

CUBA & THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS - WESTERN CUBA, 6 DAY



INTRODUCTION


The largest island in the Caribbean is widely known for its abundance of classic cars, cigars and rum, but there is so much more to see when you scratch beneath the surface and venture into the countryside. Begin and end your Cuban tour in the capital Havana and in the days in between visit farms and waterfalls in Soroa and Las Terrazas. Learn salsa (and then try out your new skills) in the picturesque town of Vinales and spend some serious beach time relaxing and swimming at Cayo Jutias. The tumbledown 1950s streets of the capital certainly also need a look in, so spend an evening in Havana soaking up the culture, tastes, sights and sounds of this beautiful city. You'll gain a huge appreciation for Cuba, a land where time has long slowed its pace.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Havana

Bienvenido a Cuba! Welcome to Cuba! You'll arrive in the old-fashioned and colourful capital of Havana. There will be a welcome meeting at approximately 6 pm this evening, to meet your group leader and fellow travellers. If you arrive early, please note most activities in Cuba can only be booked through the tourist desk in the lobbies of the larger hotels or direct with the venue. Why not take a stroll to get acquainted with Cuba's capital, where vintage cars, plumes of cigar smoke, Neo-Gothic churches and Art Deco theatres come together in a unique mesh of histories. Otherwise, there are plenty of good museums to check out, including the Museo de la Revolucion and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.




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DEPARTURE
Select Sundays
DURATION
6 Days
LOCATIONS
Not Available


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DAY 2: Soroa

Spend the morning enjoying a walking tour around Old Havana. This well-preserved part of the city was designated a World Heritage Site in 1982. The streets are lined with colonial architecture, 16th-century fortresses and many beautiful churches. Afterwards, take a private vehicle to Callejon de Hamel, an alley located in Havana's working class Cayo Hueso quarter. Adorned with the evocative Santeria murals of local artist Salvador Gonzalez, this lively street is Havana's centre of Afro-Cuban culture. You'll also head on a short drive and take a quick visit to the eccentric neighbourhood of Jaimanitas, in Havana's outer western suburbs. The artist Jose Fuster has brightened up the area by rebuilding and decorating over 80 houses (including his own) with ornate murals and domes. Even though you do not enter Fuster's House (known as Fusterlandia), you'll see why this is one of Havana's most peculiar sites. In the afternoon, head to Soroa, in the heavily forested Sierra del Rosario to check in to your guesthouse for the night. On your way, learn the lingo with your leader and practice some Spanish phrases to make interacting with the locals a breeze (or should we say brisa).




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DAY 3: Vinales

In the morning, enjoy a tour of a Soroa orchid garden, which boasts over 700 species of orchid. You'll also have the option to take a steep 1-kilometre climb up a mountain path to a lookout. Next, travel to the community of Las Terrazas, a pioneering ecovillage that dates back to a reforestation project in 1968. Meet some of the residents and learn how they work together to support their neighbours, as well as how they showcase their open studios, woodwork and pottery workshops. Head towards Vinales, stopping by Finca de Plantas Medicinales (a herb farm) to learn about local herbs and their medicinal properties. Because of historical sanctions against Cuba, the country has had to find ways to be self-sufficient, with a prime example being to develop its own medicines, many of which are herbal. You'll see how herbs are grown, dried and crushed before being sent to a factory to be processed into medicines. Afterwards, drive a short distance to the small town of Vinales in Pinar del Rio Province. On arrival, your leader will take you on a short orientation walk of the town.



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DAY 4: Vinales Day Two

This morning, take an early guided walking tour of surrounding farmlands and the Vinales valley. Surrounded by limestone cliffs and interspersed with small farms, the scenery around Vinales is some of the most picturesque in Cuba. The valley receives some of the highest amounts of rainfall in the country, and so, you'll see the limestone karts and valley floor covered in vegetation. Visit a local farm where you'll have the opportunity to experience the guajiro (agricultural worker) way of life. Depending on the season, you can choose to help out with daily farm activities, such as toasting and grinding coffee or harvesting yuca, corn or tobacco. This is also your opportunity to marvel at the speed and skill of the local's cigar rolling technique. In the afternoon, perhaps book in for a cave tour or a beach excursion to Cayo Jutias but be sure to get back in time for a relaxed salsa lesson with your group. After dancing your heart out, you would've worked up an appetite, so an optional dinner at one of Vinales' farm-to-table restaurants is highly recommended. Eat organic like the locals at an eco-friendly ranch and learn how Cubans have lived off their land for decades.



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DAY 5: Vinales to Havana


Today travel back to Havana by private vehicle (approximately 3 hours). You'll have a free afternoon to explore the city's Old Town and wander the harbourside esplanade called the Malecon. This esplanade also acts as a seawall and roadway, diving the historic French and Spanish-inspired architecture from the Straits of Florida. In the evening, head out on the town. Havana's nightlife is varied and lively, full of bars, clubs and places to see a cabaret show. Why not put your new salsa skills into practice on one of the city's many dancefloors?



DAY 6: Depart Havana

With no activities planned for today, you are free to depart your accommodation at any time. If you do have some extra time in Havana, why not book an Urban Adventures tour, like the Classic American Car Tour of Havana: a cruisy ride through the washed-out elegance of the city's suburbs, finishing in style with a drink at the Hotel Nacional (see urbanadventures.com/destination/havana-tours).



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard
Inclusions	<p>Accommodation in standard or guesthouse properties Internal transfers as indicated on itinerary Guiding by experienced bilingual guide Included excursions as listed on itinerary</p> <p>Exclusions International Flight Visa fees and reciprocity fees (if applicable) Travel insurance Gratuities for staff and guides</p>
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request, contact us for more details
Notes	Contact us for more details.
Price Dependent upon	Departure date, seasonality and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures' offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure's internal processes are also structured to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.

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