JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



DISCOVERY GROUP TOURS

PARAKEET: CUBA BEYOND THE BEACH

12 days from **£2,872pp**

CUBA / HAVANA / VIÑALES AND THE SIERRA DE LOS ORGANOS / CIENFUEGOS, SANTA CLARA AND BAY OF PIGS / TRINIDAD AND THE ESCAMBRAY MOUNTAINS



WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

- A passion for the region runs through all we do
- All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America
- Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

- Fully bonded and licensed
- ATOL-protected
- On your side when it matters
- Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

- Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks
- We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions
- Let us show you the Latin America we know and love

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

This Journey Latin America group tour travels overland across western Cuba visiting the highlights. Explore Trinidad a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Viñales, Cienfuegos, Santa Clara and evocative Havana. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office currently advises against travel to Cuba.

	UK clients depart on a flight, arriving Havana, Cuba, the same day.
DAY 1	**Overnight in the capital.**
DAY 2	**Walking and driving tour of old Havana.**
DAY 3	**Travel west to Viñales.**
DAY 4	**Excursions and walks in and around Viñales.**
DAY 5	**Journey via the Zapata Peninsula to Cienfuegos.**
DAY 6	**Explore Cienfuegos.**
DAY 7	**Arrive in the UNESCO world heritage Trinidad.**
DAYS 8-9	**Explore and relax in Trinidad and on nearby Caribbean beaches.**
DAY 10	**Drive to Santa Clara; visit Che Guevara's memorial.**
DAY 11	**Finish your tour back in Havana.**
DAY 12	**Depart on international flight.**

ITINERARY

This group tour trip begins in Havana, Cuba's inimitable capital, with its faded grandeur enlivened by the sound of salsa and rumba. You then head west to Viñales, a fertile valley punctuated with lumpy limestone mountains in the island's tobacco-growing region. From here journey south to Cienfuegos and on to the cobbled streets of colonial Trinidad, before visiting Santa Clara, home to Che Guevara's mausoleum.

Few would deny that Cuba is a unique holiday destination in a Caribbean Sea rich with gorgeous tropical islands. The turmoil and upheavals of its political and social history are overwhelmed by the sunny friendliness of the people and their love of music and dance.

UK clients depart on a flight, arriving Havana, Cuba, the same day.

DAY 1

Overnight in the capital.

You will be met at the airport by your local tour leader or a representative who will escort you to the group hotel.



DAY 2

Walking and driving tour of old Havana.



A guided tour of Old Havana will show you more of this fascinating city. The streets of La Habana Vieja were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982, and the subsequent restoration of this part of town has transformed it into arguably Latin America's finest colonial quarter, in marked contrast to the rambling, potholed streets and crumbling façades around it.

After a local cocktail jump in a vintage American car to be driven past some of the highlights of Havana including Revolution Square, the National Hotel, Capitol building and the former Presidential Palace. Between these grand buildings, pass pastel-hued mansions, observe the bustling street life and hear the music seeping out of every doorway. You'll have trouble keeping your hands off your camera as iconic images flash before you around each and every corner.

DAY 3

Travel west to Viñales.



In the morning continue west by road for 3 hours to Viñales, a small, rural town tucked away in the Sierra de los Órganos. The tree-shaded high street is lined with wooden colonnades and one-storey, red-roofed houses. Horse and carts clatter along the main road and local children play baseball with sticks and stones outside the dilapidated whitewashed church in the main square. There is a splendid old chemist's shop and a few other bare-shelved stores, as well as a couple of salsa bars which attract a lively crowd in the evening.

DAY 4

Excursions and walks in and around Viñales.

Viñales is set in a valley with a distinctive landscape, featuring domed limestone mountains, known as mogotes, which jut into the sky from a fertile plain. Using oxen and carts, local farmers cultivate the red soil of the valley floor for fruit, vegetables and tobacco, and the countryside is peppered with thatched curing barns for drying the tobacco leaves.

You have a guided walk through this beautiful valley. The trail passes alongside fields tilled by straw-hatted farmers and their oxen. You have the opportunity to visit a campesino family in their home and talk to them about life on the land, as well as visiting a tobacco farm to learn about the growing processes of one of Cuba's most important crops.



DAY 5

Journey via the Zapata Peninsula to Cienfuegos.

A journey of 4 to 5 hours brings you to the south of the island and the Zapata Peninsula. This region is full of unspoilt nature and luxuriant tropical vegetation, fringed by beautiful beaches. You will also visit the Girón Museum, a collection dedicated to the failed CIA-inspired invasion of Cuba in 1961 which became known as the Bay of Pigs. In the afternoon drive onto the elegant city of Cienfuegos.



DAY 6

Explore Cienfuegos.

The port city of Cienfuegos was founded by French settlers from Louisiana in 1819 giving it an air and architectural style that is distinct from that of the rest of the island.

You will have a walking tour of the city led by your tour leader to experience the easy-going ambiance of the city, which has well earned its sobriquet 'Pearl of the South'.



DAY 7

Arrive in the UNESCO world heritage Trinidad.



Just outside the city is the Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos. This Garden covers 97 hectares and is one of the most important and oldest botanical gardens in Cuba. You will stop here before travelling east to Trinidad, a picturesque town which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988.

Its popularity has not affected its colonial charm and unhurried atmosphere. Low-rise, brightly painted houses with vast shutters open out onto cobbled streets, palm trees dot the main plaza and life in the evenings goes on into the early hours with dancing and music outside the Casa de la Música.

DAYS 8-9

Explore and relax in Trinidad and on nearby Caribbean beaches.



A walking tour allows you to wander through Trinidad's cobbled streets and elegantly crumbling town houses which lead to vibrant plazas frequently filled with music and salsa dancing. As you visit the Plaza Mayor and Museo Romántico, you'll be introduced to the history of the town, which seems barely touched by the modern world.

There are also several optional excursions available. You might relax beneath the shade of a palm tree at Playa Ancón (11km from the town), a wide stretch of white sand on the Caribbean or Board a catamaran and cruise in style to Cayo Blanco or Cayo Macho.

The more active might travel to Topes de Collantes, a protected area of beautiful sylvan landscapes set in the Escambray Mountains where you can spot endemic flora and fauna and hike through the verdant, fertile landscapes to reach the Caburní waterfall or make your way to the simple, yet characterful Casa Artex dance hall to pick up some fancy new footwork during an hour-long salsa lesson.

DAY 10

Drive to Santa Clara; visit Che Guevara's memorial.



Leave the coast and head inland to Santa Clara (2.5 hrs). Over 55 years ago Che Guevara, assisted by just 18 guerrillas, captured the railway here, in a move that was instrumental in the triumph of the Revolution. Today, this vibrant university town is home to an excellent museum dedicated to the events of the late 1950s and to Che Guevara. There is time to visit the museum, Che's mausoleum and a monument and plaza dedicated to the man and the Revolution.

DAY 11

Finish your tour back in Havana.



A journey of 3 or 4 hours brings you back to Havana. The afternoon is free to further explore the atmospheric streets, visit some museums, do some last-minute shopping or simply relax with a mojito.

If you wish to explore more of Cuba by travelling east to Camaguey or spend some time at the cayes or beaches on the north coast you would leave the tour and continue with your private extension.

DAY 12

Depart on international flight.

UK clients arrive home the following day.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Havana: walking tour with vintage car
- Viñales: walks in the Viñales valley
- Zapata Peninsula: Giron Museum
- Cienfuegos: walking tour
- Trinidad: walking tour
- Santa Clara: Che's mausoleum

ESSENTIALS

To find out more about how our group tours including group sizes, solo travellers and why to choose us. Please click **here**.

On this tour, you'll be accompanied from start to finish by one of our exceptional local Cuban tour leaders. Owing to government restrictions on foreign tour leaders working in Cuba, we always use a pool of handpicked and JLA trained local leaders. From the moment you land in Cuba until the day the tour ends they will deal with all the practicalities, expertly adapting to the circumstances and individual needs of the group. Rather than different guides in different cities, your leader will get to know the group and keep you informed and entertained as you go.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

12 days, 11 nights: Havana 2; Viñales 2; Cienfuegos 2; Trinidad 3; Santa Clara 1; Havana 1.

ACCOMMODATION

We use a mixture of medium-class hotels, as well as private homestays. We must emphasise that in Cuba the standard of accommodation (and service) varies. All hotels have private facilities. In Trinidad you will be staying in casas particulares, or family homes. This system allows Cuban families to open up a few rooms to tourists. As each family has 2 or maybe 3 rooms, larger groups will be split among a number of different properties, but these will be located near one another and your tour leader will arrange meeting points and be on hand for assistance. Facilities within the houses vary; all have communal outside areas such as patios and roof terraces to relax in, and all offer excellent meals at additional cost. Due to Cuba's strict regulations, casas particulares or private homes which are open to tourists are of a relatively high standard, however they do not necessarily conform to recognised hotel standards. With tourism growing the casa particulares are increasing in scale and also in development meaning most now have fridges in the rooms and even TV's – something unheard of a few years ago. In all cases the rooms are clean and have private bathrooms with hot water. Staying in these is a great way to get an insight into the Cuban way of life and meet its friendly people.

Examples of the hotels include:

- Havana: Palacio de los Corredores
- Viñales: Nature Central
- Cienfuegos: La Union
- Trinidad: Casa Particulares
- Santa Clara: Central Villa Clara

Hotels are subject to change and are dependent on availability and more so then anywhere else in Latin America can change at the last minute.

TRANSPORT

5 road journeys (longest 5hrs with stops) all in private vehicles.

MEALS

Breakfast daily.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

On this tour the price includes excursions in all the places you visit as per the itinerary. There will however likely be some free time when you may choose to take part in an optional excursion. These are booked locally through your tour leader once you are in Latin America, however we are more than happy to advise you of what is on offer in advance of your holiday so you can best plan the excursions that suit you.

TRAVELLING ALONE

There is no extra cost for single travellers who are willing to share a room. You will be accommodated with another same-sex member of the group who is also travelling solo. For single travellers who wish to have their own room there are a limited number of single rooms available, which carry a surcharge.

CLIMATE

Cuba is generally hot throughout the year, although due to higher temperatures in the summer and also the risk of hurricanes we do not run this tour during that period.

A comprehensive overview of the weather in all the regions you are visiting can be found in our Destination pages. Our Travel Experts can answer your questions on climate and further details will be sent with your confirmation documents.

CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT AND LUGGAGE

A daypack is essential for carrying rainwear, snacks, books/tablet and a water bottle. Light, summer clothing will be adequate for this hot climate, and the dress code is very casual everywhere. Thin, long-sleeved garments may be useful for evenings, and a lightweight raincoat is the best protection against tropical downpours. Your footwear should include comfortable walking shoes or trainers and sandals. We recommend that you pack a torch as lighting can be poor at night.

MONEY

Please see the Country Info tab on this holiday for our latest currency information and advice about how to take your spending money. Tipping in Latin America is almost always done using cash. It is customary to tip tour leaders, local guides, drivers, boat crews and other service providers such as restaurant staff and porters. Full tipping guidelines are sent with your confirmation documents as is advice on local costs.

HEALTH, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND INSURANCE

For health information on travelling to Cuba including recommended vaccinations, please see https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/

A completed Cuban tourist card is essential for all UK citizens travelling to Cuba. The cost of this is included in the holiday price and the card will be issued with your final documents.

Travel insurance is essential and documentation must be shown so please take it with you. Details of our recommended policy can be found on the Travel insurance website.

Our full briefing dossier contains more information on vaccinations, visas and insurance and will be provided with your final travel documents or can be requested from your travel consultant at any time.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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