

---

---

# TRAVEL TO CUBA

— A Comprehensive Guide —

# Welcome!

# ¡Bienvenido!



We are delighted you will be joining the this cultural journey to Cuba. If you would like to speak to someone from Cuba Cultural Travel, you may call our office at (760) 645-3269, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm PST.

Throughout the following pages, you will find **IMPORTANT INFORMATION** regarding your trip. Please take the time to read and familiarize yourself with all of the different aspects of this trip. You will find most of your questions will be answered. Of course, if you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

*\* With the new relations between Cuba and the United States, this document will be updated as changes occur.*

# A Letter from the President

Dear Cuba Travelers,

As the owner of Cuba Cultural Travel, I would like to welcome you to Cuba during this historic time in US-Cuba relations. As you will find out for yourself very soon, the people of Cuba are very happy about the recent changes.

It has always been part of our mission in Cuba to improve the lives of the people we come into contact with and make a positive contribution to Cuban society. In some cases, this means giving exposure to talented artists, musicians and dancers thru paid performances or helping out the less fortunate with donations and assistance.

During my 16+ years of assisting Americans in Cuba, I have continually been impressed with the generous nature of the American people and their sincere desire to help the Cuban people.

In recent years, we were granted permission by the Cuban authorities to make donations to several group homes in Havana that provide care for needy children. A typical Cuban group home is based in a residence and is home to around 12 to 20 children of varying ages living in a family like environment with several dedicated and affectionate staff members. I have been very impressed with the Cuban system of caring for the young and, in particular, those with mental and physical disabilities.

*These donations will be collected by your CCT tour escort the day following your arrival in Havana and distributed according to the individual needs of the six orphanages we are currently supporting. Please be aware it is your responsibility to bring your donations into Cuba.*

Please feel free to call me at (760) 645-3269 regarding your donations or any other questions you may have in relation to your trip to Cuba.

Michael Sykes, President  
Cuba Cultural Travel

If you are interested in making a donation to the children who live in these homes, I would like to recommend some items that would be useful.

- Children's clothing, shoes and hygiene supplies
- Toys, art supplies and school supplies
- Used laptops and used digital cameras (with memory card) for the staff
- DVDs (cartoons) and books for children (Spanish)

# What's Covered

On the following pages, you will find the below information. Please be sure to read each section thoroughly.

... [Legal Travel to Cuba](#)

... [Luggage Fees](#)

... [Arriving in Cuba](#)

... [Medical & Health](#)

... [Money & Credit Cards](#)

... [Buying Art, Rum & Cigars in Cuba](#)

... [What to Bring](#)

... [Essentials Checklist](#)

... [Recommended Gifts](#)

... [Staying Connected](#)

... [Wi-Fi Internet & Mail Service](#)

... [Street Smarts](#)

... [Leaving Cuba](#)

... [Recommended Reading](#)

# Legal Travel to Cuba

You must have a valid passport to enter Cuba. Be sure you check the expiration date of your passport to make sure it is valid for at least 6 months AFTER the dates of travel. You are also required to have a Cuban visa (referred to as a tourist card.) You **do not** need to send your passport into CCT to obtain a visa/tourist card. When you enter Cuba your tourist card and/or passport will be given an entry stamp. Once you arrive in Cuba, your passport will no longer be required and you should keep it in the security box in your room along with your tourist card. The only time you will need your passport is for exchanging money, more on that to follow. You do not want to lose your passport in Cuba!

Any American citizen or resident wishing to travel to Cuba must abide by regulations set forth by the U.S. Treasury Department. You may be asking yourself, “Why the Treasury Department?” This is because all U.S. currency, regardless of whether in your wallet or not, is controlled by the U.S. Treasury Department. When the U.S. Government decided to limit trade with Cuba and restrict travel for its citizens, it did so by placing strict controls on US currency. To monitor the situation, the Treasury Department has a division dedicated solely to monitoring and controlling US dollars outside of our country. This department is called the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), and it plays a key role in governing all activities concerning Cuba. All travelers and flights to Cuba must abide by rules set forth by OFAC. Any transaction involving Cuba or a Cuban National must comply by regulations written and enforced by OFAC.

Cuba Cultural Travel previously operated under a People to People specific license. With the latest amendments to the regulations, as of January 16, 2015 and subsequent changes since, authorized travel is still required; however, CCT now operates under a general license. This stipulates that visitors to Cuba will engage in a full time schedule of activities in **Support of the Cuban People**. This general license allows Cuba Cultural Travel to continue to operate tours in Cuba. These tours are open to all Americans, and no application or approval process is required.



## Tip

Once in Cuba, you should keep your passport in the security box in your room along with your return ticket and tourist card.

# Commercial Flight Luggage Fees

Airline	Carry-on Dimensions	Carry-on Fees	Max # of Checked Bags	Checked Bag Fees (1st, 2nd)	Weight Limit per Bag	Overweight Fee	Checked Bag Dimensions
American	9" x 14" x 22"	Free	2	\$25, \$40	50 lbs First Class 70 lbs	\$100	62" linear max
Delta	9" x 14" x 22"	Free	2	\$25, \$40	50 lbs First Class 70 lbs	\$100	62" linear max
JetBlue	9" x 14" x 22"	Free	5	\$25, \$35	50 lbs	\$100	62" linear max
Southwest	10" x 16" x 24"	Free	2	Free, Free	50 lbs	\$75	62" linear max
United	9" x 14" x 22"	Free	2	\$25, \$40	50 lbs First Class 70 lbs	\$200	62" linear max

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS A GUIDELINE. ACTUAL FEES SHOULD BE VERIFIED WITH THE AIRLINE.

MAXIMUM WEIGHT PER CHECKED BAG IS 70 LBS FOR ALL COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS INTO CUBA.

# Arriving in Cuba

**Cuban Customs and Immigration** – When you arrive in Cuba you will first enter the immigration area where a Cuban immigration officer will ask you for your airline ticket, tourist card/visa and passport, he/she will stamp your tourist card/visa, you will need to retain this for your departure. You will then pass to the baggage claim area and finally the customs checkpoint where you will be asked for your Customs Declaration Form; this form will be provided by the airline either upon check-in or during your flight. As you depart through the doors of the airport a representative of Cuba Cultural Travel will be holding a sign and gathering your party together. When everyone is together you will depart the airport with your guide. **IMPORTANT: Never leave your bag unattended at the airport!**

**What can I not bring into Cuba?** The government (airport customs) does not allow pornography, fresh fruit or meat into the country. They will also restrict the import of household electrical items such as toasters and hotplates. Hair dryers are allowed. There are no restrictions on camera gear and you can bring a video camera as long as it is not the larger professional variety used to make documentaries. Laptop computers have not been a problem in the past.

**Safety** – The biggest threat to most tourists in Cuba is getting run over by a car. Unlike the United States, pedestrians do not have the right of way. Do NOT expect a Cuban driver to slow down for you... you are expected to jump out of harm's way. And NEVER blindly follow the person walking in front of you as you follow the tour group across the street. PLEASE BE AWARE AT ALL TIMES!!

Public safety is a concern in any major city, but less so in Havana. Numerous police officers patrol the areas where tourists congregate and crime consists mainly of petty thievery of unattended items. Violent crime is rare in Cuba; this is due mainly to the fact that there are no guns or drugs and severe penalties for breaking the law. This being said, it is not recommended to go on a solo journey thru Centro Habana with \$5,000 worth of camera gear hanging from your neck. As with all big cities, common sense prevails. Be sure to speak to your tour guide or CCT escort if you plan to venture off on your own during any downtime or in the evening.

# Medical & Health

**Medical Care** – You have no reason to be concerned with health issues during your visit to Cuba. Cuba has the highest percentage of physicians per capita in the world and they take great pride in providing tourists with good medical care. If you require medical attention during your trip the hotel staff will direct you to a clinic. *(If staying at the Hotel Parque Central, a 24-hour physician is available at a nominal cost.)*

**Health Regulations** – No inoculations are required. Please see the CDC’s website for recommended immunizations: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**Medical Insurance** – As of May 2010, Cuban authorities require all travelers to the island have insurance coverage for medical emergencies. The cost of your airline ticket INCLUDES insurance covering travelers while in Cuba. Please note, pre-existing conditions are not covered. Passengers must retain their boarding pass during their stay in Cuba. The boarding pass will serve as evidence of the insurance policy should any emergency medical services be required during the trip. **The insurance included in your package covers the following:**

- Medical expenses for sudden illness and accidents up to the amount of 25,000 CUC
- Repatriation cost up to the amount of 7,000 CUC

**Trip Cancellation Insurance** – We strongly recommend you purchase cancellation insurance to will cover the cost of your trip should you need to cancel for unforeseen reasons.

Upon receipt of your registration, CCT provided you with recommendations for trip cancellation insurance for your trip. If you have not yet obtained trip cancellation insurance, you may still do so. If you have any difficulties, please contact Laura Adams at Cuba Cultural Travel via phone (760) 645-3269, Monday thru Friday from 9am to 5pm PST, or email [Laura@CubaCulturalTravel.com](mailto:Laura@CubaCulturalTravel.com).

We have recommended the following companies for the purchase of trip cancellation insurance:

- |                           |                |  |                    |
|---------------------------|----------------|--|--------------------|
| • Travel Insurance Select | (800) 937-1387 | <a href="http://www.travelinsure.com/cobrand/select/cubaculturaltravel">www.travelinsure.com/cobrand/select/cubaculturaltravel</a> |                    |
| • Travel Guard            | (800) 826-4919 | <a href="http://www.travelguard.com">www.travelguard.com</a>   | (Agent ID 254276)  |
| • TravelEx                | (800) 228-9792 | <a href="http://www.travelexinsurance.com">www.travelexinsurance.com</a>   | (Location 05-0976) |



# Money & Credit Cards



**Cuban Currency (1 CUC = 1.13 USD)** – As a foreigner, you will be expected to pay for everything in Convertible Pesos known as CUCs. The days of spending U.S. dollars in Cuba are long gone, so you will need to convert your USD into CUC. You will be able to do so in the lobby of your hotel in Cuba. You cannot convert to CUC in the United States. Conversion rates are standardized and you will receive the same rate at hotels or banks. There is a standard fee included when exchanging currency. If you exchange \$100 USD, you will receive 87 CUC. If you have CUC remaining at the end of your time in Cuba, you may convert them back to USD at the airport. There is another national currency, also called the Peso that is in wide circulation in Cuba. Cuban pesos exchange at a rate of roughly 24 pesos to the dollar. However, few stores will accept pesos from foreigners. Pesos are mostly useful on public transport, cinemas, neighborhood farmers markets, and are the currency used only by locals. It is NOT necessary to bring your cash in small denominations.

*Many people will tell you that you should convert your USD to Euros or Canadian Dollars prior to your trip to obtain a better exchange fee in Cuba. This option is your choice completely as it really ends up to be the nearly the same after the conversion fees.*

**How Much Money Should I Bring to Cuba?** We recommend passengers bring about \$125.00, per person per day for extra meals, drinks, incidentals at the hotel, taxis, etc. This amount is a baseline and does not take in account the purchase of any artwork. It is likely you will not need this much, however, if you run out of money in Cuba you will find it impossible to replenish your funds. Better to have the cash and not need it, than to need it and not have it. In an era when most Americans pay for everything with credit cards, many of us have forgotten what it feels like to have a wallet full of cash. It is not uncommon for U.S. travelers to Cuba to run out of cash because they were afraid to carry greenbacks. Do not make this mistake! Please carry a sufficient amount of money to Cuba. Each hotel room provides a security box to protect your valuables, keep your cash in the security box and only exchange money as needed. It is better to return with unused money than to go broke in Cuba. There are no restrictions on the amount of cash you may bring into Cuba, however, any amount exceeding \$5,000 USD should be declared.

**Credit Cards** – Until U.S. financial institutions have enrolled Cuban merchants into their systems for transaction processing, your credit card will not work in Cuba. At this time, only credit cards and Traveler's Cheques issued by a non-U.S. bank or company will work. This time, you can leave home without your American Express. Most foreign bank cards are accepted in the larger tourist spots throughout the island; however, small merchants are likely not setup to handle such transactions. Credit card operations in Cuba do not always run smoothly. Cash advances are usually possible only on Visa and MasterCard (provided they are not issued by North American banks) at certain banks, and will require your passport and payment of a commission fee.

# Buying Art, Rum & Cigars

**What Can I Buy in Cuba?** Pursuant to the regulation changes on October 17, 2016; in addition to bringing back art, limits on cigars and alcohol personal consumption have been lifted. However, keep in mind duty regulations will still apply. Additionally, if you purchase rum from the duty-free shop in Cuba and will be connecting to another flight once back in the United States, be sure to obtain a receipt. If you cannot provide duty-free proof of purchase, your rum will be confiscated regardless of being in a sealed bag.

**Buying Art in Cuba** – U.S. regulations allow importation of artwork into America. There are no limitations placed on American tourists buying art in Cuba. When buying art in Cuba, several things need to be considered. Firstly, that the seller of art provides the buyer with the proper documentation that allows the art to be exported out of the country. As you leave Havana, airport officials will ask any traveler with a cardboard tube containing rolled artwork to provide exit papers showing the piece was inspected by a government official and deemed appropriate for export. This procedure ensures that a priceless piece of Cuban patrimony is not smuggled out of the country. This permit, in the form of a stamp, can only be provided by one office in Havana Vieja and the process normally takes one day to complete. The artist you purchased the artwork from will take care of this stamp. You will need to provide your passport number. Photographs or prints are exempt.

If you should fail to get the necessary paperwork, you will likely need to pay a small fee at the airport of 3 CUC per piece of art. If airport officials believe your art is of significant importance, they may seize your art and ask you to return to the airport with additional information. Obviously, this option is not feasible. Therefore, it is best to get the proper paperwork ahead of time.



# What to Bring

**Clothing** – Despite its subtropical location, Cuba has distinct summers and winters. Winter is between November and April, with relatively little rain and pleasant, temperatures of 75° to 80° F (≈ 24° to 27° C). Cool, rainy spells are possible, due to cold fronts moving south from Florida. May through October is off-season and is the hottest period with temperatures between 85° and 90° F (≈ 29° and 32° C) in mid-summer, and the possibility of severe storms and hurricanes. Casual, comfortable, light, loose fitting and washable cotton garments are the best options for Cuba. In the months when rain or cold winds are a possibility, a light sweater or waterproof hooded poncho will come in handy, as well as a collapsible umbrella. When packing, keep in mind public buildings, such as museums, and transportation can be overly air-conditioned. Unless you are in Cuba for business, there is little use for a suit and tie. However, a cocktail dress or pair of dressy slacks may be needed at a fancy nightclub, disco or restaurant. It is commonplace for men to wear slacks to dinner as opposed to shorts. Comfortable walking shoes are a must, as are a good supply of socks. Also pack a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen to guard against the strong, hot Cuban sun.

**Electric Converters / Adapters** – Almost all of Cuba runs on 110 volts and 60 hz. These outlets are for flat prongs, therefore no adapter will be necessary.\* However, we do recommend bringing a 220v adapter just in case.

*\* If you are staying at the Hotel Parque Central, this hotel has 220 volts. Make sure you bring an adapter like the ones used in most of Europe (round prongs – see example). If you forget to bring one it will be hard to buy one in Havana; the hotel sometimes has adapters to loan though they are rarely available.*

*Additionally, if you are staying in a Casa Particular, some of these homes also run on 220v and will require an adapter.*

**Hair Dryers** – The rooms at the hotels are equipped with hair dryers, however, they are attached to the wall and are not the most convenient and comfortable to use. For ladies who are accustomed to blow-drying their hair “properly” you might want to consider bringing your own hair dryer. **Keep in mind the 220 volts and the different plug set-up you may encounter.**

**Laundry** – There are no Laundromats in Cuba; however, most hotels offer a laundry service and charge on a per piece basis.



# What to Bring (cont'd)

**Medical Supplies and Sundries** – Although larger hotel stores carry some goods, travelers to Cuba should bring their own medicines, vitamins, Band-Aids, contraceptives, sunscreen, toothpaste and toothbrushes, shampoo/conditioner, soaps, prescription medications (in their original bottles if possible) and other essentials as none of these items are readily available or are only available at inflated prices. It is best to assume you will have difficulty finding daily essential items in Cuba. It is also advised to bring your own over-the-counter medicines such as Ibuprofen, Imodium, and Alka-Seltzer.

**Water** – Sanitary standards are very high in Cuba and the drinking water is usually safe, however, it is recommended travelers consume unopened bottled water. Regardless, packing some Imodium or Lomotil for an upset stomach never hurts.

**Gifts** – In a country of chronic shortages and few retail stores, simple gifts are very welcome. We encourage our travelers to bring along a few items to leave behind. Your itinerary includes several visits that would benefit from your generosity. ***If quizzed by a Cuban Customs official, refer to your donations as gifts – not donations.***

*List of recommendations may be found on [page 14](#).*



## Tip

Due to chronic shortages one can encounter on the road at locations outside of the hotel, it is highly recommended travelers also pack: toilet paper, tissues, pre-moistened towelettes, and anti-bacterial wash. It is not uncommon to find most restrooms (aside from those within your hotel) will not have toilet seats with toilet paper provided only at a bare minimum and for a fee.

# Essentials Checklist

Below you will find a basic checklist of essential items you should pack for your trip to Cuba.

- walking shoes
- umbrella / raincoat / poncho
- wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap
- sunglasses
- sunscreen
- lightweight, comfortable clothing for warm/humid weather
- sandals / flip-flops
- a lightweight sweater or shawl for cooler evenings
- charger(s) for any electronics (phone, iPad, etc.)
- outlet adapter (if staying at the Hotel Parque Central)
- cosmetics (makeup, lip balm, etc.)
- swimsuit / cover-up
- antibacterial hand sanitizer
- toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, toothbrush, toothpaste)
- any prescription medications
- over-the-counter medicines (Tylenol, Imodium, etc.)
- bandaids (for blisters or scrapes)
- a nice outfit for an evening show or event
- cotton/breathable socks
- undergarments
- camera/memory card
- money (no credit cards)
- bug spray (if you will be travelling outside Havana)
- passport / travel documents

# Recommended Gifts

**Children** – Pens, chalk, pencils, calculators, blank CDs, art supplies, staplers, rulers, and office supplies.

**Hospitals, Clinics, and Homes for the Elderly** – Over the counter medicines such as aspirin and vitamins, antibacterial ointment, cotton, bandages, syringes, sterile gloves, eye drops, analgesic ointment (BenGay), cold medicine, anti-itch cream, toothpaste, allergy pills, reading glasses, used shoes, DVDs of cartoons in Spanish.

**Religious Organizations** – Both churches and synagogues play an important role in distributing goods to the community, often by organizing various community programs designed to assist the needy. Suggestions include clothing, reading glasses, school supplies, and hygiene products (toothbrushes, deodorant, etc.), shoes, DVDs (cartoons in English or Spanish).

**Medicine** – Prescription medicine is made available to the public thru a non-denominational pharmacy operated by the Jewish Community Center (Patronato), which is always in need of medicine. A full-time pharmacist will accept donations of all kinds. Of particular importance are asthma inhalers. Large donations of medicine should be divided among fellow travelers to avoid a potentially long inspection process by Cuban airport inspectors. *(Please call Cuba Cultural Travel to discuss larger medical donations. Try and reduce packaging if possible and consolidate pills. Reduce the volume of packaging as much as possible.)*



# Staying Connected

## Land Lines

Be aware it can cost up to \$3.00 per minute to call the United States from Cuba. Your best value is to call home and have the person return your call. Calling Cuba from the U.S. can also be expensive, especially if you do not have an international calling plan. With a calling plan, expect to pay about \$1.00 per minute to call Cuba from the U.S.

## Cellular Phones

The following cellular companies have entered into agreements with ETECSA/ Cubacel. Upon arrival in Cuba, any global ready phone will switch to the Cubacel network and you will receive texts and calls. Keep in mind, roaming and international rates can be expensive. You should check with your cellular provider to see what plan will work best for you while in Cuba.

**Verizon:** Roaming rates of \$3 per minute for voice calls and \$2 per MB for data. Verizon says customers traveling to Cuba first have to subscribe to the Pay-As-You-Go International Travel Option, and must have a phone designated as a "world device" that is capable of receiving signals in Cuba.

**Sprint:** Voice calls when roaming in Cuba are \$2.49 per minute. Data on the island is \$1.99 per megabyte, and SMS text messaging is 50¢ to send and free to receive.

**T-Mobile:** Customers can talk for \$2.00 a minute, send text and multimedia messages for 50¢ per message and receive them for free, and use data for \$2.00 per MB.

**AT&T:** Voice calls when roaming in Cuba are \$3 per minute. SMS and MMS are 50¢ and \$1.30 respectively. Data is \$2.05 per MB.

THE ABOVE RATES SHOULD BE CONFIRMED THRU YOUR PROVIDER AS THIS INFORMATION MAY BE OUTDATED.



NOTE: The setup and use of a cell phone in Cuba is both lengthy and costly. Also, obtaining a Cuban cell phone (or SIM card) can only be done by a Cuban resident. The process listed below is time-consuming and frequently frustrating. (Not recommended!)

*If you are in Havana, there are two places where you can get your cell phone operational. One is Cubacel in Miramar (Calle 28 #510, Tel 05-880-2222 or 05-264-2266 for client attention). The other is at the airport, where Cubacel has offices in both Terminals #2 and #3.*

*You can either bring your own cell phone or rent a cell phone in Cuba. If you rent a phone, there is a 100 CUC refundable deposit, plus 7 CUC/day for the equipment rental and 3 CUC/day for rental of a line (total 10 CUC/day).*

*If you bring your own phone, it's only 3 CUC/day to rent a line; however, you'll have to take out a minimum 10 CUC credit to use the phone. Obviously it's most economical to bring your own cell phone though to be activated for use in Cuba, your cell phone must be GSM working in the 900 MHz bandwidth or else it will not work. A tri-band phone is even better.*

*SIM cards (prepaid with a certain amount of time on it) are available from all Cubacel offices and enable you to call anywhere in Cuba and receive calls. These can be purchased for 10, 20 or 40 CUC each.*



# iPhone & Android Apps

There are a few different applications that will work over Wi-Fi to send messages. Be sure to choose your preferred app and download it prior to your trip as some apps are blocked from download in Cuba. Also check that anyone you wish to communicate with has the same app installed and set up.

**imo** is the most reliable and is available for both iPhone and Android phones.

[www.imo.im](http://www.imo.im)

**WhatsApp** works at times, though cannot be downloaded once in Cuba. It is also available for both iPhone and Android phones.

[www.whatsapp.com](http://www.whatsapp.com)

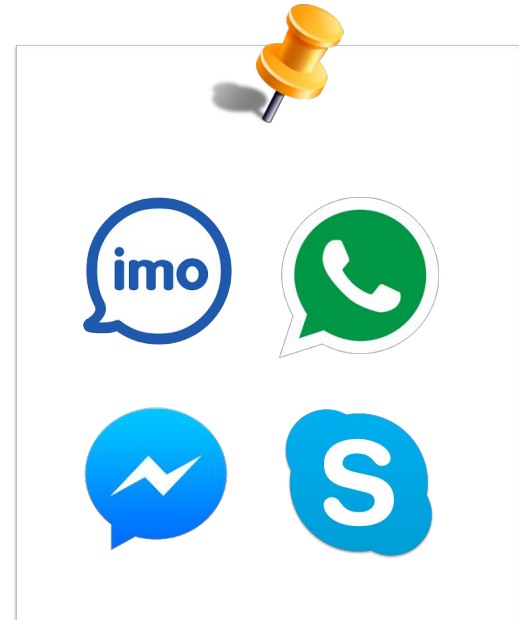
**Messenger** through Facebook will work as well and is available on all platforms.

[www.messenger.com](http://www.messenger.com)

**Skype** may or may not work. It is available on all platforms.

[www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)

It should be noted that video calling requires a strong, stable Wi-Fi connection. Most hotels in Cuba have decent connections, though not enough to keep a video call going.



# Wi-Fi Internet & Mail Service

**Wi-Fi – Internet / Mail Service** – Wi-Fi can be found at most hotels with the purchase of a Wi-Fi card. Many Casas Particulares now offer Wi-Fi as well with the purchase of a Wi-Fi card. Internet connections are slower in Cuba, therefore it is recommended you download your emails, disconnect while responding, and reconnect to send them so as to preserve your minutes. Keep in mind, not all webmail servers allow you to do this and using Microsoft Outlook to send emails does not always work. Certain hotels may also offer use of their business center computers for an additional fee.

The Hotel Jagua in Cienfuegos does offer Wi-Fi, however, does not have Wi-Fi cards readily available for purchase. It is best to keep your internet card from your previous hotel for use at the Jagua.

Wi-Fi connections may be sporadic at times, please be patient.

*There are various Wi-Fi hotspot locations throughout Havana, however, you will still not have the ability to use data on your phone unless you have a previously mentioned carrier and plan.*



Cuba's mail system is terminally slow, but otherwise efficient and reaches all parts of the island. There is a post office in every town where stamps can be bought and cards sent or picked up. In addition, most tourist hotels sell postage stamps. Postcards being sent outside of Cuba will eventually get to their destination, and it helps to write the country destination in Spanish.



## Street Smarts

**Can I say what I please? Go where I want?** Inevitably Americans want to know if they can discuss communism, Fidel Castro or politics with the people on the street or the Cuban tour guide. The answer is yes, however, please do so with respect and never in front of a crowd. In particular, do not put your tour guide in an uncomfortable position in front your tour group. As far as traveling about on your own and wandering freely, your movement is rarely inhibited. You are free to explore as you please.

**Tipping** – In Cuba, tipping is the reason why so many highly educated people are working as taxi drivers and waiters. In a country where the average individual earns \$25 a month, a small gesture of appreciation goes a long way. If you should go out for a meal on your own, it is recommended you leave 1-2 CUC per person for your server.

**Photography** – It has been said Havana is like walking on to a movie set with the inhabitants playing the role of enthusiastic actors. Nowhere on earth will you find people so happy to have their picture taken! The rustic charms of Cuba combined with trust and friendliness of the people will rekindle your faith in the human spirit!

It is common practice, and expected, to give 1-2 CUC to a Cuban who might pose for you to take a photograph.

# Street Smarts (cont'd)

**Hustlers** – American tourists are considered to be the most generous in the world. They are also considered easiest to take advantage of. Make a point of checking every receipt you receive in Cuba for accuracy. Overcharging is common practice. There is no sales tax in Cuba and service charges can easily be waived if you are not happy with the meal or service. If you are trying out a new restaurant, always ask in advance what a meal will cost, especially if you are eating in a private restaurant called a paladar. If you need some recommendations, ask your tour guide to give you our prepared list of favorite paladars and restaurants.

It is becoming quite common for local citizens to approach US travelers explaining that they need milk for their baby. If you agree to help them, they will bring you around the corner to a store and ask you to go in and purchase the dried milk. It will sound as though you are only asking for a small portion when, in fact, you will be left with a hefty bill. Be aware of scams such as these as they will approach you when you walk out of the hotel. As Americans, it does not take much to tug at our heartstrings; and many Cubans are aware of this.

You will likely be approached on the streets of Havana by a Cuban man who wants to sell you cigars. He will tell you his mother, cousin or aunt works at one of the cigar factories and he will offer you a box of cigars at a fraction of the official price. These cigars are ALWAYS low quality counterfeits that are not made at the factory and smoke very poorly. If you want good quality cigars, you need to buy them at the official government stores.





# Leaving Cuba

**Departure from Cuba** – Your group will need to arrive at the airport in Cuba 3 hours prior to your departure. At this point, you will check-in and then proceed through Immigration where officials will take your visa/tourist card and stamp your ticket. From this point on, you will just proceed through security where you will wait until your flight is ready to board.

If you purchased art while in Cuba, you will be asked by customs to show the proper approval in the form of a stamp and/or a form that should have been provided by the artist. All art sold in Cuba needs to be approved for exportation. Make sure you have with you, and accessible, the proper paperwork.

**Arriving back in the United States** – Before landing, the flight crew should provide you with a declaration form. You will likely recognize this is the same form you are given when you arrive on any international flight. When you pass through U.S. Customs and Immigration, officials will then request the form.

Upon arrival, you will immediately go through Immigration.\* After checking your passport and letter of authorization, you will be cleared to move on to baggage claim. Upon leaving the baggage claim area, you will provide Customs officials with your declaration form and be cleared to leave the area. Occasionally, officials will do a secondary search of passengers' luggage, so please be prepared and be sure to declare anything you are bringing home from Cuba.

# Recommended Reading

## Travel Guide

[Cuba Handbook](#) by Christopher Baker

## Novels on Cuba

[Cuba and the Night: A Novel](#) by Pico Iyer

[Waiting for Fidel](#) by Chris Hunt

[Cuba Diaries: An American Housewife in Havana](#) by Isadora Tattlin

[Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuba Boy](#) by Carlos Eire

## General Interest Books

[Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana](#) by Ann Louise Bardach

[Trading With the Enemy: A Yankee Travels Through Castro's Cuba](#) by Tom Miller

[Cuba In Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture](#) by Simon Calder & Emily Hatchwell

[This is Cuba: An Outlaw Culture Survives](#) by Ben Corbett

## History Books

[Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution](#) by Louis A Perez, Jr.

[The History of Havana](#) by Dick Cluster & Rafael Hernandez

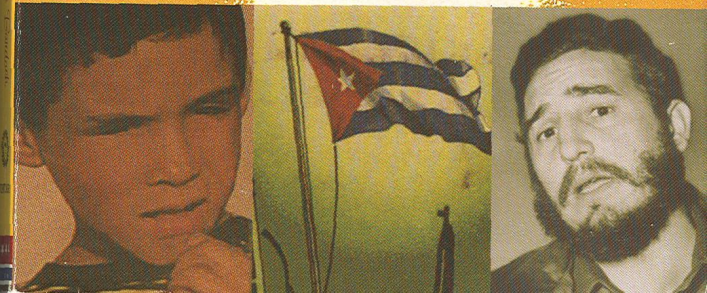
For an extended reading list, please visit: [www.cubaculturaltravel.com](http://www.cubaculturaltravel.com)

"Bardach knows Miami and Cuba from the inside out. . . .  
Her contacts are wide-ranging in both places, her  
research is thorough and meticulous."

—LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW

# CUBA Confidential

LOVE AND VENGEANCE  
IN MIAMI AND HAVANA  
ANN LOUISE BARDACH





Thank you for choosing Cuba Cultural Travel.