

The Cuban Experience 2020

8 Day Guided Tour – 3-4V

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Tour exclusive to Virgin Holidays guests • Full Day Havana Tour • Dance Lesson in Trinidad • Vinales Valley
- Santa Clara • Sugar Mills Valley • Cigar, Cuban cocktail and sugar making experiences • Sancti Spiritus • Optional Varadero Extension

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Havana

Upon arrival, you will be met by your Cubanacan representative, who will be located at the exit door and well identified with either Cubanacan or Virgin Holidays logo. You will then be transferred to the **Iberostar Parque Central Hotel** for 3 nights.

Please note, on arrival, your representative will confirm the time of the welcome/information meeting where your guide will take you through all details concerning the tour, useful recommendations and optional activities. The rest of the afternoon/evening is at leisure.

Day 2 – Havana

After breakfast depart for your full day city tour of Havana where you will take in the key sights of this fantastic, Spanish colonial city. Heading towards 'Old Havana', first stop will be San Francisco de Asis Square, surrounded by historically important buildings such as the Basilica Menor de San Francisco de Asis. Take in the charm of the cobble-stoned, harbour side location and admire the striking white marbled Fuente de los Leones (Fountain of Lions), Next meander through Plaza de Armas, the social hub of the city with its host of bars and restaurants attracting locals and visitors alike, before stopping at the Palacio de los Capitanes (General Captains Museum), host to more than 60 Spanish generals over the years. Today, it is home to the Museo de la Ciudad (City Museum) unveiling a wealth of history and heritage about this fascinating country. Lunch is enjoyed at a local restaurant. The afternoon continues with a visit to Revolution Square, full of historical significance being the location of Castro's many speeches and political rallies. Next stop is a walk along Malecon, soaking up the seafront and the local scene before ending in the hustle and bustle of La Rampa Street with its many outdoor hangouts. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure before an evening dinner and the Nine Canyon Ceremony at La Cabaña Fortress. (B,L,D)

Day 3 – Havana - Viñales Valley

After breakfast depart to the Viñales Valley, a designated UNESCO World Cultural Centre. Passing through rust coloured tobacco fields you have arrived in the region where, arguably, some of the finest Tobacco in the world is produced. Continue on to the beautiful La Cueva del Indio, a cave and underground river, rediscovered in 1920 with approximately four kilometres of underground streams. The final stop before lunch is to see the 120 metre-long Mural de La Prehistoria, designed in 1961 Leovigildo González Morillo. Lunch is at a local restaurant followed by free time to explore the local craft market, or just kick back and relax in the open air in a sillón (rocking chair). Return to Havana. (B,L)

Day 4 –Havana – Santa Clara - Cayo Ensenachos

After breakfast depart to Santa Clara, one of the most central regions of the country and home to the final resting place of Che Guevara. Santa Clara is where the revolution was won in 1958 and the town is steeped in history and symbolism of the world's most iconic rebel. Enjoy a fascinating city tour, including visiting Che Guevara Revolution Square, the Museum and the Mausoleum. Wander through the Parque Vidal, a large square closed to traffic, popular with locals offering a range of cafes, offices and the town library. The final stop before lunch is the Armoured Train Battle Monument, representing the site where Che Guevara and his men overpowered an armoured troop train, a vital part in the end of the revolution and prompting Batista to flee Cuba. Lunch is at a local restaurant. Transfer to the tiny island of Cayo Ensenachos and check in to the **Iberostar Ensenachos Hotel**, where you will stay for the next 2 nights. Rest of the afternoon/evening at leisure. (B,L,D)

Day 5 - Cayo Ensenachos – Remedios - Cayo Ensenachos

Today, after breakfast, travel back to the mainland across the causeway to the colonial town of San Juan de Los Remedios, the oldest Spanish settlement in the former Las Villas province, explore the town square, park and church. Many sugar mills across the country have been converted into museums, and a visit to Museo de Agroindustria Azucarero Marcelo Salado (Museo del Vapor) covers one of the most famous. Dedicated to the history of the sugar industry, the trip wouldn't be complete without a ride on one of the steam trains! Afterwards, return back to the Iberostar Ensenachos for lunch and the rest of the day at leisure. (B,L,D).

Day 6 - Cayo Ensenachos – Santi Spiritu – Trinidad

After breakfast depart for Trinidad, en-route visiting Santi Spiritus in central Cuba, meaning 'Holy Spirit' in Latin. Enjoy a walking tour to take in the true Cuban way of life in this un-spoilt town. Just before arrival in Trinidad pass through the Valley de Los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills) and stop at the plantation of Manaca Iznaga, which is one of the few houses that are still well maintained. On arrival in Trinidad embark on a full tour of the World Heritage city including the Palacio de Cantero Museum, La Canchanchara Bar and Plaza Mayor Square. Lunch is at a local restaurant, and why not enjoy a Cuban dance lesson. Check in at the **Gran Iberostar Trinidad Hotel** where you'll spend the next 2 nights. (B,L,D)

Day 7 – Trinidad - Cienfuegos

Today's exploring will take you to Cienfuegos, a charming waterfront city, known as the 'pearl of the south' and the only city in Cuba that was founded by the French. You will stop en-route at the Botanical Gardens with its impressive Caribbean flora. On arrival in the city, enjoy a city tour including visits to the Tomas Terry Theatre, the Cigar Factory and the Palacio de Valle to marvel at its architectural brilliance. After lunch at a local restaurant take a relaxing boat trip around the bay. Transfer back to Trinidad for overnight at Gran Iberostar Trinidad Hotel. (B,L,D)

Day 8 – Cienfuegos

After breakfast, transfer from Trinidad to Havana Airport for your flight back to the UK or alternatively take an extended stay in Varadero. (B)

Meals: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

Please note: Until 07th June this tour will depart on a Thursday after which it will depart on a Tuesday.

TOUR NOTES

Pre/Post Tour information

The first day of the tour is at leisure so allows you enough time to arrive and relax. If you wish to arrive earlier extra nights can be added to your tour in the Iberostar Parque Central in Havana. Your hotel in Havana is in a central location so there are dining options close by as well as in-house options for you to consider. We recommend extending the end of your tour with a few nights on the beach.

What to expect

A tour in Cuba is an adventure where anything can happen. We recommend you are of a reasonable fitness level as touring often involves long walks and uneven surfaces, this tour may not be suitable for those who require special assistance.

Time difference

GMT -4 hours (summer) -5 hours (winter)

Tour inclusions

- Private air conditioned transport throughout exclusive to the Virgin Holidays group
- Sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees
- Services of an experienced, English speaking, local guide
- Road taxes, parking fees, fuel surcharges and taxes.

Tour exclusions

- International flight with Virgin Atlantic in economy class, including all UK and overseas airport taxes and applicable fuel surcharges
- Flight upgrades and airport transfers in the UK
- Insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, tips & gratuities, video camera fees at monuments
- The required Cuban visa
- Anything not detailed on the itinerary including optional excursions.

Dining inclusions

7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 5 dinners.

Included activities

Tours listed in the itinerary.

Optional activities (not included and booked locally)

Advised by your tour guide on arrival.

Accommodation

Cuba is currently in very high demand and often to accommodate the group we may have to substitute one or more of the hotels with that of a similar standard. This tour is advertised as a 3.5V due to limitations in smaller areas but please note city hotels are of a higher standard.

Journey times

Cuba journey times between destinations can vary and sometimes be long.

Group size

There is a maximum of 25 people per group.

Language

Spanish is the official language and it may help to learn a couple of phrases before you travel. English is widely spoken, especially in the more built up cities.

Visa requirements

UK passport holders currently require a tourist visa, which we will provide with your final documents if you have added the cost of this to your holiday. A full 10-year passport is required and it must be valid for at least six months after your arrival back into the UK. Non-British passport holders should contact the consulate regarding whether or not they need a visa. It is stipulated in Cuba that people should carry their passports at all times. On sightseeing excursions, however, you may wish to carry a photocopy of your passport, there can occasionally be police spot checks and passport details are required for this, although tourist coaches tend not to be stopped by the authorities.

Currency

The unit of currency in Cuba is the Cuban Peso or Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), divided into 100 centavos. In essence, everything imported is priced in Cuban Convertibles, and that is what tourists will get when they exchange money. Cash is king in Cuba and it is very easy to change Sterling cash or Euros, we do not recommend exchanging US dollars or carrying travellers' cheques. Most larger hotels will have a money exchange desk. There are few ATMs outside airports and larger cities, they will always tender Cuban Convertible Pesos but a bank charge of 3% will be applied to the transaction plus whatever charge your own bank will apply. Please note that you cannot obtain Cuban Convertible Pesos outside of Cuba. We recommend that currency (Euros or Pounds Sterling) is taken in small denominations.

Electricity

The electricity supply in Cuba is 220 volts, most hotels have two pin sockets so we recommend an international travel adaptor set. You will not be able to buy plug adaptors in Cuba. Voltage sometimes fluctuates and power cuts are possible so a torch would be useful. Air conditioning units can be temperamental and we recommend to take care of poor wiring.

Tipping

It is customary to tip in Cuba. 10% is usual in restaurants and a guide for drivers would be \$3 and tour guides \$5 each per guest per day. Please note that there isn't porterage services at Havana airport so do beware of individuals who might approach you, politely decline their help as they are not porters, although they claim to be.

What to pack

- Lightweight, cotton clothes, smart casual is acceptable in hotels
- A light sweater or fleece for early mornings and evenings and air-conditioning can be cool in restaurants
- A light waterproof in case of short showers
- Comfortable, sturdy footwear
- Casual clothing and sandals for dinner and relaxing at your hotel
- Sun cream, sunglasses and hat
- Camera and/or video camera with spare batteries and memory cards
- Swimming attire for an occasional swim
- Binoculars
- Mosquito repellent and spray and a simple first aid kit
- Handy wipes, antiseptic hand gel and bottled water where possible
- Low denominations of local currency – handy for ad-hoc tipping!

Recommended vaccinations

We advise you to discuss your individual requirements for Cuba with your GP at least 6-8 weeks prior to travel. Please carry any personal medication in your hand luggage.

