

Viva Cuba



TRIP OVERVIEW

Cuba is a land of contrasts, pulsing with the energy of its Spanish and Afro-Caribbean roots, yet peppered with reminders of its revolutionary past and Communist present. Take in classic Cadillacs, the faded grandeur of colonial-era buildings and the ever-present sounds of salsa as you tour Havana, explore the country's revolutionary past in Santa Clara, experience rural Viñales and make your way to Caribbean shores in Cienfuegos and Varadero, all on our tour of this unique island.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

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 read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important details such as visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Havana D

Depart the UK on your flight to Havana, via Madrid. On arrival, you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. Re-join your group for tonight's welcome dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2: Havana B/L/D

Havana teems with iconic symbols of Cuban life – old Cadillacs rumble past colourful colonial-era buildings, live salsa music pours out of restaurants and cafes, locals lounge on balconies smoking the country's famed cigars, and murals of Che Guevara adorn walls and T-shirts. Today starts with a walking tour through Old Havana, or Havana Vieja, an area of the city built during the 16th century Spanish occupation. Wind your way along the cobbled network of streets, through wide squares and past the faded grandeur of old buildings. Stop at Floridita's Bar, the famous hangout of Ernest Hemingway which boasts a life-size bronze statue of the writer seated at the bar. Enjoy one of the bar's famed daiquiris before lunch at a local restaurant. Make your way to the city's lively craft market and browse through the multitude of stalls hawking everything from linen shirts and cigars to paintings and percussion instruments. Continue on to Revolution Square where the towering Jose Marti memorial pays homage to this national hero, looked over by a huge steel casting of revolutionary Che Guevara. This evening, after dinner at a local restaurant, witness the Nine Cannon Ceremony at Morro Fortress, where soldiers dressed in 18th century military regalia fire a cannon over Havana Bay. Next, experience Cuba's rich musical culture with a Cabaret Parisien Show and a cocktail at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, before returning to your hotel for the night. Please Note – Shorts or Sports Clothing cannot be worn to the Cabaret Parisien Show.

DAY 3: Havana to Viñales B/L/D

Following breakfast, journey to the nearby fishing village of Cojimar, the inspiration behind Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea". Visit Finca Vigia, the writer's former home which now serves as a dedicated museum, and delve into his life at this hilltop villa where many of his belongings are on display. Next, enjoy a Don Gregorio cocktail, named in Hemingway's honour, before lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, depart for Viñales, stopping en route at Las Barrigonas, a tobacco farm that grows some of the world's finest tobacco using traditional farming methods that have existed in this valley for hundreds of years. Explore the tobacco plantation and farmhouse then travel onward to Viñales for your overnight stay.

DAY 4: Viñales B/L/D

After the energy of Havana, soak in the slower pace of rural life in breathtaking Viñales, a town framed by limestone hills and dotted with the greenery of tobacco farms. A scenic drive through the rural landscape takes you to the cigar factory and tobacco plantation in Pinar del Rio where you can witness how Cuba's famed cigars are toasted and rolled. Travel onward into the surrounding valley then board a boat and float downriver to Cueva

del Indio, an otherworldly river cave that was once an ancient, indigenous dwelling. Your boat ride then carries you to Mural de La Prehistoria, a fantastic 120-metre-long rock mural that took over four years to paint. After lunch, return back to the hotel to enjoy a Cuban cocktail lesson, followed by a sunset dinner.

DAY 5: Viñales to Cienfuegos B/L/D

Depart Viñales and drive onward to spectacular Soroa, whose natural beauty has earned it the name "Rainbow of Cuba". Wander the fragrant pathways of Soroa's Orchideary, surrounded by the delicately coloured foliage of over 700 orchid species then travel to Las Terrazas, a small rural community set in the heart of a picturesque 25,000 hectare UNESCO biosphere reserve. Explore one of the many trails that criss-crosses this verdant area as a local guide takes you through its nature, community and history. After lunch, drive onwards to the seaside city of Cienfuegos, your home for the next two nights.

DAY 6: Cienfuegos B/L/D

The nearby town of Trinidad has charmed visitors for decades with its brightly coloured buildings, lovingly restored plazas and churches, and donkey-drawn carts rolling down cobbled streets. After breakfast, make the short trip from Cienfuegos to Trinidad for a morning tour of the city. Admire the stately architecture and fascinating artefacts of the Romantic Museum, which offers a window into the world of the wealthy sugar baron, Conde de Brunet, who once owned this mansion. Catch a glimpse of the pretty yellow and green bell tower of Iglesia y Convento de San Francisco, located a stone's throw from the museum, as you continue on to Bar La Canchancha for a taste of the bar's signature cocktail, made of local rum, honey, lemon and water. Visit the soaring bell tower of Manaca Iznaga before lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon, return to Cienfuegos for a tour of this city on the shores of the Caribbean. Enjoy a leisurely walk down the central boulevard as you make your way to the magnificent Palacio de Valle and wander the towers and hallways of this lavishly designed marble and alabaster mansion, built by a wealthy businessman in the early 1900s. Before returning to your hotel, visit the Cigar Factory in Cienfuegos.

DAY 7: Cienfuegos to Varadero B/L/D

After breakfast, travel to Santa Clara, the centre of revolutionary Cuba. In 1958, the revolutionary forces of Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos attacked the city and derailed a train carrying military supplies for the dictator Fulgencio Batista, a move that led to Batista's fall. Explore the Che Guevara Square, Museum and Mausoleum - the memorial and resting place of the revolutionary and the museum which retells his life's work, then view the Armoured Train Monument where the remnants of the derailed trains lie. Make your way to tranquil Parque Vidal, the city's central park, and take in the elegant neo-classical buildings which line its borders. Drive onward to the seaside resort town of Varadero for your overnight stay and an afternoon at leisure, allowing you to enjoy the powder-soft sands and warm waters of the town's spectacular beaches.

DAY 8/9: Varadero to the UK B

A morning at leisure gives you ample time to soak up some sunshine on the nearby beachfront. In the afternoon, transfer to the airport in Havana for your return flight to the UK, or continue on to your chosen extension.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to leisure hotels. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and Cuba. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed.

Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. If you have booked a triple share please note that your room will be a twin room with a rollaway bed or sofa bed added. This may limit the floor space in the room.

Please note: final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will be taken in local Cuban restaurants or at your hotel. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.



ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in Havana you will be met by a representative from our local agent, **Viajes Cubanacan**, holding a sign displaying: "Viajes Cubanacan". The Mercury Holidays/Viajes Cubanacan representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact Viajes Cubanacan during your stay the details are:

Viajes Cubanacan Head Office, Havana

68th Street No.503 5ta & 5ta A. Miramar, Playa

Telephone: 0053 7 206 9590

E-mail: comercial2.mercado3@avc.vin.tur.cu / coor5.mercado3@avc.vin.tur.cu

Emergency contact information

Please find below the 24 hour emergency contact details for Viajes Cubanacan:

Telephone: 0053 7 206 9586
0053 7 206 9587

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

Visas

A visa (Tourist Card) is required for entry into Cuba. British passport holders will need to obtain a tourist card for travel to Cuba. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa for you on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The cost of the visa is £74 per person. The visas take around 10 working days to issue and are only valid for 2 months from the date of entry. We therefore recommend that you apply for your visa 8 weeks before travel. However, please be aware that your passport will be required for the application so make sure that you will not need it during this time. Alternatively, you can visit the Embassy of Cuba in London: 176 High Holborn, London, WC1V 6PA. Your passport must be valid for at least 2 months after departing from Cuba. Visa 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 regarding visas and passport validity.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call 0800 781 4237 and quote 'WK830' for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. 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.

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. Approximately £300- £400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour. 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.

Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health and vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your

own needs as early as possible and in good time before your departure. Sources of information include; www.fco.gov.uk, www.travelhealthpro.org.uk, www.hpa.org.uk, your General Practitioner or a specialist clinic.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 9, and the maximum will be 40. If in the unlikely event there are less than 9 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date, then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. You will also be joined by a local guide in each of the cities which you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

Tipping

It is at your discretion to tip both your driver and guide. We would recommend to tip approximately USD \$2-4 per person per day. This is a total of \$24 per person to budget for tips on your trip. Tips will be collected at the beginning of your tour. Tips are accepted in the local currency.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with a good level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves climbing of steep stairs and getting on and off coaches. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties. All our tours feature a "Tour Pace" to help find the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights, climb stairs and get on and off coaches and boats. The tour pace for Viva Cuba is intermediate. A good level of fitness is required as you may be on your feet for approximately four hours in a day, though this will be interspersed with regular breaks and will vary from day to day. You will be walking around the sights, and may be getting

on and off coaches, trains and boats and climbing steps which may be irregular. You will stay in variety of hotels throughout the tour. Our guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

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 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.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels. Please note whilst credit cards are widely accepted in Cuba, due to issues with Cuban infrastructure it is not uncommon for the machines to be out of order.

Itinerary Changes

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 informed of them. Some road construction and/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Waterproof lightweight jacket
- Sunglasses and hat
- Ruck sack
- Camera and charger
- Loo paper for public WCs
- Binoculars
- Swimwear
- Anti-bacterial hand sanitiser

- Personal toiletries and first aid kit containing travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, antiseptic creams, aspirin etc
- A travel plug adaptor: the voltage in Cuba is 110-220 V. You will need a 2-flat pin plug or 2-round pin plug adapter. However, there are many different types of electrical sockets throughout the country, some taking plugs similar to the UK's, others for two or three pin prongs. Should you plan to use your own hairdryer, travel iron, video camera, battery charger, electric shaver, etc, it is advisable to bring a multi-adaptor

FLIGHT INFORMATION

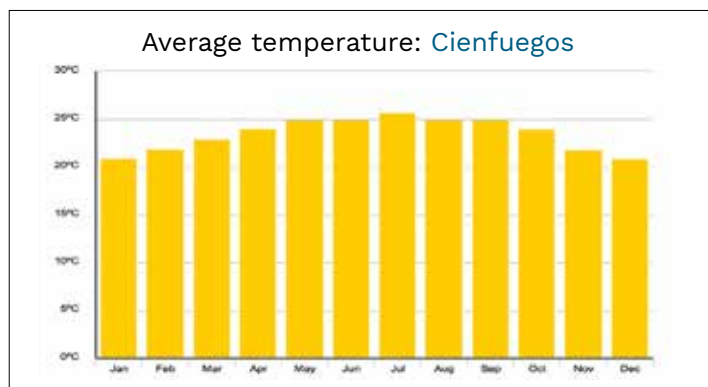
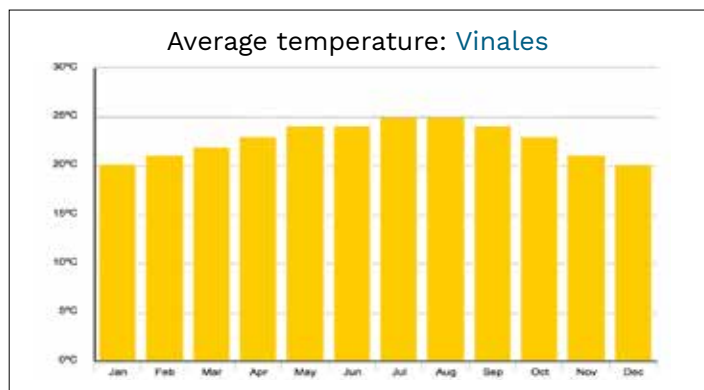
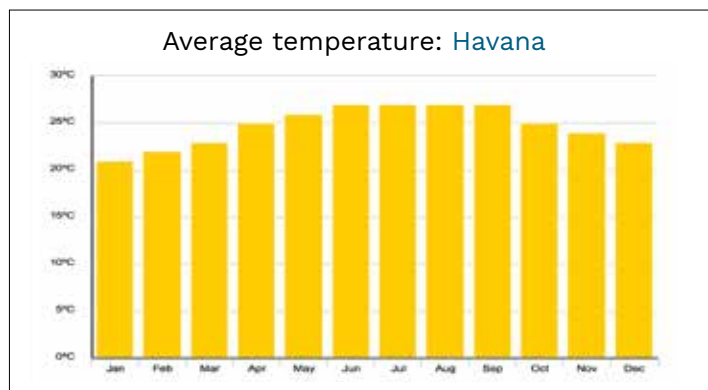
IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details, including terminal, airline and baggage allowance, will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure. A printed E-ticket is no longer required at check-in, all you need to do is present your passport to the staff at the desk and your boarding pass will be given to you.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras on 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.



Varadero Beach Stay: 4 Night Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Indulge yourself with a 4-night beach stay in the stunning seaside resort of Varadero. Boasting a 13-mile white, sandy beach and warm, shallow wading waters, Varadero is the ideal place for sunbathing, swimming and water sports. The town centre offers a wealth of restaurants, cafes and bars and the resort is home to one of only two golf courses in the country.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

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

Varadero (4 nights)

A land transfer takes you from Havana to Varadero, where your stay will take place at the **4★ Sol Caribe Beach Hotel** on All-Inclusive.

This hotel in Varadero boasts an ideal location alongside the beach and provides a range of services and facilities. With two large swimming pools, a gym, sporting activities, and more - this hotel has plenty to offer. For dining on-site, you will find a buffet restaurant, a la carte restaurants, and bars. Guestrooms are modern with all the facilities required to ensure maximum comfort. In-room facilities include air conditioning, flat screen TV, free Wi-Fi, and a coffee maker.

Hotel Information

Address: Calle K y Avenida de las Américas, Varadero, Matanzas, Cuba.
Phone: 0053 45 668070

Any alternative hotels or board basis will have been confirmed at booking. Please speak to our reservations department if you are unsure.

Please note: the hotel listed is provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry or snacks.

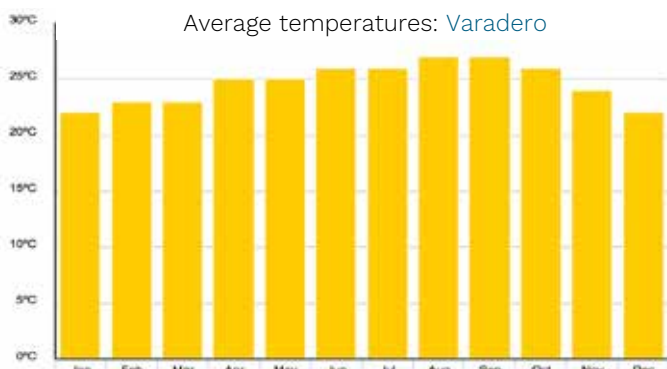
Tour Guides

Your stay in Varadero is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Please note: This extension takes place after your main tour.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

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



Sol Caribe Beach Hotel

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Varadero Beach Stay: 7 Night Extension

If you have not yet booked this fabulous extension, there is still time to do so. Please contact 0333 003 0522



TRIP OVERVIEW

Indulge yourself with a 7-night beach stay in the stunning seaside resort of Varadero. Boasting a 13-mile white, sandy beach and warm, shallow wading waters, Varadero is the ideal place for sunbathing, swimming and water sports. The town centre offers a wealth of restaurants, cafes and bars and the resort is home to one of only two golf courses in the country.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

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

Varadero (7 nights)

A land transfer takes you from Havana to Varadero, where your stay will take place at the **4★ Sol Caribe Beach Hotel** on All-Inclusive.

This hotel in Varadero boasts an ideal location alongside the beach and provides a range of services and facilities. With two large swimming pools, a gym, sporting activities, and more - this hotel has plenty to offer. For dining on-site, you will find a buffet restaurant, a la carte restaurants, and bars. Guestrooms are modern with all the facilities required to ensure maximum comfort. In-room facilities include air conditioning, flat screen TV, free Wi-Fi, and a coffee maker.

Hotel Information

Address: Calle K y Avenida de las Américas, Varadero, Matanzas, Cuba.
Phone: 0053 45 668070

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Please note: the hotel listed is provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

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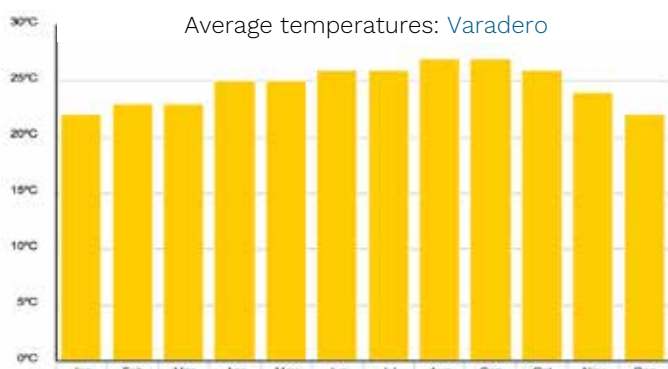
Tour Guides

Your stay in Varadero is not escorted by a tour guide. All internal transfers are included.

Please note: This extension takes place after your main tour.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

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



Sol Caribe Beach Hotel

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Please note: Final hotel and flight details will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.