

Dear Challenger

MUSIC FUND FOR CUBA
Cycle Cuba Challenge
22 April – 03 May 2013



Thank you for your recent enquiry about Cuba Solidarity Campaign's unique and exciting Cycle Cuba Challenge 2013. All proceeds will go to the **Music Fund for Cuba** (www.musicfundforcuba.org.uk), 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 purchasing essential educational equipment for young visually impaired Cuban school children. Many essential items are in critical short supply. The cycle group will deliver aid directly 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 20,000 asthma inhalers, 50,000 contact lenses to a children's hospital, specialist Braille printers, musical equipment and speaking watches to a school for visually impaired children and a restoration project of a community theatre in Havana.

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

The Challenge runs 310 kilometres from Soroa to Cayo Jutiás and back to San Diego de los Baños in La Güira National Park. The route passes through the lush forests of Sierra del Rosario, 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. From the finishing line we return to Havana, where we have received a special invitation to participate in the inspiring May Day Rally in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución, with its iconic images of Che Guevara, alongside over 1 million Cubans with flags and banners flying high. We celebrate a wonderful group achievement with our famous celebratory meal at a top Havana restaurant.

To be part of the Challenge simply complete and return the enclosed registration forms with your registration fee of £199. You will then need to raise the minimum sponsorship entry level of £2,699. We will give you plenty of fundraising tips and we're only a phone call away if you need any help.

***** 2 people booking together can register for only £99 per person *****

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 an intoxicating salsa rhythm by night you won't regret it. Cycle Cuba Challenge is a great way to be involved in delivering essential educational equipment direct to young visually impaired Cuban school children.



The tour costs include return flights with Virgin Atlantic from London Gatwick direct to Havana, UK Departure Tax, 10-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, who works with the Cuban national cycle team, and an English speaking local guide.
- 100% vehicle support. Transfers in air-conditioned coach.
- Luggage and spare parts carried on support vehicle.
- 4L of bottled water per cyclist per cycling day.
- Detailed route descriptions and daily briefing sessions.
- Hotel accommodation equivalent to 3 star standards.
- Full board, except 3 lunches & 3 evening meals. Pack lunch on cycle days.
- Special invitation to participate in the May Day Rally in Plaza de la Revolución addressed by Raúl Castro and attended by over 1 million Cubans.
- Specialist visits to Teatro Miramar restoration project, a school for visually impaired children, a local health care centre and a neighbourhood community project.
- Guided cultural and historical visits, including Che Guevara's secret underground HQ during the 1962 October Crisis, Museum of the Revolution and a walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Celebratory evening meal at the end of the challenge.

What is not included: Cuban Tourist Card, currently £15, travel insurance, Havana airport departure tax (CUC25 as at October 2012), single room supplement if required (£200 per person) and any visits listed as optional.

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.
- An information dossier including recommended kit list.

You will need to bring your own bike and cycle helmet. The cycling is all on road. Mountain, tourer and hybrid bikes are ideal for this challenge. We recommend a wide range of gears, with a good low ratio. You should have experience of cycling on roads and be generally fit and healthy. It is recommended that you follow the suggested training schedule before departure.

CYCLE CUBA CHALLENGE 2012 ITINERARY



TRIP PROFILE

A fully supported point-to-point road tour in the central provinces of the island. The total cycling distance is approximately 310kms over 5 days. The average distance per cycling day is 62kms and the longest day is 80kms. 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. 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 28°C in April/May.

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: 22 April. Virgin VS063 departs London Gatwick South Terminal 11:15. Check in at 08:15. Arrives Havana 16:00 local time.

Inbound: 02 May. Virgin VS064 departs Havana 19:15. Arrives London Gatwick 09:00 on Friday 03 May.

All flight times are subject to final confirmation by the airline.

ITINERARY

Day 1. Havana. Transfer to Hotel Plaza in Old Havana. Introductions to the Challenge Support Team and initial Briefing Meeting.

Day 2. Soroa. Transfer to Soroa, the 'Rainbow of Cuba'. Assemble and test ride bikes. Optional visit to the famous orchid garden.

Day 3. Soroa to San Diego de los Baños. 59km. The first day's cycling over undulating terrain. The landscape is dotted with tall majestic royal palms and *Tiñosas*, turkey vultures, soaring overhead on the thermal currents. We visit a rural Policlínico, a local health care centre, on route and see first hand some of Cuba's many achievements in health care. At the end of today's cycle, we have the optional opportunity to revitalise tired muscles with an invigorating immersion in hot sulphurous waters from natural mineral springs at the local spa complex.

Day 4. San Diego de los Baños to Pinar del Río. 53km. 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 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.

Day 5. Pinar del Río to Puerto Esperanza. 55km. Today's route passes through a quintessential Cuban landscape with small *bohíos* (farmhouses) and *guajiros* (farmers) tending their fields with ox drawn plough. In the evening there is an optional visit to Casa de la Música, a traditional Cuban music venue, to groove to those intoxicating salsa rhythms.

Day 6. 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.

Day 7. Viñales to San Diego de los Baños. 80km. The last day's cycling follows a hilly terrain with sections of broken road surfaces. 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 1962 October 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 310 exhilarating kilometres we reach the finish line back at San Diego de los Baños, a laid-back, tranquil old spa town.

Day 8. 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. We attend a donation presentation at Abel Santamaría School for visually impaired 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.

Day 9. Havana. 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 and visit the Museum of the Revolution, including the Granma yacht memorial.

Day 10. Havana. The group has a special invitation to join over a million Cubans taking part in the May Day celebrations, one of the most important events in the Cuban political calendar. A truly inspiring event in Plaza de la Revolución with its iconic images of Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos. We celebrate a tremendous group achievement at an authentic Cuban restaurant and have an optional opportunity to visit a glitzy nightclub to relax and enjoy the salsa magic of Havana.

Day 11. 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.

CYCLE CUBA CHALLENGE 2013 CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Please read in conjunction with the Havanatour Booking Conditions

1. You must be at least 16 years old before 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 £2,699. This includes the costs of the challenge. All sponsorship monies must be paid by 18 March 2013.
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 certificate stating that you have a suitable level of health and fitness to participate. A copy must be forwarded to Cuba Solidarity Campaign 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. The Cuban Ministry of Tourism require all visitors to Cuba to have a valid comprehensive travel insurance policy, including full medical cover. You must check with the insurance provider that your policy is recognised and valid in Cuba. An insurance cover note must be carried to Cuba and presented to immigration authorities if requested. 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 and cover cycle touring.
11. You must hold a current 10-year passport with at least 2 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 Music Fund For Cuba and donations already received to the relevant donors. Monies can still be donated to the Music Fund For Cuba if the sponsors agree.