



# Cuba

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HISTORY



Cuba is officially referred to as the Republic of Cuba and is located on the Isla de la Jeventud and also on a number of the Caribbean Sea's archipelagos. Its capital city is Havana which is the biggest city in the country. The history of Cuba began with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 and the subsequent invasion of the island by the Spaniards.

## In The Beginning

In the late 15th century the indigenous Ciboney and Guanahatabey peoples occupied western Cuba, and the more numerous Taino inhabited the rest of the island. Estimates of the total population range as high as 600,000; however, the actual total was probably about 75,000. The Taino were a peaceful people and were highly proficient agriculturalists, related to the Arawakan peoples of South America who migrated to the Greater Antilles. Their houses, called bohíos, formed villages ranging from single families to communities of 3,000 people. They made pottery, polished stone implements, and idols of religious spirits called zemis. The Taino diet included potatoes, manioc, fruits, and fish.

## Che Guevara

Che Guevara was a prominent communist figure in the Cuban Revolution (1956–59) who went on to become a guerrilla leader in South America. Executed by the Bolivian army in 1967, he has since been regarded as a martyred hero by generations of leftists worldwide. Guevara's image remains a prevalent icon of leftist radicalism and anti-imperialism.

## Cuba Since 1991

Soviet troops began to withdraw from Cuba in September 1991 over the latter's objections that the withdrawal would compromise the island's security. In 1993, the US tightens its embargo on Cuba, which introduces some market reforms in order to stem the deterioration of its economy. These include the legalization of the US dollar, the transformation of many state farms into semi-autonomous cooperatives and the legalization of limited individual private enterprise. In 2001, US exports food to Cuba for the first time in more than 40-years after a request from the Cuban government to help it cope with the aftermath of Hurricane Michelle.





MONEY





The Cuban Peso(CUP) and the Cuban Convertible Peso(CUC) are officially used in the island. The dual currency is not a modern issue since it arose in Cuba 102-years-ago. Even though the authorities announced their intention to eliminate it, the CUC and the CUP still circulate and tourists use the CUC more frequently.

## Credit Cards

In Cuba it is largely a cash culture, but in recent years ATMs have become more common (if still unreliable) and can be found in most of the major cities and tourist hotspots. Visa, Euro and Master cards are widely accepted, but US card issuers like American Express and Diners' Club are still blocked. You should check with your card issuer to ensure it can be used in Cuba. There is normally a commission for using a credit card at around 3% for both purchases and cash withdrawals. The British embassy in Cuba is regularly contacted by travellers who are stranded in Cuba without cash. Some travellers automatically assume that they can use their debit/bank cards everywhere. Unfortunately this isn't the case, yet.

## Debit Cards

Amex and Mastercard have both stated they are trying to have their cards function in Cuba. Currently, no US-based credit or debit cards can be used there — this also includes using a debit card to take cash out of a Cuban ATM.





villa cla

## Visitors From The USA

Most hotels provide internet at an additional rate, which can range from \$2-\$12 per-hour. Sometimes you can pay to connect to one of two or three computers in a hotel business center, but typically, internet comes in the form of a prepaid card where you scratch off a code and connect with your own devices.

## ATM

There are ATM machines in several locations in Havana. You could find an ATM in almost every bank and hotel in the downtown area of Havana. There are also ATMs in selected "Casas de Cambio" (Houses of Change -CADECA-). Do not assume that you will find an ATM in every town or city of Cuba. You could find some ATM machines in main cities like Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Santiago de Cuba, or in resorts like Varadero, or the keys, it will not be the same for smaller cities and towns. If you are going to one of the "countryside" cities, be sure to bring all the cash you will need.

HELPFUL INFO

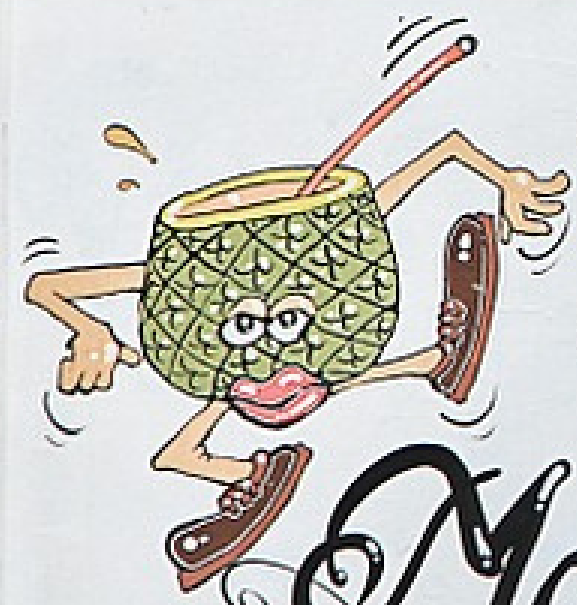
## Climate

In Cuba, the climate is tropical, with a dry and relatively cool season from late November to mid-April, and a rainy and muggy season from late April to early November. The climate is fairly uniform from one area to the other, but there are some differences that are worth considering. To visit cities and make excursions, the coolest period (December-February) is preferable, and in any case the dry season (late November to mid-April). For beach life, the Easter period (late March-April) is nice throughout the country.

## Electricity

In Cuba the power sockets are of type A, B, C and L. The standard voltage is 110/220 V and the standard frequency is 60-Hz.





**DRINK**



*Mojito*  
*Piña Colada*



## Technology & Communication

Cuba's growing digital economy is fueling private sector growth, economic development, and social change across the island. However, access to internet is still low, and the island nation lacks the resources to further develop its internet communications and technology (ICT) sector. Despite these challenges, Cuba has some of the brightest and most innovative technological minds in the world. U.S. tech and telecom companies have the resources to help Cuba digitize its economy and move into the 21st century. Improving the ability of Cubans to connect with the rest of the world will help foster economic growth and improve human rights on the island.

# Infrastructure & Transport

Cuba has a good infrastructure of transport, so much by road as by air and by rail that facilitates the connection among all the points of the country in term of hours. It's necessary to do distinction among the transportation that are paid in dollars (of very good quality) and those that are paid in Cuban pesos (the national currency) that are in general of mediocre quality, most tourist, obviously, will use services of transport paid in dollars. Cuba is very well connected throughout the Caribbean and the rest of the world. Unlike its train network, Cuba's national airline Cubana de Aviación is rather modern and serves major routes.



## In Case Of An Emergency

In Cuba, dial 106 to access your emergency services – Fire, Police or Medical.

## Language

The official language spoken in Cuba is Spanish and it is the first language of about 90% of the entire population. Other languages spoken in the country include Haitian Creole, Lucimi, Galician, and Corsican.







## LGBT Travel

While Cuba isn't a queer destination (yet), it's more tolerant than many other Latin American countries. The hit movie *Fresa y Chocolate* (Strawberry and Chocolate, 1994) sparked a national dialogue about homosexuality. Activist Mariela Castro, the daughter of Raúl, has led the way in much-needed LGBT reforms and changing social perceptions. Today Cuba is pretty tolerant, all things considered. People from more accepting societies may find this tolerance too 'don't ask, don't tell' or tokenistic but Cuba remains ahead of most of Latin America in this respect.

Lesbianism is less tolerated and seldom discussed and you'll see very little open displays of gay pride between female lovers. There are occasional fiestas para chicas (not necessarily all-girl parties but close); ask around at the Cine Yara in Havana's gay cruising zone. Cubans are physical with each other and you'll see men hugging, women holding hands and lots of friendly caressing. This type of casual, non-sensual touching shouldn't be a problem.

## Religion

Cuba is a multiracial society with a population of mainly Spanish and African origins. The largest organized religion is the Roman Catholic Church. Afro-Cuban religions, a blend of native African religions and Roman Catholicism, are widely practiced in Cuba.





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## Getting There

Only 103-miles away from the United States, the largest island in the Caribbean has lived through a complicated estrangement from its nearest neighbor since 1961. What Americans call “the embargo,” and what Cubans call “the blockade,” has arguably done more to shape Cuba’s present as its 1959 revolution. Since President Obama lifted many of the longstanding travel restrictions for U.S. citizens when he restored diplomatic ties with Cuba in 2015, Americans are now able to experience the country. Cuba has 10 international airports. The largest by far is Aeropuerto Internacional José Martí in Havana.

The only other sizable airport is Juan Gualberto Gómez International Airport in Varadero.

## Driving

Driving here isn't just a different ballpark, it's a different sport. The first problem is that there are no signs – almost anywhere. Major junctions and turnoffs to important resorts or cities are often not indicated at all. Cubans drive how they want, where they want. It seems chaotic at first, but it has its rhythm. Seatbelts are supposedly required and maximum speed limits are technically 50-km/h in the city, 90-km/h on highways, and 100-km/h on the Autopista, but some cars can't even go that fast and those that can, go faster still.

THE EXPERIENCE

## Culture

The Caribbean nation of Cuba is well-known for its vibrant and rich culture that is a complex mixture of different influences and factors. Due to the Cuba's rigid communist history, the development of the country has been set back. Though conveniences such as WiFi are now available, they are not widespread as is typical of most Western countries. It is still difficult to find access to things in stores due to ongoing trade embargoes. These embargoes are also one of the reasons why Cuban cuisine can be satisfying but bland.

## Bucket List

Do a vintage car tour

Join the winter Carnival in Havana

Horse riding in the valley of Viñales

Hiking in Viñales

Learn how to roll cigars in the tobacco plantations

Snorkel or Dive in the Bay of Pigs

Do a cacao tour in Baracoa



# Family Travel Highlights

Take a ferry to a Robinson Crusoe island

Taking a ride in a convertible car

See Flamingos at Laguna Guanaroca

Visit the Museo de Revolucion

## Tourist Authority

Ministerio de Turismo

Ministry, National Tourism Organization HAVANA, CUBA

Plaza del la Revolucion Calle 3ra, N? 6 entre G y F. El vedado HAVANA, CUBA

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# Foods To Try

Tamales

Medianoche

Pernil Relleno de Moros y Cristianos

Vaca Frita

Frita

Shrimps in coconut sauce

Arroz com pollo (rice with chicken)

Lechon asado

Ropa vieja

## Drinks To Try

Daiquiri

Mojito

Cuba Libre (Cubata)

Bay Leaf Tea

Cuban Coffee Primer

Agua Fresca-Jamaica Hibiscus Drink

Caribbean Style Lemonade



# Photography Hot Spots

El Malecon

The Streets of Old Havana

El Capitolio

Colorful streets in Trinidad

Topes de Collantes National Park

Trinidad church

## Souvenirs To Buy

Cuban Cohiba Cigars

Cuban Rum

Coconut Monkeys

Cuban License Plates

Cuban Art

Cuban Straw Hat





MERCERIA

DAX