



**OK CYCLE &
ADVENTURE
TOURS** SINCE 1995

**Cuba - Cycle Cuba Bike Tour (2023-2024)
Guided Tour
15 days/14 nights**



Cycle with us through Cuba as we tour the colonial capital of Havana, explore tropical forests and pedal past striking limestone landscapes in Viñales. In historic Trinidad and Viñales we go local and stay in privately run casas particulares. We also ride through the forests of Topes de Collantes Nature Reserve and along the Caribbean coast to Trinidad, stopping to swim in tropical pools and see the infamous Bay of Pigs. Now is undoubtedly a fantastic time to visit Cuba to see and experience the island. Visiting Cuba is like stepping back in time as little has changed over the past 50 years. To fully enjoy the Cuban experience you should travel with a willingness to expect the unexpected and, above all, an adventurous spirit. In our opinion go now and experience this unique destination before it changes.

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Itinerary Day to Day

Day 1: Join tour in Havana

Our tour begins in Havana. Built around a deep natural harbour, Havana is one of the most impressive colonial cities surviving in the Americas today. Crumbling tenement buildings and 50s style American Cadillacs rub shoulders with white marble grandeur and the still audible echoes of the Cuban Revolution. The largest city in the Caribbean and Cuba's political and cultural heart, it is the perfect place to start our journey. In Havana we stay in 'casas particulares' - family-run guesthouses. On arrival to the main joining point casa in the old center of Havana (as detailed in your Joining Instructions) you will be met by your host and shown to your room in one of the local guesthouses in the surrounding area.



Day 2: Visit Old Havana; drive to Soroa

Havana boasts a sheer abundance of great buildings that reflect its importance centuries ago when all the Spanish galleons passed through with their freight of gold and silver, brought in from colonies in the Americas. During a relaxed walk through the old town we will take in the most important sites and buildings. After lunch we head off by bus to Soroa, nestling in the forested hills about an hour west of Havana. After checking in there may be time to stretch our legs on a walk, perhaps up to the top of a hill with views over the surrounding mountains and towards the sea.

Day 3: Cycle through tropical forests to Las Terrazas 21 km + 300 m

Today we take our first bike ride with an excursion into the surrounding hills. The cycling is very rewarding - through almost tropical forests with plenty of flowers and interesting plants along the way - eventually leading us to the enchanting settlement of Las Terrazas, perched on the edge of a lake and the UNESCO biosphere reserve of Sierra de Rosario. This is an internationally acclaimed reforestation project and model '70s communist settlement, set in the mountains at altitudes of around 500 meters where pine forests alternate with old coffee plantations. There is the chance for a swim in a natural pool in the San Juan River before we have lunch. You have the chance to try Cuba's most original, community run vegetarian restaurant. Afterwards we head back to our hotel in Soroa by bus. Keen cyclists can do a few more miles if they wish. The support bus can only accompany short sections at the beginning and end of today's cycle route due to road conditions.

Day 4: Cycle to the Cuban spa town of San Diego de los Baños 58 km + 100 m

Early this morning there is a chance to visit the splendid Soroa orchid garden. We start cycling downhill out of the Sierra, using smaller roads and a quieter section of Cuba's Carretera Central. We will cycle through picturesque countryside with rolling hills, palm trees and farmhouses in small hamlets, eventually arriving in the Cuban spa town of San Diego de los Baños. The surrounding virgin countryside and forests are fabulous.





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Day 5: Ride past banana and coffee plantations to Vinales 43 – 58 km + 100-400 m

We continue cycling along Cuba's dramatic western mountain range, passing banana and coffee plantations and tobacco fields in one of the most remote rural areas of this trip. We will stop at the Cueva de los Portales - a famous site in the jungle where Che Guevara set up headquarters during the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962. Soon we will see the first views the Viñales Valley - one of Cuba's natural highlights and an area of outstanding beauty. The area is home to some of the most spectacular and colourful scenery in Cuba. Millions of years ago underground rivers cut tunnels through the limestone hills and when the roofs collapsed, strange hills or 'Mogotes' were left sticking up from the otherwise flat valley floor. In between the jungle-clad saw tooth karst mountains the rich, red soil has been worked into a patchwork of fields growing some of the best tobacco in the world - the raw material for the famous Havana cigars. The cycle distance today is 43km if starting from Cueva de lo Portales and there is the option to extend this to 58 km by starting the ride from the hotel and paying a national park entrance fee directly (approx 5 CUC).



Day 6: Orientation tour of the Vinales Valley 25 km

We spend two entire days in this strikingly beautiful area. Today we will start the day with an orientation tour of the Vinales Valley by bike, exploring the valley in depth as well as taking some time to stroll through Vinales itself - a small laid back town with a charming main street built in neo classical style, leaving the afternoon free to explore the area further. Those interested can visit the limestone cave 'Cueva del Indio' and the Botanical Gardens in Vinales. The support bus does not accompany the ride today but is on call in case needed.

Day 7: Free day to relax or explore the island of Cayo Levisa 20 – 45 km (optional)

Today is left free for taking it easy or perhaps by booking an excursion to Cayo Levisa, an island near Vinales just off the north coast with lovely beaches. Alternatively you may wish to take the bikes for some further exploration of the area.

Day 8: Drive to Cienfuegos via Bay of Pigs

We commence the day with a bus ride (approximately 5 hours) across western Cuba to the Bay of Pigs - infamous for the ill-fated invasion attempt by Cuban exiles who landed here in April 1961 with the help of the US government. The result is well known and successful Cuban resistance, together with the missile crisis a year later, led the Americans to conclude that only a total trade embargo against the island could hope to discredit and ultimately oust Castro. Castro's Cuba keeps on resisting, however. We will visit Cueva de Los Peces for a quick swim in this sinkhole or cenote that is connected to the warm



Caribbean waters and has resident tropical fish. We continue by bus to the elegant town of Cienfuegos which was founded in 1819 by French farmers who had abandoned their plantations in Haiti after a slave rebellion led to formal independence there. The French brought their classical construction style of houses and quite an entrepreneurial spirit, thus triggering the sugar boom in the area. After a short visit we continue by bus for 15 minutes to our hotel on the outskirts of town in Cienfuegos playa.

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Day 9: Cycle to Trinidad via Yaguanabo beach 41 km + 250 m

We start our day with a quick exploration of Cienfuegos before driving for about 1 hour to Guajimico where we commence today's cycling with the backdrop of the Sierra Escambray Mountains getting ever more impressive as we get closer to Trinidad. We will have a chance to stop en route for a swim in the Caribbean at Yaguanabo beach before continuing by bike to Trinidad. The town became incredibly wealthy in the 18th and 19th century and almost all the palaces and stately homes of the rich families remain, their grandeur undiminished by time and the cobbled stone streets add extra charm to this colonial gem. In the evening we should go out in town to sample the great live music to be found everywhere in Trinidad. One of the best spots is the Casa de la Trova where they play 'Trova' (Cuban Folk Music) and 'Son', the essence of Salsa. Those with some basic knowledge in Latin dancing or at least the willingness to try it will be most welcomed. On arrival we will have a short orientation walk in town exploring the central square and surroundings. In Trinidad we enjoy local hospitality for three nights as we stay in casas particulares - private houses.

Day 10: Visit the sugar cane valley and old sugar mills by bike 37 km + 230 m

We have two full days to explore this wonderful town and its surroundings. Today we take a ride into the very scenic Valle de Ingenios (sugar cane valley) towards Santi Spiritus where we can see the old sugar mills. The support bus does not accompany the ride today but is on call in case needed. This afternoon we will visit the colonial heart of Trinidad on foot and hopefully have the opportunity to hear some live music.



Day 11: Free day for a boat trip, snorkeling and relaxation

Today is left free to take a very rewarding catamaran trip to the small island of Cayo Las iguanas - where you can snorkel on the reef and enjoy a seafood lunch on the island. Alternatively you can relax on the beaches south of Trinidad.

Day 12: Scenic downhill ride from Topes de Collantes; bus to Santa Clara 35 km + 350 m

Just a few miles behind Trinidad looms the Sierra Escambray, one of the three main mountain systems in Cuba. It has peaks up to 1100 meters, an incredible abundance of tropical and semi-tropical vegetation on its slopes, and some of the best Cuban coffee is also produced here.

Climbing up into the Sierra on the road from Trinidad is an experience, with slopes as steep as 20% (don't worry, we do this by bus!). Those wishing to do the toughest cycling challenge to be found in Cuba may want to try by leaving at the early hours of the day and being picked up by the group later. We start cycling on the highest sections of the road, near Topes de Collantes, a village and mountain retreat built in the early 1950s. From here it is one of the most scenic downhills through the jungle to be found anywhere in Cuba. Before leaving the mountains we can stop at a local coffee farmer's home to enjoying a meal and see the process of coffee tasting and of course we will try it as well! Then heading north, passing through the village of Jibacoa we finally reach the provincial town Manicaragua where we finish the cycling for today. We will take a short bus transfer to the hotel in Santa Clara. This town is one of the most important of the Cuban revolution, as it was here that Che Guevara won the decisive battle in December 1958 which led to the fall of Havana a few days later.

Day 13: Drive to Havana via Yumuri valley 17 km + 150 m

Santa Clara is a busy Cuban provincial town and home to the Che Guevara monument and mausoleum which we will visit together with a museum dedicated to his life. We continue by bus (2-3 hours) to Matanzas where we get back onto the bikes for an afternoon ride into the Yumuri Valley, surprisingly still unknown to most western visitors. Abundant vegetation, palm trees, crops and plenty of birds are to be enjoyed while cycling through our last stretch of rural Cuba. Once on the coastal road we continue to the stunning Bacunayagua canyon with a great viewpoint and allegedly the best Pina Colada served anywhere in Cuba. The support bus can only accompany short sections at the beginning and end of today's cycle route due to road conditions. Later we continue by bus for about an hour on to Havana.

Day 14: Explore Havana on foot or by bike 23 km + 100 m

Today is left free to explore Havana however you may wish to take an optional cycle to explore the capital. In spite of growing traffic this is still a wonderful way of getting to know different parts of town.

Day 15: Tour ends in Havana

The day is free for more exploration and perhaps shopping in Havana.





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Route



Technical characteristics

Route Profile: Moderate. The terrain is mainly on flat, tarmac roads, although the surface can be in poor condition in places. There are some uphill sections particularly in the Viñales and Soroa area. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour except where not possible on days 3, 6, 10 and 13. Road conditions are ideal as Cuba has little traffic, particularly on days 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 when we ride on quieter backroads.

Distance: 277 km

Travel Dates: **2023** October 27; November 10 **2024** Feb 2; Feb 16; Mar 29; Oct 25; Nov 8



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Prices (Per Person) Canadian Dollars

	2023	2024
Double Occupancy	\$3580	\$3600
Single Supplement	\$520	\$530

Accommodation:

Accommodation can be basic, particularly in some rural areas, occasionally with unreliable water and electricity supply. Service levels in government hotels, shops and restaurants are generally poor as this is not a service-oriented western culture. Of course, this is all part of seeing the 'real Cuba' and while we think you'll be pleasantly surprised by most of the hotels we use, you should be prepared for simply furnished rooms, some out-dated furniture and varying levels of service. Most of the hotels do have air conditioning and en-suite facilities.

Casas particulares - This is a Spanish term meaning private accommodation or homestay in Cuba. Staying in a casa offers the visitor a unique opportunity to experience Cuban hospitality in local accommodation adapted for tourism. The number of rooms, quality, facilities and access to other areas of the house such as the living room varies massively but as a general rule the majority of Casas are clean, basic, centrally located and can host only a handful of guests. Casas are generally run by the owner and members of the family that live there and the standard of English spoken will vary from zero to fluent, which is a good opportunity for you to practice your Spanish. Virtually all of the rooms have private facilities but on rare occasions it may be necessary to share.

Included:

- All accommodation, 9 nights in casas particulares and 5 nights in standard hotel
- 14 breakfasts, 1 dinner
- Support van with driver
- Tour leader throughout
- Airport transfers
- Bike rental – Stevens Galant SX Hybrid 27 gear or similar with front suspension, including pannier and water bottle holder, use of own pedals and saddle on request

Not included:

- Travel Insurance
- Visas or vaccinations

Assisting people in realizing their touring dreams worldwide is our passion.

www.okcycletours.com



THIS IS A PARTNER TOUR FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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