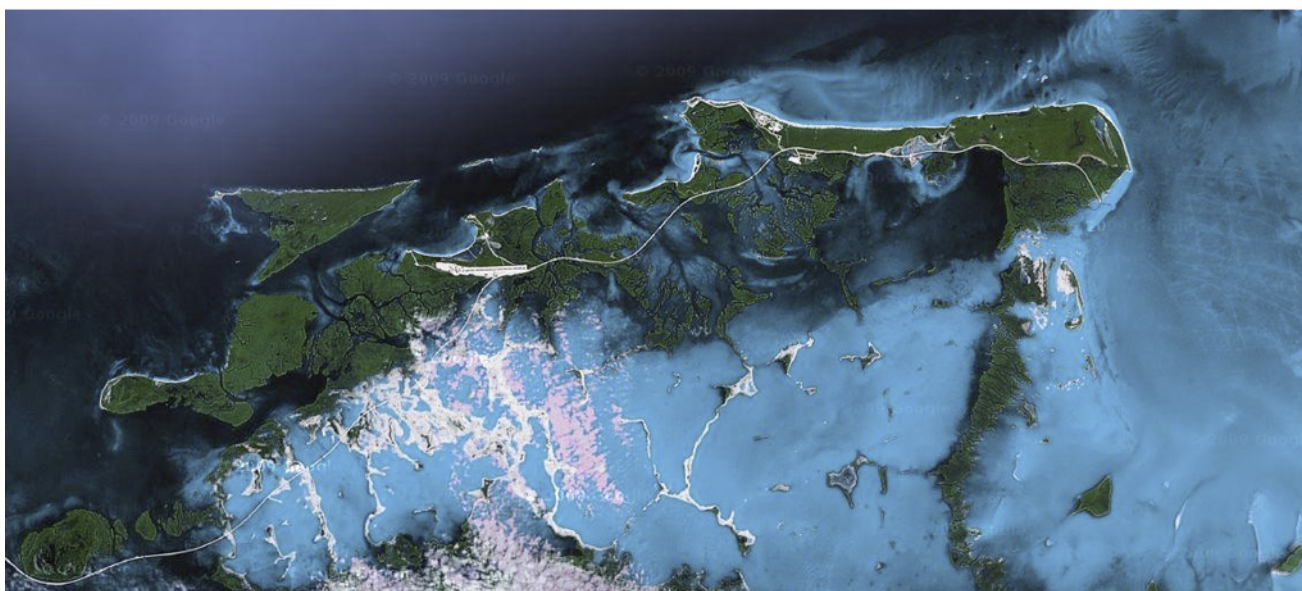


# Pre Trip Information

CASA BATIDA SANTA MARIA  
WORLD CLASS FISHING FOR TARPON

## Cuba

Cuba is located 90 miles south of Key West, and lies at the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico between Florida and Central America. It is the largest island in the West Indies with a population of approximately 11 million. Cuba's geography is diverse with more than 400 Keys and Islets, over 300 natural beaches and four mountain ranges. The Cuban archipelago was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492. The first seven townships were founded in the late 16th century by Diego Velazquez, who led the conquest of the island. The Spanish domination lasted four centuries and ended in 1898 with Spain's defeat by the United States in Spanish American War. The U.S. granted Cuba independence in 1902 after four years of U.S. occupation but in the Cuban constitution of 1902, the U.S. had the right to intervene in Cuban affairs to protect U.S. interests on the island. The country was dominated by a series of conservative dictators: (Machado, 1924-33, Batist 1940-59). Until Fidel Castro imposed a Marxist-radical government on the 1st January 1959. This led to a cooling of relations between Cuba and the USA, who supported invasion attempts (exiles landing to the Bay of Pigs, 1961) and imposed an economical embargo on the island that still exists today.



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## How to book

For latest availabilities and bookings please visit [www.loopadventures.com/bookcuba](http://www.loopadventures.com/bookcuba)

## Local contact persons and phone numbers

Fabrizio Barbazza: 05 280 6694  
Rodolfo Ecotour Habana: 05 286 6665  
Cayo Santa Maria: 042 350571

## Itinerary

When you disembark in Havana you will be provided with a VIP Facilities Pass. This will enable you to bypass the long lines at Immigration, and your bags will be brought to you in the separate VIP Salon where you can have free drinks and food.

**NB:** Be prepared and have the luggage receipts ready!

You will be met at the VIP Salon or outside in the customs hall by a Casa Batida representative holding a sign. On meeting, he will give you all the necessary vouchers for your stay in Cuba. He will then tell you where to pick up the van that will provide the transfer to your hotel in Havana, where you will overnight. You must give the driver your transfer voucher for this leg of the journey. The drive between Jose Martin airport and Havana takes about 30 minutes.

### If you arrive on Friday

Arrival in Havana – VIP welcome – Transfer to Hotel Cohiba (NB: single room costs extra).

### If you arrive on Saturday

Transfer to Cayo Santa Maria (350 km, 4-5 hours). Accommodation at Hotel Melia or Las Brujas (NB: single room costs extra). Welcome and check-in. Briefing with the guides.

### Sunday to Friday

6 full days of fishing.  
(Lunch packages during fishing days are provided for by the hotel, or you can assemble your own lunchbox from the breakfast buffet)

### Saturday

Transfer to Havana airport (350 km, 4-5 hours + time for lunch).

## Visa

A valid passport (valid 6 months after return date) is required with a Visa valid for one month (to be purchased together with your flight ticket or from your travel agent). We can assist with Visa at a cost of 100USD incl shipping after you have filled out the booking form at: <http://www.loopadventures.com/bookcuba>

If you decide to arrange your own Visa fill out as travel operator: ECO Tour, and address in Cuba: Hotel Melia, Santa Maria

## Extra costs

If arriving on Friday or earlier or depart later than next Saturday.  
Havana Hotel Melia Cohiba: \$100/night

### Departure Airport Tax

You will need to pay a departure tax of 25 Pesos before departure from any Cuban airport for an international destination. ????

### Single Rooms

Cayo Santa Maria Hotel Melia - High season (Dec 22 – Feb 28 & Jul 15 Aug 24): **\$105/night**.  
Cayo Santa Maria Hotel Melia - Low season: **\$64/night**.  
Villa Las Brujas: **\$35/night**

### Own boat with guide

\$1000/week

Tips to guides - we recommend 150 - 200 Euro

### Currencies

Euro is ok. USD can be changed but to a low rate.  
Money exchange can be made at the airport, in banks or hotels in Havana or Cayo Santa Maria.  
Rates are more or less the same everywhere.

Conversion CUC (rates do vary from time to time)

1 CUC = 0.8 € = £0.75 = \$1.10



# Pre Trip Information

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## Baggage Requirements

We encourage you to check your luggage straight through from your point of embarkation. We also encourage everyone to carry at least one change of casual clothing in case of lost or delayed luggage on arrival in Havana. Please though be aware of the stringent airport laws regarding sharp Implements which must be stowed in your hold baggage. NOTE: Please be sure to padlock any hold luggage as this will deter anyone going through your luggage whilst it is out of your control.

## Camp services & Fishing license

The daily transfers between hotel and marina where the boats are takes appr 10 minutes. All free to borrow Loop tackle will be handled by the guides.

## Language

The official language is Spanish. English is only spoken in tourist areas. Outside of the tourist hotels and venues, little English will be used. Speak slowly and do your best to use some Spanish. Cubans will be grateful if you attempt to speak in their language.

## Time

Cuba is in the Eastern Standard Time Zone (-5GMT). It also will change to Eastern Daylight Saving Time from May to October.

## Telephones/Internet

Cellphones work, both in Havana and cayo Santa Maria. Internet stations are available at Hotel Melia Santa Maria.

## Electrical current

110V, identical to U.S. power. Adapter and/or converters may be required.

## Water

Water in Cuba is purified in the main tourist areas, however bottled water is readily available. We recommend that you avoid drinking their water. Note: Cuba has a substandard purifying system compared to the West. Water is nowhere near as dangerous as Mexico, but is not ideal for Western stomachs.

## Restaurants Hotel Melia Santa Maria

Food, beverages and drinks are all inclusive but as an option you can book tables at various gourmet restaurants at the front desk.

NB: Normally you have to book several days ahead and it is not included in the price.

## Climate & Clothing

Temperatures can range from 20°C / 70°F up to 30°C / 90°F. Dress is informal; feel free to wear what you are most comfortable on the island. You should consider taking:

### Clothing

- Slacks/short, 2 or 3 pairs in lightweight cotton.
- Long-sleeved shirt (for sun protection), light colour/fabric.
- Cotton sweater, sweatshirt or jacket for cool morning and evenings (only winter time).
- Your normal shoes, plus 1 pair rubber-soled, non-slip boat shoes. One pair of neoprene wading shoes.
- Fishing hat: should have long front visor with black underbill and this must shade face, neck and ears.
- Good quality polarising sunglasses.
- Sunscreen: It is very important that waterproof sunscreen with at least a sunblock factor of 24 is applied to every square inch of exposed skin. Remember that the sun will reflect off the water and can burn your face even if you wear a wide-brimmed hat.
- Lips care.
- Lightweight rain gear for the occasionally rain shower.

### Fishing Accessories check list

- Polarised sunglasses: two pairs with amber lenses (avoid green) indispensable for seeing fish
- Clipper for cutting monofilament
- Hook sharpener
- Reel grease, apply to reels each evening (if not a Loop reel)
- Needle nose pliers
- Nail knot tool
- Golf glove
- Small terry towel to wipe off sunblock and sweat from your hands.
- Leader (50-70-100 lb.)
- Tippet (20-24-30 lb.)
- Flies
- Waterproff bag

### Optional

Scale and measuring tape, adhesive tape.



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## Daily Fishing Schedule

You can have breakfast at the hotel from 7.30 am onwards. Pack your picnic lunch at the hotel and be ready at approximately 8 am for transfer, appr 10 minutes drive, to the marina. On arrival your rods and equipment will be ready in the skiff to depart for fishing at 8.30 am.

Lunch is usually held at one of the picnic spots that are dotted along the archipelago but please ensure that you advise your guide what drinks you require before departing in the morning. Skiffs aim to return to the marina at 4 pm.

## Fishing

The Cuban Government has made the area around Santa Maria a nature conservation area - Casa Batida's playground. The cays of Cayo Santa Maria / Las Brujas are uninhabited and apart from those that you fish with the only people you will see are a few commercial lobster fishermen. Cayo Santa Maria / Las Brujas are therefore ideal habitats for bonefish, tarpon and permit. It is made up a series of cays, channels, mangrove lagoons and flats. The flats tend to be white sand interspersed with turtle grass ideal for those who want to wade. Around the cays are mangroves and the wading can be a little trickier so fishing is primarily done from the boats. Most days you will have the option of either fishing from the skiff or wading.

Through the flats and cays you find deeper channels that provide perfect areas for tarpon to feed on the bountiful shoals of sardines but when the tides are right you can see them move onto the flats providing great sport. Likewise on the slightly deeper parts of the flats you will see schools of permit and tarpons and many times you will feel the Grand Slam is seemingly moments away.

When sight fishing, especially for bonefish and permit, most anglers prefer the hours of 8 am to 3 pm. Earlier and later, the sun causes a glare, making fish difficult to see. Even so, after 3:30 pm, tailing bonefish are visible against the bright light up until dusk making for some of the most exciting fishing.

There are some areas that have still not seen a fisherman or a fly, and part of the fun will be finding new and productive areas. Each evening the director and the guides will determinate the next day's schedule on the basis of the clients input and careful rotation of the productive areas to ensure the grounds are rested.

## Guides

You will fish with one guide throughout the week. Please be aware that each guide has a varying degree of conversational English but all are learning. They do though speak enough to convey the important information of where fish are and when to cast. They will base their instructions on the clock method with 12 o'clock being the bow - simple easy and effective.

All boats are equipped with latest Loop Saltwater gear - free to borrow! All rods have the latest X-grip handles.



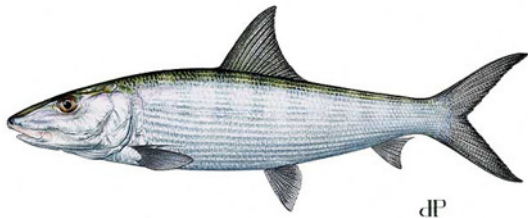
# Pre Trip Information

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## Fish Species

Although it is possible at the right time of year to hook up with tuna, snapper, shark, cubera, etc outside of the barrier they are the exception. Instead Casa Batida is best known for its bonefish, tarpon, permit, jack crevalle and barracuda. Bonefish range from 3 to 10 lbs, Permit from 5 to 50 lbs, Jack Crevalle from 8 to 20 lbs, Tarpon from 15 to 200 lbs - there is something for everyone and for just about all abilities.

## Bonefish



Bones are the most popular and numerous in the line up of flats species. Its attributes include a great eagerness to take flies but they are best known for their astonishing and reel-stressing runs.

Bonefish have three basic modes of behaviour, which you are likely to encounter. The angler's presentation will be determined accordingly.

1. -"Tailing"- While feeding with their snouts buried in the bottom silt, bonefish will often stick waving tails or flash their on the surface. As this occurs, the angler can usually cast a fly or lure almost directly on the top of their head without spooking them.
2. -"Mudding" - On the deeper parts of the flats, bonefish will often stir up the bottom as they grub for food. This cloud of mud tends to make the bones feel quite secure and often the angler can catch one after another without spooking the school.
3. -"Cruising"- Are generally the most difficult fish to present a fly or lure to because they are not necessarily interested in feeding. Cruising bones are much more aware of their surroundings, and extreme care should be taken in presentation. When casting, place your fly well ahead of the fish and let it settle until the fish is right on top of it.

## Fly Selection, some general guidelines

It is important to match the fly's overall colour with that of the bottom. The food items that bones prefer are also expert in camouflage and will match to their surrounding perfectly. Then again, there are days when light colours are the only colour that will work. When in doubt, ask your guide for recommendations.

## Sink Rate

You will need flies with three sink rates: non-weighted, slightly weighted, heavy. Normally, non-weighted, eyeless patterns are used in the shallow turtle grass; intermediate/small-eyed flies are used in 1 to 2 feet of water, and heavy flies, 4 to 6 foot of water or when the fish are mudding.

## Bonefish Flies

You should consider taking 3 to 5 dozen of the assorted flies listed below for a week's fishing. You need not include all of these. Half should be in size #4 and half in size #6.

Crazy Charlies in light colour (brown, cream, pink, yellow, white), Gotcha (excellent), Mini-puff, Snapping Shrimp, Crab (imitation light colour).

## Tackle for Bonefish

**NB: Latest Loop Saltwater Tackle is free to borrow!**

## Rods

For bonefish, 8 - 9 ft. graphite for a 7-9 weight line.

## Reels

Should be anodised, corrosion resistant saltwater models that will hold a full fly line, plus approximately 200 yards of 20lb backing. Reels with high quality, waterproof, smooth drag are essential to prevent break-off from the blistering runs of hooked fish.

## Lines

Floating weight-forward fly lines are all that are necessary. You can try even an intermediate line.

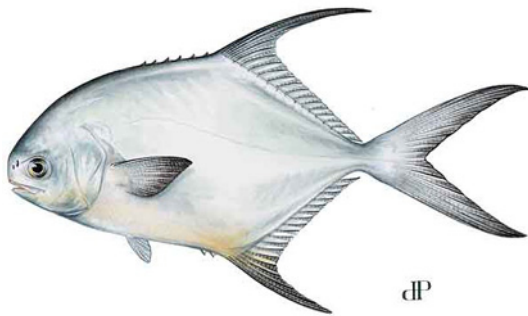
## Leaders

Clear 9ft tapered leaders in the 10-12 lb. range are recommended. We cannot emphasise how important it is that leaders be clear, even at Cayo Santa Maria. Dark leaders lower your chances, especially if you are casting to larger, more wary bonefish. At Cayo Santa Maria, you will usually have the opportunity to cast to many tailing fish. If you are in an area with a lot of tailers, we recommended switching to a 7 weight line or to a 12ft leader with a long 8lb tippet.

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## Permit



Permit is by far the most difficult, picky, frustrating fish you will encounter on the flats. They have superb eyesight and a well developed sense of smell, some fanatical anglers rumour them to be a higher life form in a fish's body. Unlike bones permit are excessively finicky about what they eat. They will often charge your offering, only to stop at the last moment and snobbishly refuse. Do not become discouraged.

### Fly Fishing for Permit

For the fly fisher, permit is considered as the ultimate flats species. The bottom line is, unlike the bonefish (which has an empty stomach for a brain), permit always seem to be immediately suspicious about that little ball of hair and epoxy you're trying to make look like a crab.

### Fly Selection

Permit flies are generally larger than bonefish patterns because permit seems to prefer a slightly meatier meal. Although there is much debate over the best permit pattern, the best advice is to stick with one that the guide recommends and endeavour to persevere.

### Patterns

Permit have a particular weakness for small crabs (especially live ones) so the majority of the productive patterns are crab imitations. The most productive in the area, are the "Casa Batida's" crab. Light color, size #2 and #4. Puff patterns #2 to #4 light colour. Many Casa Batida permits have fallen to a bonefish fly as well.

### Stalking, Presentation and Retrieve

Tailing fish are more likely to take a fly but cruising permit are most commonly encountered, so you must be prepared to place the fly well in front of the fish, allow it to settle to the bottom and patiently wait. When the permit is several feet from the fly "scoot" the fly along the bottom in a slow, deliberate, crab like fashion and then stop the fly completely. This will be the moment of truth because the fish will either turn on the offering or proceed as though the fly simply never existed.

If the permit appears uninterested, you must possess enough self-control to attempt to persuade the fussy critter into reconsidering your offering. At this point, do not begin madly stripping the fly liked a crazed bone fisherman - think like a terror stricken crab and slowly retrieve the fly as if it is trying to inch its way out of the permit's vicinity. The trick is to try to keep the fish interested, catching it's attention and then leaving the fly motionless. The majority of the time, permit prefers to take a motionless fly.

### Tackle for Permit

**NB: Latest Loop Saltwater Tackle is free to borrow!**

#### Rods

Should be the same as aforementioned bonefish recommendation but a bit heavier to handle larger flies and fish. The ideal permit rod is 9 or 10 wt.

#### Reels

Those listed for bonefish should fare well against permit, but make sure to have at least 200 yards of 20lb backing.

#### Lines

In most case, a floating line will suffice because most permit flies are heavily weighted.

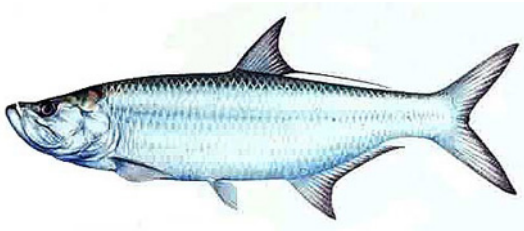
#### Tippet/Leader

Again, follow the bonefish guidelines but use a slightly stronger tippet section (12-14lb).

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## Tarpon



Tarpon are the largest, strongest and most acrobatic of the Casa Batida fish. Even juvenile fish will put your angling skills to the test. The tarpon size in Casa Batida range from 15 to 200 lbs. A large number of these fish, especially the mid size, remain in the area throughout the year. Migratory fish begin to show up in the beginning of April and, the number increase significantly from April to August.

### Fly Fishing for Tarpon

Most tarpon will be encountered in the tidal channels connecting the flats, in most circumstances, fish are seen rolling and the angler will try to approach within casting distance. In the south of the "cayos" in 4-5 feet of water, tarpon can be found cruising along the shore.

### Presentation

Once cruising or rolling fish have been spotted, it is important to quickly and accurately place the fly in front of the fish's path. Tarpon are not easily spooked and you can place the fly quite close to them. A distance of about three to five feet is perfect. Allow the fly to sink to the level of the fish and then begin to strip it back with a slow retrieve. This is the moment of truth. If all goes well and the tarpon is in the dining mode, the fish will greedily take the fly, wait until it turns the head before setting the hook. By doing this, the tippet will slide into the corner of the fish's mouth (the softest part) which theoretically sets you up for the best possible hooking angle. Tarpon have concrete-lined mouths, so a super shark hook is paramount necessary.

Correct hook setting will also help put the odds in your favour. Point the rod tip at the fish and firmly set the hook with your stripping hand only. Then keep your rod tip close to the water (to eliminate slack) and pump the rod sideways with short sharp tugs as you pull on the line and the rod simultaneously. This sounds very nice on paper, but if you have not caught one of this giant primeval giant before, the sight of one inhaling your puny fly will turn you into a bumbling ball of nerves.

## Tackle for Tarpon

**NB: Latest Loop Saltwater Tackle is free to borrow!**

### Rods

The flies you will use are not that big, nor are they heavy, so you will not need a big rod for the fly, it's for the fish. The ideal rod for Casa Batida is 10wt. From April to August a 12 wt would be better.

### Reels

Tough, no-nonsense reels are a must when you are playing tarpon. Anti-reverse, with a strong, reliable drag is a vital. Tarpon reels should hold your line plus at least 200 yards of 30-lb backing.

### Lines

Floating lines are generally all that are needed but a sink tip line (T300 to T500 or fast sink head) can be very useful to fish the deep channel.

Leaders and Tippets: Very simple leaders are best. Start with a perfection loop, then 7 feet of 50lb line, finishing with another perfection loop. Attach 24 lb. class tippet with a perfection loop or bimini twist with a loop to loop. Now is the time to attach the shock leader of 80lbs which can be connected with Albright knot or a very simple surgeons loop. Then tie the fly with a perfection loop or Rapala knot.

### Flies

A selection of the following should cover you in all condition ( tied in sizes 2/0- 3/0- 4/0), Cockroach, Chico's Shallow Water Tarpon (burnt orange/grizzly, yellow/grizzly), Stu Apte (Apte Tarpon), Lefty's Deciver (various color), Deceiver (red/yellow, chartreuse/white), Clouser Minnow (various colour). Popping bugs are very effective all year around. We do not like rabbit strip flies as they have too much wind resistance. We like flies that casts fast and easy so as to be able to present the fly to the fish with only two false casts.

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## Jack Crevalle



Jack Crevalle are found from March to August in good numbers. In those months they can be considered a primary target. Shallow water in a sandy footing is the house of this great fish. It attacks the popper or the fly with extreme aggressiveness giving the fisherman a fight without comparison.

### Presentation

Jack are found on the white flats around Cayo Largo, with the fly the fisherman has to cast ahead of the jack with the popper remember to make more noise that you can.

## Tackle for Jack Crevalle

**NB: Latest Loop Saltwater Tackle is free to borrow!**

### Rods

A 10 weight rod of the same type discussed in the tarpon section

### Reels

The same reels one uses for Tarpon is used for Jack Crevalle.

### Lines

Floating lines are generally all that are needed.

### Leader/Tippet

Use the same leader of the tarpon, just lessen shock leader to 50 lb.

### Flies

Very good is Clouser Deep Minnow (Chartreuse), but when the school are around the popper is better (Yellow, Green, Red). One of the most exiting fishing in Casa Batida.

## Other Gamefish

Barracuda, Snapper, Shark, lurking at the top of the food chain, these tough flats predators offer some outstanding action on a fly or lure. They will strike anything that darts away from them in an injured manner. When, hooked, they are some of the fastest and most powerful fish to be taken on light-tackle.

### Flies

Barracuda, Needlefish patterns (green/white, chartreuse, blue, white), Braided Barracuda Fly (chartreuse), Saltwater popper (2/0-3/0)

**NB:** For barracuda, an extra-fast retrieve will usually provoke more strikes than a slow retrieve.

Shark, Snapper, Lefty's Deciver (red/white, blue/white), Streaker, Shark Fly (2/0-3/0)