monuments. After a day of exploration we can highly recommend that you stop in at one of Old Havana's many historic bars and enjoy a delicious and minty 'mojito' cocktail. Try the atmospheric bar, Dos Hermanos, which is tucked away down near the harbour. (B)

**Day
3**

Havana

UNESCO declared Havana a World Heritage site in 1982 and restoration has been going on since that time, with many dilapidated public buildings painstakingly restored to their former glory. Some of the finest examples of Spanish colonial architecture can be found within easy walking distance of the hotel and many of these historic buildings are open to visitors. Highly recommended is a tour of one of Cuba's famous cigar factories, Real Fabrica de Tabacos Partagas, which is located just behind one of Havana's most glorious buildings the Capitolio Nacional. A visit to the Museo de la Revolucion is also highly recommended. This museum is housed in the former Presidential Palace, one of the most impressive buildings in Cuba, and provides a complete account of the Cuban Revolution. There are plenty of historic maps and documents,

as well as static displays and equipment, describing key events of the revolution. Old military vehicles including trucks, fighter planes and boats are located in a covered section at the rear of the main building. If you are feeling a little overwhelmed by the buildings and museums it might be time for a change of pace! You won't have to look very far to find and hear traditional Cuban music in full swing. Seemingly every small bar, hotel and restaurant around town has a resident group of musicians on hand. Your feet will be tapping, and before long, you'll be up on the dance floor doing the salsa! We have not worked out if there's a correlation between the number of 'mojitos' you consume and your salsa-dancing skills... maybe you can find out for yourself! (B)

Day 4-6

Santiago de Cuba

This morning we leave Havana and fly to Santiago de Cuba, in the far east of the country. Santiago holds a special place in the hearts of many Cubans, as it was here that the first seeds of the Cuban Revolution were sown. The nearby rugged mountains of the Sierra Maestra were home to Fidel Castro and other revolutionaries during this turbulent period. For music lovers Santiago is often a highlight of the trip, as many of the traditional forms of Cuban music were developed here over the centuries and the local musicians consider themselves the custodians of all things musical! Not surprisingly, a small but thriving musical instrument manufacturing industry can be found here. Music and nightlife go hand in hand and the bars and clubs of Santiago are legendary. After a walking tour of the city with our guide we have free time to explore the delights of the city. Santiago has many incredible public buildings, museums and churches to explore and our leader will be on hand to show us around. (3B)

Day 7

Camaguey

Heading into the lush interior of Cuba it's a long drive to Camaguey, situated about halfway between Havana and Santiago. The surrounding countryside is marked with cattle farms, as well as citrus orchards and sugar plantations. Camaguey itself always manages to surprise, with its twisting streets and alleyways, and a notable feature of the city is the proliferation of huge earthenware water pots known as 'tinajones'. We see these all over the city and they were originally used to store water in times of drought. (B)

Day 8-10

Trinidad

First thing this morning there is a tour of the old town centre of Camaguey before continuing our drive across the interior to historic Trinidad, arriving late afternoon. Standing on the streets of Trinidad is like stepping back in time. From vantage points above the town we almost expect to see Spanish galleons anchored offshore, several kilometres away. Set up in 1514 this was the third settlement established in Cuba by the Spaniards. It's no surprise that UNESCO declared Trinidad and the beautiful rolling hills that surround it, a World Heritage site in 1988. This is quintessential Cuba of cobblestone streets, pastel coloured houses, old Chevrolets, ice cream shops and gorgeous churches. Locals sit out on the doorsteps of their houses in the evening, discussing the events of the day while puffing on giant cigars. For these reasons and more, Trinidad is one of the most-visited towns in the entire country. The town is small enough to walk around and is incredibly photogenic and there is plenty to do. Accompanied by our tour guide, it is easy to do our own exploration of the town. Climb the bell tower of the central Museo Nacional de la Lucha Contra Bandidos (a former convent) for great views over the old rooftops and surrounding hills. There are some great markets here, specialising in beautiful Cuban linen. Tablecloths of all shapes and sizes are

delicately embroidered and are a great buy. We will need to bargain hard though! If in need of a beach fix, it's a short ride in a 'coco taxi' (or an easy bike ride), to nearby Playa Ancon - a white sand beach lapped by the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea. Please note that there is a shortage of reliable accommodation in Trinidad and many of the hotels experience constant water and electrical shortages. From time to time it has been necessary for us to stay in the nearby colonial town of Sancti Spiritus (65km), which because of its historical significance was declared a national monument in 1964. Should this be the case on our trip, a bus will be provided daily to take us into Trinidad. (3B)

**Day
11**

Santa Clara

Departing the coast, we head inland to the historic city of Santa Clara. This city was the sight of a major victory for the Cuban revolutionaries. Ernesto Che Guevara led a small band of soldiers in an attack on a heavily armed train. Although significantly outnumbered, Guevara's forces defeated the government troops. Learning of the defeat, the President Batista fled the country a few days later, thus sealing victory for Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries. Not surprisingly large murals of Che Guevara and inspiring revolutionary slogans are found all over the city! Today, Santa Clara is home to one of Cuba's largest universities. For most visitors though, a visit to the Revolutionary Plaza and imposing Che Guevara Monument is the highlight. The remains of Che and fellow revolutionaries are interred within the walls of this imposing structure. It's a serene and peaceful place and an important political symbol of freedom for many Cuban people. (B)

**Day
12**

Havana

Today we take the short drive back to Havana, where our Cuban holiday comes to an end upon arrival at the bus station. If you are flying out of Havana today, please do not book your flight to depart until after 3.30pm (15:30 hrs). (B)

Itinerary Variation

While the information presented here details our planned itinerary, including routes taken, activities included, accommodation and meeting times, please accept that unforeseen changes may occur. We are constantly on the lookout to improve our program and further enhance your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date with any last minute amendments to your tour.

About The Imaginative Traveller

Our aim has always been to provide exceptional travel experiences. We believe that adventure travel should be stimulating, and that it should give you an authentic experience of a place. We want our travellers to relish the amazing diversity of countries and cultures the world has to offer. Our focus is on innovation, not imitation.

Obsessed with quality

One of our strengths has been our obsession with quality. We've always believed that our commitment to you doesn't end as soon as you've paid for your holiday. On the contrary, it is just beginning. Whilst most operators simply get a local company to handle the day to day operation of their tours, we do it all ourselves. We have managers for each of our **key destinations** around the world and all our small groups are escorted by our own leaders. Our local teams include guides, drivers, administration staff and contacts in the local community who help us ensure that our adventures are active and involving.

For comparability, all prices in this dossier are quoted in one currency. We use the US Dollar since that is familiar to most. However, once on tour you will need to pay for all goods and services in the local currency. See your Country Dossier for details of exchange rates.

Trip Grade

Culture

Whether you're taking in man's greatest works at places like Petra or Angkor Wat, experiencing grand set-pieces like the Trans-Mongolian Railway or trying your hand at regional specialities like tango in Buenos Aires, getting to grips with local cultures is what travel's all about. A few tips from a guide and a sense of adventure are pretty much all you need. So what are you waiting for? It's time to get the lowdown on high Tibet among Lhasa's magisterial temples; follow up Delhi's eye-popping bustle with a fix of its fiery food; and mix manic markets and Incan masterpieces in Peru.

Included

An experienced local tour guide in Cuba and there will be the services of local guides at some sites. All transport, accommodation, sightseeing and meals as indicated.

Not included

International flights, arrival and departure transfers, departure and airport taxes, visas, all other meals, all optional tours or activities during free time, transfers outside of the tour program, travel insurance, tips and items of a personal nature.

Meals

11 breakfasts

Accommodation

11 nights Hotel

Single room supplement

Most of our travellers like the thought of travelling with a few like-minded souls. There are NO compulsory single supplements on most tours as we simply arrange twin shared accommodation for you and another tour member of the same sex. But don't worry if that doesn't appeal. We do understand there are times when you just want a bit of privacy and 'me' time so we are more than happy to arrange a private room upon request when you book.

Transport

Bus, Private van, Taxi

Optional excursions

*prices below are guide only

Cayo Levisa - Sea Kayak Hire

- Euro €2.5 (per hour)

Havana - Bicycle rental (full day)

- Euro €4

Havana - City Tour

- Euro € 15

Havana - Dance lesson

- Euro €11 (per hour)

Havana - Tour to Las Terrazas

- Euro €28

Havana - Tropicana shows

- Euro €40 - 67

Santiago - Bicycle rental

- Euro €4

Santiago - Casa de La Trova

- Euro €1.50

Santiago - City tour

- Euro €8

Trinidad - Bicycle rental

- Euro €3 (full day)

Trinidad - Che sites tour

- Euro €10

Trinidad - Excursion to Topes de Collantes Park

- Euro €28

Trinidad - Excursion to Valle de los Ingenios

- Euro €22

Trinidad - Salsa lessons

- Euro €4 (per hour)

The itinerary and supplementary information has been compiled with care and provided in good faith. However it may be subject to change, and does not form part of a contract between the client and The Imaginative Traveller.

Responsible Travel - Travellers' Guidelines

At Imaginative Traveller we love helping our clients experience the beauty and cultures of the destinations we visit. However, hand in hand with this we have always been aware that we have a responsibility to minimise any negative impacts that tourism can bring.

Responsible Travel is twofold. It's about taking people to the places they want to go in a safe and responsible manner but also about respecting and maintaining the natural and often delicate balance of the destination. Economic gain from tourism is often fundamental to a country, but should never be at the expense of its culture or the environment.

Our Aims

It is our aim to provide journeys that have minimal negative and maximum positive impact on the places we visit.

We do not believe that, as visitors, we should impose our own cultures on others; rather that we should experience foreign cultures and appreciate them for what they are.

Whilst it is our aim to show destinations and cultures in a positive light, we do not believe in papering over the cracks or shielding visitors from the realities of life. This does not mean, however, that we condone or endorse certain situations or regimes that may be in place.

Our guidelines are meant not as rigid instructions but rather as suggestions to make our holidays more enjoyable – for everybody. As cultural and environmental sensitivities vary from country to country more specific guidelines can be found in our individual country and trip dossiers.

Travellers' Guidelines

- ✓ Before you depart try to spend some time familiarising yourself with the destination you will be travelling to – their culture and customs. The country dossiers on our website offer detailed information about all the regions we visit. They also include some useful phrases in the local language for you to use on your trip! A few words of the local language can open up many more opportunities for you to interact with the people you will meet.
- ✓ Although it is tempting to give out pens, sweets and money to people begging, and particularly tempting to give to children, we feel that this encourages a begging mentality and has a long-term negative impact on communities. If someone begging earns more than someone in the same community who works this can discourage local employment. If children regularly bring home money it may discourage their parents from sending them to school. It is of course your own personal choice but you could consider giving to registered charities or contributing to our Responsible Travel fund instead. Money donated through our fund to our worldwide projects is matched pound for pound by Imaginative Traveller and used to help local grassroots projects.
- ✓ Always ask permission to photograph local people and respect their decision if they would prefer not to have their picture taken.
- ✓ Respect local dress codes, especially at religious sites. Our tour leaders are always on hand to give you advice about this.
- ✓ In many of the countries we visit you might see examples of animal cruelty (for example dancing bears, performing monkeys and snake charmers). Please do not take photographs of this or offer money as it encourages the activity.
- ✓ Respect the environment you are in. It sounds obvious but do not throw litter, take it with you or use rubbish bins! You may see locals throwing rubbish on the street but do not follow their example!
- ✓ When shopping in countries where haggling is the norm – enjoy it and only pay what you feel is a fair price for the goods you are purchasing. However, remember that the shopkeeper does have to make a living so do stop once you have reached a price you are happy with. Bargaining should be fun but always remember that a small amount can mean much more to the vendor than to you.
- ✓ Endeavor to take home souvenirs made locally; the money you spend can be very important to the local communities. However, do use your common sense and don't buy anything that you think might be made out of endangered animals or plants.
- ✓

To help keep as much money as possible in the host country - try to eat in locally owned restaurants and order local drinks and produce rather than international brands.

- ✓ In hotels do be conscious of how much water you are using. Many of the areas we visit regularly have shortages; try not to have hour long showers! Don't leave lights, air conditioners or fans on when you leave the room – you wouldn't at home!
- ✓ Respect the environment you are in, especially when in national parks or reserves. Pay attention to rules about keeping on paths, keeping a distance from animals and not removing any of the natural habitat.
- ✓ Relax and immerse yourself in the differences of the culture you are in – you'll be back home in the familiar soon enough (and wishing you were still on holiday!). These cultural differences are part of what makes your experience special.

If you would like to offset the carbon dioxide that will be produced on your flights you can do this on our website ([on our Responsible travel page](#)). We work with climatecare, who will reduce the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide that you produce in another part of the World through their emission reduction projects. These projects are low carbon efficient technologies in developing countries and not only serve to reduce emissions but also help to spread the adoption of low carbon technologies and improve the quality of life for local communities. Details of climatecare's projects can be [found on their website](#).



If you would like to contribute to our Worldwide projects, helping communities all over the World, you can also do this on our website or with a sales consultant. Please refer to our [responsible travel page](#) on the website for details of our current projects. Any donation you make will be matched £ for £ by Imaginative Traveller (up to a maximum of £1000).

Have a great trip!

Please do let us know if you have any comments about responsible travel at rto@imtrav.net

The Imaginative Traveller & Gecko's Adventures This trip is operated by our partner company, Gecko's Adventures. Gecko's is an Australia based company with more than 10 years experience in adventure travel and they share our ethos for offering unique holiday adventures. As this is a code shared departure you can expect there to be both Imaginative Traveller and Gecko's travellers on your trip.
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