

# *Casa's* in Cuba

A guide to a truly authentic Accommodation option in Cuba





A Casa Particular is similar to B&B accommodation but unique to Cuba. Staying in a Casa Particular is a brilliant way of immersing yourself in the life and culture of fascinating Cuba. When you choose a Casa Particular for your accommodation, you will meet the local people on a one-to-one basis and get a rare glimpse into the everyday life of ordinary people in Cuba. In addition, your host or hostess will be able to advise you on all things Cuban – the best restaurants, the best music and Salsa venues and any seasonal attractions that are only known to the locals!

## WHAT IS A CASA PARTICULAR?

Casa Particular (or Casa Particulares in the plural form) is Spanish for 'private home'. In 1997 the Cuban government allowed local people to rent out their properties to visitors for the first time; prior to this all accommodation on the island was owned by the government, and this is why these Cuban-styled B&B's or rental apartments are called Casa Particulares to distinguish them as privately run establishments.

Originally more of a homestay experience, Cubans have embraced the opportunity to own and run their own businesses. Both the level of service and facilities you can expect at a Casa have improved dramatically over the last few years, bringing a Casa experience more in line with the type of B&B experience you would expect elsewhere in the world (although still quintessentially Cuban).

Owners of a Casa Particular have to pay an annual per-room tax to the government and are entitled to "advertise" their establishment by placing a small sign on the door – two blue triangles – "roofs" – against a white background. Most of the owners/operators are fiercely proud of their businesses and really strive to give holidaymakers a brilliant and authentic Cuban home-stay experience.



## WHAT KIND OF ACCOMMODATION CAN YOU EXPECT?

There are different categories of Casa Particulares in Cuba. In most instances you will be renting a private en-suite room within a renovated family dwelling on a bed and breakfast basis – sometimes with a shared kitchen, lounge and terrace in the traditional B&B style. Most Casa's have 3-4 rooms that they can rent out to guests, but there are also some smaller and larger options as well.

Some Casa's have self-contained apartments with all you need for self-catering, and these are a particularly attractive option for families who would prefer a little more freedom and space than you generally get in a hotel room. The Cubans love children and your little ones will be warmly welcomed.

In the countryside, your Casa Particular could be on a working farm, or perhaps in a little traditional village, allowing you to live the Cuban rural life for a few days. Your hosts will be happy to arrange local guides for hiking or horse-riding, and you will be able to sample real home-cooked meals using farm-fresh ingredients and freshly caught fish and seafood on the coast.



## FINDING THE PERFECT CASA

At Locally Sourced Cuba Tours we always try to find the very best Casa's/ B&B's for our clients. The B&B's we select for our clients will generally depend on four factors:



- Availability (It is important to note that many of the best Casa's are fully booked months in advance)
- Budget (As private enterprise develops in Cuba, so does the selection of Casa's available. There are now newer Casa's/ B&B's that charge a premium as they provide better facilities (but not necessarily the same cultural experience)
- Previous Client Feedback (We are always searching for the best Casa's and our team is constantly visiting various destinations to look for new Casa's and check on the condition of our preferred Casa's. We also base our selections heavily on previous client feedback.)
- Our Casa Criteria (We always aim to book Casa's that...
  - Are in central locations
  - Have friendly hosts
  - Have air-conditioning and ensuite bathrooms
  - Are know to us, and rated highly by previous clients



tripadvisor®

## THE TRIP ADVISOR CONUNDRUM

While Trip Advisor is a fantastic resource to search for and review Casa's, it can also be misleading when it comes to selecting the perfect Casa in Cuba. Trip Advisor does place importance on the number of reviews a property has, not just the quality of the reviews. For this reason many of the newer (and better Casa's) might not be rated highly on Trip Advisor, but are still a great option.



Furthermore it is important to note that Cuban's are not as well versed when it comes to marketing and advertising as people in other parts of the world. This is because up until recently, they haven't needed to be. Many Cuban's also do not have access to the internet, so even listing their property on Trip Advisor is a challenge. Many of the Casa's Locally Sourced Cuba Tours works with are not listed on Trip Advisor for this reason, but are consistently rated by our clients as some of the best Casa's they have stayed in, in Cuba.

The team at Locally Sourced Cuba Tours, want you to know that we always put our clients comfort and best interests at the centre of everything we do. We ask us to trust us in making the best Casa bookings for you. If there is ever any issue with your accommodation, you should tell your guide immediately so he or she can alleviate the problem.



## ALWAYS REMEMBER

Whilst the utmost care will be taken to ensure suitable Casa Particulares are used whilst on the tour, please note each Casa Particular is different and unique in its surroundings and features. When you are staying in a Casa, please remember you are staying in a local Cuban's home/ property, and it is one of which they are very proud of.

If you group has any mobility issues, please let us know, as some of the best Casa's are upstairs. Your guide or the Casa owner will help with your luggage on arrival.

