



Caribbean a la Carte Corp.  
Avenida Balboa  
P.H. Bay Mall, Piso 3<sup>ro</sup>, Oficina 304  
Ciudad de Panamá, Panamá  
Registro Mercantil Público de la República de Panamá:  
Ficha: 841354 Documento: 2655190

## EVERYTHING YOU MUST KNOW BEFORE YOU TRAVEL TO CUBA BROUGHT TO YOU BY CARIBBEAN À LA CARTE (CALC):

### VISA AND OTHER REQUIRED DOCUMENTS TO GO TO CUBA

Once in Cuba, at the airport controls you will be required to present:

- **Passport** with at least six months ahead of validity.
- **Visa or Tourist card** already issued.
- **Health Insurance**
- **Return ticket** (might be an e-ticket). CALC seldom sells international air flights tickets.
- **An address** of a hotel or private residence you are thinking to stay. Please make sure **to inform the location for your hotel or private residence as delivered to you by CALC**. This information is available through updated databases countrywide, so any misinformation will be easily detected. If you change your address while in Cuba, legally established hotels and private residences have to inform it to immigration authorities, under the law, so that there is no problem for you on your way out of the country. If you later change your place of stay, the owner of the new place is required to inform the authorities. This is a security measure, so in case there is an emergency (tropical storms, floods, hurricanes or medical alerts) the authorities are able to locate you and offer assistance.

### HEALTH INSURANCE AND VACCINES

Visitors to Cuba will find not only the natural beauty of the island, the proverbial hospitality of its people, but also an **absolute security**, which includes wellbeing and good health. For any health-related emergency, Cuba's healthcare system guarantees medical attention through an extensive network of clinics and hospital covering the entirety of the country. In addition, the vast majority of hotels provide with primary medical attention.

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Healthcare is free for all Cuban residents; however, this is not the case for foreign visitors. There are international clinics throughout the country, like Cira García International Clinic, at Havana. Since May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, health insurance is mandatory for any visitors to the country. To comply, visitors must have travel insurance covering healthcare services or healthcare insurance valid within Cuba. (Please refer to the options on this offered by CALC in the Terms & Conditions)

**Vaccines:** You do not need special vaccination plans to go to Cuba. While it is true Cuba is a tropical country, it has also one of the most advanced healthcare systems in the world, and the island (are her physicians) are well known for this fact. Diseases like malaria, typical of other countries with similar geographical and climatological conditions, have been eradicated long ago in Cuba, while the health system keeps an enormous effort controlling mosquitoes and other disease carrying vectors.

#### **Gastroenterological diseases:**

Nevertheless, tap water is not recommended for regular consume. Tourists are encouraged to drink bottled or boiled water to avoid any issues with respect to water.

#### **BAGGAGE:**

Please bear in mind that airplane/airport security measures forbid passengers to carry weapons, sharp objects or inflammable substances in your hand baggage.

Sometimes your suitcase might get lost, misplaced or delayed. Thus, remember to carry in your handbag those items you esteem irreplaceable, at least for the first few days. Nevertheless, in markets and stores in Havana you may find everything you need in these extremely rare occurrences.

There are certain restrictions to some electronic equipment and other items you can bring into Cuba. Please consult the General Customs website (<http://www.aduana.gob.cu/index.php/english>) for these norms and regulations.

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## **CUBAN CULTURE**

Despite economic hardships, education in Cuba is free from first grade to post-university level. Cubans love (and many are well versed in) art in its various forms. Attendance to theaters, cinemas, opera houses, ballet performances, art galleries and museums is very common among the population.

Cubans have a great sense of humor, people are open and are very easy to approach and talk to. You may find that establishing a conversation is effortless, and it can turn out to be very pleasant and fruitful.

Every year the country is seat of many important cultural events. The New Latin-American Cinema International Festival and the International Book Fair are examples of those events.

## **CURRENCY**

Cuba has actually two currencies in circulation. One of them is the Cuban Convertible (CUC), which can be exchanged for the principal currencies in the world, at a rate 1 CUC = 1.15 USD approximately for cash exchange. With travelers checks and other bank transactions the rate is 1 CUC = 1.03 USD. This is due to the still ongoing U.S. embargo against Cuba.

CUC bills have always the national heroes portrayed in statues, as a recognizing trait. The other currency is the Cuban Peso (CUP), rated 1 CUC = 24 CUP, and could be used at some local markets and stores. CUP bills have national heroes' faces on them (like U.S. dollars have), so you may differentiate from the other ones.

Money exchange offices are called CADECA, and you could also change money at banks and hotels. Exchange rates at hotels are less favorable, so we suggest using the CADECAs elsewhere. Most situations in which you may find yourself as a tourist will need you to make your payments in CUC, but you need to know beforehand which currency you may use in which case. Do not buy a lot of CUP, because there is little you can exchange those for. A sum of 10 CUC will yield you

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240 CUP, more than enough in most cases. In case you have some extra CUC at the end of your trip, you may exchange it back at the airport for Euros or USD.

We suggest you bring cash, because there are not many places in which you may pay with credit cards and debit cards not always work. VISA y MASTERCARD (if they are not issued by American banks) allow you to get some cash at CADECAs, banks, ATMs and some hotels. Please ask for the transactional costs before you ask for this service. U.S. dollars have a 10% tax in the exchange, so we advise you to bring your cash in other international currencies (euros, Canadian dollars, yen and pounds sterling). Please check beforehand if your local currency is accepted for exchange in Cuban banks. Traveler's checks are accepted, but again check for transactional costs before cash them.

### **WHAT TO WEAR IN CUBA**

As you may guess, Cuba is a tropical country, so expect warm temperatures throughout the year. Although for some days in December or January (Cuban winter) you might need a jacket, short leveys and pants (preferably made of cotton or other light material) will make for most of your wardrobe in Cuba. Nevertheless, on some occasions, like when going to theaters and ballet performances or the opera, a more formal dress code is enforced. Please ask in advance to avoid misunderstandings regarding the dress code for certain places. Sea water at beaches is always warm. Do not forget your sunglasses and sunlight protection while relaxing at the beach.

Havana has a tempered and dry climate, with mean temperatures around 26 °C (78 °F). Farther east (i.e. Santiago de Cuba) you find warmer temperatures, which may be over 30 °C (86 °F) some days. Relative humidity also rises as you move to the southeastern parts of the country, accounting for an elevation in the overall thermal sensation you experience.

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## TRANSPORTATION IN CUBA

Transfer from airport to hotel and vice versa are included in the services offered by CALC. Taxi rates from and to the airport (in Havana) are usually around 30 Euros. Within the city limits, cabs are a good choice. Private owned cars, through a license payment, are also allowed to service nationals and visitors. In any case, please inform yourself well before using their services.

There are also small vans and sedans, which are owned by cooperatives, these will charge you with 5 CUP for fixed lengths. Many Cubans rely on auto stop (locals call it "botella") for transportation. Other types of public transportation are little reliable in Cuba, with no fixed hours and long queues at the bus stops. In small cities (not in Havana), taxis sometimes take the form of horse carriages, which may cost you 1 or 2 CUC for a ride through town. In Havana, you may find the small Cocotaxis, a three-wheeled motorcycle with a peculiar design that can also provide for alternative, less expensive transportation.

To move between cities, you may rent a car. We recommend you to contract this service through CALC, since they are a bit more expensive if rented once in the country and sometimes cars are not available during the high season (November to April) due to superior demand. Bus services between cities can be bought through the Viazul company, which deliver special transport services to tourists.

Road infrastructure in Cuba is not always at the best international standards. At some points, you may find yourself dealing with many bicycles or even loose cattle on the road, so precautions are encouraged. If you feel needed, car rental agencies offer driver services, in which the experienced driver acts also as a guide. Please ask us if you need more information in this regard.

## MEALS IN CUBA

Food is relatively not expensive in Cuba. Typical cuisine is called "criolla", and is a mixture from Spanish and African traditions with a little bit of Chinese thrown into the mix. Rice, black or red beans, pork, chicken, fish, lobster, shrimps and vegetables like sweet potato, yucca and bananas are common ingredients in the

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local cuisine. Yucca with special dip is an exquisite dish.

We suggest that you have your meals at restaurants both private (called "paladar") and state owned. To cook your own meals might in the long run be cheaper, but it takes time to discover the best places to shop for food in the island, and sometimes it can be an extra effort that will take time from other experiences in the country.

Bottled water comes in recipients of 0.5, 1.5 and 5 liters and are very easy to find and relatively inexpensive. You may find national and imported beverages in almost any store that sells in CUC.

## **ELECTRICITY AND APPLIANCES**

Electricity in Cuba comes in the 110 (60 Hz) and 220 volts, although the former is more common than the latter. Most private owned houses and hotels have 220 volts wall sockets in the rooms for your use, nevertheless. The majority of wall sockets are for flat-tipped plugs, although round-tipped ones are increasingly common.

## **TIPS**

For local representatives, tourist guides, bus drivers or hotel staff, tips are discretionary and not compulsory, but much appreciated. In restaurants, tips are often included in the bill and if that is the case, normally it is stated.

## **SECURITY IN CUBA**

Cubans are jolly, educated and kind. It is not rare to listen to music in every street and to find people dancing or playing dominoes at some corners. Time goes slower in Cuba, people are not often in a hurry, and are not always punctual, **with the rare exception of Caribbean a la Carte agents!**

Although Cuba is regarded as a very safe place for tourists, we encourage you to

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take the usual security measures for an unknown country. Remember that which is common in your country of origin may not be normal in Cuba, and never hesitate to ask us while in doubt.

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