



CSC, c/o Unite, T&G Woodberry
218 Green Lanes, London N4 2HB
Tel. 0208 800 0155
office@cuba-solidarity.org.uk
www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

Dear Friend

Cycle Cuba Challenge
21 April – 03 May 2010
Supporting Music Fund for Cuba

Thank you for your recent enquiry about Cuba Solidarity Campaign's unique and exciting **Cycle Cuba Challenge 2010**. This year, all proceeds will go to the **Music Fund for Cuba** (www.musicfundforcuba.org.uk). Music Fund for Cuba is a registered charity (Reg 1096283) supported by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and first established in memory of Kirsty MacColl in 2001. Monies raised will go towards the **Teatro Miramar Project**, a community theatre which is being restored through monies raised by the Music Fund for Cuba. The cycle group will also deliver essential educational and musical equipment to a school for visually impaired children in Havana where we will be guaranteed a rousing reception from the school salsa band. We have run an annual sponsored cycle challenge in Cuba since 1999. Many intrepid challengers have taken part in these events and successfully raised funds for vital educational and medical aid projects in Cuba, including over 10,000 asthma inhalers to a children's hospital, specialist Braille printers and speaking watches to a school for visually impaired children.

Cycle Cuba Challenge runs 355 kilometres from San Antonio de los Baños to San Diego de los Baños in La Güira National Park. The route passes through the lush forests of Sierra del Rosario and Las Terrazas, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, through the tobacco fields of Pinar del Río following the Viñales Valley, with its soaring limestone *mogotes*, onto the Gulf of Mexico with its pristine white sandy beaches. The route passes through dramatic scenery and along quiet rural roads with opportunities to experience vibrant Cuban culture at first hand. To celebrate a wonderful group achievement we have received a special invitation to participate in the May Day Rally in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución, with its iconic images of Che Guevara. We will parade our bikes through the Plaza in front of Raúl Castro and other dignitaries and alongside over 1 million Cubans, with flags and banners flying high.

To be part of **Cycle Cuba Challenge** simply complete the enclosed registration form, medical questionnaire and Havanatour booking form and return them with your registration fee of £199. You will then need to raise the minimum sponsorship entry level of £2,300.00. We will give you plenty of fundraising tips and we're only a phone call away if you need any help.

Go on, grab the experience of a lifetime and register today. When you are cycling through a beautiful rural Cuban landscape by day and dancing to intoxicating salsa rhythms by night you won't regret it. **Cycle Cuba Challenge** is a great way to be involved in Music Fund for Cuba's exciting **Teatro Miramar Project** and deliver essential educational equipment direct to young Cuban school children.

***** If two people book together the registration fee is only £99 per person *****

The tour costs include return flights with Virgin Atlantic from London Gatwick direct to Havana, UK Departure Tax, Cuban Tourist Card (visa), 11-night's accommodation based on two people sharing twin rooms with en suite facilities, entrance to all visits and excursions (other than those marked as optional) and all meals listed in the itinerary. There are comprehensive back up and support services throughout the Challenge.

- Dedicated support team including a cycle tour manager, a fully qualified mechanic and doctor, who work with the Cuban national cycle team, and an English speaking Havanatour guide.
- 100% vehicle support, including front and rear support vehicles.
- Transfers in air-conditioned coach.
- Luggage and cycle spare parts carried on support vehicles.
- 4L of bottled water per cyclist per cycling/hiking day.
- Detailed route descriptions and daily briefing sessions.
- Hotel accommodation based on two people sharing a twin room with en suite facilities. Hotels are equivalent to 2/3/4 star standard and all but 2 have swimming pools.
- Single room supplements available
- Full board, except 3 lunches & 3 evening meals. Pack lunch on cycle days.
- Specialist visits to Teatro Miramar restoration project, a school for visually impaired children, a health care centre and a local community project.
- Guided cultural and historical visits, including Santo Tomás caves, a hot sulphur bath, Che Guevara's secret underground HQ during Cuban missile crisis, a walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage site and Museum of the Revolution.
- Celebratory evening meal at a top Havana restaurant.
- **Special invitation to participate in the May Day Rally in Plaza de la Revolución addressed by Raúl Castro.**

To secure your place:

- Please ensure that you have fully read and understood the enclosed literature, including Conditions of Entry and Havanatour Booking Conditions.
- Complete and sign the Registration Form, Medical Questionnaire and Havanatour Booking Form.
- Enclose your non-refundable £199 registration fee. Cheques made payable to **Music Fund for Cuba**.

After receipt of your registration fee we will send you:

- Sponsorship forms and a detailed fundraising pack including ideas and suggestions to help you reach your sponsorship goal.
- A suggested training schedule.
- Cycle Cuba Challenge T-shirt.
- A pre-departure information dossier including cycling in Cuba guidelines and recommended kit list.

You will need to bring your own bike and cycle helmet, which must be worn at all times whilst cycling. The cycling is all on road. Mountain and hybrid bikes are ideal for this challenge but a good strong tourer will suffice. We recommend a wide range of gears, with a good low ratio. Full kit and

equipment details will be sent to you after registration. You should have experience of cycling on roads and be generally fit and healthy. It is recommended that you follow a training schedule before departure.

Cycle Cuba Challenge is run by Cuba Solidarity Campaign in association with Havanatour (ATOL 4636).

Many thanks for your interest in **Cycle Cuba Challenge 2010** and I hope that you will be able to join us cycling to the salsa beat and raising funds for **Music Fund for Cuba**.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call me on 020 8800 0155 or email me on tours@cuba-solidarity.org.uk

With very best regards

Simon Bull
Tours Manager

CYCLE CUBA CHALLENGE 2010 ITINERARY

TRIP PROFILE

A fully supported point-to-point road tour in the western provinces of the island. The total cycling distance is 355 kilometres over 6 days. The average distance per cycling day is 60km and the longest day is 71km. The route is classified as moderate to challenging. The terrain ranges from undulating to hilly with several steep and demanding climbs and downhill descents. Though many roads are in fair condition you should expect lots of potholes and poor surface conditions on some sections. There is a 10km section with unmade road surfaces on the last cycle day. The roads are tarmac and generally free of heavy traffic. It is suitable for recreational riders and above, or fit and confident novices who are comfortable on a bike. Mid-level fitness is required, for example running, cycling or swimming 2-3 times a week. Cuba is hot and humid, with average national temperatures of 29°C in April.

There is vehicle support at all times, enabling you to take a lift at any point if you get tired. You cycle at your own pace and together with the programmed cultural visits you will gain an insight into present day Cuban society not available to many tourists. Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean. It has a diverse and fascinating culture. There is an irresistible blend of dramatic scenery, vibrant colours of a lush tropical landscape and stunning colonial architecture. The images and symbols of the Cuban Revolution mix with left over icons of American 50's culture. Buicks and Chevrolets, with gleaming chrome and extravagant fins, cruise the streets redolent of an earlier era. An impressive health care system, posters of revolutionary figures and a wealth of rural schools with happy children in their bright red and white uniforms illustrate more recent events. Imagine fading pastel coloured colonial facades, the infectious laughter of school children and an unstoppable salsa beat playing on the warm breeze and you have the sights, sounds and rhythms of Cuba.

FLIGHT TIMES

Outbound: Wednesday 21 April. Virgin Atlantic VS063 departs London Gatwick South Terminal 11:45. Check in at 08:45. Arrives Havana 16:25 local time.

Inbound: Sunday 02 May. Virgin Atlantic VS064 departs Havana 19:10. Arrives London Gatwick 09:25 on Monday 03 May. **Flight times are subject to final confirmation by the airline.**

ITINERARY

21 April. Arrive Havana. Transfer to Hotel Nacional. Dinner.

22 April. Havana. Introductions to the Challenge Support Team and initial Briefing Meeting. Later, we take a fascinating walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a wealth of impressively restored colonial buildings and intriguing historic sites. We will enjoy lunch at El Patio situated in the inspiring Plaza de la Catedral de San Cristóbal. Meal Plan: Breakfast and lunch.

23 April. San Antonio de los Baños to Soroa. 71km. The first day's cycling includes some steep climbs along the Sierra del Rosario. The landscape is dotted with tall majestic royal palms and *Tiñosas*, turkey vultures, soaring overhead on the thermal currents. We pass through the lush forests of Las Terrazas, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. On arrival in Soroa, nicknamed the 'rainbow of Cuba' there is an optional visit to the famous orchid garden. Meal Plan: Breakfast, pack lunch and dinner.

24 April. Soroa to San Diego de los Baños. 61km. In the morning, on route over an undulating terrain, we will have the opportunity to visit a rural Policlínico, a local health care centre, and see first hand some of Cuba's many achievements in health care. At the end of today's cycle, we have the opportunity to revitalise tired muscles with an invigorating immersion in hot sulphurous waters from natural mineral springs at the local spa complex. Meal Plan: Breakfast, pack lunch and dinner.

25 April. San Diego de los Baños to Pinar del Río. 52km. Revitalised and ready to go, today's route is undulating and continues along the old Carretera Central passing through several busy, bustling market towns of this rich agricultural region. We share the road with tractors, oxen and shy, smiling cowboys on a cattle drive. In the evening there is an optional visit to Casa de la Música, a traditional Cuban music venue, to listen to those intoxicating salsa rhythms and take our first tentative salsa steps. Meal Plan: Breakfast, pack lunch and dinner.

26 April. Pinar del Río to Viñales. 44km. Before remounting our bikes we visit a local cigar factory to watch the cigar rolling and packing process. Today's route passes through a quintessential Cuban landscape with small *bohíos* (farmhouses) and *guajiros* (farmers) tending their fields with ox drawn plough. At El Moncada, we change our helmets for headlamps and explore Cuba's largest cave system and visit nearby monument to Los Malagones, Cuba's first revolutionary militia group who eliminated a counterrevolutionary band in 1959. Meal Plan: Breakfast, pack lunch and dinner.

27 April. Viñales to Cayo Jutías. 63km. The terrain is hilly as we climb through the Viñales Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, punctuated by soaring limestone *mogotes* rising up from the valley floor like massive haystacks. We pass distinctive tobacco fields with characteristic deep red earth and drying barns full of tobacco leaves. Crossing the causeway, over turquoise blue waters, we are rewarded with a dip in the crystal clear waters of the Gulf of Mexico. In the evening we have an invitation to attend an informal meeting with the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR) with local families, from grandparents to grandchildren. After welcoming speeches, we will have the opportunity to chat with local families and gain a valuable insight into present day Cuban society and add some new steps to our rapidly expanding repertoire. Meal Plan: Breakfast, pack lunch and dinner.

28 April. Viñales to San Diego de los Baños. 64km. The last day's cycling follows a hilly terrain. Cycling along the single main streets of small villages, we pass Cuban grandparents sitting on the verandas of their wooden houses exchanging memories. Maize dries on the pavements in the hot sun. Passing through an area of sweet smelling coffee plantations we stop for lunch at Los Portales, the secret HQ of the legendary Che Guevara during the Cuban missile crisis. Keep a look out for the Toco-ro, the national bird whose feathers reflect the colours of the Cuban flag, as we continue through La Güira National Park. After 355 exhilarating kilometres we reach the finish line back at San Diego de los Baños, a laid-back, tranquil old spa town. Meal Plan: Breakfast, pack lunch and dinner.

29 April. Havana. After breakfast we transfer back to Havana and visit the Teatro Miramar project, a community theatre restoration project being undertaken by Music Fund for Cuba. Lunch will be included at the famous Bodequita del Medio in Old Havana. Meal Plan: Breakfast and lunch.

30 April. Havana. We attend a donation presentation at the school for visually impaired young children where we have the opportunity to meet staff and students and see first hand how the educational equipment will be used. We are guaranteed a rousing reception and gifted musical performance from the school salsa band. In the afternoon, we visit the Museum of the Revolution, including the Granma yacht memorial. Meal Plan: Breakfast.

01 May. Havana. The group has a special invitation to participate in the May Day Rally, addressed by Raúl Castro and attended by over one million Cubans in Revolution Square, with its iconic images of Che Guevara. A truly inspiring and memorable event. We intend to parade our bikes through Plaza de la Revolución with our flags and banners flying high. That evening, we are rewarded with a glorious opportunity to celebrate a tremendous group achievement at our famous celebratory meal at one of the capital's finest restaurants and an optional visit to a top salsa nightspot to relax and enjoy the rhythms of Havana, the salsa capital of the world. Meal Plan: Breakfast and dinner.

02 May. Havana. Free morning for further independent exploration of this fascinating capital city. Early afternoon transfer to the airport for the return flight, arriving London Gatwick the following day. Meal Plan: Breakfast.

CYCLE CUBA CHALLENGE 2010 CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Please read in conjunction with the Havanatour Booking Conditions

1. You must be at least 16 years old before the date of departure.
2. You are required to pay a non-refundable registration fee of £199.
3. You agree to raise a minimum sponsorship of £2,300. This includes the costs of the challenge. Full sponsorship monies must be paid by **10 March 2010**. At least £1,150 per person, based on 30 participants and £199 registration fee, will go towards Teatro Miramar Project and purchasing educational equipment for Cuban schoolchildren.
4. You must be fit enough to undertake the Cuba Cycle Challenge and be prepared to complete a questionnaire regarding your medical history. If you are over 65 years of age or have any medical condition that could be adversely affected by this event you will be required to provide a doctor's letter stating that you have a suitable level of health and fitness to participate. A copy must be forwarded to Havanatour UK before departure.
5. You are responsible for ensuring that you have sufficient supplies of any medication that you are taking and all the necessary vaccinations for travel to Cuba. It is your responsibility to take the requisite medical advice.
6. The Cuba Solidarity Campaign and Havanatour reserves the right to refuse entry to any individual who is deemed medically unfit to take part.
7. Participation in the event is at your own risk and you agree to indemnify Cuba Solidarity Campaign and Havanatour against claim for loss of or damage to personal property, accidents, personal injury or death howsoever arising and any claim arising from your own actions.
8. You must provide your own bicycle and cycle helmet. Cycle helmets **must** be worn at all times whilst cycling.
9. If we are unable to allocate a twin room due to odd numbers of participants, then a single room supplement will be payable by any participant placed in a single room.
10. You must obtain appropriate travel insurance, upon the basis that it covers cycle touring. The policy must provide adequate cover for the payment of the costs and expenses relating to medical treatment, repatriation costs, loss of or damage to personal items and claims made by third parties.
11. You must hold a current 10-year passport with at least 6 months to run from the date of departure from Cuba. A Cuban Tourist Card (visa) will be provided to participants.
12. If you cancel, all sponsorship forms must be returned to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and donations already received to the relevant donors. Monies can be donated to the Music Fund for Cuba if the sponsors agree.