

14-DAY ADVENTURE

# CUBA DISCOVERY

**Cuba**

A 14 day multi activity adventure in the west of Cuba that is perfect for anybody who wants to experience this unique Caribbean island in an active and adventurous way. We will be exploring the old city of Havana and enjoying cocktails on idyllic beaches but you can also expect high speed zip wires, kayaking trips, horse riding and salsa dancing. We will take a boat to the paradise island of Cayo Levisa for snorkeling along coral reefs and hike through the forested mountains of the Sierra de Escambray. An action packed 2 weeks of adventure and discovery amidst the beautiful Caribbean sea.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Kayaking through the Sierra del Escambray
- Horse riding in the Vinales Valley
- Snorkeling at Cayo Santa Maria
- Trip fully carbon offset as standard


KANDOO
ADVENTURES
Havana
Cayo Levisa
Vinales
Cayo Santa Maria
Santa Clara
Sierra del Escambray
Lago del Hanabanilla
Sancti Spiritus
Trinidad

# ITINERARY

DAY 1

## ARRIVE IN HAVANA

Welcome to Havana! A member of our local team will meet you at the airport and we transfer to our hotel in the city.

Accomodation: **Hotel**

DAY 2

## HAVANA CITY TOUR

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.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**
Accomodation: **Hotel**
Meals included: **Breakfast / Lunch**

DAY 3

## HAVANA – LAS TERRAZAS

Today we leave Havana and head to the region of Las Terrazas. We visit a small community living within a protected natural park and take time to chat with the locals and discover the stunning flora and fauna to be found here. The highlight of the day is high speed zip line through the jungle canopy and out over the lake! In the afternoon we reach our hotel and settle down for the evening.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**
Accomodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

DAY 4

## HORSE RIDING IN VINALES

Today begins with a 2 hour horse ridding excursion through the spectacular Vinales valley. The valley was designated a UNESCO world heritage site in 1999 partly due to the traditional farming methods still in use here but also thanks to the unique landscape. The valley is dotted with immense dome shaped limestone outcrops that rise up to 300m. After lunch we visit Moncada Valley, home to the largest cave in Cuba, Santo Tomas.

Hiking time: **2 - 3 hours**
Activity time: **2 - 3 hours**
Accomodation: **Homestay**
Meals included:
**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

DAY 5

## HIKING AND SALSA DANCING IN VINALES

After breakfast we return to the valley of Vinales to continue exploring on foot. We are welcomed by the local community who invite us in to their homes to experience some authentic local cuisine and we will also get a salsa dancing lesson! We spend a lazy afternoon in a local bar sipping cocktails and listening to music, there will be plenty of opportunity to try out your new salsa skills.

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

DAY 6

## SNORKELING ON CAYO LEVISA

Breakfast eaten, we head to the Palma Rubia port to board a boat, it is just over an hours crossing to the paradise island of Cayo Levisa. Here we can go snorkeling amidst the rich fauna and flora of the coral reef around us and relax on a white sandy beach under the shade of a palm tree.

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

DAY 7

## TO SANTA CLARA

Today we jump back on our vehicle and head toward Santa Clara stopping for lunch in the Zapata Swamp region. On arrival in Santa Clara there is time to explore the town and visit the Che Guevara Mausoleum memorial before settling into our hotel. Dinner tonight isn't included so feel free to head into the town and sample some delicious Cuban cuisine in one of the local restaurants.

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

DAY 8

## KAYAKING IN THE SIERRA DEL ESCAMBRAY

This morning we head south and enter the beautiful Sierra del Escambray, a drive of just over an hour. We arrive at the village of El Salto de Hanabanilla that sits on the shore of Lake Hanabanilla. This is the starting point for our kayaking trip through this stunning mountain range. We take some time to sort out our equipment and glide out into the lake after lunch. Our first destination is the Rio Negro, where we will find our campsite and enjoy dinner in a typical restaurant in the middle of the lake.

Activity time: **3 - 4 hours**
Accomodation: **Refuge**
Meals included:
**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

DAY 9

## LAGO DEL HANABANILLA

Our kayak expedition continues today as we leave the Rio Negro and paddle south east along the lake toward the Cortina Jibacoa dam. Gliding through the water we will come across tiny villages, local fishermen, waterfalls emerging from the forests and pelicans drifting on the surface of the lake. At Jibacoa, we meet our vehicle again and drive south along the Rio Guanayara to our accommodation at Gallega Farm.

Activity time: **4 - 5 hours**
Accomodation: **Refuge**
Meals included:
**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

DAY 10

## RIO GUANAYARA AND TOPES DE COLLANTES

We start today with a hike through the jungle following the bank of the remote Guanayara River. Natural swimming pools and incredible plant and bird species are just waiting to be discovered. After lunch we take the road to Topes de Collantes National Park and visit a local coffee plantation before continuing to our accommodation in Trinidad.

Hiking time: **2 - 3 hours**
Accomodation: **Homestay**
Meals included:
**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

DAY 11

## TRINIDAD

A day dedicated to discovering the beautiful and unique city of Trinidad, a living museum where time seems to have stopped. Wonder through the colourful streets and meet local inhabitants known for their hospitality. We visit the craft market and the potter's house before taking your second salsa class, this time with a team of professionals!

Accomodation: **Homestay**

Meals included: **Breakfast / Dinner**

DAY 12

## TRINIDAD TO CAYO SANTA MARIA

Today we say farewell to Trinidad and take the road north toward Cayo Santa Maria on the opposite side of the island. We pause on the way to visit Sancti Spiritus, one of the oldest European settlements in Cuba. We arrive at Cayo Santa Maria in time for lunch and spend the rest of the afternoon just relaxing and exploring this little paradise of turquoise waters and white sands.

Accomodation: **Hotel**

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

DAY 13

## CAYO SANTA MARIA TO HAVANA

Today you have a choice of optional activities. You may like to hire kayaks or go for a catamaran excursion, spend the morning swimming in the 30°C water or just lounge in a deckchair and work on your tan. After lunch, we meet our driver and start our journey back to Havana. We arrive back in the city in the late afternoon and settle in at our homestay.

Accomodation: **Homestay**

Meals included: **Breakfast / Lunch**

DAY 14

## DEPARTURE

Enjoy a final morning in Havana, do some shopping and soak up the lively musical atmosphere of the city one final time. Transfer to the 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

This active exploration of Cuba is not very demanding but you will need to be in good health with a reasonable level of fitness. You will be hiking (3-4 hours per day), kayaking, swimming or horse riding nearly every day of the trip so a good amount of stamina is required. Our kayak expedition will stretch over 2 days with up to 5 hours of kayaking per day, if this is something you aren't used to then building up the fitness in your upper body would be recommended.

To discuss your suitability for this trip please feel free to contact us and speak to a member of our team.

## 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

**Hotels and homestays**

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, there is a small possibility that a bathroom may be shared between 2 rooms.

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.

**Refuges**

When staying in mountain refuges, accommodation will be more of an 'open-air' affair. Some refuges are large, wooden structures with palm roofs under which mattresses are laid out. The balmy, Cuban evenings need little protection so a night under the stars is the perfect way to immerse yourself in the mountains. Other refuges offer tents, shared on a twin or single basis. Both types of refuge have shared bathroom facilities onsite. If you wish to see more information on refuges in Cuba, visit our Cuba Trip Guide.

**Toilets**

You will be pleased to know that in Cuba they have western-style, flushing toilets. There may be some differences, as with many developing countries, and you may occasionally find toilets are missing seats or have low-water pressure. It is also common practice to put used toilet paper in a rubbish bin next to the toilet so as not to clog up the low pressure water systems. We would recommend bringing some of your own loo roll in case the bathroom stall is out of paper. In all our accommodation, rest assured there will be nice, clean toilets. However, we can't guarantee that when you're out and about, the same standards of hygiene will be available in public toilets.

## 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).**

American Airlines have flights from Dallas, Tampa and New York with stops in Miami. Delta also has this same route from New York. American Airlines have direct flights from Miami. Those people travelling from the west coast will need to connect with one of these services. Connection times in Miami are just over an hour.

*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's currency is Cuban Pesos (CUP). To see an up to date conversion rate, please visit xe.com.
The Cuban Peso is a closed currency so you can only exchange money within the country. Banks, Exchange Houses called CADECA and larger hotels will commonly provide an exchange service. When you use an ATM to extract Cuban money (CUP) at the official exchange rate, it will be approximately 150 CUP to £1 GBP. The ATMs will take Visa, Mastercard, and American International Service (AIS). However, **cards issued by a US institution will NOT work in Cuba.** Please ensure if your card is issued by a US institution that you have alternative methods for acquiring local currency. Given the great inflation that the country suffers, there is also a non-official exchange rate that is generally has higher rates than the official exchange rate, however this can be somewhat unstable and we wouldn't recommend using it.
A meal for two in a mid-range restaurant will cost around $80 (1920 CUP). Taxi starting prices in Havana are about:$1 USD (24 CUP). You will then pay about $0.5 USD(12 CUP) for every km of the journey. Cuba is generally a cash economy and cards aren't accepted in all establishments. Bring plenty of cash to exchange, we recommend budgeting $300 USD (7205 CUP) on top of your tips, this should give you plenty of money for meals out and souvenirs.

**Please also be aware that regulations change quickly and often in Cuba**, so check on the currency situation before your trip departure.

## TIPS

Tipping customs vary all over the world and can be very confusing when travelling to a new country. Tipping is always appreciated - it is not obligatory and should be left to the discretion of each individual in Cuba. Tips are not a substitute for good wages: our guides are all well paid and well looked after. If you are satisfied with your guide's services, we recommend the following for the entire trip:

**1200 CUP ($50) - Guide**
**800 CUP ($33) - Driver**

On the other hand, if you receive bad service or have not been treated well, you would not be expected to tip at all. Please ensure to tip in Pesos rather than your local currency.

# 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

# 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.