

# Cuba Travel Opportunity FAQs

Greetings from Scotland! I am Kath Bateman, director of the travel company Caledonia Worldwide responsible for the arrangements for the forthcoming MDEA/NDEO dance trip in Cuba. I hope the following information will respond in full to your questions, but if you have any further questions please do feel free to get in touch.

**Must all participants be MDEA/NDEO members?** As indicated by Suzie Henneman, as long as the accompanying person is an adult and is going to be participating in the dance lessons and programme, then they are very welcome to join in. We will not be traveling with children or adults not interested in the dance portion of the trip, dance study being the focus and the impetus for the trip.

**What level are the classes, if you know?** It all depends on the level of those coming on the trip. We will be asking everyone to rate themselves before the trip in terms of level of dance ability according to the classes included in the schedule, and for sure some of the classes will be open level for styles which may be brand new to everyone such as Pilon or Afro-Cuban rumba. That means we will have a lead dance tutor for the group and other dancers as partners. However, for other more popular styles such as Salsa we may have different levels according to the levels in the group. All to be decided once we see who is coming on the trip

**Will the home stay hosts speak some English?** Some of the homestay hosts speak good English, others less so, but that is all part of the cultural exchange and we have never, ever had any problems with a lack of communication between guests and hosts before. Whatever basic Spanish skills you might have, I am sure they will be very useful. If there are any really tricky communication issues, we will have our local team on hand to help at all times.

**What is the nature of our home stay accommodations?** Please see the following description for more info on homestays: The Cuban people are known for their open hospitality, warm personalities, spontaneity and friendliness and through this programme you will have an opportunity to experience all of these firsthand. This type of accommodation is pretty relaxed and informal and is a great way to meet local people and eat good home-cooked food. All our homestay accommodation is licensed by the Cuban government and is regularly inspected. You can be reassured that you will be staying in middle class homes which offer a professional level of service, as well as a friendly welcome and a safe environment. Your hosts may not speak much English, if any, but they will be friendly and will ensure you have a pleasant and memorable stay in their home. We know almost all of the homestay hosts personally, and many have been welcoming Caledonia clients for several years. Breakfast and evening meals are not eaten with your hosts as they will always eat separately from their guests.

Although your room may not have an external window (very common in Cuba due to noise from the street) it will have air-conditioning and an electric fan. Hot water should be available for showers and you will have your own private bathroom and access to a fridge. You will not be sharing a bathroom with your hosts. You can have as much or as little interaction with your hosts as you wish, so if you just need to relax and unwind after a busy day, nobody will mind at all if you don't want to chat.

You can come and go as you wish during the day and you may be given your own front door key. If you are not, you just have to knock on the door at any time of the day or evening and your hosts will let you in. Your hosts will be able to arrange for your laundry to be washed and ironed for a small charge (usually CUC\$3-\$5 per small bag). Just ask them about this when you arrive.

**Is it possible to extend the trip to Havana, on our own?** You can go up to Havana on your own if you wish, or we can help you organise domestic travel and accommodation/activities. It is possible to fly into Santiago de Cuba from Miami on direct flights, and from Havana back to Miami, so that would be the route for you to check.

**Do you have sufficient interest to make the trip happen? When is the decision deadline?** We have had several enquiries to date and are hopeful of the minimum number of 10 people booking before long. The maximum number will be 20, to accommodate the number of homestay options and the master class sizes. Deposits will be due not later than September 15<sup>th</sup> and it is first come-first served. When the trip is filled up at 20, that is the cut off.

Looking forward to hearing from you again.