

Salsa at Christmas in Havana and Varadero - 10 nights

Christmas Time in Cuba - Christmas is big news in Cuba and the festive season is one of the most magical times to visit Havana for non-stop Salsa dancing and partying, experiencing not only Christmas but also the biggest night of the year - New Year's Eve - in this vibrant city. We also include a little luxury to help recover from the indulgences of the festive season, with two nights accommodation in Varadero's best hotel the 5* Paradisus Princesa del Mar.

Dates and Prices 24 December to 3 January - £2,389.00

Unique Features Christmas in the Caribbean: Enjoy Christmas and New Year in the warm and balmy climate surrounded by the laid back and friendly spirit of the Cubans.

Your Holiday

What's Included

- | Thorough and entertaining syllabus in Cuban salsa and related dances (15hrs)
 - | The delightful company, every night, of a team of professional Cuban dancers all paid for by us.
 - | Beautifully organised programme of salsa nights out (Club entry and drinks extra)
 - | Charminglly hosted by our team on the ground who are intimate with Cuba.
 - | 8 nights accommodation and breakfast in the 5 star National in Havana
 - | 2 nights luxury All Inclusive accommodation in the 5 star Paradisus Princesa del Mar, Varadero
 - | Meet & Greet upon arrival, airport and hotel transfers.
 - | Room share options available or single supplement at £220
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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 very best holidays ever!'

'We were able to see so many different aspects of Cuba that as a sole 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'

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 bodega 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:

Jan 16/25

Feb 16/26

March 17/27

April 19/29

May 21/30

June 22/31

July 22/31

Aug 22/31

Sept 22/30

Oct 17/27

Nov 17/27

Dec 17/27

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.

Paradisus Princesa del Mar - Hotel***** (All Inclusive) (Included)

Set on the beautiful Varadero Beach, Paradisus Princesa Del Mar Resort and Spa has a great location. Once you've finished admiring the powdery white sands and gentle aqua waves, you could try your hand at one of the myriad of water sports that are included. If land sports are your particular speciality, you can enjoy a set or two of tennis, or perhaps an aerobics class. If it's pampering you're after, head to the European Spa and enjoy a relaxing treatment. An all-suite resort with extensive facilities and high standards of service.

There are eight restaurants, swimming pool with seven whirlpools, four floodlit tennis courts, beach and pool volleyball, basketball, aerobics, fitness centre, table tennis, pool, European spa and Water sports including pedal boats, sailboats, catamarans, kayaks, snorkelling and windsurfing.

All rooms have balcony/terrace, air-conditioning, satellite TV, CD player, stocked mini-bar with soft drinks, bottled water

and beer, replenished daily. Tea/coffee-making facilities, mini-bar, safety deposit box, iron and board, and hairdryer.

Single and twin / double rooms are available.

Classes and Workshops

Classes and Teachers: Over the course of your holiday you will receive over 15 hours of salsa tuition from our team of professional dancers. Remember the criteria by which we select our teachers extends way beyond mere technical ability or even teaching ability. We look for teachers who are charismatic, and entertaining and who will teach you to dance with flair. And as these are much more than just teachers, because they will be accompanying you at night, we also select them for their personality and, quite frankly, physical attractiveness. 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.

Syllabus: We have recently completely refreshed the syllabus we teach in order to make it deeper and more comprehensive. If this is your second trip to Cuba we are confident that you will find a lot of new material in this syllabus. If it's your first time you will find this course entirely comprehensive. You will cover:-

- | Cuban music and how the rhythms are constructed
- | Rumba
- | Son
- | Mambo
- | Cha Cha cha - slow mambo tempo
- | The Bachata
- | Reggaeton (popular music from Puerto Rico - a blend of salsa, merengue and reggae and currently very fashionable)
- | How Cuban salsa differs from LA / New York style which you may have encountered in the UK.
- | Templeque and Cuban body movement
- | Rueda (Cuban Wheel)
- | Styling for both men and women
- | Spinning for both men and women

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) indicates an optional extra for which a charge will be made in advance. Please note that nights out are all inclusive (transport to the club, club entry, drink, accompaniment by tour host and our team of dancers) and payable locally at the beginning of the week. Each night out works out at approximately £25 per person.

DAY 1

Arrival and transfer to hotel.

Welcome cocktail party and introduction to your Cuban salsa team.

DAY 2

Morning - Overview of the week and Salsa classes.

Afternoon - Visit Callejon de Hammel and see Cubans dancing Street Rumba, African Rhythms bands and Guaguanco dancers. (OP) Lunch in picturesque Cuban restaurant in Old Havana. Wander around back streets to the hotel through this amazing part of Havana.

Evening - Salsa-ing with your Salsa Teachers open-air at this fantastic fortress at the entrance of Havana's port overlooking the Malecon.

DAY 3

Morning - Salsa lessons. (OP) Templeque Class - learn to move like a Cuban!

Afternoon and evening - Salsa your way through the afternoon and evening at a hot salsa matinee club.

DAY 4

Morning - Salsa lessons.

Afternoon - (OP) Visit the Rum Museum and the Tobacco Factory.

Evening - Salsa-ing in another of Havana's best dance venues with your Cuban teachers.

DAY 5

Morning - Salsa lessons.

Evening - Salsa-ing in another of Havana's best dance venues with your Cuban teachers.

DAY 6

Morning - Salsa lessons.

Evening - Salsa-ing in another of Havana's best dance venues with your Cuban teachers.

DAY 7

Morning- Check out and Transfer to Varadero for 2 nights All Inclusive at the 5* Paradisus Princesa del Mar.

Evening -Dinner and drinks, enjoy the hotel's extensive facilities.

DAY 8

Morning & Afternoon - Relax and chill out by the pool or on the beach, enjoy the hotel's water sport facilities, sample local and international cuisine in the wide choice of restaurants and enjoy the rum cocktails at one of the hotel's many bars. Alternatively excursions to the surrounding countryside can be booked at the hotel.

Evening - One of the biggest celebrations in the Cuban calendar: New Year's Eve! Enjoy a gala dinner and entertainment.

DAY 9

Check out and transfer back to Havana for two final nights of salsa with our Cuban dancers.

DAY 10

Free time in Havana with a night out with our Cuban dancers in the evening.

DAY 11

Transfer to Havana airport for the return flight to the UK

DAY 12

Arrive in London

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, Afrocuban, 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 fun. 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: On 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 'Casa de la Trovas' where you can dance on the balcony, smart clubs with drink-as-much-as-you-like bars, hot late night venues (from 2.30am onwards) where you will find the djs mixing Salsa with Hip Hop and rap. You are expected to pay your own way into the nightclubs and the transport there and back unless it is included as part of an excursion. We may walk, take taxis or organise private coach transport to the best clubs.

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 performs with the Cuban Television Ballet. Please see the note under Your Classes for details of the syllabus.

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.

Beach Trip - Playas del Este
(weather permitting)

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 Chansonier, 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.

Single Room
Supplements,
Upgrades and
Budget Options

Option 1 - Included

Nacional de Cuba - Hotel***** Bed & Breakfast - (24/12/2012 to 30/12/2012 - 6 nights)

Single Room (1 Person) 132.00 GBP

Twin Room (Based on 2 sharing) Included

Extra Nights

One Bed Suite Executive Floor (Per Room) 0 GBP per night

Single Room (Based on 1 sharing) 83 GBP per night

Triple Room (Based on 3 sharing) 180 GBP per night

Twin Room (Based on 2 sharing) 104 GBP per night

Paradisus Princesa del Mar - Hotel***** All Inclusive - (30/12/2012 to 01/01/2013 - 2 nights)

Single Room (Per Room) 44.00 GBP

Twin Room (Per Room)	Included
Nacional de Cuba - Hotel***** Bed & Breakfast - (01/01/2013 to 03/01/2013 - 2 nights)	
Single Room (1 Person)	44.00 GBP
Twin Room (Based on 2 sharing)	Included
Extra Nights	
One Bed Suite Executive Floor (Per Room)	0 GBP per night
Single Room (Based on 1 sharing)	83 GBP per night
Triple Room (Based on 3 sharing)	180 GBP per night
Twin Room (Based on 2 sharing)	104 GBP per night

Flights and Transfers

Flights: This package holiday includes a direct flight with Virgin Atlantic.

Transfers: We will meet any flight you are on if you let us know the details and take you to the hotel and back to the airport at the end of your holiday. The transfer time from Havana airport to the Hotel Nacional is around 20 minutes. The transfer time from Havana to Varadero is around one hour.

Making your 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 La Habana (Havana) is approximately 20 km (12 miles). There are no public buses that pass by the airport en route to La Habana, so you must either take a personal taxi or tourist bus. The taxi charges approximately \$20-30 dollars, and the tourist bus charges approximately \$10-15 dollars. Journey time: about 30 minutes.

What to Expect in terms of Organisation

On Arrival: You will receive a detailed itinerary and any other important information, including an overview of the local sights, recommended restaurants and other helpful tips.

Club Dance Holidays Host: Your holiday will be hosted by Amanda Maitland ably supported by a team of professional ground handlers. Amanda is Scottish and intimately familiar with the salsa scene in the UK where she is well known as a salsa teacher, she is particularly passionate about Cuba where she is a frequent visitor and therefore her preference is Cuban Casino Style Salsa & Rueda. She will be with you for the week.

Amanda may contact you in the UK before your departure to make sure you are comfortable with all the arrangements

Your holiday tour host is there to make your holiday as enjoyable as possible. Club Dance Holidays Tour Hosts are a cut above your typical Holiday Rep with a lightness of touch that enables you to get the best out of your holiday without being in the least bit interfering. We make sure you get the best out of the destination even though you are there for a relatively short time and we do this through our local knowledge and our knowledge of dance. Club Dance Holidays Tour Hosts normally offer much more of themselves than you would expect including making sure your nights are sociable and fun often well into the small hours if that is your whim. During the daytime the level of participation and presence of Club Dance Holidays tour hosts varies according to the nature of each holiday and its destination.

Overview of the Week and Welcome Drink: At the beginning of your holiday there is an Overview of the Week where your tour host will tell you about all details of your holiday and answer any questions you might have. At the Overview of the Week you can buy your optional extras and Dance Holidays will invite you to be our guest to a drink.

Getting Around: You are responsible for making your own way to the dance classes and meeting points on the itinerary. We give you a detailed, annotated map and itinerary which make this easy. Nearly all of the activities we plan are within walking distance of the hotel. On one or two occasions it may be wise to get a taxi, and we will let you know when and how.

Before Your Go

Books onCuba: 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 '\$'. Whilst bringing your money in cash may seem a bit alarming, it is from our personal experience, the most practical way of buying. Cheques, credit cards that are related to US banks and American Express travellers cheques are not accepted. There are very few (if any) cashpoints. You can take cash out by showing your credit card and passport at a till within a bank but you will probably have to queue for a long time.

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

Gifts for Cubans: Cuba is without many of the essential things that we take for granted. Things that are particularly difficult to get hold of in Cuba include toiletries (shampoo, moisturiser, razors, soap, toothpaste, etc), perfumes and aftershaves, pens and paper, books in English or Spanish, clothes, and shoes. In the past some visitors have taken small gifts to give to the Cubans they meet or have left some of their own things behind them when they travel back to the UK.

Passports: These must be valid for at least six months beyond the length of stay. Please check your passport now.

Tourist Visa Card: You require a Tourist Visa Card to enter Cuba. We as a tour operator can issue Tourist Visa Cards to our clients who come from Britain, Australia, Canada, USA, other EU countries and Japan. (If you live in another part of the world, please arrange your own visa to enter Cuba). Cuban Tourist Visa Cards are valid for one single trip of up to 30 days, although the stay can be extended in Cuba. The card must be bought in the country where the trip has been arranged (through us!). All passengers must hold tickets and other documentation required for their onward or return journey unless holding special annotation issued by a Cuban Consulate. You will be sent your Cuban Tourist Visa Card with your tickets a few days before you go. You will need to keep your Tourist Visa Card safe as you will need it to get in to Cuba and to get back out of the country. So look after it carefully during your trip.

Health and Fitness: There are no particular health requirements for a dance holiday. However you should be able to dance for at least two hours a day in order to be able to enjoy the dance classes. Please inform us if you have any medical conditions that we need to be aware of.

Luggage Labels and Lost Luggage: We strongly recommend that you secure your luggage before flying by all means possible – tape and locks. You should attach large and clear labels to your luggage with your name, flight number and destination. Do not put travellers cheques, jewellery or money in your suitcase. In the unlikely event that your luggage is lost during the journey you need to independently take the matter up directly with the airline at the airport in Havana.

Vaccinations: We are informed by the Cuban Embassy that no special vaccinations are required for travel to Cuba. However, the following vaccinations are recommended by NHS Direct: tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio, diphtheria, BCG and hepatitis B. Please consult your own GP in respect of which vaccinations you should have.

Insurance: This is a condition of booking please refer to the information supplement for details.

Travel Documents: You receive these (which include a detailed Information Pack, your flight tickets and your Cuban Tourist Visa Card) when you have paid for your holiday in full and as soon as we have received your airline tickets. In some cases the airlines do not release the tickets until five days before the departure date. We also confirm the address and phone number of the hotel and the emergency contact numbers.

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 its 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.
