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## Cuba Travel Advice

**TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS:** Due to United States restrictions, travel to Cuba is extremely limited. The latest revisions of U.S. restrictions went into effect on Sep 3, 2009. Please see the website of the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control: <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs/cuba/cuba.pdf>. Legal information regarding travel to Cuba is also available at the web site of the **National Lawyers Guild** at [www.nlg.org](http://www.nlg.org). For efforts to abolish the restrictions, please contact [www.cubacentral.com](http://www.cubacentral.com).

**DOCUMENTS:** Under U.S. restrictions, only persons whose travel falls into certain categories may be authorized to spend money related to travel to, from, or within Cuba.

**A. General License (no application to Office of Foreign Assets Control necessary):**

1/ Official U.S. and foreign government travelers; 2/ Journalists and supporting personnel; 3/ Persons traveling to visit a close relative who is a national of Cuba or who is a U.S. government employee assigned to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana; 4/ Full-time professionals conducting research in their fields; 5/ Full-time professionals attending certain professional meetings; 6/ Persons attending telecommunications-related professional meetings; 7/ Persons traveling for commercial marketing, sales negotiations, or for servicing of telecommunications-related items; 8/ Employees of a producer or distributor of agricultural commodities, medicine, or medical devices or an entity representing such a firm for the purpose of commercial marketing, sales negotiations, or for servicing of such items; 9/ Cuban nationals returning to Cuba.

**B. Specific License issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (we must receive a copy of your license):**

1/ Persons traveling for certain clearly defined educational activities –including: participation in a structured educational program that includes at least 10 weeks in Cuba, independent research for writing a master’s thesis, doctoral dissertation, or similar document, participation in a formal course of study or teaching at a Cuban academic institution, or sponsoring a Cuban scholar in the U.S.; 2/ Persons traveling for religious activities; 3/ Persons traveling for certain humanitarian projects; 4/ Persons traveling for free-lance journalism; 4/ Persons traveling for professional research or to attend a professional meeting that does not meet the requirements of the relevant general license; 5/Amateur or semi-professional athletes traveling to participate in a competition held under the auspices of an international sports federation, or for participation in certain public performances or exhibitions; 6/ Persons traveling on behalf of private foundations or research or educational institutes; 7/ Persons traveling for purposes related to exportation, importation, or transmission of information or informational materials; 8/ Persons visiting close relatives who are neither Cuban nationals nor U.S. government employees assigned to the U.S. Interests Section; 9/ Other Specific Licenses issued by OFAC. *If you are not a U.S. citizen, you must also carry with you all necessary documentation to re-enter the U.S. (visa, green card etc.) and necessary documentation (e.g. visa) to depart from and return to the third country through which you may be traveling to Cuba (e.g. Mexico, the Bahamas, Canada).*

**INOCULATIONS:** None are required for travel to Cuba.

**BAGGAGE:** [As amended Sep 3, 2009] The previous **44 lb. limit** on accompanied baggage (including carry-on and gift parcels) applicable to those traveling under specific licenses for the purpose of visiting immediate family members and to those traveling under academic educational licenses and to those traveling for professional research, **no longer applies**. There is no weight limit on items brought to Cuba for your personal use during your visit. **However, all airlines will collect overweight charges on baggage to Cuba**. These charges vary from airline to airline: from Miami over 44 lbs @\$1-\$2 per lb; from Nassau over 71 lbs @\$2.50 per lb; from Cancun: Mexicana: 44 lbs free + excess baggage @\$2.12 per lb. Cubana: 66 lbs free + excess baggage @\$1.30 per lb.

**GIFT PARCELS:** [As amended Sep 3, 2009] Gift parcels may be brought to Cuba by any licensed traveler and given to any individual (excluding certain Government and Communist Party officials) or to a charitable, educational or religious organization “not administered or controlled by the Cuban government”. In addition to foods (including vitamins), medicine, medical supplies and equipment (including hospital supplies and equipment for the handicapped), gift parcels may now include clothing, personal hygiene items, consumer communication devices, and many other items. The total value of non-food items is limited to \$800. There are no limitations on bringing informational materials.

**WHAT TO TAKE:** Be prepared for hot weather, with a chance of brief periods of rain. However, bring a light jacket or sweater for cool evenings (and sometimes very cool air-conditioned restaurants!). From November to April the temperature averages 75-80 F.; from June to August, about 85-90 F. The warmest weather is in the eastern part of the island (Santiago). Rainy season is May-October. In general, clothing should be on the informal side. If you bring prescription drugs, be sure the druggist's identification label is on the container. Here are some other items to remember when packing:

- Sun screen / Sunglasses / Sun hat
- Alarm clock
- Soap
- Extra pair of glasses
- Tissues / Tampons
- Camera film (packed separately)
- Mosquito repellent + Anti-Itch Medication
- Normal medications/Bandaids
- Detergent for personal laundry
- Spanish-English dictionary
- Bathing suit
- Plastic bag for soiled clothes

**TIPPING:** Tipping is expected (in Convertible Cuban Pesos).

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**MONEY:** Only Convertible Cuban Pesos (CUC) are accepted as payments for goods and services in Cuba. US Dollars (USD) can be exchanged upon entry at the airport or at hotels or banks or Exchange Offices. The exchange rate (as of June 1, 2006) is approximately 1 USD = .92 CUC plus an additional exchange fee of 10% (that is, including the exchange fee 1 USD = .82 CUC). There is no exchange fee for other currency exchanges – such as for Canadian Dollars or Euros – and we suggest you consider changing your USD into one of these currencies before departing from the US to Cuba. Travelers Checks must be exchanged into CUC as well – with an additional 3% fee charged for this exchange.

**LIMIT ON EXPENDITURES:** There is a **\$179** per day limit (as of April 1, 2008) on expenditures paid directly or indirectly to Cuba or Cuban nationals for transactions ordinarily incidental to travel within Cuba for all licensed individuals including payment of living expenses (such as hotel accommodations) and the acquisition of goods for personal consumption in Cuba (such as meals). However, there is no limit to expenditures that are directly incidental to the activities authorized by the Treasury Department pursuant to the license under which you are traveling. For example, the **\$179** limit would not apply to expenditures for travel from your hotel to a conference you are authorized to attend, or expenditures for travel needed to carry out your authorized research or educational or religious activities, or payment of accreditation and program fees for your authorized participation in an academic or educational program. There is also no limit on purchases of "informational materials" as described in the section listed below under SHOPPING. There is also no limit on payments to Marazul for transportation on the flights from Miami, Nassau, Cancun or other cities to and from Cuba for authorized travelers.

**CELL PHONES:** There are several companies which rent cell phones in Cuba. For instance, CUBACEL has offices at Terminal 2 and Terminal 3 at José Martí Airport. The charge in CUC is approximately 9 CUC per day + 3.30 CUC per minute for outgoing international calls / .44 CUC for incoming international calls (or .50 outgoing/ .44 incoming LOCAL calls). 100 CUC Deposit required (returned at the end of service).

**EMAIL AND INTERNET:** Access and services are available at increasing numbers of hotels, post offices, and cybernet cafes

**RELIGIOUS SERVICES:** Visitors are free to attend the services of their choice.

**CAR RENTAL:** Rental cars or chauffeur-driven cars are available at the airport, and at many hotels in Havana and in major cities and resorts.

**SHOPPING:** Persons authorized to travel to Cuba are **NOT** permitted to purchase merchandise in Cuba. **You cannot buy cigars, liquor or handicrafts, for instance.** The **only exceptions** are 'informational materials' for your own use. These include books, periodicals, paintings, sculpture, records, tapes, C.D.s, films, video cassettes, photographs, posters, etchings, lithographs, serigraphs, microfilm, microfiche, and other informational materials. As indicated above, these purchases must be made with Convertible Cuban Pesos (CUC).

**MEDICAL CARE:** Effective May 1, 2010, all travelers to Cuba are required to have medical insurance coverage during their stay. For travelers on the charter flights from Miami and New York, the cost for this coverage will be included within the airfare charge. For travelers on flights from Cancun or Nassau or from other cities, medical insurance will be available upon landing in Havana at a cost of approximately 2-3 CUC (Convertible Cuban Pesos) per day in Cuba. We recommend drinking bottled water only. The most common afflictions for visitors are mild diarrhea and sunstroke. We also recommend drinking plenty of non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic drinks, using sunscreen, and getting enough rest.

**ELECTRICAL CURRENT:** In general, your electric razor, hairdryer, or other small appliance will operate in the standard electrical current in Cuba. However, some of the newer or recently renovated hotels have converted to 220 volts, and you will need a converter.

**SECURITY:** Many hotels have lock boxes at the front desk and may also have them in each room which you may want to use for your valuables and perhaps for your passport. Other than in the room safe, do not leave valuables (e.g. passport, money, or camera) in your room.

**TIME:** Cuba is on daylight saving time summer and winter (one hour later than Eastern Standard Time).

**CORRESPONDENCE:** There is direct dialing between the U.S. and Cuba (Cuba's country-code is 53; Havana's city-code is 7). You can obtain your hotel telephone number (and often fax number also) from Marazul. Collect calls may not be available. If you are not staying at a hotel, international calls can be placed from the Hotel Habana Libre, Hotel Neptuno (in Miramar) or Hotel Inglaterra (in Old Havana). Postal service between the U.S. and Cuba takes 6 weeks or more, so you should not expect to receive any mail while you are there.

**IN AN EMERGENCY:** If you are a member of a group which has made its arrangements in Cuba through Marazul, family or friends can contact us in case of emergency at 201-319-1054 or at 800-223-5334 and we will attempt to contact Cuba and have a message passed on to you.

**READING SUGGESTIONS:** Available from [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). We recommend **Cuba** (2009) from Lonely Planet, **National Geographic Traveler: Cuba** by Christopher Baker (2007), **Havana, Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis** by Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula and Joseph Scarpaci (2002) from the University of North Carolina, **Havana** (2007) from Lonely Planet, and **Cuba and United States: A Chronological History** (1997) by Jane Franklin from Ocean Press. Also, **Frommer's Cuba** (published 2008). Information on Cuba can be obtained from the **Center for Cuban Studies**, 124 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011 (212-242-0559). Also: [www.oceanbooks.com.au](http://www.oceanbooks.com.au) For MAPS of Cuba and Havana: [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) or [www.mapseasy.com](http://www.mapseasy.com)

- Updated 10/08/09

**HELPFUL ADDRESSES:**

**Havanatur-Celimar / Dept. USA** Ave Paseo #606 e/25y27,Vedado Tel: 836-3100

**Mexicana**, Calle 23 #64, esq. Infanta, Vedado, Havana tel: 33-3621 / 33-4423

**Banco Financiero Internacional**, Calle Linea 1, Vedado, Havana; tel: 833-3423,833-3424

**Individual Tourism Office**, Habana Libre Hotel, L y 23, Vedado, Havana tel: 832-6245, 832-6634

**U.S. Interests Section**, Calzada e/ L y M, Vedado, Havana tel: (53-7) 834-4400, Fax (53-7) 833-1084

**Cuban Interests Section**, 2639 16th St NW, Washington DC 20009 tel: 202-797-8518/Fax 202-797-8521

**Office of Foreign Assets Control**, 1500 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, 2nd Fl. AX, Washington DC 20220 tel:202-622-2480/fax:202-622-1657