



tour dossier for:

Cubano Jazz

14 nights / 15 days • Cuba



Adventure Tours

Varied local transport • Pleasant hotels

The Facts

Dossier Last Updated: 29-03-2008

Tour Code: CJH

Duration 14 nights / 15 days

Joining City: Havana

Departure City: Havana

Nearest International Airport (joining / departing):



This dossier is designed for this particular tour and should be read in conjunction with the country dossier(s), regional pre-departure booklet and optional excursions guides relevant to your itinerary. You will also receive a joining letter in advance of your journey with further information, while last minute updates may be posted in the Latest News section of our website. Please see tucantravel.com for details.

What's Included

- Accommodation: 14 nights in hotels & homestays
- Meals: Lunch in Las Terrazas
- Excursions: Bellamar caves, Boca Guama crocodile farm, Central Australia, City tour of Santa Clara, Che Guevara Museum and Memorial, tour of Camaguey on Bicitaxis, boat tour along Rio Toa (weather permitting).
- Transport: Private bus, on foot, boat, 1 flight
- Group: Average 8 - 12; max 18
- Age: Recommended 18 - 60
- Staff: Tucan Travel tour leader, local guides

What's Excluded

- Local Payment - Due to currency changes in Cuba the Local Payment must be paid in Euros (US dollars **WILL NOT** be accepted).
- International flights & departure tax
- Visas required for all traveller
- Tips on included excursions, visas, travel insurance, personal items, other tips.
- Pre & post tour accommodation
- Airport transfers

- Spending money allow EURO30-35 per day to cover meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs, laundry and any extras
- Optional Excursions - Please see our Optional Excursions Guide (available from www.tucantravel.com) for a comprehensive list of optional activities and excursions available on this tour.

Brief Overview

A fascinating two week journey travelling almost the entire length of Cuba. Staying mainly with local families we take in provincial towns, streets filled with colourful buildings, the wildlife of Cuba's largest ecosystem of swamps and lagoons and hear the distinct local blend of rumba and Afrojazz.

Itinerary

Day 1 to 2

Arrive Havana

Havana is a city that seems to be lost in time. Everywhere you look there is rich history from the original arrival of the very first Spanish conquistadors to the more modern history of the 1950s. There are many castles, plazas, churches and museums to explore and with its archaic bars and restaurants, this city can feel like stepping back in time to the days of Ernest Hemmingway!

Day 2 to 3

Varadero

We then head for Varadero, visiting the Bellamar caves en route. We will arrive in Varadero in the afternoon, and the next day you have free time for many options such as snorkelling, diving, river tour or Catamaran trips. This is one of Cuba's more famous beach resort areas and you will enjoy the variety of things to do and see here.

Day 3 to 5

Playa Larga

We leave Varadero and travel to Playa Larga. On the way we will visit Central Australia (!) which was the site of Fidel's Bay of Pig's resistance campaign. There is an included excursion to the Boca de Guama Crocodile farm and then you have a free afternoon at Playa Larga. The next day is also free for options such as snorkelling and diving.

Day 6 to 8

Trinidad

On our way to Trinidad we pass Santa Clara, where Ernesto 'Ché' Guevara won the decisive battle for the Cuban Revolution. We visit the Ché Guevara memorial and museum (burial site). After our visit to Santa Clara we will travel to Trinidad. Trinidad is a colonial gem which was used by the Spaniards as their base to conquer the New World and is one of Latin America's most attractive towns. We have an orientation walking tour and you will see that Trinidad has an array of cobbled-streets, colourfully painted buildings, elegant palaces, ornate plazas and is a great place to experience the local music for which Cuba is so famous. The next two days are free days and there are many options for how you can spend your time. There is horse riding, a tour through the Valley of the Sugar Mills or hiking. In Trinidad we spend three nights in homestays.

Day 9 to 10

Camaguey Santiago de Cuba

Today we travel onto Camaguey and have free time for a city tour. We will enjoy a homestay with a local family and you can see how locals live. Camaguey was originally built to thwart pirate invaders with its labyrinthine streets. Today it is a university town, and it also has one of the country's most inspiring museums. You will have the opportunity to do an optional Bicitaxi tour of this very spread-out city, visiting all the major sites. The next morning we drive to Santiago de Cuba and stay overnight in a hotel. You have an included city tour in the afternoon with free time to explore Santiago. There may be the option to go to a local baseball game, depending on the season.

Day 11 to 15

Baracoa - Santiago de Cuba - Havana

We leave Santiago for Baracoa and enjoy a spectacular bus journey along the edge of the beautiful Sierra Maestra Mountains. During the drive we will stop at various look-out points to buy the delicious local fruits and cucuruchu (a local coconut /cocoa which is a very sweet, tasty fruit). Baracoa is a small beachside town surrounded by rich vegetation and more than 10 rivers. We stay overnight with a local family here. After our first night we have an excursion to visit Rio Toa, surrounded by imposing canyons, and we walk through the bush along the beach to a village with a local guide who will tell us all about the plants. We can also take an interesting walk through coconut groves and a small cacao plantation. There is plenty of time to relax on the sun-soaked beaches. After our first night we have an included excursion to Rio Toa. We will take a walk with a local guide through a coconut grove and small cocoa plantation, and then take a small boat onto the river where we can see the extraordinary variety of birdlife. There is plenty of time to relax on the sun kissed beaches, have a swim or walk along the beach. We return to our homestay family for another night and the next day we travel back to Santiago, where you will have a free afternoon to, perhaps, visit the Castillo de Morro fort on the mouth of the Santiago Bay which was built to protect the city from the marauding pirates. There is a superb museum inside depicting the history of the fort with many weapons, maps and descriptions of the various attacks. The views are also pretty breathtaking, looking along the coast to Santiago itself. In the evening we have an end of tour dinner together - you can reminisce about all the fun you have had on your trip! The next morning we will fly to Havana and you will have a free afternoon to enjoy some last minute sightseeing and shopping. We will have end of tour drinks together and farewell the group. Our tour concludes on day 15.

Important note: The itinerary listed above is to be used as a guide only. Occasionally we may need to update this document and it may be different to the information printed in our current brochure. Tour leaders may need to make adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances during the tour. It is very important that you visit our website and review a copy of this dossier as close as possible to your departure date in case of changes that may affect your plans. Any last minute changes may also be posted in the Latest News section of our website.

Pre and Post Tour Accommodation

Very little time is spent in the starting and finishing cities and you will need to allow a few days at the beginning or end of your tour if you want to explore them further. For details of pre and post tour accommodation bookings (which should be made at the time of your tour booking) please refer to our current brochure or contact our reservations team.

About Adventure Tours

In Cuba, travelling exclusively on local transport can be quite difficult, so Cuba's Adventure tours travel on privately leased transport. Where possible, we stay mostly in homestay accommodation and so have a high degree of interaction with the local people. This hands-on style means that you will need to travel light (see below for details). Tucan Travel Adventure Tours in Cuba will bring you into contact with cultures and experiences that contrast dramatically with those at home and therefore a sense of humour and patience is essential! It is common for pre-booked private transport to be late and for things to not go quite according to plan, this is one of the charms of travelling in Cuba and makes for a great adventure!

Don't forget that Tucan Travel also offers four other tour styles: Discovery Tours (Central & South America) where we travel by private and comfortable, custom-built vehicle staying in hotels; Overland Expeditions (in South America only), which usually have a high percentage of camping, travel by overland truck and suit travellers who love the great outdoors; Budget Expeditions (great value tours for 18 to 35s in South America) are flexible tours offering travellers optimum control over their budgets, travelling in our custom-built expedition vehicles, plus coaches and local transport, staying in pleasant hotels, hostels and campsites; Independent Travel offers personalised itineraries, stopovers and language schools with your choice of accommodation and flexible travel days.

Local Payment

The cost of all Tucan Travel tours includes a compulsory Local Payment which is in addition to the Tour Price paid to your booking agent. The Local Payment **MUST** be paid to your Tour Leader in full EURO cash at the pre-departure meeting on the first day of your tour. The Local Payment is administered by Tour Leaders and no refunds can be made for any unused services or if you decide to leave the tour early.

Due to currency changes in Cuba the Local Payment must be paid in Euros (US dollars **WILL NOT** be accepted). See the Cuba Country Dossier for more details.

Pre Departure Meeting

The address of your joining hotel can be found on your joining letter and tour voucher. On arrival you should look for a Tucan Travel information sheet on the hotel notice board where you will find details of the pre-departure meeting. The tour leader will normally hold the pre-departure meeting on the afternoon of Day 1 (assuming that all clients have arrived by then). Your tour leader will give a briefing about the tour, outline the plan for the next few days, answer any questions and collect your Local Payment in full in Euros cash. Then there may be an option for everyone to go out for dinner and drinks to start to get to know one another.

You will need to bring the following important items to the pre departure meeting:

1. Passport (including any necessary visas) original document and a photocopy.
2. Vaccination certificates (e.g. Yellow Fever, if required)
3. Travel voucher
4. Travel insurance policy
5. Local Payment

Tour Personnel

Adventure Tours use a variety of different styles of leadership in order to maximise your enjoyment and experiences. On this tour you will have a combination of Tucan Travel tour leader and local guides. The Tucan Travel tour leader accompanies your tour and local guides will lead your included and optional excursions.

Degree of Difficulty / Fitness Required

Adventure Tours suit people who are fit and active. Although no experience is required there are many walks between bus/train terminals and hotels/homestays and travellers must be able to carry their own luggage over various terrains as well as lift up luggage onto the tops of buses!

On these particular tours there will be some up-hill walking which will not be difficult for those who are reasonably fit.

Pre-Departure Information

Once you have booked the tour (paid your deposit), your booking agent will provide you with a detailed pre-departure booklet with in-depth information to help you prepare. If you do not receive your pre-departure information shortly after booking your tour please consult your travel agent. After you have paid for your tour in full you will also receive from your travel agent: a local map & joining letter for your arrival city, your tour voucher and transfer voucher (if applicable).

Country Dossiers

This Tour Dossier is designed to be read in conjunction with our Cuba Country Dossier which you can download from our website or obtain from your booking agent. The Country Dossiers contain essential information about visas, arrival transfers, spending money & costs, taxes & tips, climate, local food etc.

What you need to bring

A full list of suggested equipment can be found in the pre-departure booklet.

A towel is suggested as some hotels will not allow you to take their towels to the beach and also for home stays when towels are not always provided. A sarong is also highly recommended as it can also be used in place of a towel. Snorkelling equipment may be useful, but not necessary, as you can easily hire it locally. If you want to save space you could just bring some swimming goggles - still great for spotting fish! You may wish to bring some kind of waterproof protection cover for your pack, as luggage tends to get thrown around a lot on transport and it may get dirty and sometimes wet.

On Adventure Tours it is very important that you do not bring too much luggage as you will find it extremely difficult to get on/off buses and trains etc and there is a fair amount of walking to/from hotels. You are also likely to encounter many cobbled streets and dirt roads so luggage on wheels is totally unsuitable. As this trip starts and finishes at the same hotel in Havana, you may wish to leave behind some luggage if you have been travelling before or plan to travel on after this tour. The lighter your luggage the better time you will have!

You must be prepared to carry your own bags at all times. We therefore strongly urge you to limit your luggage to a maximum of 10-14 kgs. Please see the relevant Country Dossier and Pre Departure Information booklet for further information about luggage requirements and what to pack.

Transfers

We do not offer arrival or departure transfers in Havana due to the ease, availability of local transport. Please see the Cuba Joining Letter for detailed information.

Accommodation

This tour includes 21 nights in hotels, homestays & cabins. All accommodation is chosen for its central locality, security, friendliness, cleanliness and ambiance. Although sometimes simple, you will find clean comfortable rooms, usually with en-suite facilities (occasionally bathrooms may be shared), and sometimes a bar and restaurant are attached or close by. Most of the homestays offer very good value, substantial typical meals (at your own expense). All rooms will be allocated on a share basis, usually in twins, sometimes triples (depending on the male/female ratios). There will usually be 2 to 4 Tucan Travel clients staying in each home and all homes are usually within the same block (neighbourhood) as one another.

Transport

On Adventure Tours our goal is to offer you as much variety as possible in terms of transport so that you'll have good opportunities to meet the local people. On this tour we will be using privately hired buses, mini buses, taxis, boats (life jackets provided) and one flight. There will also be some walking with your luggage between some transport and hotels. Optional excursions may use other forms of transport, for example boats, horses, trains and mountain bikes.

Meals

Meals, snacks and drinks are not included on this tour and are at your own expense. Your tour leader will be able to advise the best places to eat. As much of our accommodation on this tour is in home-stays in Cuba, many of our hosts will offer delicious meals, typical of the country (at your own expense), so you might prefer this to eating out! Please see the relevant Country Dossier for more information about the local food.

Tour Highlights

- Havana Vieja (Old Havana) - One of the most interesting cities on this planet.
- Bellamar caves - down 159 steps to the level of the main chambers and the deepest caves in Cuba with some unexplored chambers still being developed.
- Varadero - pristine beach resort
- Bay of Pigs - site of unsuccessful U.S invasion of Cuba.
- Included visit to crocodile farm and Indian village of Guama.
- Playa Larga - a coastal town in heart of Cuba's largest eco-system.
- Che Guevara Museum & Memorial - museum of celebrated revolutionary Che Guevara
- Trinidad - The most beautiful, colonial town in the Americas.
- La Casa Natal Ignacio Agramonte Musuem in Camaguey. (Optional)
- Santiago de Cuba - Cuba's second city of vibrant music
- Guided city tour in Santiago de Cuba
- Castillo de Morro - Fort set in the Bay of Santiago, great views and museum. (Optional)
- Journey out to Baracoa along the edge of the Sierra Maestra Mountains.
- Baracoa - One of Cuba's best destinations for beaches, trekking and boating.
- Salsa, Rumba, Chachachá and other music throughout this tour.
- Orientation walks - Introductory walks conducted by your expedition leader at each main stopover.

Day to Day Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive Havana (Cuba)

Day 2 - Varadero

Day 3 - Varadero

Day 4 - Playa Larga

Day 5 - Playa Larga

Day 6 - Trinidad

Day 7 - Trinidad

Day 8 - Trinidad

Day 9 - Camaguey

Day 10 - Santiago de Cuba

Day 11 - Baracoa

Day 12 - Baracoa

Day 13 - Santiago de Cuba

Day 14 - Santiago de Cuba, flight to Havana

Day 15 - Depart Havana

Please note the day to day itinerary above is given as a GUIDELINE ONLY.

Responsible Travel Tips

At Tucan Travel we are serious about our responsibility to care for the environment and people that we visit. Here are a few tips to help you to enjoy your tour while minimising your impact and enhancing your travelling experience. Learn more about our responsible travel policy at www.tucantravel.com.

1. Carbon offset your Tucan Travel tour and flights. Check out our website for details about how you can go about this

www.tucantravel.com.

2. Bring your own metal water bottle. Fill up at restaurants or treat your own water on tour instead of buying lots of plastic bottles. Bear in mind that there may not be recycling facilities available at some destinations.

3. Cut out plastic - remove and recycle the packaging of new travel gear before you pack, and bring a light cotton or string bag for your

shopping, so you can politely refuse plastic bags at shops and markets.

4. Bring a stack of pens and pencils and hand these out to children rather than offering sweets. Your alternative gifts will still be popular and the parents will thank you for saving their children's teeth – access to dental services may not be readily available there.
5. Learn a bit of the local language before you travel. Being able to say even a few words like hello, please and thank you will help you to connect with people in a positive way and really enhance your personal experience. Bring a phrase book on tour and keep practising to improve your confidence. You will also find some good language tips in the country dossier(s).

Feedback

At the end of your tour we would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time to complete a questionnaire about your experiences. The tour leader will give you a paper copy and an electronic version can be found on our website. We take feedback very seriously as it allows us to maintain and improve the very high standards we expect from our road crew, local operators, hoteliers, transportation and office staff, among others. We also use this information to improve our itineraries and optional excursions on offer. Thank you in advance for your help with this.

Subscribe to our e-newsletter

If you're keen to keep up-to-date with the latest news, special offers, events and competitions, why not sign up to our newsletter? It's easy - just enter your details in the 'subscribe' section on our home page, and that's it. Don't worry, we won't spam you, or pass on your details to any third parties, and it's easy to unsubscribe if you decide later on that it's not for you.

Join our online communities

Make friends with fellow passengers in the Tucan Travel forums, and ask questions about any tour you like – we've got the answers! See Share your tour photos and videos on Youtube and Flickr, and keep in touch with group members on Facebook, Bebo and Myspace. There are many Tucan Travel communities out there waiting to welcome you, just a few clicks away.

Write a travel diary and get published on our website!

Share your experiences of life on tour and you may be rewarded! Get in touch with us for details through www.tucantravel.com.

We want your photos!

We've taken you to some of the most amazing places on earth – why not share that with the world? Send us high resolution colour photos of your adventures, and you could be published on our website or our brochure. Contact us through www.tucantravel.com.