

THE RHYTHM OF CUBA

Havana, Las Terrazas, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Santa Clara & Varadero



Lavish Spanish colonial architecture and intriguing cities contrast with pristine coastlines and verdant plantations on this enthralling eight day tour of Cuba. The largest and most diverse of the Caribbean Islands, Cuba's turbulent history weaves a fascinating tale mirrored in the vibrant culture, arts and music. Experience the indefinable magic of this country from the atmospheric streets of Havana, to the natural beauty of Las Terrazas, the wonderfully preserved historic Trinidad and the sublime beaches of Varadero.

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to Cuba. Please take the time to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as flight details, visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Havana

Depart London on your scheduled flight to Havana where, on arrival, you will be met by a representative and transferred to your hotel.

DAY 2: Havana B/L/D

Today begin your first exploration of Cuba with a full day city tour of the fabulous capital city of Havana. Starting at one of the city's top cigar factories, witness local craftsmen at work, 'rolling', 'bunching' and 'binding' to produce a wide range of entirely hand-crafted cigars. Then continue with a walk around the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Old Havana to visit the city's oldest square, Plaza de Armas. Laid out in the early 1500s, it has been a longstanding social hub in the city with shaded tropical gardens, surrounded by cafes and beautiful Baroque buildings. Meandering along the narrow streets, pass vintage cars, quaint cobbled squares and carefully restored architectural gems all sharing the stories that have shaped this grand city through history.

Late morning, journey back to the origins of Cuba's most famous beverage during a visit to the Havana Club Museum of Rum. The combination of world-famous sugar cane (first introduced by Christopher Columbus in 1493), a favourable Caribbean climate, and the unique skills and knowledge of the Cuban 'rum masters' has produced the country's famous Havana Club rum; a spirit that captures the heritage and unique atmosphere of the country's capital.

Venturing out to the suburbs of the city, a trip to Ernest Hemingway's former home allows you to wander around the grounds and take a peek through the open windows and doors to gain a fascinating insight into the life of one of America's most famous authors. Following lunch at the nearby seaside village of Cojimar, you will return to Havana, to the 16th

century fortress of El Morro Castle, built atop a rocky out-crop at the entrance of the harbour by the Spanish to protect the city. From here, soak up the breathtaking views across the city skyline and see the famous Malecon, Havana's evocative eight kilometre-long sea drive. This evening after dinner, experience an unforgettable night of live music performed by the famous Buena Vista Social Club's Saga at La Taberna Benny More.

DAY 3: Havana B/L

This morning a short visit to the modern portion of the city awaits to visit the famous Revolution Square with its magnificent Jose Marti Memorial before delving into one of the most naturally beautiful corners of Cuba. Located a couple of hours' drive south-west of Havana, take in the wonderfully traditional views amongst thick tropical vegetation and tall royal palm trees with their distinctive white trunks. Stopping at the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Las Terrazas, you will learn about the reforestation project that started here in the 1960s and how the pioneering eco-community has since developed. Visit the ruins of the French coffee plantation and then enjoy lunch and a Cuban coffee at a nearby restaurant. In the afternoon, you will have some free time to swim in the natural lagoon formed from the San Juan River surrounded with lush verdant landscapes before returning to Havana.

DAY 4: Havana to Trinidad B/L/D

Bidding farewell to Havana, you will journey south to the elegant coastal city of Cienfuegos, situated around Cuba's most spectacular natural bay. Arriving in the afternoon, enjoy some lunch before starting a short city tour taking in the most popular cultural sights of the UNESCO World Heritage Site including the ornate Palacio de Valle and Paseo del Prado, Cuba's longest boulevard lined with neo-classical buildings and colourful colonial houses. Continuing along the coastline, early evening you will enter the island's historic heart, Trinidad, and enjoy the evening at leisure to relax at your hotel.

DAY 5: Trinidad B/L/D

After breakfast, a tour of this beautiful UNESCO listed town will commence. The charming Trinidad is the best preserved historical centre in all the Americas and

boasts a plethora of historical buildings and cobbled streets, making it one of the nation's true gems. Full of the history of colonial Cuba, cars are not allowed in the city centre so you will explore on foot visiting Santa Ana church and the Main Square surrounded by beautiful buildings before sampling a speciality cocktail 'canchanchara' made from honey, lime juice and rum at a local bar.

DAY 6: Trinidad B/L/D

Journeying out to the surrounding countryside of the Valley of the Sugar Mills, a morning tour of this UNESCO World Heritage Site awaits. Here the valley landscapes are scattered with the ruins of the once prosperous sugar industry. Stopping at a view point you will be able to see the baroque-style tower of Manaca Iznaga which overlooks a plantation once owned by one of the region's wealthiest families to learn about the industry. This afternoon will be at leisure for you to relax at your accommodation or explore the area further at your own pace.

DAY 7: Trinidad to Varadero B/L/D

Leaving Trinidad, a stop is made at the nearby Santa Clara, capital of the Villa Clara province and synonymous with the famous revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. Here you will take a tour of the city's main sights including the armoured train which Che and his contemporaries derailed during the Cuban Revolution's Battle of Santa Clara. Concluding with a trip to the Che Guevara Monument and Mausoleum, you will depart Santa Clara and continue on to Varadero. Located along the Hicacos peninsula, Varadero is the largest tourism resort in the Caribbean and with its uninterrupted 20 kilometre-long stretch of white sandy beaches it is easy to see why. Arriving early afternoon you will have the chance to relax in the beautiful surroundings for your last night of the tour.

DAY 8: Varadero to the UK or Extension B/L

This morning will be at leisure before your afternoon transfer to Havana in time to catch your evening flight back to the UK, or continue on to your chosen extension.

Hotel Information

Havana (3 nights): 4★ NH Capri La Habana Hotel - Calle 21, La Habana.

Telephone Number: 0053 7839 7800

Trinidad (3 nights): 4★ Hotel Brisas Trinidad Del Mar - Peninsula Ancon, Trinidad.

Telephone Number: 0053 7204 3449

Varadero (1 night): 4★ Blau Varadero Hotel - Varadero, Cuba.

Telephone Number: 0053 4566 7545

All accommodation is 4★ and features a television and air-conditioning. Mercury Holidays has visited and inspected all of the hotels to ensure that they meet the standard of service which we require for our clients. If the hotels detailed above are not available, alternatives of a similar standard will be used. Please note that Cuba's infrastructure is not as developed as other Caribbean countries so please be aware that hotel standards may vary. Final confirmation of your hotels will be sent in a document approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always served in your hotel each morning and will be western style. Lunch and dinner will either be taken at your hotel or at a local restaurant.

On your arrival

On your arrival in Havana you will be met by a representative from our local agent in Cuba holding a sign displaying 'Mercury Holidays'. The Mercury Holidays/Cuba Top Travel representative will transfer you to your hotel on arrival where you will spend your first night. There will be a guide with you throughout the tour and will be able to answer any queries you may have.

Visas

British passport holders currently need a tourist visa to enter Cuba and this comes in the form of a 30-day tourist card. Entry is granted on arrival when you show your passport (must be valid for at least six months from the date you are due to leave Cuba), your return flight ticket and your completed tourist card. The tourist card will be sent to you in your final documentation approximately 10 days before your travel. You will need to show this on arrival where one part will be taken and one part will be given back to you. The part given back to you must be kept in your passport for the duration of your stay as you will need to show this on departure.

Visa, arrival and departure requirements are subject to change and obtaining a visa is the responsibility of the traveller and not Mercury Holidays. We recommend you check with your destinations Tourist Board or Embassy prior to departure for the most up to date guidelines.

Insurance

You must obtain suitable travel insurance prior to departure. Mercury Holidays is partnered with Holiday Extras who offer insurance at the following prices, (worldwide, including USA).

Age in years	Up to 64	65-74	75-85
Up to 10 days cover	£45	£90	£158
Up to 17 days cover	£51	£96	£166

For all persons 86 years and over, please contact us for insurance prices. If you decide to organise your own travel insurance, please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Please also note that, for insurance purposes, Cuba comes under 'USA' so you will need a policy for worldwide cover including USA. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Health and Vaccinations

We recommend that you consult your local GP for advice on travel health/vaccinations before departure. You can also visit the NHS travel health website www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk. Any medicines you may need

However, if you do experience any issues on arrival or need to contact the local team in an emergency the details are:

Cuba Top Travel

Calle 3ra y Malecón

Vedado

Habana

Cuba

Office: 0053 7 8646188

during your journey should be packed in your hand luggage. It is not advisable to drink the tap water.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves full days of sightseeing, often on foot and includes some hiking, trekking, climbing of stairs and getting on and off coaches. **This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.**

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be eight and the maximum will be 40. In the unlikely event that there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date, you may be asked to change to a different date. The choice to switch to any of our other tours, or cancel with a full refund will also be available to you should an alternative date not be suitable.

Tour Guides

This is an escorted tour, meaning you will be met on arrival at Havana airport and will have a guide with you for the duration of your tour, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge and assistance at all times.

Tipping

Tipping is part of the life in Central America and customary on a tour but you should not feel obliged or pressured to tip if you feel you have not received good service. Gratuities are usually expected for local guides on excursions and tips are also appreciated by the tour leaders/guides at the end of your tour. We recommend an average of CUC 2-4 (GBP £1-£3) per person per day for the duration of your tour. This is only if you feel that their service was up to standard and is completely at your own discretion.

Currency Exchange

There is currently a two currency monetary system in Cuba; the Cuban Peso (CUP) and the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). The most used of these by tourists is the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). Cuban currency is not traded internationally so you cannot buy it in advance before you travel. You will be able to buy local currency when you arrive in Cuba.

We recommend you avoid taking US dollars to exchange in Cuba as they are subject to an additional 10% tax. The best currency to take is either Euros or



Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Cuba Top Travel

24 hour Emergency number: 0053 5 2829354

Sterling (in small denominations) since these are the most common major currencies and the exchange rates are generally quite reasonable. The notes should not be damaged as some places will refuse them if they are not in perfect condition.

There will also be cash machines available throughout the tour in major cities where you will be able to withdraw money in the local currency. However, it is not recommended to rely on them as your sole source of funds as cash machines do not always work and may not be available in the more remote locations.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry, any meals not included in the itinerary as well as drinks and any additional snacks. We recommend you bring along a minimum of GBP £200 per person to change in to local currency. It is a good idea to try and maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping or small purchases.

Credit card information

Whilst you may wish to bring a credit card with you on the tour, cash is the most widely accepted form of payment in Cuba. Except in major hotels, you should not rely on paying for goods or services with a credit card.

Itinerary changes

Our intention is to adhere to the day to day itinerary as printed here. However, the order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are made aware of them and keep you updated as much as possible. Some road construction and/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times.

What to Pack

- Sunscreen, insect repellent and wide-brimmed hat
- Waterproof, lightweight jacket
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Lightweight clothing
- Camera and charger
- Swimwear
- A plug adaptor – the electricity supply is 220 volts and two round pin plugs

Flight and Airport Information

Your flight is to Havana Airport with Virgin Atlantic (VS) departing from London Gatwick South Terminal.

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
London Gatwick - Havana	12:15	16:55	10 hours 5 minutes	VS63M
Havana - London Gatwick	17:45	07:50	8 hours 40 minutes	VS64M

IMPORTANT: Please note that all flight times are subject to change. Final flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Baggage Allowance

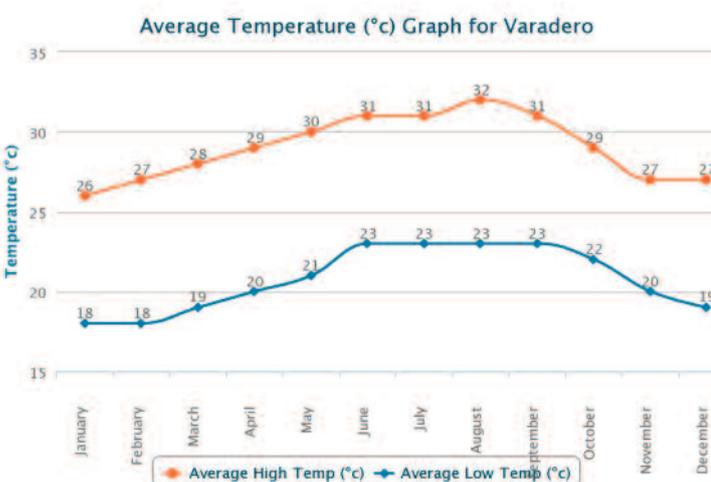
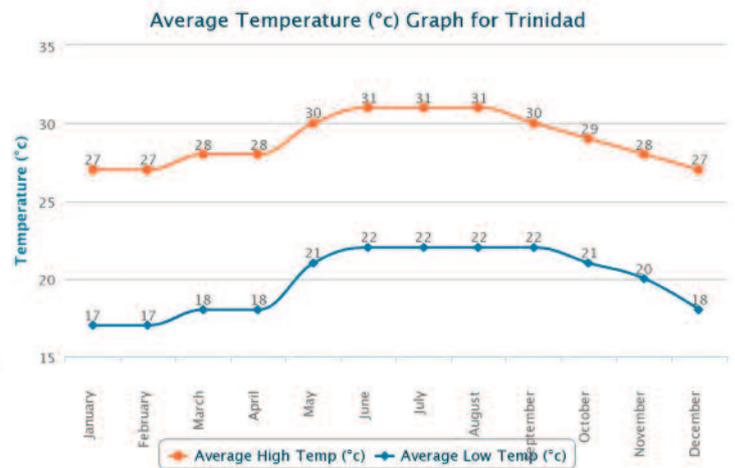
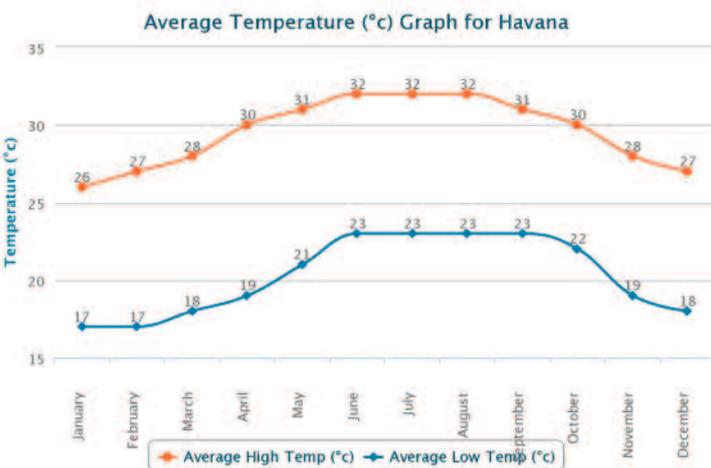
Each passenger is entitled to 23kg of hold luggage plus one item of hand luggage not exceeding 23cm x 36cm x 56cm in size and 10kg in weight. Weight restrictions will be finalized on your e-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay an additional fee for this at check-in. Gatwick Airport advises that you should arrive at the airport at least three hours prior to your flight time for international departures.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking, lounges or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras - Tel. 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

Weather and Climate

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.



EXTENSION YOUR VARADERO BEACH STAY



Your Cuba tour will end with a chance to relax on the beautiful beaches of Varadero with your 3 night All-Inclusive extension.

This document aims to give you all the information which you will require during your extension to Varadero

Varadero:

The beaches of Varadero provide the perfect setting for an extension to our Cuba tour, glistening tranquil waters lap against gorgeous white sands amidst the cool tropical caribbean breeze.

Hotel Information

Your Varadero stay will take place at the 4★ Iberostar Tainos on All-Inclusive, unless otherwise stated at the time of booking. All internal transfers are included. Address: Las Morlas, Km. 12,5 42200, Varadero, Cuba. Telephone: 0053 45 668 656

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry and any additional snacks or drinks you may wish to have.

Tour Guides

Your stay in Varadero is not escorted by a tour guide. Your time here will be free to do as you wish. Details of your departure transfer will be confirmed by your guide at the end of your tour, before you begin your extension stay in Varadero.

Please note:

This extension stay in Varadero will take place at the end of your main tour.

Flight Information

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
Havana - London Gatwick	17:45	07:50	8 hours 40 minutes	VS64M

IMPORTANT: Flight times/numbers are for guidance only & are subject to change. All flights are operated by Virgin Atlantic (VS). Each passenger is entitled to 23kg of hold luggage plus one item of hand luggage not exceeding 23cm x 36cm x 56cm in size and 10kg in weight. Weight restrictions will be finalized on your e-ticket receipt. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay an additional fee for this at check-in. Gatwick Airport advises that you should arrive at the airport at least three hours prior to your flight time for international departures.

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