

# cuban revolution, cuba



Your expedition begins in the Cuban capital of Havana and ends by the Caribbean Sea in Trinidad some six days later and after cycling approximately 350kms. Most of the cars on the road are large American Chevs and Buicks from before the revolution, and buildings have remained untouched for more than half a century. You can't help but be touched by the friendliness and pride that the Cubans feel for their country.

Outside of Havana, there are very few vehicles on the road and as Cuba has a strong biking culture, you will fit right in. You will pass villages separated by colourful fruit orchards, sugar plantations and tree-lined avenues.

You will cycle through Cienfuegos, which sits in a bay facing the Caribbean Sea and has attracted pirates through the ages, and continue to the magnificent Sierra del Escambray before finally reaching Trinidad. You can spend your final evening dining and salsa dancing before returning to Havana.

## Day 1: London to Havana

You will meet at London Heathrow airport, for a day flight to Cuba, the world's 15<sup>th</sup> largest island. Our Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist you with the check-in and any last minute questions. The flight lands at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Havana-Cuba's capital. Havana, founded in 1519, is now the Caribbean's largest city and much of the old city still remains largely untouched despite the various wars and revolutions that have taken place over the last 200 years. On arrival in Havana, You will be met at the airport by a Charity Challenge local agent who will transfer you to the three star St John's hotel for a welcome Mojito (Cuba has some of the world's finest rum of which there is plenty available!) and a briefing on

the week's challenge ahead. Overnight in a hotel in Havana.



## Day 2: Havana to Playa Jibacoa

The week's challenge will be taking place in Cuba's countryside, passing through rural villages, so today, you will get the chance to experience city life in Havana. There is a wealth of historical buildings and monuments, and during the course of the day, you will get a chance to explore many of them. In the late afternoon, you will transfer to Playa Jibacoa, where you will be introduced to your method of transportation for the challenge ahead, and make sure that the bike is comfortable. You will be given a full briefing about what to expect during the challenge, before you inevitably have to start the actual exercise. Overnight in hotel in Playa Jibacoa.

## Day 3: Playa Jibacoa to Matanzas – approx 60 kms

After breakfast you will start the journey South towards Trinidad. The day's biking from Playa Jibacoa to the town of Matanzas involves plenty of hills and the only off-road section of the challenge. You will have plenty of pit stops along the way for refreshment, relaxation, and of course taking in the country scenery that you will be passing. Six kilometres after you leave the hotel the challenge begins as the road becomes uneven for approximately the next 10kms. Because of the poor

conditions of the road today, we strongly recommend you not to cycle too fast! This tough but enjoyable start offers a glimpse of a few local farms along the dusty road to Arcos de Canasi, 15kms from the start. You will stop for a well-deserved snack at Arcos de Canasi. It is wise to follow the instructions of your local guide once you get into the towns to avoid taking the wrong route! The next small village along your journey is Corral Nuevo, 12kms on from Arcos de Canasi. Be prepared for many hills with steep climbs of up to 200meters long throughout your journey. You will continue your ride through two more villages - San Miguel and Chirino before you reach the city of Matanzas. The most difficult part of your ride takes place now, at the entrance of Matanzas for the following 600meters. Try to stick together as a group once you get into Matanzas city. Lunch will be eaten in Matanzas. Matanzas was built with sugar money (so to speak) and in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, was the centre of the Cuban sugar industry. Today, much of this heritage remains, with sugar plantations, a sugar refinery, and sugar exporting facilities. You will be transferred from Matanzas to Varadero where you will overnight in a hotel.



#### Day 4: Matanzas to Cienfuegos – 80 kms

The province of Matanzas also hosts the infamous Playa Giron (the Bay of Pigs) on the South coast, where a CIA-backed challenge to the Revolution was defeated in 1961. Today's ride is along a fairly flat tarmac road, passing many villages separated by fruit orchards, agricultural areas and tree-lined avenues. You will take Carretera Central (Central Highway) for the first 5kms until you reach Guanabana village. Each village that you pass will inevitably leave its mark on you. The locals go about their daily routines, leaving you to survey life in rural Cuba. Each house differs from the next, but all are colonially designed, and oozing with character. You will continue on to Triunvirato village where you will find the only steep hill of the day, approximately 300meters. The next village you arrive at is Cidra located 6kms on from Triunvirato. Juan Gualberto Gomez town then follows this, after a further 7kms. You will be riding alongside and over many of the rural rail tracks that are used at harvest time to transport sugar to the ports for distribution. Be careful as you won't find security barriers at most of them. There are plenty of shaded spots to stop en route and take a breath of fresh air, with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. The next town is Union de Reyes (9kms further) where you will stop for a snack 35kms will have been covered already!

After your pause you will continue on to Bolondron village (11kms) and Guira de Macurijes (6kms). Your lunch will be taken in the next town of Pedro Betancourt (11kms). To the South East of the province is the Sierra del Escambray, and the highest peak of the region-Pico San Juan 'La Cuca', but your ride will thankfully be along the flatter roads of the province! The last section of the ride will pass through small villages including Camilo Cienfuegos Uno. You will then continue on through Saca Piedra, La Luisa, Los Jardines, Zapote covering another 14kms until you reach Torriente village. The final 14kms takes you to Jaguey Grande town where you will take a bus transfer to your hotel.

#### Day 5: Cienfuegos – approx 60 kms

The beautiful city of Cienfuegos known among Cubans as 'The Pearl of the South' was founded on the fortunes of the sugar industry in the mid 1700s. This morning you cycle to Cienfuegos. Today the road you will travel is generally in good condition & mostly flat, however the first 3kms were damaged in the last hurricane. The first hill you will climb is found after 4.5kms and is about 300meters long. You will ride around the scenic roads that border the city of Cienfuegos. Once you get closer to the city of Cienfuegos the traffic gets busier so it is best to stick together as a group. You will also see many locals on bikes so you will blend in well! Cienfuegos, which sits in a bay facing the Caribbean Sea was repeatedly looted by pirates through the ages. Overnight at Cienfuegos Hotel



#### Day 6: Cienfuegos to Hanabanilla – 65 kms

Nestled into the foothills of the Sierra del Escambray, is a huge reservoir - the Embalse Hanabanilla, with the town on one side and a hotel on the other. Today you cycle on road in a good condition. After your first 12kms (near the Service Station) the route becomes very hilly with ups and downs of about 200meters each. You will pass by Cienfuegos Botanical Garden around 20kms from today's starting point. A huge cement factory will emerge from the main road in the distance. The first village on your way will be Guaos about 4kms from the Botanical Garden. More rolling hills are to come as you approach the Escambray Mountains but none of them are too difficult to overcome! Please bear in mind that the road also has many curves and visibility is limited. You will continue to ride through small villages like Dolores and Codicia before you make your first stop for a snack at Cumanayagua town, 38kms from your morning's departure point. The next town of Barajagua is

located 12kms further. Lunch will take place soon after at La Macagua village. The most challenging section of the day is next with about 8kms of steady hills of about 500meters each; the road is in good condition though. Waiting for you at the end of the day are views across the reservoir to the town, separated only by the water and a number of Cuban boats fishing for bass. We will stay overnight in Hanabanilla hotel.



### **Day 7: Hanabanilla to Trinidad – nearly 90 kms**

Today marks the final stage of the biking challenge. You will start riding very early today to cover the 90kms. The first 7kms are mostly going down the hills you came over the day before. The small community of La Campana will appear after 11kms followed by La Moza 4kms after; the terrain will be mostly flat with a few ups & downs. Your first stop of the day will be in Manicaragua once you have cycled 22kms. You will grab a snack before continuing to Guinia de Miranda located 20kms later. The road remains flat but with some deterioration at the end of the road. There are also many curves creating limited visibility. After reaching Guinia de Miranda the many potholes make the ride a real challenge along with couple of 'steady' hills! Your lunch stop of the day is about 6kms ahead at Campismo Rio Seibabo; a campsite facility. You will have covered 47kms by this point. The second half of today includes a rather bumpy road and some challenging hills. You will also take a vehicle transfer before your final 2hrs of cycling into Trinidad city. The reward makes all of your hard work worthwhile as you head downhill towards Trinidad, and into the Hotel Ancon – an all-inclusive hotel on the Caribbean Sea. Here you can nurse any sore muscles, and make use of the excellent facilities before having a relaxing dinner and evening relaxation on the beach.

### **Day 8: Relaxation!**

Today can be spent simply relaxing on the beach or by the pool. Alternatively, there will be the option to visit the charming town of Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (since Dec 1998). The town is like a living museum, with cobble streets and colonial housing which has changed little in more than 150 years. Trinidad is a great place to explore, with so much to see, and is a great place to get your final look at Cuba. That evening, you will enjoy a celebratory dinner and now you can sample some of Cuba's finest exports – rum and cigars! Overnight Hotel Ancon.

### **Day 9: "Ciao"**

Today, you depart for Havana once more, to catch a flight back to the UK via Madrid with Iberia Airlines.

### **Day 10: International Departure**

You will arrive back in the UK at London Heathrow airport late morning.

N.B. The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, wildlife movements, the strength of the group and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

## **Optional extensions:**

### **Havana (4 days, 3 nights):**

- Experience an evening of salsa dancing and typical Cuban music.
- A full-day tour of Havana including a stroll along the Paseo de Marti (el Prado) a visit to the Capitolio Nacional
- Stroll around and stumble across some of Havana's many hidden cultural, historical and political treasures

### **Ancon Beach (3 days, 2 nights):**

- Full days of relaxation – lie on the beach or visit the charming town of Trinidad.
- Experience a catamaran trip to a deserted island. Snorkelling, scuba diving or deep sea fishing can be arranged through the hotel.



To find out more information, visit the Cuban Revolution challenge page on our website or click on "extensions" in your member's area.