



**SADDLETRAVEL.COM**

## Western Cuba Explorer

Weight limit: 90 kilos

Nearest airport: Havana

8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding



Discover Cuba's unique cultural heritage on this trail through the Green Province. An extraordinarily fertile land and valley, used to produce the Habanos Cuban cigars, the lush and tropical vegetation in the region is also home to stunning mountainous landscapes and jungle-covered hills. This is a slow-paced ride for novice riders onwards who want to appreciate the culture and scenery from horseback. There is live music on many of the nights and riders

can enjoy the Cuban hospitality, sleeping in the guajiros (field workers) farms, having lunch together and drinking and dancing with the locals.

## The Riding

Three teams of horses are used during the course of the trip. Riders are not expected to assist with the care and tacking up of their horses but any help is welcome. The horses are crossed Cuba Appaloosas, Pinto Cubano and Criollos. They are safe and in good condition, suitable for the climate and terrain of the island. They range in size from 14.2hh to around 15.1hh. Western tack is utilised.

## Level of Riding and Fitness

Riders should be happy in walk, trot and should have cantered before. The riding is generally slow-paced and not technically difficult so novices are welcome. However there may be some short canters and some of the terrain is steep so this trail would not be suitable for a complete beginner.

General fitness is recommended as around five or six hours per day are spent in the saddle. The minimum age for this ride is 12 years.

## Guides & Group sizes

The group size is between 6-10. All rides are guided by owner and guide Rafael, a political science graduate who is fluent in Spanish, French and English.

## Horses & Tack

Horses are provided by three different stables during the course of the trip. Riders are not expected to assist with the care and tacking up of their horses but any help is welcome. The horses are crossed Cuba Appaloosas, Pinto Cubano and Criollos which range in size from around 14.2hh to 15.2hh. Western tack is used and saddlebags are provided.

## Accommodation & Dining

Accommodation ranges from boutique to basic. On some nights you will be in a double room with en-suite and on others you will be in a multi-dorm room with 2 bathrooms for the group. All accommodation owners are friendly and local and will provide a welcoming environment for the evening. Meals are healthy and plentiful but riders should be aware that often meals are later than we would have in the UK. It is not unusual to have lunch around 3 or 4 pm for example. All meals have lots of fruit and vegetables which are served along with Cuban staples of rice, beans, beef, chicken and pork. Wine is not readily available in Cuba but riders can purchase wine in town to take along on the trail if they want to. Good beer and rum is available everywhere.



## Itinerary

### **Day 1**

Arrive in Cuba and head to the Hotel Presidente in Havana for a welcome reception with your guide Rafael and the other riders. Dinner in a local paladar (family restaurant). Accommodation at Hotel Presidente or similar, close to the Malecon of Havana.

## **Day 2**

After breakfast, transfer to the Finca Charco Azul (1h) in Cayajabos, at the south of Pinar del Río province and the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve. After a welcome cocktail, a 3 hour ride through this Finca of about 400 hectares. Lunch will be served at the finca after an optional dip in the swimming pool. Transfer to Mil Cumbres (2h30m drive). Dinner and accommodation at the Mil Cumbre's Refuge. Tonight will be your first introduction to live, traditional, Cuban music.

## **Day 3**

After breakfast, you'll head out on a 5 hour ride through the mountains of Cuabal and Pan de Guajaibón, which has an altitude of 692m and is the highest point in the Pinar del Río province. You'll stop for a welcome cocktail in the house of a local "Guajiro" family before continuing through the mountains and valleys characterised by lush vegetation and protected species of birds and trees. After lunch, transfer to Viñales (1h drive). Dinner in a local paladar (family restaurant). Accommodation at the Hotel Los Jazmines or similar depending on availability. Optional night out at Casa de la Trova (musical show).

## **Day 4**

After breakfast, transfer to the horses for a 5-hour ride through the Viñales and Palmarito Valleys. Climb up along a bridlepath to El Mirador del Valle, where you can drink a guarapo, a refreshing sugar cane juice, while enjoying a magnificent panoramic view over the tobacco plantations and mountains. During the ride you'll stop in some of the rural communities where cigar-making is the main industry. Lunch on the terrace of a nice restaurant before transferring to Finca La Guabina (a 1 hour drive). Dinner and accommodation at Finca La Guabina with a traditional Cuban musical evening.

## **Day 5**

After breakfast, head out on the horses again to explore the beautiful landscape of the Finca. After lunch, riders can relax at the farm or enjoy a talk about the wonderful Appaloosa and Pinto horses of the farm. Dinner and accommodation at Finca La Guabina. Traditional Cuban musical evening.

## **Day 6**

After breakfast, it's time for a 3 hour ride to discover the plains of the Finca with its royal palm trees, rice fields and tropical fruit plantations, like guava and pineapple. Lunch in the Finca before transferring back to Havana. Dinner at a famous restaurant in El Vedado district. Accommodation at Hotel Presidente or similar.

### **Day 7**

After breakfast in Havana, transfer to a beachside Finca beside the beaches of Playas del Este (a 30 minute drive). Enjoy a final 3-hour ride to the beach for a swim and a seafood lunch at a local restaurant. Transfer back to Havana in time for a farewell dinner with a great musical show. Accommodation at the Hotel Presidente or similar.

### **Day 8**

Breakfast at the hotel before having a free day for sightseeing in Havana. Transfer to the airport at 18:00.



### **Flights & Airport transfers**

Fly into Havana's Jose Marti International Airport, Havana (HAV) on the first day. A one way group transfer is included to Jose Marti airport on the last day of the programme for clients departing at 6pm or later. Arrival transfer from Havana airport is not included, taxi cost is approximately 730 Pesos (£25).

## What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing and your helmet in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride.

Please use the packing list as a guideline, bearing in mind the time of year you are riding.

Riding trousers

Short riding boots or similar (need to have a heel and be comfortable for hiking)

Hard hat

Riding hat with brim

Half chaps

Riding gloves

Sunglasses

Sunblock

Insect repellent

Lip Balm with sunscreen

Personal toiletries

Medications

Camera

T-shirts and shorts

Spanish phrase book

Lightweight long sleeve shirts

Sweater or sweatshirt

Informal wear for evenings

Plastic bag for wet clothing

Lightweight rainwear

Copy of passport

Sandals

Additional passport photos

Swimwear

Beach towel

## Climate

Cuba has a warm tropical climate which makes it an ideal destination especially during the months of November to April, dry season months in Cuba. During this period of the year, Cuba

enjoys a lot of sunshine with only a scattering of intermittent rain-showers brought about by northeasterly trade winds blowing in from the sea.

## Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at the National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.



## Travel documents

For entry requirements to Cuba for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/cuba/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

## Currency & Tipping

The Cuban National Peso (CUP known as 'moneda nacional') is the only legal cash currency in Cuba, although private hotels, bars and restaurants usually accept cash payments in dollars or euros. You should not take CUP out of the country and should allow plenty of time to change any remaining Cuban currency at the airport. There may be limited international currencies available at that time so you may not be able to change all the Cuban currency that you have. It is recommended to have Euros, pounds sterling or Canadian dollars for cash payments in duty free shops or cafes in the departure area after immigration.

You should not change money anywhere other than at Cadeca exchange houses, large hotels or banks, due to the prevalence of forged currency. Check with your bank before you travel to confirm that your debit and credit cards will work in Cuba. If your bank can't confirm this then you should bring cash, or travellers cheques. Bank notes should be in good condition with no tears, rips or markings. It is very difficult to exchange US dollars in Cuba and travellers cheques and credit cards drawn on American banks aren't widely accepted. There are virtually no ATMs available for drawing cash against Cirrus or Switch cards. Credit card transactions, including withdrawals from ATMs, are subject to local commission charges of approximately 3% in addition to your bank transaction charges. Many international hotel shops now only accept payment by credit card, and not in CUP.

## Cancellation policy

### Payment & Cancellation Terms

[saddletravel.com](http://saddletravel.com)

Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50% 30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Book with confidence – Covid Guarantee:

If a ride operator is closed or you are unable to travel – due to lockdown:

1/ The deposit is reissued as a rebooking voucher to rebook anytime.

2/ Any balance payment will be refunded to you in full within 1 week of departure date.

## Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.



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