

Cuba is probably one of the most fascinating of the Caribbean islands. It is as rich in history as it is in vibrancy. With a completely different flavour to any of the other Caribbean Islands. The crystal clear seas and the talcum sand are a draw on their own, but the real jewel in Cuba's crown is indeed its culture.

Christopher Columbus officially discovered the island in 1492. It was inhabited by natives, whom declined in population as the Spanish colony developed in those following centuries. Spanish rule was severe and exploitative. A vast population of African slaves was imported to work the coffee and sugar plantations and occasional rebellions were harshly suppressed. It was US intervention during the Spanish-American War in 1898 that finally overthrew Spanish rule. The subsequent Treaty of Paris established Cuban independence, which was granted in 1902. Most memorably Fidel Castro led a rebel army to victory in 1959. The Soviet Unions subsidies helped ease the pain of USA trade embargo that commenced in 1961, but Cuba has had to overcome huge economic recession since the Soviet subsidies were withdrawn in the early 1990's.



In my personal opinion Cuba is not quite as picturesque as many of its neighbouring islands. It does have fabulous beaches and some lovely scenery, but Cuba's fabulous formula comes from its ambience, its time locked character, and its razzle.

For those of you who demand more from a honeymoon than sun soaking and crocodile shaped lilos by the poolside, Cuba is the thinking newlyweds paradise. The main destination for tourists in general is Varadero; this is a peninsula on the north of the island that is exclusive to tourism. This is the package tourist's paradise; feel free to venture out of your hotel complex, as it is very safe mainly due to the locals respecting tourists as the main boost to their economy. The peninsula offers activities such as horse riding, swimming with dolphins, and a water safari. All good fun but I have to say the water safari sounds vastly more interesting than it actually is. Cuban cuisine is a mix of Spanish and African techniques, local cuisine is available in the hotels as well as offering food that would be considered more typical to Britain and the USA.



My main recommendation is of course Havana. One of the most fascinating places I have had the pleasure to visit. Watching the 1950's American cars rolling along narrow roads that are

lined with vibrantly coloured Spanish colonial houses in mid dilapidation is truly inspiring. Visit revolution square and see the giant Che Guevara, and probably like me rename it ‘revolution car park’.

Handing out tips is a great idea to show appreciation for people in the service sector. Be careful not to tip officials as they may consider it bribery, corruption of officials is rare, the same principle applies to handing money out to children and beggars, this practice is not allowed and the person receiving the money could get into trouble!



A honeymoon in Cuba is not just about traveling to the tropics, it’s also like traveling back in time so don’t forget to pack your sunscreen and a flux capacitor!