15-DAY ADVENTURE

PEAKS OF CUBA

Cuba

The Caribbean island of Cuba may not be the first place that springs to mind when you think of trekking destinations but take a few steps away from the normal tourist sights and you will find there is a whole lot of adventure on offer. On this trip we will cross the island from east to west, exploring the beautiful Sierra Maestra and climbing to the summit of Turquino, Cuba's highest peak. We continue to the Escambray Mountains to discover waterfalls and natural swimming pools amidst the jungle. Of course there is also time to relax on Cuba's famous white sand beaches and experience the sights and sounds of Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Trinidad. This trip is a great mix of activity, culture and discovery on a Caribbean island that is full of surprises.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Climb to the summit of Pico Turquino, Cuba's highest mountain
- Discover the Escambray and Maestra mountain ranges
- Enjoy guided tours of Havana, Trinidad and Santiago de Cuba
- Trip fully carbon offset as standard

Havana
Zapata Swamp
Bay of Pigs
Cienfuegos
Sierra Escambray
Trinidad
Sacti Spiritus
Camaguey
Bayamo
Turquino Peak
Sierra Maestra
Santiago de Cuba
KANDOO ADVENTURES
Trek / transfer
Flight

ITINERARY

DAY 1

ARRIVE IN HAVANA

Arrival in Havana where a member of our local team will be waiting to greet you at the airport. Transfer to your hotel in the city where you can meet your guide and the other member of your group before sleeping off the journey.

Accomodation: **Hotel Parque Central**

DAY 2

HAVANA

This morning we wake up in lively Havana and start exploring! We will take a walking tour of the colonial squares in the old city. This really is like taking a step back in time, the cobblestoned streets are dotted with cascading fountains and art galleries can be discovered in little hidden courtyards. The air is filled with music and cigars as you wonder the streets and soak up this captivating Caribbean city. After a guided tour and some lunch at a local restaurant there is plenty of time to explore independently.

Accomodation: **Hotel Parque Central**

Meals included: **Breakfast / Lunch**

DAY 3

FLIGHT TO SANTIAGO DE CUBA

This morning there is a little more time to walk the streets of Havana before we transfer to the airport and board a domestic flight to Santiago de Cuba on the opposite side of the island. On arrival in Santiago, we transfer to our hotel accommodation and begin exploring our second Cuban city.

Accomodation: **Hotel**

Meals included: **Breakfast**

DAY 4

SANTIAGO DE CUBA

Today is spent exploring Cuba's historic second city. The streets of Santiago climb up and down the hills facing the bay and beautiful old colonial buildings can be seen all over. We will visit the Museum of Piracy and El Morro Castle, a colonial fortress that dominates the narrow entrance to the Bay of Santiago de Cuba. There is also time to visit a local bar downtown and enjoy a mojito and some local music.

Accomodation: **Hotel**

Meals included: **Breakfast**

DAY 5

EL COBRE AND EL SALTON WATERFALL

Today we head west by minibus to the town of El Cobre where we pause to visit the Sanctuary of La Caridad del Cobre, the Cuban patron saint. We then continue in to the heart of the beautiful Sierra Maestra range and find ourselves in a tropical paradise of forested mountains running along the coast. We reach our hotel for tonight and have lunch before heading out to explore our new surroundings. Don't forget to bring your swimming costume this afternoon, our hotel is just 25m from the stunning El Salton waterfall where deep turquoise pools are too much to resist.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**

Ascent: **500 m**

Descent: **500 m**

Accomodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 6

BAYAMO AND SIERRA MAESTRA

This morning we will jump back on the minibus and continue our journey along the Sierra Maestra range. We stop off in the historic town of Bayamo and enjoy a tour of the central park and local squares before pausing for lunch at La Bodega restaurant. In the afternoon, we return to the mountains and settle in at Hotel Santo Domingo in the western Sierra Maestra.

Accomodation: **Hotel**
Meals included: **Breakfast / Lunch**

DAY 7

TREK TO LA COMANDANCIA DE LA PLATA

We set off at 8am to reach el Alto Naranjo and begin our trek to La Comandancia de la Plata, the remote headquarters of Fidel Castro during the guerilla war of the 1950s. After touring the site, we continue to La Platica, a farm in the mountains where we can spend the night.

Hiking time: **4 - 5 hours**
Ascent: **900 m**
Descent: **500 m**
Accomodation: **Refuge**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 8

ASCENT OF TURQUINO PEAK

Today is the day we climb to the highest peak on the island, 1974m Pico Turquino. This is going to be a tough day with well over 1400m of vertical ascent to complete. We leave early in the morning and trek for 4 hours to reach Aguada de Joaquin, the mountain refuge where we will be sleeping tonight. From there another 3-4 hours of trekking will take us up to the summit. As we gain height, the views of the surrounding mountains, jungle and Caribbean sea beyond are spectacular. At the summit we take some time to enjoy this awesome location before returning to our refuge at Aguada de Joaquin and settle down for the evening.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**
Ascent: **1450 m**
Descent: **900 m**
Max. altitude: **1974 m**
Accomodation: **Refuge**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 9

TRAVEL TO CAMAGUEY

This morning after breakfast, 4 hours of hiking will take us back to the road at El Alto del Naranjo and we say farewell to the beautiful Sierra Maestra. We use 4x4 jeeps to reach Santo Domingo and pause there for lunch. Jumping back in our minibus, we set off for Camaguey which is a drive of around 4 hours. On arrival in Camaguey we settle in at our hotel for a well earned rest.!

Hiking time: **4 - 5 hours**
Ascent: **500 m**
Descent: **900 m**
Accomodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 10

CAMAGUEY TO SIERRA ESCAMBRAY

We start today with a tour of the old town, Camaguey has many old colonial squares and churches and is a fascinating place to explore and take some photos. We then continue our journey toward the Escambray Mountains, pausing for lunch in Sancti Spiritus and enjoying a short walk along the boulevard. We end our day in a place called Jarico in the Banaos natural park, amidst the stunning Sierra Escambray.

Accomodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 11

SIERRA ESCAMBRAY

Today we begin to explore our second Cuban Mountain range, the idyllic Sierra Escambray. From our accommodation in Jarico, we trek up the valley for 3 hours to reach La Sabina, a farm on top of the mountain where we will be sleeping tonight. After lunch we head out again to continue exploring the area. This evening we can relax on rocking chairs on the verandah and gaze out at the wonderful view down the valley from the farm.

NOTE - On this day we can leave the bulk of our luggage at Jarico and carry only what we need for a one night stay at the top of the mountain.

Hiking time: **5 - 6 hours**
Ascent: **500 m**
Accomodation: **Refuge**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 12

LA BELLA WATERFALL TO TRINIDAD

After breakfast we begin our descent back down to Jarico. On the way down we make a stop at the river where the deep natural pools of La Bella waterfall are perfect for diving and swimming. At Jarico we collect our luggage and have lunch before setting off for Trinidad. The drive is roughly 1 hour and we arrive at a private house where a lovely local family will be our hosts for the night.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**
Descent: **500 m**
Accomodation: **Homestay**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 13

TRINIDAD AND PLAYA ANCON

Today is a day of pure relaxation. We have free time in the morning to explore the city and in the afternoon we drive to Playa Ancon, one of the most beautiful beaches of south Cuba. Strolling along the beach, swimming and sunbathing are the only things you need to worry about today. In the late afternoon we return to our hosts house in Trinidad.

Accomodation: **Homestay**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 14

CIENFUEGOS AND ZAPATA

We take the road for the Bay of Pigs today, stopping at the city of Cienfuegos, known as the Southern Pearl. This neoclassic city was founded by French families in the 19th century and you can clearly see the French influence in the squares and architecture. We continue to the Zapata swamps and stop off at the Bay of Pigs for a swim and some lunch. We end our day in a small, peaceful village by the sea called Caleton. We are accommodated in a private house where our hosts will provide a delicious evening meal.

Accomodation: **Homestay**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 15

DEPARTURE

Today we depart Caleton and drive back to Havana to catch our return flight home. It is a leisurely morning with time to enjoy breakfast and walk along the white sand beach before boarding the vehicle. Transfer to airport.

Meals included: **Breakfast**

PLEASE NOTE

It is in the nature of a trip of this kind that arrangements and participants have to be flexible. While we use all reasonable endeavours to ensure a trip runs according to your itinerary, the day-to-day agenda and ultimate goal of the trip are taken as aims and not as contractual obligations. It is a necessary condition of your joining any of our trips that you accept this flexibility. Occasionally, we may have to make changes and we reserve the right to do so at any time.

TRIP INFORMATION

DIFFICULTY

The trekking elements of this trip are of moderate difficulty. The mountain trails we follow can be steep and arduous, the trails are often uneven and great care will be needed to keep your footing and avoid slips and trips. In tropical forests, the humidity can be very high which makes the trekking feel more difficult. The maximum ascent in a single day is over 1400m, you will need to be confident in your fitness and have recent experience of walking for up to 8 hours on steep and difficult terrain. We recommend that you prepare for this trip by doing training hikes with over 1000m of ascent on a regular basis before departure. If you are unsure about your suitability for this trip, please feel free to contact us with any questions.

FOOD & DRINK

During this trip all breakfasts are included. When lunch or dinner is not included on a certain day, there is a wide range of cafes or restaurants where you can find food for all tastes and budgets.

Cuban cuisine has remained fairly simple as a result of all businesses being state owned and the American embargo. There is not always a wide variety of foods to choose from. In state restaurants, meals mainly consist of chicken, fish or pork with congri (rice and kidney beans) and plantains (cooking bananas). On the nights we stay with local families you will find the food is significantly more varied and plentiful, highlighting all the incredible local produce. Cassava, plantain, mango, guava, pineapple, coconut, pork, chicken fish and even lobster are all common ingredients. Private restaurants are now starting to emerge and offer a much more rich and refined cuisine than the state owned restaurants and hotels.

In Cuba you can always find an excellent selection of fruit juices, local beers and of course, rum. Drinking water is not included in your trip and it is your own responsibility to make sure you stay well hydrated, especially when trekking. You can fill your drinks bottles in hotels, villages and at natural springs throughout the trip. We recommend you use a water treatment system of some kind, either a filter attached to your hydration pack or purifying tablets. We do not recommend buying plastic bottles which must be carried with you and recycled after use.

ACCOMMODATION

This trip includes a mix of different accommodation types with 4 star hotels in Havana, homestays with local families and basic mountain refuges in the mountains. In most cases (including homestays) you will have a double or twin room with a private bathroom. At some homestays, a bathroom may be shared between 2 rooms. When staying in mountain refuges, accommodation will be basic with dormitories of between 4 and 8 people and shared bathroom facilities.

Please note that hotels in Cuba are owned by the state and the quality of the accommodation can vary significantly. Rooms will always be clean and spacious with private bathrooms but in some cases are not up to international standards.

LUGGAGE

Your luggage should be packed in a flexible 70-80 litre duffel bag or backpack and not a rigid suitcase. Please limit the weight of your luggage to 15kg. Your bags will be transported with you in minibus or 4x4 vehicles and can be safely stored at your accommodation when you are out. You should also bring a smaller 30-40 litre daypack to carry with you while trekking or exploring each day. Your daypack will be needed for carrying water, spare clothing, swimming costume, camera etc. On some nights we may ask that you leave your main luggage in storage and carry only what you need for a 1 night stay in your daypack.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

You will need to arrive at Jose Marti International Airport in Havana on day 1 of your trip. The airport code is HAV.

From the UK, the best way to reach Havana is with either British Airways via Madrid or Air France via Paris. Both airlines depart the UK early in the morning and arrive in Havana in the evening of the same day. The connection times in Madrid or Paris are under 3 hours.

Travellers from the United States are required to obtain a general license for travel to Cuba. Your reason for travel must fall under one of the 12 categories authorised by the OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control).

United Airlines have direct flights from Houston and New York. Southwest Airlines fly direct from Tampa and American Airlines have flights from Miami. Another option is Jet Blue who offer direct flights from New York and Fort Lauderdale. Those people travelling from the west coast will need to connect with one of these services.

If you are changing airlines or re-checking your luggage at an airport on route, please ensure you leave a minimum of 3 hours between flights. This will account for any delays on arrival, travel time across airports (this can take longer than you think) and time taken to re-check baggage.

Travelling Responsibly

Here at Kandoo, we like to support our guests to make their travel more sustainable. As of 2025, we are offsetting the carbon on all of our trips from arrival in destination to dropping you back off at the airport. As we don't include flight travel in our trips these aren't included in our offsetting calculations, so we are providing you with the calculator below for you to do this yourselves.

eC02 Flights Calculator

ON ARRIVAL

On arrival, after collecting your luggage and clearing immigration, please look out for a member of our local team in the arrivals area. They will be holding a large "KANDOO ADVENTURES" sign.

BUDGET & CHANGE

Cuba has two main currencies, Cuban Pesos (CUP) and Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC).

As a tourist you will mainly be using CUC, pronounced "Kook". This is the currency that you can use to pay hotel and restaurant bills or buy souvenirs such as cigars and rum. CUP also know as "Local Pesos" are accepted by street vendors, low budget restaurants, local markets etc. 1CUC is worth 25 CUP.

Cuba is a closed currency so you can only exchange money within the country. Banks and larger hotels will commonly provide an exchange service. Try to avoid exchanging US Dollars if possible as you will be charged a 10% penalty which does not apply to other currencies.

FORMALITIES & HEALTH

PASSPORT

You will need a passport that is valid for at least 6 months after your departure from Cuba.

VISA

To obtain your Cuban visa you must use the electronic visa management system https://evisacuba.cu. Payment can then either be in cash directly to the Cuban Consulate or can be made online. The price of the visa is GBP ?20.

For the online visa application:
- You can access from any device connected to the Internet.
- Visit the site https://evisacuba.cu and follow the instructions on screen.
- Your visa will be approved once the corresponding payment has been received.
- Once the visa has been approved, you will receive an email with the visa code and the link to the D'Viajeros form associated with the visa, which can be filled out 7 days before the trip to activate it.

For travellers from the USA, travel to Cuba for tourism purposes is not permitted. Your reason for travel must fall under one of the 12 approved reasons for travel to Cuba. People who would like to join a trekking trip will often give their reason for travel as supporting the Cuban people. This is because by booking the trip, you will be supporting the economies of the areas and communities you visit. Travellers from the USA must obtain the more expensive pink visa rather than the normal green visa.

To arrange for a visa, we recommend that travellers from the USA contact their airline or the Cuban Embassy.

VACCINATIONS

There are no mandatory vaccines required for travel to Cuba. However, it is recommend that you have Hepatitis A and B, Tetanus, Typhoid, and Diphtheria.

HEALTH

Malaria

Cuba is considered very low risk for Malaria. The risks of contagion via mosquito bites is highly unlikely. It is advisable to protect yourself by applying repellent creams and covering your arms and legs in the evenings. We do not encourage the use of preventive treatments as they are not needed.

Water

During your trip you can fill your water bottles at natural springs, hotels and villages. We recommend that you bring a water filter or purification system with you to treat your water before drinking. This will greatly reduce the risk of an upset stomach or diarrhea and allow you to enjoy your experience to the full.
It is essential that you avoid dehydration during your trip by drinking 2 to 3 litres of water every day. Cuba can be very hot and humid even at the cooler times of year and especially in the jungle where you will be trekking. Failure to get enough fluids can result in headaches, fatigue and nausea which will spoil your enjoyment of the trip.

First Aid

Although your guide will always carry a comprehensive first aid kit in case of injury, we recommend you also carry a small first aid kit for your own use. Useful things to bring along are painkillers such as paracetamol or Ibuprofen, anti diarrhea medication, antihistamine, plasters and antiseptic cream.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

CLOTHING TO BRING

- Sun hat (wide brim for protection)
- Scarf or bandana to protect your neck
- Cotton T-shirts
- Long sleeved T-shirt
- Comfortable trekking trousers or shorts
- Shorts for the beach / city tours
- Waterproof and windproof hard shell jacket
- Waterproof and windproof hard shell trousers
- Warm jumper, fleece or soft shell
- Swimming costume / sandals
- Walking boots (sturdy soles and good ankle support)
- Comfortable trainers for the evenings
- Socks for trekking (not too warm)
- Thin socks for evenings and touring

EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- Sun glasses
- Sun cream
- Personal medication (pain killers, anti-diarrhea, antihistamine etc)
- Daypack - 30-40 litre
- Duffel bag or backpack - 70-80 litre
- Sleeping bag liner for use at mountain refuges (optional - blankets are provided)
- Water bottles or hydration pack
- Water purification system (charcoal filter, chlorine tablets or similar)
- Quick drying travel towel
- Head torch with spare batteries
- Walking poles

HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

1 CHOOSE YOUR DATE AND CHECK AVAILABILITY

A full list of available dates can be found on our website.

2 CONTACT US

Contact us by phone, email or through our website. We will answer any questions you may have and send you a personalized itinerary and quote.

3 COMPLETE BOOKING AND PAYMENT

When you are ready to book, we will send you a link to our online booking forms and participation agreements. We accept all major credit and debit cards and require a low 20% deposit to secure your place.