



CUBA UNBOUND KAYAKING WEST TOUR – PACKING GUIDE & RECOMMENDATIONS

We are very pleased you will be joining us on a Cuba Unbound Kayaking Tour! The packing guide outlined below is meant to help you plan, prepare and outfit yourself for your upcoming travels. We have provided our best recommendations and suggestions, but **we want to be clear: it is only a guide**. Our recommendations are based on the outlined itinerary, our knowledge of Cuba, and our personal experiences. However, each traveler will have his or her own preferences and favorite travel items. We hope you find this resource helpful – minimize as much as you feel comfortable within these guidelines, and feel free to amend it with your favorite travel items too!

General: We will provide all necessary paddling equipment, including kayaks and paddles, PFDs (personal flotation devices), and safety equipment for the kayaks. It is highly recommended that all of your kayaking clothes are synthetic or wool, **not cotton**. Synthetics are also ideal for walking/hiking and touring in warmer climates (you can typically expect daytime highs of 75-80 deg F in Cuba, with varying humidity) as they wick away moisture and dry quickly. **We do have a selection of snorkels, masks, & fins available for your use on this tour. However, if you have your own snorkeling gear, need a very specific size, and/or do not want to share equipment with others, please bring your own snorkeling gear with you.** Wetsuits most likely will not be necessary for snorkeling, as the water in the Caribbean is quite warm year-round.

Luggage Recommendations: Cuba Unbound adventures are best enjoyed if you travel light. We think it is wise to avoid checking any luggage. We highly recommend **NOT checking bags** to Havana. The airport is often very busy, with multiple flights coming in at once and limited baggage carousels in some terminals. Some of our guests have recently waited up to 2 hours for their checked bags, which can adversely impact your Day 1 schedule, not to mention test your own patience. One thing that still might make carrying on all luggage difficult: the standard TSA limitations on liquids and gels. As many of these items are not so readily available in Cuba, if you need larger volumes of any such items, one idea is to purchase them at the your departure airport after you pass through security. ***If you check bags, be sure to carry everything that is either essential or would be hard to replace in your day pack/carry-on bag (medications, travel documents, important personal items/essentials).*** ***We will not be able to wait for checked luggage that is lost or delayed.***

Whether you are carrying on your luggage or checking a bag, we recommend bringing TWO bags with you on this tour:

1. One roll-on suitcase or duffel/backpack – This will serve as your main piece of luggage during your tour. If you are planning to carry this bag on your flight(s), the total dimensions should meet standard carry-on size of 45 inches or less (22 x 14 x 9 in.). During your tour in Cuba, we will transport this bag for you between hotels each day, and you will have access to it each evening when we check into our accommodations. **Also, depending on your shopping plans, you may consider packing an extra soft-sided compressible duffel inside your main luggage – to use for anticipated souvenir purchases in Cuba or extra space on your return flight.*

2. One small daypack - this dual-purposed pack can serve as your personal item during your flights, as well as your day pack each day when not on the water (you will be provided with a third bag for use while kayaking – see below). This pack can remain on the tour bus during kayaking excursions, where it will be secure but available to you before and after each paddle. We find that the smaller the daypack the better, however the capacity to hold those items you'll want access to during the day is important (camera, clothing layers, sunscreen, water bottle, hat, etc.). Ultimately, the choice of day pack and size is your own, but consider what you're likely to need and want to carry with you each day, and how easily accessible and organized your pack allows those items to be.

Dry Bag for Kayaking excursions (*provided by Cuba Unbound and issued upon arrival in Cuba*) - this bag is for use during the day while kayaking. This dry bag will accompany you in the kayak, providing easy access to your personal items (rain gear, sunscreen, extra clothing layers, binoculars, camera, etc.) throughout each paddling excursion, and keeping them dry and safe. You will return this bag to us at the end of your tour.

Essentials:

- Passport – **valid for at least six (6) months after the date of your arrival**
- Cuba Travel Documents: 1) Cuba Tourist card; 2) Flight tickets/confirmation; 3) Certification of Travel to Cuba** (*The Certification of Travel to Cuba will be provided to ALL Cuba Unbound guests*)
- A photocopy of your passport, inside a zip lock bag and stowed elsewhere in your luggage (*as an additional precautionary measure, consider leaving a photocopy with family or friends at home as well*)
- Copy of your air tickets with ticket numbers, placed elsewhere in your luggage.



- Adequate cash for the length of your trip (*plan to exclusively use cash for all purchases and gratuities – we will provide additional details and recommendations on the appropriate amount to bring in your pre-trip materials)
- Watch or small travel clock with alarm (*if you are taking a phone for use as a camera, this can serve as your alarm clock as well*)
- Money belt or concealed passport carrier to carry your passport, travel documents and money, hidden under your clothing
- TSA-accessible lock for luggage security when not on your person (*optional- can buy these at any travel or outdoor store*)

Cuba Kayaking & Touring Clothes (*only synthetic or quick-dry materials should be worn while kayaking*):

- One pair of paddling gloves (*optional*)
- One pair long, lightweight, nylon pants with zipper pockets (*Zip off legs give you more options*)
- One pair nylon shorts (*this can double as a swimsuit for the guys*)
- Swimsuit
- One quick-dry sport dress (*optional for easy over the swimsuit/ hiking/ kayaking*)
- Sarong for ladies (*optional but very handy for changing clothes, laying on the ground, etc.*)
- One - two short sleeve button-up shirt(s) or t-shirt(s) (*synthetic is best*)
- One long sleeve shirt for sun protection (*You can buy tight-weave nylon shirts with SPF protection made by companies such as Columbia, Patagonia, Exofficio or REI etc. Sun protection is essential*)
- One wide-brim, tie-on hat (*nylon variety is ideal, as it packs well*)
- One lightweight raincoat (*a windbreaker that has some waterproof qualities will work as well*)
- Three pair light synthetic or light merino-wool socks
- One pair sandals with ankle straps to wear while kayaking, on the beaches, walking around towns, etc. (*Chaco, Keens or Tevas are preferred but there are many other brands that are suitable*)
- One pair walking/running shoes, to use for city tours and for other times when you want to wear something other than sandals.

Cuba Non-Kayaking or Casual Clothing (*in general, clothing in Cuba should be informal*):

- Two –three other comfortable pairs of pants/shorts/dresses (*lightweight dresses pack small and make great travel options for women*)
- One - two short or long sleeve and/or button up shirt(s) for town
- One - two t-shirt(s) or tank top(s)
- One light-weight packable fleece, vest, or sweater, or light jacket for warmth in the evenings and mornings (*optional for spring tours*)
- One pair light weight pajamas
- Underwear (*synthetic is best. Consider total # of days on the trip and adjust accordingly*)
- Casual hat for sun protection
- One buff or bandana for sun protection and cooling off
- Three pair light nylon or cotton socks (*one thicker pair for longer walking tours & light hiking*)

Gear and Other Essentials:

- Small day pack per above
- Personal snorkeling gear if you prefer your own equipment – snorkel, mask, & fins (*fins optional – consider packing space & weight*)
- One water bottle, 1 liter or larger (*A bottle that fits in a daypack pocket or clips to the outside of your daypack and to a kayak deck is ideal*)
- Small quick-drying camping towel (*ideally packs down well and fits in your daypack- you can get them at most outdoor stores*)
- Camera/film/batteries/battery charger
- Universal electrical plug adapter (*most outlets in Cuba will match U.S. outlets and plug types, but in some locations, other types may be present*)
- Umbrella- ideally a travel variety that collapses to less than 12” in length (*optional, but often preferable to a raincoat in warm Cuba*)
- Binoculars (*Optional but nice for bird and wildlife watching*)
- Sunglasses, polarized are highly recommended for sun protection and enhanced clarity
- Retaining strap for glasses and sunglasses (*Chums, Croakies or similar item*)
- Extra pair of sunglasses and glasses/contacts
- Small container of clothing detergent (*bio-degradable, multi-purpose soap like Dr. Bronners is great*)
- Other *optional* laundry items: small scrubbing brush and small portable clothesline for quick drying in your hotel room (*washing clothes and using a drying line will increase your confidence in packing light*)



- Three to four kitchen garbage can liners – for wet clothes, dirty laundry, soiled shoes, etc.
- A few quart-size or 1-gallon ziplock bags for packing sunscreens, lotions or anything that might make a mess
- Small waterproof camera box like the Pelican brand
- Book(s) or E-reader, pen and note pad, pocket Spanish-English dictionary, deck of playing cards or other games, etc. (**we recommend 1-2 books at most; keep games and “extras” small in size and to a minimum**)
- iPod/small portable music player with headphones
- Inflatable travel pillow/night shade/earplugs (*optional, and should pack down very small*)
- Headlamp or small LED flashlight
- Travel coffee mug (*optional*)
- Electrolyte tablets/mix, Hammer Gels, Cliff bars/blocks, etc. for fuel replenishment while kayaking (*hard to impossible to find in Cuba*)
- Additional before & after-activity snacks (*Optional – granola bars, candy bars, etc. Fruits, seeds, and veggies are not permissible*)

Toilet Kit/First Aid (*most, if not all, of the products listed below are nearly impossible to find in Cuba – please plan accordingly.*
**Also, liquids/gels in carry-on luggage must be under 3.38 oz/100 ml (another reason that checking bags may be necessary)*)

- Standard toiletry kit including general hygiene products, toothbrush/toothpaste, etc.
- Sunscreen – at least 30 SPF recommended
- Lip balm with SPF 15-30
- Pre-moistened toilette packets or disposable shower wipes to refresh
- Personal medicines/prescriptions (*Dramamine-motion sickness, Benadryl -allergic reactions, Advil or Aspirin, etc.*). **Make sure that any prescription drugs include your doctor’s/pharmacist’s identification label on the outside of the container.**
- Insect repellent**- we recommend repellent with **DEET** or **Picaridin Insect Repellent** (*Picaridin is less toxic and less harsh on gear/clothing than DEET. Here is one example of a Picaridin-based repellent: sanyer.com/products/picaridin-insect-repellent/*)
- Anti-itch medication and/or topical cream (e.g. Benadryl)
- Heavy duty skin lotion for dry, sun-baked and salted skin
- Small squeeze bottle of hand-sanitizer gel
- Shampoo and body wash (*one small travel flask of each - these items can also be scarce in Cuba and casas particulares will not always provide them*)
- One roll (or partial roll) of toilet paper
- Feminine hygiene products

Additional notes regarding luggage limitations for travel to/from Cuba:

- Gifts for individuals or organizations are allowed with some limitations. We will explain this in detail in one of your pre-trip e-mails.
- Electronic items for personal use are often screened carefully upon arrival in Cuba – as long as you bring only what is reasonable for your trip (one camera, one cell phone, one e-reader, etc.), you should not have any issues.
- U.S. citizens are permitted to bring home up to \$400 worth of goods from Cuba (including rum/alcohol and/or cigars). “Informational materials” are excluded from this limit- including books, periodicals, any type of art or musical recording, etc.
- ****Please check your airline’s luggage restrictions and fees prior to your trip***