

# cuban revolution, q&a



## how big is the group?

Each group is intended to be a minimum of 12 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 25 people due to the wilderness environment in which the expedition is taking place.

## who do we fly with?

You will be flying with Iberia Airlines from London Heathrow Airport to Havana (via Madrid) and returning from Havana to London Heathrow Airport (via Madrid). The flight tickets will be issued upon departure at the airport. There is a possibility of upgrading your flights to business class (subject to availability). If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights. Please contact [flights@charitychallenge.com](mailto:flights@charitychallenge.com) for further assistance.

## what's the luggage allowance?

As no formal clothes are needed, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum - details on what to pack are provided in your Kit List. Your rucksack (suitcases are not appropriate) must not exceed 15kgs in weight. Each day when you begin to ride, your personal kit will be transported to the next camp/hotel.

## what will the accommodation be like?

You will be staying in hotels throughout the expedition. The hotels, apart from in Havana and Trinidad, will be quite basic. You will be sharing in rooms of two with ensuite bathrooms. Please let Charity Challenge know if you are travelling with a friend or relative who you wish to share with.

## will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Theft from luggage during baggage handling is fairly common so we recommend that you remove any valuables and padlock, as much as you can, your rucksack or purchase wire mesh to completely cover your bag. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times. You should take a photocopy of your passport, tourist card and any vaccination certificates and leave a copy at home with a friend/relative in case of loss or damage to the originals. Be ware of pickpockets and bag-snatchers, especially in the area of Old Havana, on buses/trains, at major tourist sites and in nightclubs.

## what is the food and drink like?

Cuba has suffered from the American embargo, and there are serious shortages in most sectors of the economy. Often food is very dull and repetitious, with a heavy reliance on eggs, chicken, rice and beans. In the country more fresh produce is available and you will tend to eat better there. Please let Charity Challenge know if you have any dietary requirements or allergies.

## who will be leading the group?

We employ a number of first aid qualified expedition leaders, all of whom speak fluent English. They will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

## what is a typical day?

During the cycling days we rise early and pack our bags (daypacks and luggage if in transit to next hotel). Departing after breakfast, we then cycle for 4 to 6 hours. There will be a mid-morning water and snack stop, and later a picnic lunch en route. The afternoon ride is usually short in order to bring us to our hotel well before sundown. Where necessary, vehicles are used to transfer you at the end of the day to your hotels. Dinner and the day's debriefing are usually in the hotel.

## what are the bikes like?

The bikes in Cuba are basic, non brand specific and all of them have 18 or 21 speed gears. The bikes are sturdy and weigh approximately 15kg's. The frames are either 16 or 18 inch, the bikes have standard brakes and upswept handle bars. They probably do not compare to your bike at home. There is an assortment of gents and ladies bikes.

## how fit do I need to be?

Training and fitness is definitely required. It is important that you work specifically on your stamina, leg and joint strength, and balance in order to get as much out of the challenge as possible. Don't forget that the temperature and climate is different to the UK and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days. Also see the Fitness Training Advice notes.

## what happens if I fall ill, can't keep up or there is an emergency?

Throughout the expedition, back-up support will be close by, and we maintain radio contact with the back up team. If for any reason any injury should occur, or continuation is not possible, a relief vehicle will be made available.

## what is included in the cost of the expedition?

Your international flights to and from Cuba, all meals and drinking water unless otherwise stated in the itinerary, all transfers in Cuba, all accommodation, bikes, group first aid supplies, an English-speaking expedition leader and full local support team, a Charity Challenge T-Shirt, US\$20 equivalent to the local community project, and discount from Nomad Travellers Stores for personal equipment. We also make a contribution through Climate Care to offset the equivalent CO2 emissions of your international flight.

## what is not included in the cost of the expedition?

The following items are not included in your expedition and will be at your own expense - tips for the local support team, activities not mentioned in the itinerary **Please note:** You will need to pay 25 Convertible Peso departure tax when leaving Cuba, personal spending money and travel to and from UK airports.

Historical Preservation Society of Havana to enhance local living conditions.

### what is the weather likely to be like?

The rainy months in Cuba are from May to the end of October and the dry season runs from November - April. The hurricane season is usually from July to late October. Temperature varies little all year round. The average daily temperature in the coolest months – December to March is 26C (79F). In the hottest months – July and August temperature is usually 32C (89F). Humidity varies little averaging 62%.

### what shall I do about spending money?

You will not need large amounts of money during this trip and other than at the start and end of the trip, you may well be in the countryside away from any foreign exchanges or banks. We recommend that you take sufficient amount of cash approximately £200 in small denominations. US Dollars are no longer accepted in Cuba, the currency since 2005 is the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) with its own exchange rate. The wider use of the convertible pesos (CUC) to include the tourist industry has inevitably meant an increase in the number of forged CUC banknotes of all denominations but in particular \$100.00. You are strongly advised not to change money anywhere other than at the airport, Cadecas, hotel exchange bureaux or banks. Individuals offering exchange facilities to avoid queues should be avoided, and where possible small denomination bills should be requested. Travellers' cheques and or credit cards drawn on American banks (American Express credit cards, American Express "Golden Gift" travel cheques, credit cards issued by Abbey and other "affinity cards" drawn on MBNA banks) are NOT accepted in Cuba. Credit card transactions are subject to local commission charges of between 11% -13%. However, Euro or Sterling cash as well as Travellers cheques drawn on UK banks are accepted at Cuban banks and Bureaux de Change. There are virtually no cash-points for drawing cash against Cirrus or Switch cards.

### how much would you recommend for tips?

Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. You should only tip if you feel that you have received good service. We recommend approx. GBP£5 in Cuban Peso per person per expedition day, 8 X £50 =£40 and this should be given to the expedition leader at the end of the expedition who will distribute it fairly among the support team.

### should I take gifts or clothes for the locals?

We advise against giving small gifts to children as it can encourage begging. However, if you have any small items (pens, toys) or clothing that you would like to donate, your expedition leader will collect it from you at the end of the expedition and make sure that it is distributed where it is needed most.

### what do you do to protect the environment?

We are keeping to a small group so that we limit the impact we have on the surrounding environment. We will ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly. Finally we follow the local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect. We will also be donating \$USD20 equivalent per participant towards the

### can you recommend any literature about the region?

- *Travellers Survival Kit* by E Hatchwell & S Calder.
- *Cuba Libre* by P Marshall – for the history of Cuba.
- *Into Cuba* by Marshall and Willetts has good images & text. James A Michener and John Kings Six Days in Havana is a worthwhile read and Pico Lyer's Cuban impressions in *Falling off the Map: Some Lonely Places of the World* are very amusing.
- *Cuba Diaries* by Isadora Tattlin published by Bantam Books
- *The Rough Guide to Cuba* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

### english

Hello  
Goodbye  
Good morning  
Good evening  
Good night  
Please  
Thank you  
How are you?  
You're welcome  
Excuse me  
I'm sorry!  
I understand  
I don't understand  
Yes  
No  
How much?  
When?  
Where is...?  
What is the time?  
Do you speak English?  
Zero  
One  
Two  
Three  
Four  
Five  
Six  
Seven  
Eight  
Nine  
Ten

### spanish

Hola  
Adios/Ciao  
Buenos dias  
Buenos noches  
Buenos noches  
Por favor  
Gracias  
Como esta?  
De nada  
Disculpe  
Disculpe/Lo siento  
Entiendo  
No entiendo  
Si  
No  
Cuanto?  
Cuando?  
Donde esta/queda...?  
Que horas son?/Que hora es?  
Habla ingles?  
Cero  
Uno  
Dos  
Tres  
Cuatro  
Cinco  
Seis  
Siete  
Ocho  
Nueve  
Diez

NB: The information provided above was correct at the time of going to print.