


"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover" - Mark Twain

A man with a warm smile, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat and a light-colored button-down shirt, is the central figure. He is holding a small knife in his right hand. The background shows lush green foliage and a wooden fence. A large white text box with a thin red border is superimposed over the lower half of the image.

TRAVEL IN CUBA

Trip Welcome Packet
Cuba 2018

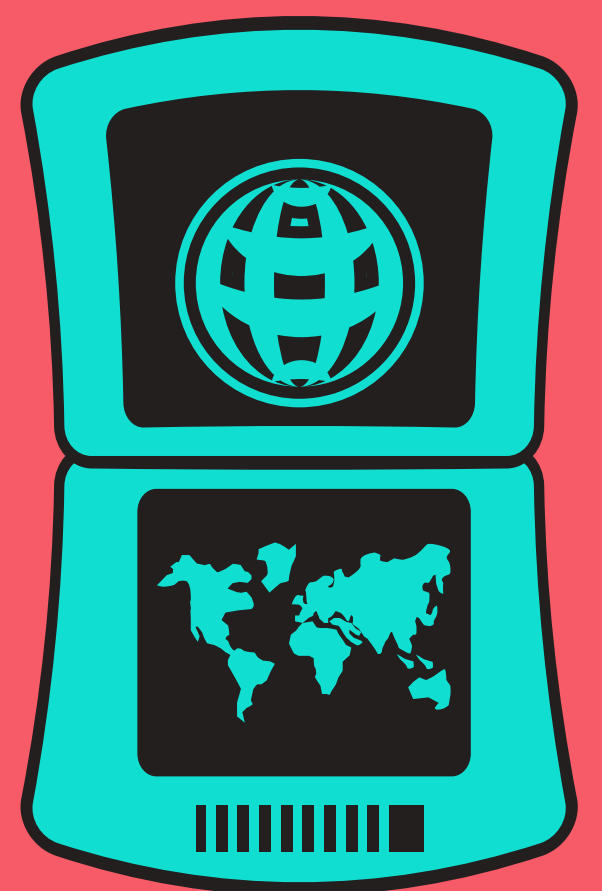
CREATED BY THE HEART OF TRAVEL

FLIGHTS, IMMIGRATION, TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS



Flying to Cuba from the U.S. is now legal and a variety of commercial airlines offer daily flights in and out of Havana from major U.S. cities. We recommend searching for flight options on Google Flights and then booking directly with the airline. Online check in is not available for these flights, please arrive to the airport 3 hours early.

You will be traveling under the category of "educational activities and people-to-people exchanges" with an organized tour. Please select this category when filling out paperwork at check in. Before boarding your final flight into Havana you will be able to purchase a tourist visa from the airline at the gate.



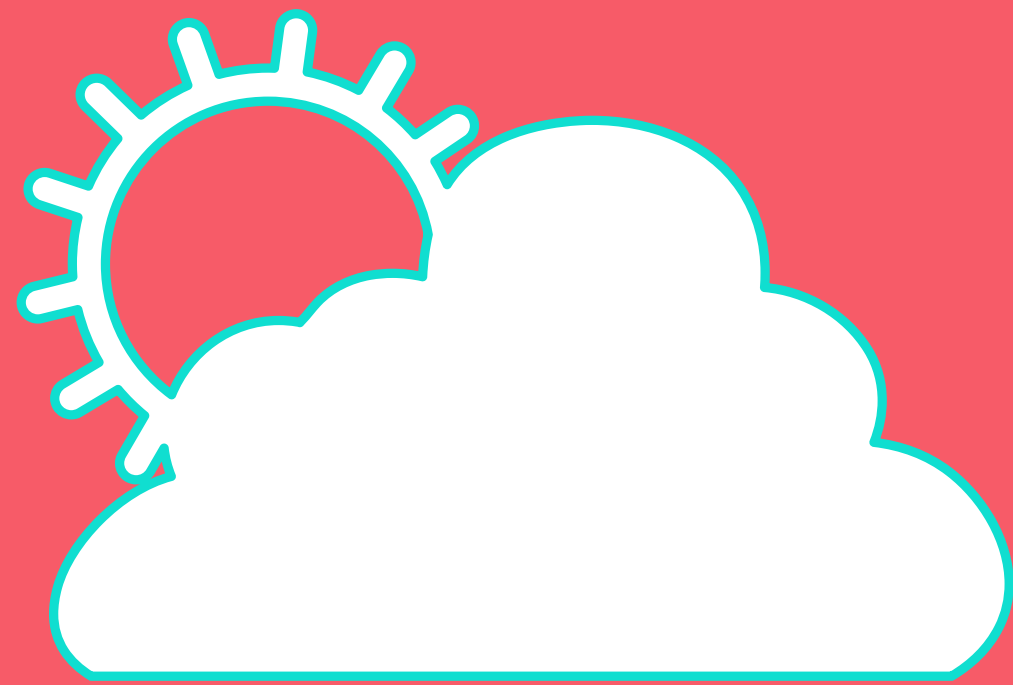
Cuba requires that all visitors purchase travel medical insurance for the duration of their stay in the country. This is not the same as trip insurance which, while not required, is recommended. Travel medical insurance is included in your registration free and The Heart of Travel will contact you if we need any further information to order policy.

HOW TO PACK IN CUBA



We recommend traveling with a large backpack or a light weight roller case, but keep in mind there may be times where you have to walk 5 - 10 minutes on cobblestone roads or dirt terrain with your baggage. Make sure you have a separate day pack to take on excursions!

The dry season runs from November to April and the wet season from May to October. Even in the rainy season, downpours are short and heavy and should not hinder travel plans. The hurricane season is from July to November with the peak in September and October. Humidity is common throughout the year.



SUGGESTED PACKING CHECK LIST

- 4-5 shirts/t-shirts
- 1-2 pairs of shorts
- 1 pair of long trousers/pants
- Comfortable hiking pants/shorts
- Fleece top or similar
- Comfortable sundress/skirt
- Sandals/flats for walking in the city
- Comfortable hiking/walking shoes
- Swimwear + cover up
- Daypack
- Luggage lock
- Sunglasses
- Hat for sun
- Watch or alarm clock
- Camera
- Book to read (limited wifi in Cuba)
- Powerbank to charge devices
- Binoculars
- Personal Medication + Toiletries
- Sunblock/lip balm
- Eye mask/ear plugs
- Insect Repellant
- Hand sanitizer
- Pack of tissues for public restrooms
- Female hygiene products (harder to get in Cuba)

TRAVEL TIPS



Schedule an appointment with your doctor or travel nurse to discuss the upcoming trip.



Withdraw cash to bring to Cuba. U.S. cards will not work so you need to bring dollars which we will exchange on day one of the trip.



Contact your cellphone provider to discuss options for international plans for use in Cuba.



Remind your friends and family that internet access is limited in Cuba and you may be unreachable at times. They can contact The Heart of Travel at anytime via text or email if they need to communicate with you.

CURRENCY

There are 2 forms of local currencies in Cuba, the Peso Convertible (CUC), and the Cuban Peso . Travelers only need CUC. Dollars can be exchanged at exchange houses called CADECAs, and the current conversion is 1 to 1. However, the effective value is about US\$1.03 because the Cuban banks always take a commission of around 3% when they give you CUC, whether this be by exchanging cash, travellers cheques, or using a credit card at an ATM or for a cash advance. Remember, US cards will NOT work in Cuban atms.

HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS



Tap water is not safe for drinking. Use purified water only. We will provide water to refill your bottle on the van!



All the places we eat at are clean and safe in terms of food handling. Still, you may experience mild traveler's diarrhea. If it persists please let your program director know.



Most of our lodging will have a safe to lock up valuable items. If your room doesn't, ask your program director to help you find an alternative to safely store any valuable items.



Dress modestly and don't display excessive jewelry or flashy items that call attention to you.



While Cuba is one of the safest countries in Latin America for tourists, we recommend not to walk alone at night.

CULTURAL ETIQUETTE

As with travel to any foreign destination, it's important to remember that you are a guest in that country. You're likely to encounter social and cultural differences and we ask that you remain respectful, open minded and willing to learn about the country you are visiting. Travel is a great privilege and therefore it comes with responsibility. Cubans are extremely friendly and welcoming to visitors and we hope you make new friends on this trip. Here are some things to keep in mind!

- Don't photograph people's faces without permission
- Tipping, while not required is greatly appreciated. 10% is standard.
- Taking photos of government buildings or the military is prohibited.
- Cat calling on the street is more culturally accepted in Cuba. Unless you feel threatened of physical assault, it's best to ignore it, look ahead and continue walking.
- Tourism is a large part of the economy and we encourage you to buy from local vendors to support Cuban individuals. However, you should never feel pressured to do so, a polite "no gracias" is fine!

WANT TO LEARN MORE BEFORE YOUR TRIP?



The Cuba Reader - History, Culture, Politics by Chomsky, Carr and Smorkaloff

Cuba - A new History - by Richard Gott

Conversations with Cuba - by C. Peter Ripley and Bob Shacochis

Daughter - An exile's memoir of Cuba - by Alina Fernandez - the story of the other side of Cuba's enigmatic President.

Cuba: from Columbus to Castro and Beyond - by Jaime Suchticki

Blessed by Thunder - Memoir of a Cuban Girlhood - this story revolves around a young girl growing up in Cuba during the Communist Revolution.

Cuba Libre - by Elmore Besnard.

Living Inside the Revolution - by Karen McCartney - a fascinating portrayal of life as an expat resident from 99 to 2005.

Before night falls - starring Johnny Depp, Sean Penn and Javier Bardem - tells the tragic life of a Cuban dissident. Writer - Reinaldo Arenas.

Guantanamo - a satirical look at life in Cuba

Fresa y Chocolate ('Strawberry and Chocolate') - probably one of Cuba's more famous and controversial films about the friendship between a gay man and a straight man in modern day Havana.