Salsa in Cuba - 7 nights

The ultimate Salsa experience, a wonderful week of Cuban music and culture in the company of our local Cuban dance team. Let us show you how to dance Cuban style with professional tuition by day and nights out in Havana's best Salsa clubs.

| Dates and Prices | 17 March to 24 March - £1,599.00 |

Unique Features

A team of professional Cuban dancers all supplied by us. What makes our Cuban Salsa trips different to the rest of our Salsa programme is our team of Cuban dancers who supply us to come out with you at night to the dance venues in Havana. This means that there are more dance partners to go round and enables you to dance with not just Cubans but Cuban trained dancers! Cuban Salsa is about truly "inhabiting" your body, really dancing WITH your partner and feeling the music in your soul. You will find that there is more fluidity and body movement compared to LA, New York and UK Salsa due to Cuban Salsa being at one with Salsa's ancestors - Son, Rumba, Afro-Cuban dance, Cha Cha Cha and Mambo. Our team of Cuban instructors truly want to see you dance like a Cuban, and will work with you on the "feel" of the fluid Cuban body movement, as well as on the moves and the footwork.

Your Holiday

Salsa in Cuba - what more could you ask for? This holiday is designed to completely immerse you in Cuban culture and the Cuban dance scene, both of which are energetic, very real and spontaneous. It's all about forgetting who you are, where you come from and living in the moment. Enjoy 15 hours of Salsa classes with some of the most exciting Cuban Salsa teachers and dancers in Havana. We have a whole team dedicated to assist you in the classes in the mornings, take you to the best Salsa matinee afternoon dance sessions in the afternoons and accompany you at night dancing with you until late in intimate clubs, where the dancing is often energised by bands.

What's Included

- A thoroughly entertaining syllabus in salsa (Minimum 15 hrs - see Classes and Workshops)
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- A beautifully organised programme of nights out with our team of Cuban dancers who really spice it up (payable locally)
- Full hosting on the ground who are experts in salsa and in Cuba.
- Return direct flights with Virgin Atlantic Gatwick / Havana.
- Meet and Greet upon arrival and return hotel transfers.
- 7 nights accommodation and breakfast in the luxurious 5* Hotel National - the best in Havana.
- A well thought out programme including parties, soirees, restaurants, nights out dancing as well sight seeing suggestions.
- A full Orientation Pack containing information on where to eat, where to party, tourist spots and attractions for independent sight-seeing.
- A Welcome party and drink.
- A choice of optional extras.

What previous Customers Have Said about this Holiday

"I would like to say that the holiday was absolutely smashing - I especially enjoyed the Havana parts of the holiday - the hotel was wonderful, the dance troupe absolutely super (gold stars all around) and Ramon, our guide, exceeded all expectations being informative, friendly and looking out for us at busy social functions"

'We are not normally given to writing thank you letters, or using superlatives, but we have just returned from your Salsa dancing holiday in Cuba, and feel compelled to write and say that this was just an amazing experience, and one of the best holidays ever!!'.

'We were able to see so many different aspects of Cuba that as a solo tourist we would never have seen! Fantastic'.

'It was a brilliant experience, especially since we had the chance to go out with Cubans'

'Brilliant. Partied for 2 weeks. Cubans are all 'locos'! and good company.'

'Real eye-opening experience on Cuban society and culture.'

'Classes were excellent with professional dancers who were fun and friendly'

'I cannot think of a better introduction to Cuban culture, music and dance!!'

'An exhilarating blend of dance and experience of Cuban life. Wonderful'

Is this holiday for me?

If you love to have a good time and enjoy meeting new people in the setting of a fascinating, friendly country with year-round sunshine then yes! Our Cuban Salsa holidays are suitable for dancers of all abilities and ages - from complete beginners to advanced we can guarantee that you will enjoy our expertly organised programme of dance classes and evening entertainment, all in the company of a great group of like-minded people and professionally trained Cuban dancers who inject a real sense of fun into the entire trip.

Your Destination, includes sightseeing

Havana, the first grand city built by Europeans in the New World, retains the grandeur and charm of a history that spans nearly 500 years. When New York was still a collection of huts Havana was a cosmopolitan city with palaces and squares, with a high society already famous for its dances.

Admire the famous Cathedral in Old Havana built in 1748. Visit the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the residence of the Spanish Captain General who ruled Cuba from 1791-1898 and the Castillo Real de la Fuerza, built between 1558-77, one of the oldest surviving colonial fortresses in the Americas and home to Giralda, the symbol of Cuba, as seen on the label of Havana Club rum.

See the Capitolio Nacional, a huge marble building modelled on the Capitol building in Washington and visit the Museo de la Revolucion, formerly the presidential palace. Wander along El Malecon, the famous waterfront of Havana. Pay a literary pilgrimage to the Hotel Ambos Mundos where Ernest Hemingway wrote the novel "For Whom the Bell Tolls".

When you're cultured out stroll along the Malecon and sample an ice cream from the famous Coppelia ice cream parlour, watch the strutting peacocks in the Hotel Nacional's garden, drink a mojito in La bodeguita and a daiquiri in La Floridita and take a cab ride in a 1950s Cadillac. And, of
course, dance salsa. Visit Havana's nightclubs to learn to dance like a Cuban, with uninhibited passion.

As Graham Greene said of Havana "Anything is possible".

Climate and weather

Weather: The Cuban climate is mild subtropical. East to west oriented it receives plenty of sunshine, warm temperatures and refreshing sea breezes. No wonder that Columbus thought that he had discovered the earthly paradise! Don't forget that humidity is relatively high - in August it can be at 80%!

Average Temperatures:

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Your Accommodation

**Nacional de Cuba - Hotel**** (Bed & Breakfast) (Included)**

You will be staying at the five star Hotel Nacional de Cuba, renowned for its refined elegance and classic splendour, as Havana's best hotel. Since 1930 it has attracted a large number of personalities from the arts, sciences and politics including Winston Churchill, Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, Naomi Campbell, Errol Flynn, and Alexander Fleming. Built in the 1930s and combining Art Deco features with modernist influences, the Nacional's image still appears on much of Cuba's tourist promotion literature and evokes the glamour of a bygone era. A full refurbishment in 1992 remained sympathetic to the original architecture, preserving the hotel's 1930s splendour.

With its privileged location in Vedado, the centre of Havana, the Nacional stands on a promontory just a few metres from the sea and offers fabulous views of Havana Bay, the Malecón promenade and the city. There are two swimming pools, a choice of restaurants and beautiful gardens complete with strutting peacocks.

Twin, single and triple rooms are available and Executive Suites are on request.

**Hotel Comodoro - Hotel**** (Bed & Breakfast) (Included)**

Comodoro Bungalows are located in the Comodoro Hotel and Bungalow Complex, in the heart of Havana's Miramar district. Just twenty minutes by car from Old Havana, the Comodoro Bungalows are an ideal base for discovering the wonders of Havana and the surrounding area.

There are two freeform pools and a choice of restaurants including the Comodoro Restaurant - A la carte restaurant located on the ground floor serving international cuisine, La Cascada, and International buffet restaurant, La Fonnaza Di Roma, a cafe restaurant serving Italian cuisine and the Comodoro Bar, a grill bar.

All rooms have air-conditioning, satellite TV, telephone, safe, hairdryer and mini-fridge.

Classes and Workshops

Classes: Ten hours Salsa dance tuition is included in your holiday. You will receive expert dance tuition in Salsa from our native Cuban salsa teachers. Beginners will learn how to dance to the hot Latin rhythms of Salsa and learn enough moves to enjoy themselves dancing with the Cubans in local nightclubs. Intermediate and Advanced dancers will receive expert tuition on movement and technique designed to improve their style and will come home with some great new moves and loads of fluid Cuban style. The salsa classes will take place in a dance space within the Hotel Nacional.

Dance Levels: There will be at least two levels of Salsa tuition so that the classes will cater for all abilities, from beginner through to advanced. The dance teachers will be able to advise you on the first day of classes and suggest the level that is most appropriate to your ability and experience.

Daily Itinerary

**Sample Itinerary**

This is a provisional itinerary aiming to give you an idea of what your holiday will look like. There will be some elements which will change: (OP)
The Cuban dance scene: Dance and music penetrates much of Cuba life. Cubans are surrounded in their daily life by an eclectic mix music of Son, Rumba, Afro-Cuban, Danzon, Cha Cha Cha, Dancehall, Rap and Hip Hop. The dance scene is fantastic fun, playful and provocative. Partners dance close and the style is creative and carefree. The latest dance craze is 'Tembleke' which is a rapid, sassy body movement involving the shoulders, chest, torso and hips danced solo at your partner.

Clubs and venues in Havana: Using the inside information of our Cuban teaching team, we will take you to the most happening venues. These may include concerts of world famous Salsa bands (such as Los Van Van), Salsa-ing by the sea just across from the Malecon, a Salsa Matinee (hot Cuban salsa and lots of Rueda between 4.30pm and 10pm) - the cubans come here after work), traditional 'Casas de las Trovas' where you can enjoy with your Salsa Teachers in the open-air with the backdrop of the city's famous fortress at the entrance of Havana port. Cuban taxi dancers: included in your holiday are Cuban taxi dancers who we supply to come out with you at night to the dance venues. They will be taught by a team of Cuban instructors headed by Alexis González Valdez. He and his Cuban team (who have professional dance training) will introduce you to Cuban Salsa and thus introduce you to life in Cuba - a life which pulsates with energy, wildness and sensuality. Alexis was born in Havana. He graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Arte in Havana specializing in Show dance. He has toured Europe performing with different Cuban dance troupes. He is an active member of UNEAC - the Cuban Association of Artists and Writers and performers with the Cuban Television Ballet.

Food and Meals: Please remember that Cuba is a poor country. Sometimes the food is plain and simple, and there is a limited selection of dishes by European standards. This is just one of the unavoidable aspects of being in Cuba. Although Cuban food can sometimes be uninspiring we think that you will usually be pleasantly surprised at the quality of the food you get. We shall naturally do our best to ensure that the restaurants we take you to serve food of an acceptable quality. The quality of the food may vary but the food is generally cheap and wholesome, with lots of rice and beans, fried fish and plantains. A typical Cuban menu might include Frijoles (a kind of stew with beans and ham), rice and black beans (moros y cristianos), cucumbers and tomatoes, cassava or malanga (local root vegetables), roast pork, fried chicken, plantains, corn fritters, bread, fried fish, pizza, followed by coconut pudding or ice cream.

Vegetarians: Vegetarianism is not understood in Cuba, where meat is a rare treat. So please be patient with locals who do not understand your needs. Please be aware that vegetarian choices can sometimes be very limited. On the other hand the staple diet of Cubans includes a lot of beans, rice and plantains, all suitable for vegetarians.

Optional Extras: What are optional extras? In addition to your holiday we also offer you a variety of optional extras to make your holiday even richer and add some local colour. You can buy your optional extras at the welcome meeting at the beginning of your holiday. We will ask you to pay in cash and fill out a form. These are the optional extras that we anticipate running - actual details and prices will be confirmed on arrival. Some may require minimum numbers.

* Second week options in Varadero, Trinidad or Santiago de Cuba
Stay on for a second week in Cuba in either Varadero, Santiago de Cuba or Trinidad to chill out on the beach and soak up some of those warm rays of sun. Please ask our Reservations Team for more information at the time of booking.

Arrival and transfer to hotel.  
** DAY 1 **
Evening - Welcome Drink and snacks. Salsa-ing all night with your Salsa Teachers!

** DAY 2 **
Morning - Overview of the week and Salsa classes
Afternoon - Visit the Callejon de Hamel for a dance performance of Street Rumba, African Rhythms bands and Guaguancó (OP). Lunch in a picturesque Cuban restaurant in Old Havana.
Evening - Salsa-ing with your Salsa Teachers in the open-air with the backdrop of the city's famous fortress at the entrance of Havana port.

** DAY 3 **
Morning - Salsa lessons. (OP) Tembleke Class - learn to move like a Cuban!
Afternoon and evening - Salsa your way through the afternoon and evening at this hot matinee salsa club.

** DAY 4 **
Morning - Salsa lessons.
Afternoon - (OP) Visit the Rum Museum and the Tobacco Factory.
Evening - Salsa-ing in another of the most famous and lively dance venues in Cuba, accompanied by your teachers.

** DAY 5 **
Morning - Salsa lessons. Afternoon - Chill out and sleep off your hangover around the pool enjoying the salsa music and sun. Evening - Salsa-ing with your teachers in a fantastic club just outside Havana in the upmarket Marina Hemingway neighbourhood.

** DAY 6 **
Morning - Salsa lessons.
Afternoon - (OP) Cuban Style salsa class: tembleke.
Evening - (OP) Dinner at a local seafood restaurant serving freshly caught lobster. Later - Salsa-ing all night with your Salsa Teachers.

** DAY 7 **
Morning - Salsa lessons
Afternoon - Chill out and sleep off your hangover around the pool enjoying the salsa music and sun. Evening - Salsa-ing with your teachers in one of the most famous and lively dance venues in Cuba.

** DAY 8 **
Transfer to Havana airport for your return flight.

Nightlife: The Cuban dance scene: Dance and music penetrates much of Cuba life. Cubans are surrounded in their daily life by an eclectic mix music of Son, Rumba, Afro-Cuban, Danzon, Cha Cha Cha, Dancehall, Rap and Hip Hop. The dance scene is fantastic fun, playful and provocative. Partners dance close and the style is creative and carefree. The latest dance craze is 'Tembleke' which is a rapid, sassy body movement involving the shoulders, chest, torso and hips danced solo at your partner.

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Your Teachers: In Havana you will be taught by a team of Cuban instructors headed by Alexis González Valdez. He and his Cuban team (who have professional dance training) will introduce you to Cuban Salsa and thus introduce you to life in Cuba - a life which pulsates with energy, wildness and sensuality. Alexis was born in Havana. He graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Arte in Havana specializing in Show dance. He has toured Europe performing with different Cuban dance troupes. He is an active member of UNEAC - the Cuban Association of Artists and Writers and performers with the Cuban Television Ballet.

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Minimum number: 10 Spend the day on the beach by the beautiful Atlantic Ocean. All go by mini bus or coach to El Megano and enjoy the light golden sand shelving into stunning aquamarine waters.

Option on lunch approx 15:00 cuc extra, a little more if you have lobster!

Please be sure to bring/wear sun protection as this activity is outside

30.00 cuc

Special Dinner Night

Lunch / Dinner

Minimum number: 10 Join Amanda at the lobby of the National Hotel, to go to the chosen quality restaurant. Previous trips have included El Chansonnier, The Roof Terrace at the Parque Central El Barco & The famous El Aljibe. Amanda will inform you which of the restaurants we will be going to during the week.

40.00 cuc each including transport.

Walking Tour around Old Havana

Minimum number: 10 Transfer by mini bus to Central Havana. Opportunity to learn about the old city and enjoy the colourful ‘Old Havana’ in the company of your Official Guide. Time permitting, you may get the opportunity to take a stroll round the flea market and buy souvenirs. Then, transfer to Vedado back to the Hotel Nacional.

25 cuc

Optional Extra ‘Going Out’ Package

We can take the whole process of getting transport to the venue, paying for the entrance to the clubs, and organising the dancers’ drinks off your hands by asking you to give us the money at the beginning of the week. All you have to do is turn up. If you would like to take advantage of this, Amanda will organise it. She may even be able to negotiate better rates or music, if she is speaking on behalf of a group of 15 or 20, than you would be able to by turning up as individuals. It is not an arrangement for profit, purely for convenience, simplicity, and hopefully, your enjoyment. In a couple of venues we receive a complimentary rum cocktail because we are a group.

If you would like to do this, the estimated cost is 140.00 cuc’s for the 5 nights out in the week or 180 cuc’s for 7 nights. The arithmetic is as follows. The average club cover is between 5.00 - 25.00 cuc’s and transportation is about 10 per guest. So if you opt into this, Amanda will organise your entrance, transport, and in the case of some venues, a complimentary cocktail drink. We balance the cheaper nights and the more expensive nights out so that the average price covers the weekly expenses.
Making you own way to the hotel for ground only package

Making your own way there: For those whose flights don't coincide with our Airport coach transfer, you can make your own way to the Hotel in Havana. The distance between the José Martí International Airport and the city of Havana is approximately 20 km (12 miles). There are no public buses that pass by the airport en route to Havana, so you must either take a personal taxi or tourist bus. The taxi charges approximately $30 CUC, and the tourist bus charges approximately $15 CUC. Journey time: about 30 minutes.

What to Expect in terms of Organisation

Flights: Almost all our published prices include return flights from selected UK airports. If you are travelling from outside the UK we can offer you a holiday price without a flight included. Please ring us to find out which UK departure flights are offered on each holiday. Our client care team are happy to price you a flight from any UK airport. Supplements may apply for certain regional UK airports or if you are buying close to the time of departure. If you buy well in advance you will be able to take advantage of our Early Bird Discounts and promotions which apply on many holidays.

Transfers: We offer airport transfers at our chosen arrival destination airports to meet flights from a variety of selected UK airports. In addition, if you are on a different flight which coincides with our arrival times at our chosen airport, we can also offer you a place on the transfer. Our client care team can advise you on selected flights for your chosen holiday. Sometimes you may have to wait a short while at the airport to connect with our transfer. If you are not coming from our selected UK airports or are flying to a different arrival airport, we can happily arrange a transfer for you at an extra cost - please ask us for details. You may wish to make your own way to your hotel. To do this we will give you easy to follow instructions.

Before Your Go

Books on Cuba: Of the books we have read about Cuba or set in Cuba these are the ones we would recommend. "Enduring Cuba" by Zoe Bran - Recommended travel book written in 2002. Honest and inquisitive look into Cuban life. “Land of Miracles” by Stephen Smith - An excellent recent travel book written about Cuba, witty clever and informative. Strongly recommended. “Waking up in Cuba” by Steven Foehr - An honest, entertaining account of what you can expect to find in Cuba. Especially informative about the music and cultural history. “Cuba” - The Lonely Planet Guide - by David Stanley, one of the most detailed guide books on Cuba.

The dual economy: Cuba's economy has been distorted by the American blockade and by the withdrawal of subsidies by the former Soviet Union. There are two economies running side by side in Cuba. One is in Cuban pesos and is for Cubans. The other is in CUC, Convertible Cuban Pesos and is for tourists. The dual economy is to cater for the difference between the average Cuban wage and the wage that a visiting tourist will earn back home. It's worth bearing in mind that the average monthly wage of a Cuban is $12 - $15. In a nightclub a tourist might be asked to pay between $5 - $20. A Cuban will pay 30 pesos which is about 600 times less. The concept of a dual economy may seem strange to you but to Cubans it is as natural as your economy is to you.

Money: Until recently, the second economy was the American dollar. However, Castro eliminated the dollar from circulation in November 2004. You can no longer use US Dollars or any other foreign currency in Cuba, and if you bring American dollars a tax of 10% will be applied to you at the exchange of them for Cuban Convertible Pesos (this tax will not be applied to other currencies). So our strong recommendation is to bring cash Euros, UK Pounds or Canadian Dollars and change them on arrival in Cuba to the CUC. Additionally you will be able to exchange back the remaining CUC at the end of your travel. The CUC has an exchange rate equivalent to the American dollar and for this reason its sign is a $.

Tipping: Tourism is the most important industry in Cuba and those who are able to work with tourists, even as room cleaners or barmen, earn more money than doctors and other professionals. Tips therefore often constitute the main source of income for many of the Cubans who you will meet. We feel our tour hosts work hard to give you an exceptional holiday and sometimes you may find that they add some special touches which are beyond the call of duty. If you agree with us, you might wish to show your appreciation by way of a tip. You can do this by putting money in an envelope on your own or by getting together with other guests. All tipping is evidently entirely at your discretion.

Budgeting for your holiday: Here are some guidelines on prices, to help you do your own calculations. Please refer to the optional extra section of the fact sheet for the prices of the optional extras.

Three course meal with drinks: 15 Euros
Tipping per day: 2 Euros
Nightclub entrance: 5-20 Euros
Rum and coke in nightclub: 4 Euros
Beer in a bar/cafe: 2 euros
Coffee in a bar/cafe: 1.50 euros
Airport tax on leaving Cuba: 25 Euros
Visitors from the West should be aware that they are likely to get a much higher level of physical attention in Cuba than they are used to back home. This applies to men as well as women! In nightclubs, Cubans dance close and often in a very sensual way. This fact sheet contains a few tips for the new traveller to Cuba. The following are a few tips for the new traveller to Cuba.

**Essential equipment and clothing to bring**

Useful Things to Bring: It’s worth remembering that due to the US embargo you will not find as much availability in the shops (especially chemists and clothes shops) so it’s a good idea to come well prepared:

- Shoes suitable for walking around the streets
- Broad brimmed sun hat/sunglasses
- High factor sun cream
- Insect repellent/anti-mosquito spray
- Antiseptic cream in case of bites
- Elastoplasts for sore feet
- Aspirin/Nurofen for hangovers!
- Immodium for stomach upsets
- Shampoo, soap, toothpaste and other toiletries (hard to obtain and expensive in Cuba)
- Condoms (local condoms are of low quality)
- Travel washing powder (although the hotel may provide a laundry service)
- Paper tissues/toilet paper
- Swimming costume essential/beach towel
- Money belt
- Money, plane ticket, full valid passport, visa
- This fact sheet

What to wear for dancing: It is probable that you may get through quite a few clothes in the classes and dancing at night (you can get quite hot!) so bring a variety of outfits. In the clubs, the local dress code is quite casual and ‘streety’ as opposed to elegant and smart. Cuban women tend to wear jeans/tight trousers or mini skirts with sassy little tops whilst men tend to wear trousers with tshirts. Trainers are allowed at most venues.

Shorts are not permitted. A useful tip for women is in that some salsa clubs you have to leave your handbag in the cloakroom. Therefore its a good idea to bring a wrist/ankle purse or a purse that clips on to your trousers/skirt.

**At Your Destination**

The following are a few tips for the new traveller to Cuba.

**The Cuba Factor:** Be aware that Cuba is a place where things do not always go according to plan. Sometimes the most carefully constructed plans just don’t happen. At other times new and exciting opportunities arise to, for instance, see a famous Cuban band playing live, or to experience some exciting aspect of life in Cuba that no one could have possibly predicted. Turn every problem into an opportunity and you will experience the best of Cuba.

**Making friends with the locals and people not on the holiday:** Cuba is a great place to make friends with the locals, and should you do so and would like them to come along to the activities organised by us, then just ask your Tour Host and except for the dance classes and provided you pay their way there should not be a problem. However, we discourage Non-Cubans who have not paid for the holiday from coming out with us more than once or from joining in activities arranged specially for the group. We would be grateful for your assistance and cooperation in this respect.

**Buying drinks and meals for Cubans:** Often Cubans will ask you to buy them a drink or food. They are often unable to afford to buy their own. At your own discretion you may wish to occasionally buy drinks and or a meal for the Cuban friends that you make. This is usually only a matter of a few dollars and is another feature of the peculiar circumstances that prevail in Cuba.

**Attention in public places:** Visitors from the West should be aware that they are likely to get a much higher level of physical attention in Cuba than they are used to back home. This applies to men as well as women! In nightclubs, Cubans dance close and often in a very sensual way. Sometimes they may try to push their luck. This is always done with a smile, is usually just playful and can be great fun. You should exercise common sense and, if you find that you are feeling hassled you should be firm and disengage from your partner with a polite and friendly smile. One of the team will normally be on hand to provide moral support, or escape, should you need it!
Keeping your valuables safe: Although crime rates in Cuba are very low, it is a poor country and you represent to them a rich foreign tourist whose pockets are stuffed with unimaginable wealth. So please be careful. Our advice is to leave expensive jewellery and unnecessary valuables at home. It is best not to put temptation in peoples’ way. Do not leave your luggage unattended at any time and ensure that there is some way of locking or padlocking your suitcase or travel bag on the occasions where the luggage needs to be left in the bus or in the reception of the hotel. It is not unheard of for unlocked bags to be tampered with. When travelling we suggest that you keep your passport, travellers cheques, dollars and other important valuables about your person, in secure money belts or pockets. Although your possessions should be reasonably safe in your hotel rooms please ensure that your traveller’s cheques, dollars and other important valuables are always locked in your suitcase or in your safe when you go out.