

CH>RITY
CH>LLENGE



TRIP NOTES

BELIEVE ACHIEVE INSPIRE

CUBAN REVOLUTION CYCLE
CUBA

Fri 20 Mar - Sun 29 Mar 2015





In aid of your choice of charity

20 Mar - 29 Mar 2015

10 DAYS | CUBA | TOUGH

Welcome to the land of cigars, revolution, Che Guevara and vintage Chevrolets. The Cuban cycle travels from the cultural capital Havana to the exotic Caribbean. Our 10 days in the saddle will see us cycling 350kms through beautiful countryside, passing fruit orchards, tree-lined avenues and buildings left untouched for more than half a century. Outside of Havana vehicles are rare and there is a strong biking culture – so expect to fit right in!

- Cover 350kms from one beautiful coastline to the other
- Pass remote villages, fruit orchards and sugar plantations
- Discover hidden treasures in Havana's preserved old quarter
- Visit the city of Cienfuegos, once a hotbed of pirate activity
- Finish in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Trinidad

YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 Fri 20 Mar

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International departure from London

Meet at the airport for our flight to Havana, Cuba's capital and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist with check-in. On arrival in Havana, we will be met at the airport by our Charity Challenge expedition leader who will transfer us to a three-star hotel, where we will spend the night and be briefed about the adventure ahead.

DAY 2 Sat 21 Mar

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Havana to Playa Jibacoa

Today we have the chance to explore beautiful Old Havana before heading into the Cuban countryside. A city tour will give us an opportunity to learn about Havana's expansive and varied history from war to revolution, including an introduction to its many beautiful buildings and monuments. We then transfer to Playa Jibacoa, where we are introduced to our bikes ahead of the adventure that awaits us.

DAY 3 Sun 22 Mar

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Playa Jibacoa to Matanzas (approximately 53 kms)

It's an early start for our long-awaited cycle ride towards Trinidad. Today's route is hilly with steep climbs up to 200m and poor road conditions, particularly as we head to Arcos de Canasi. As the route meanders through country villages and pretty scenery, the toughest part of the day awaits at the entrance of Matanzas. The reward is a swim and a comfy hotel bed!

DAY 4 Mon 23 Mar

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Matanzas to Cienfuegos (approximately 75 kms with an optional 12kms)

Prepare for a long ride as we bid farewell to Matanzas, home to the infamous Bay of Pigs on the south coast. Overall, today's ride is flat as it passes through villages and orchards. The only steep hill is a 330m climb at Triunvirato, before we stop for lunch. The ride continues through Saca Piedras, La Luisa, Zapote and Torriente, before reaching our hotel in Cienfuegos.

DAY 5 Tue 24 Mar

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Cienfuegos (approximately 53 kms)

Cienfuegos was founded on the fortunes of the sugar industry in the 1700s. The roads are generally good and our first climb upwards is just 300m. As we ride the scenic roads that border the city, it's important to stay together as the traffic becomes heavier. Tonight there will be time to explore this picturesque bay city, which has repeatedly been looted by pirates in the past.

DAY 6 Wed 25 Mar

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Cienfuegos to Hanabanilla (approximately 60kms)

Today is the penultimate day of our ride and the route becomes hilly, curvy and visibility is limited. In addition, there's the welcome distraction of the lush botanical gardens on the approach to the Escambray Mountains. Lunch is followed by the toughest part of the day – an 8km hilly ride. Dig deep on this tough terrain, while the glorious views of the Hanabilla Reservoir push you onwards.

DAY 7 *Thu 26 Mar*

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Hanabanilla to Trinidad (approximately 110 kms)

We will be covering a pedal-pumping 110kms on this grand finale of the ride. We begin with a fun descent before attacking curved roads with potholes, steady hills and limited visibility. After lunch there are tricky hills and a bumpy road. Yet you finish with a thrilling descent down to Trinidad. Spend the evening celebrating at our beach hotel which looks out onto the Caribbean.

DAY 8 *Fri 27 Mar*

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Relaxation and transfer back to Havana

Chill out at the beach or in the hotel pool. Alternatively, you can explore the charming town of Trinidad. With its cobbled streets and colonial housing, this UNESCO World Heritage Site has hardly changed in more than 150 years. In the early afternoon we transfer back to Havana for a celebratory dinner and the chance to sample some of Cuba's finest exports – rum and cigars! Overnight in centrally located hotel.

DAY 9 *Sat 28 Mar*

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Free day in Havana

Spend more time sight-seeing or perhaps take part in a salsa or rumba lesson. And if you're feeling hungry you could grab a bite at one of Havanas many paladares (local Cuban houses that cater for paying guests). Supper is provided in a restaurant close to the airport, before your evening flight back to the UK via Madrid. (Please note lunch is not included today).

DAY 10 *Sun 29 Mar*

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International departure to London Heathrow

Arrive back in the UK in a whirlwind of emotions as you return to your nearest and dearest, but part ways with new-found friends and trekking partners.

NB

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 may occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have

the final say.



HOW TO FUND YOUR CHALLENGE

This page provides you details of the costs of your challenge.

The costs below are per person.

SELF FUNDER

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Pay a registration fee of £395.00 when you book

Then a balance of £1715.00 (8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise as much as you can for your charity.

MINIMUM SPONSORSHIP

-

Registration fee of £395.00 when you book

Raise a minimum of £3500.00 for your charity.

FLEXI

-

Registration fee of £395.00 when you book

Then £395.00 towards challenge costs (8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise a minimum of £2695.00 for your charity.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Access to your own password protected account including support materials and training schedules
- Risk assessment and emergency management planning
- Public liability insurance
- Discount on personal equipment from The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire, Cotswold Outdoor and Nomad Travel Stores
- Access to "ask the expert" re your kit requirements
- Access to training weekends (optional and at additional expense)
- Warm up exercise routines
- 16 and 20 week trek/bike training schedule
- Fitness training notes
- Sponsorship forms (online and hard copy)
- Template press release
- A-Z of fundraising ideas
- Support materials (itinerary, kit list, fact file, Q&As, health notes, travel tips, responsible travel policy and guidance)
- Fundraising advice

On your challenge

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- International flights to and from the UK (including all known UK air taxes, and fuel surcharges, at the time of costing)
- Internal road and air transfers as per the itinerary
- Accommodation during the challenge (usually in twin share)
- Three meals a day (unless otherwise stated in the itinerary)
- Drinking water on challenge days
- Entrance fees to national parks or other places of interest visited on the itinerary
- All ground staff including English speaking guide, drivers, cooks, and porters
- Full back-up support including first-aid qualified staff and first-aid supplies
- Activity equipment such as bikes, tents and rafts as per the challenge activity
- A £100 donation to your charity under the self funder option (unless stated otherwise)
- A donation to a community project in one of the countries in which we operate
- A contribution towards funding the reduction of carbon emissions through Climate Care's portfolio of award winning projects
- A Charity Challenge T-Shirt
- All challenge management before, during and post event

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Travel to and from the UK airport of departure
- Vaccinations (please check Trip Notes for requirements)
- Travel Insurance (you can buy at time of booking or in your Account Area, or provide your own policy details)
- Clothing and equipment listed on your Kit List

On your challenge

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- Tips
- Departure Tax (if applicable)
- Personal spending money
- Any other specific items listed as not included in your Trip Notes

THE DETAILS

Fundraising deadlines

You will need to send your sponsorship money to the charity as you raise it. At least 80% of the minimum sponsorship required must be sent to the charity 10 weeks before departure (by 09/01/2015), and the remaining 20% within 4 weeks of completing the challenge (by 26/04/2015). If you have raised the necessary funds, the charity will then pay the balance of your challenge costs. The charity benefits by keeping the remaining sponsorship money and every pound over and above that you raise.

Prices include all known air taxes

We include ALL known air taxes (including fuel) at the time of costing. Many companies do not include air taxes at all, and clients are therefore hit with a surcharge of three or four hundreds of pounds just before departure. Our aim is to provide you with transparent pricing and clear instructions as to what is included in our prices and if applicable what isn't.

Typical group size

The typical group size is 16 - 30 participants

Small group supplement

The costs and sponsorship levels on our website are based on a minimum of 16 participants. We can run this trip with 10-15 people, but there will be a small group supplement of £75. This is payable by your charity if you book under the Minimum Sponsorship or Flexi options, and by yourself if you choose the Self Funder option. We will notify you 12 weeks before departure if this is necessary.

Optional extras

Business class upgrades*
Travel insurance
Single room supplements*
Extensions at end of trip*
Trek/bike training weekends*
(*subject to availability)

Travel insurance

Your safety when travelling with Charity Challenge is our main concern, which is why it is a booking condition that you have a suitable travel insurance policy, which covers you for the adventurous nature of your challenge, the activities you are undertaking, and the altitudes. We have chosen to partner with specialist travel insurance providers Campbell Irvine, who offer cover for an extensive number of adventurous activities. Cover is available directly from Campbell Irvine for most European residents and includes cover for emergency medical and repatriation and for your cancellation or curtailment of the challenge. Full details including costs may be found at <http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/charitychallenge>.

Level of Difficulty

The Cuban Revolution cycle is graded as Challenging. This is the perfect challenge for participants who are of an adventurous spirit and an open mind, but perhaps haven't taken on a strenuous challenge event before and are hoping to push themselves out of their comfort zone. You can tell your supporters that on your Cuban Revolution Cycle, you will be:

- Cycling under very hot and humid conditions with temperatures of up to 30 degrees
- Covering distances of up to 100km per day
- Cycling for over 8 hours on the longest days
- Taking on some steep climbs on a mixture of rocky and main roads

Money

Currency: The currency in Cuba is Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). 1 Cuban Convertible Peso = 100 centavos. For up to date currency exchange, go to www.xe.com. The Convertible Peso is a closed currency, which means it cannot be purchased outside of Cuba. You can change GBP or Euros at the Cadeca (Money Exchange Bureau) at the Airport on landing in Cuba or at your hotel.

Credit Cards: MasterCard and Visa Credit Cards are accepted locally. Credit card transactions are subject to local commission charges of between 11% -13%.

ATMs: ATMs are not accessible outside of Havana, so ensure that you take enough cash for the trek and your stay in Trinidad – although the beach hotel in Trinidad is all inclusive, you may choose to go into the city by taxi and spend money there on food etc. There are no ATMs in Trinidad.

How much to bring: All accommodation, activities and meals are included in the cost of your challenge. We recommend that you take a sufficient amount of cash (around GBP£250), and try to request small denominations. Travellers' cheques or credit cards should be accepted in the hotels; however you will need cash (small denomination notes) in the haciendas for any drinks.

Tipping: Tipping is at your sole discretion and all staff is paid a fair wage. However, tourism is a tipping culture, and Cuban guides will generally receive a tip at the end of a job well done. If you choose to tip, we would suggest an amount of USD\$10-\$15 per participant per challenge day. Your leader will divide this amongst the local staff.

Visa

A full passport valid for a further 6 months is required and also a tourist card. This allows a stay of up to 30 days and one entry only. Charity Challenge will supply your tourist card with your flight tickets.

Vaccinations

For up to date vaccination information please check the NHS 'Fit for Travel' website: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>. Although the Charity Challenge team are travel professionals, they are not medical experts and we would encourage you to visit your GP or travel nurse to discuss vaccination

requirements. Your GP may ask questions about the specific locations that you are visiting in Cuba and as such it may be useful to take a copy of your itinerary with you.

Flights

You will be flying from London to Havana (possibly via Madrid) and returning via the same route. You will either fly from Gatwick or Heathrow, and this will be confirmed in your members' area as soon as the flight details are confirmed. The flight will take approx. 10hrs without any connection times. Your flight tickets will be issued to you at the airport. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm this via email with the Charity Challenge office at the time of your initial challenge booking, otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance). Please be aware if your flight is routed via Madrid you will not be able to bring back any duty free alcohol or liquids from Cuba, due to restrictions in place in Madrid. For more general flights questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have a suitable travel insurance policy whilst participating on the challenge. We have a special policy which covers among other things, medical (emergency, evacuation and repatriation) arrangements, cancellation and curtailment of the challenge, and more specifically for the adventurous activities undertaken on this challenge. If you have your own travel insurance policy, you must ensure that it provides at least the same level of cover as our recommended policy, including protecting the charity in the event of your cancellation 56 days or less prior to departure. If you choose not to purchase our recommended policy when you book we will send you a disclaimer which you should complete and return.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Group Size

Each group is intended to be a minimum of 16 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 30 people due to the wilderness environment in which the challenge takes place. We will be able to run this challenge for 10 to 15 people by charging a small group supplement of £75, which will be added to your final balance invoice (self-funders) or charged to your charity (minimum sponsorship or flexi).

Leadership

There will be an English-speaking challenge leader who will be responsible for the logistics and co-ordination of your challenge. There will also be numerous local support staff to assist them. The challenge leader will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

Climate

Cuba is generally hot and sunny. But it is a tropical climate and you may therefore experience tropical rain and very

occasionally storms. During the wet season it may be very humid. The hurricane season generally runs from May through to October.

Obviously, like the UK, the weather is changeable, and these are rough guidelines.

Terrain

Terrain is undulating, with some short uphill sections. Some roads are in poor conditions with potholes and gravel. On some days you will be cycling on main roads.

Luggage allowance and valuables

The luggage allowance will depend on the airline we are using for your challenge, but in general it will be one piece of checked baggage at around 23kg. However, we suggest that for our Cuban Trek you should only need around 15kg-17kg. If you don't need it, don't bring it, is a good rule. Carry any valuable with you at all times. There is a safe deposit box at the hotel in Trinidad, where you can place your valuables. Carry your passport with you and make sure you have a photocopy of your documents (travel insurance etc.) in case they get lost or damaged.

Responsible Tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism, and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. In addition to taking these practical steps to ensure that our challenges are sustainable, we also make a contribution each year to a number of local community projects, so as to give something back directly to the communities that we visit. Since 2000 we have donated almost £200,000 to such projects, supporting a range of initiatives, including schooling for children in Africa, shelter for street children in Brazil, and Orang-utan conservation in Indonesia. We recommend that any gifts brought over for children are given to the UK challenge leader and distributed where needed by them and our local Ground Agent. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and souvenirs from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income. For more information, please visit our Responsible Tourism pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

Typical day

You will rise early each day and pack your bags after breakfast, loading the support vehicle each day. You will ride each day for approximately 6-8 hours, with water stops and a long lunch stop to avoid the heat of the midday. On arrival in the afternoon into your accommodation, you will have time to relax and enjoy the (hopefully) sunny evening. Dinner and the day's debriefing are generally after sundown. Specific hours of activity for each day are given in the itinerary.

Accommodation

You will be staying in hotels throughout the challenge. The hotels, apart from in Havana and Trinidad, will be quite basic. You will be sharing in rooms of two with en-suite bathrooms. Please let Charity Challenge know if you are travelling with a friend or relative who you wish to share with. Please let Charity Challenge know if you are travelling with a friend or relative who you wish to share with. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with please ensure that you note this where appropriate when booking or email challenges@charitychallenge.com.

Food & Drink

Cuba has suffered from the American embargo, and there are shortages in most sectors of the economy. Often food is repetitive, with a heavy reliance on eggs and chicken. Rice or rice and beans accompany the main meat dish, along with a green salad and fried banana chips. Cerdo Asado; roasted pork, especially spit roasted is famous in the countryside and is delicious! Please let Charity Challenge know if you have any dietary requirements or allergies.

Clothing and equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For your cycle challenge, padded cycling shorts and comfortable footwear are essential, and helmets are compulsory throughout. Training with your cycling shorts is definitely advised! You can bring equipment like clip-in pedals or a gel seat, if desired, in order to adapt your bike in country, and we would also recommend technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts. A full kit list for this challenge can be found [here](#), once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire and Cotswold Outdoor.

Toilets

During your Cuban Revolution Cycle Challenge, you will be staying at hotels throughout with private toilet facilities. During the ride days these facilities will be limited to the great outdoors!

Phone and WiFi

Throughout the challenge, at the hotels you will be able to find a good telephone and internet reception. WIFI and internet is notoriously slow in Cuba so do not rely on this as a good form of communication.

Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of our participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up Challenge Safe, one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. Challenge Safe formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the challenge activity itself. Your welfare is absolutely paramount!

In terms of your Cuban Revolution Cycle, there are some important things you should be aware of:

- Smoke alarms are not compulsory in Cuba, and as such very few accommodation will include them. Your tour leader will explain the emergency procedures.
- You will be riding on the right-hand side of the road, through occasionally busy areas. Make sure that you are paying attention at all times.
- The brakes on the bikes may be on the opposite side to what you are used to in the UK. Take the first morning slow and steady until you get used to this.

Emergencies

The event is not run as a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's walking abilities. This is allowed for. There will be a staff member at the back of the group at all times to ensure that you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace.

Training

Training and fitness are definitely required. Anyone who leads a fairly active and moderately healthy lifestyle should be OK 'as long as they train regularly over a period of at least three months' leading up to the expedition. Don't forget that the temperature and the altitudes are different from the UK. While strength is important, endurance training should be your primary focus. Cycling up hills is a good way to condition your lower body. Begin slowly, without the weight of a pack, eventually adding weight as you increase your training pace. Take a long cycle(6-8 hours) several times with a weighted pack, up and down hills or on small mountains (weigh your pack with water containers and pour out the water before your descent to minimise knee stress).

Challenge Training

If you would like to get a feel for our challenges ahead of your departure, why not consider booking on a 1 or 2 day UK Challenge?

We have a variety of challenges, covering all levels of difficulty, taking place in stunning National Parks across the UK that are led by highly qualified and experienced expedition and mountain leaders. These challenges will give you the perfect opportunity to monitor fitness levels, test out your kit, meet people in the great outdoors, share fundraising stories and gain valuable advice and support for the challenge ahead. We encourage participants to make use of our highly knowledgeable leaders and ask them any questions you may have about clothing and equipment, expedition health and wellbeing, trekking skills, walking techniques and teamwork!

We are offering all participants **50% off** the registration fee when you book on one of the UK challenges listed via the link below. Just use the code **TRAINING** when booking. T&C's – you must have an active booking on a challenge to avail of this offer. Discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Find out more [here](#)



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It was the most challenging experience of my life but I wouldn't have missed a minute of it and I don't think I have ever had so much fun!

Philippa Kemp-Welch

“

I had the most amazing experience, challenging myself to do something (cycling) I hadn't done in a long time. Meeting new people and seeing a different side of a country I wouldn't necessarily have seen if I went on a normal trip there. Loved every minute, thank you Charity Challenge.

Jo Greenstreet

“

This challenge really met my expectations. A great challenging ride in a fascinating and beautiful country.

Susan Curran

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Any more questions?

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