



PRE-TRIP TRAVEL TIPS CUBA

• OFAC LICENSING & ITINERARY

- **Full-Time Schedule & Participation:** itinerary will be different than other programs or tours you may have participated in previously. This program, per licensing requirements is a full-time program with lots of inclusions. There will be little free time on most days of this tour, in order to fully experience the destination through its people. You may have some down time in the evenings when dinner is not included.
- **Itinerary NOTE:** US law requires that all participants of this program adhere to the full time schedule of people-to-people activities. Deviation from this itinerary, even in part, is not permitted. Specific itinerary inclusions, visits, meetings with individuals and organizations, home visits are dependent on outside factors and it may sometimes be necessary to substitute with alternatives of equal relevance and interest.
- **FELIXIBILITY:** In Cuba, things work differently and some activities that have been scheduled far in advance sometimes become unavailable for a number of different reasons. It is extremely important to go into this experience with a very open mind. The purpose of the trip is to have meaningful interactions with the locals. Your guide will be good at swapping out activities for others when needed, but don't be disappointed if things change, because they will! Enjoy every moment of it and try to make the most out of this once in a lifetime opportunity of visiting a country that has been off limits for Americans for so long.
- **People-to-People Interactions:** As these sort of interactions have been included in your program, on many occasions it will be up to you (the passenger) to involve yourself in conversations and interactions with the locals to gain as much knowledge as possible about the country and the people. The tour guide will facilitate many of these interactions, but it is always a good idea to ask questions and utilize the guide as best as possible in order to get the most out of the experience. Though sometimes the people you'll interact with don't speak English, you'd be surprised at how much you can gain by using body language and having the guide translate.
- **Keeping documents on file:** As part of the requirements under the license, each traveler should keep a copy of their travel itinerary and airline ticket receipt on file for 5 years, in case asked for it by US officials.

• **Airline Ticket:** will be given to you at the Miami hotel on the day prior to departure. You will receive this at your briefing.

- **Asistur Stamp-** located on the back of the Charter Ticket
 - This medical insurance is included for all travelers from the US to Cuba for emergencies. Havanatur reps on the ground will assist if any medical services are needed while on tour.
 - **Authorization Letter by sponsoring organization (provided in your ticket jacket)** - may be asked for this upon returning by US immigration and customs officials.
 - **Passport Copy** - good to keep these at all times on you as ID, leave original in the safe unless exchanging money. You will have one given to you inside your ticket jacket.

• CHARTER FLIGHT

- **LUGGAGE:** With the charter flight to Cuba (on the outbound only), each traveler is allowed a complimentary checked luggage and one carry on (not to exceed a cumulative weight of 44 lbs). Each additional checked luggage will be charged at \$20 per bag. In addition, each passenger is allowed up to 44 lbs of luggage (includes checked bag and larger carry-on). Anything over 44 lbs, will be charged at \$2 per pound. A small carry-on, like a purse or small backpack, will not be weighed. Any larger carry-on may be weighed and added into the 44-lb



allowance per person. Payment at the airport is by cash or credit card. On the return flight, there is no charge for luggage, as long as it stays under 50 lbs per person. In Cuba, the carry-on is exempt from the weight limitations.

- **Seating Assignments:** On your charter flight there is no pre-assigned seating. This will be assigned at the check-in counter at the airport. Please note that all attempts will be made to seat passengers together when possible. You may wish to purchase an upgrade to business class at the airport. Check with the counter for details.
- **Check-In:** a check-in time will be assigned to you and will be provided to you at the briefing. You will go directly to the group check-in area, with your group, where our Group Coordinator will assist you. You will not need to stand in the regular line.
- **Departure Tax:** Cuba charges \$25 USD per person as a departure tax that has not been included in the cost of the charter flight. This is payable at the airport in Miami before departing for Cuba. It is advisable to pay in cash, as it is typically much faster to do so, though credit cards are also accepted.

- **WHAT TO BRING**

- Bug Spray
- Sunscreen and Sun Hats
- Comfortable Clothing, Walking Shoes (casual attire)
- Medications and OTC drugs, band aids, etc.
- CASH (CC and ATM machines are not yet readily available)
- Small gifts for kids and locals, depending on itinerary (for example, school supplies, small toys, candies, art supplies, band aids, OTC drugs)
- Sunglasses
- Hand sanitizer
- Wash Cloths (not provided at most hotels)
- Tissue Paper (good to have your own at public restrooms)

- **MONEY**

- **2 Currencies:** there are two types of currencies in Cuba. The first is the Cuban Peso, used primarily by the locals for basic staples. The second is the CUC (Cuban Convertible Peso), which is the currency mostly used by tourists. It is important to make sure you are getting back the right change in the right currency when making purchases.
- **Exchange:** You can exchange USD for CUC at the airport, most hotels, exchange bureau in town centers and some banks. The current fee for exchanging is 13%, i.e. for 100 USD you will get 87 CUC. The fee is the same no matter where you exchange your currency. You will need your passport to exchange money. In Cuba, they will not accept bills that are torn or written on when exchanging into CUC.
- When exchanging money into CUC, try to get small denominations to make purchases easier, as many places (little stores, bars and restaurants do not always have the possibility to break down larger notes for you).
- **Credit Cards & Traveler's Checks:** US-issued credit cards, debit cards, and ATM cards were not previously usable in Cuba; this is changing with new regulations and more and more places will start to accept these for purchases or withdrawals, but not yet! It is advisable to bring cash in order to make any purchases in Cuba or pay for most services. Most places will not take USD, so you must exchange currency upon arriving. Tips however can be given in any currency. Traveler's Checks may also be difficult to cash while in Cuba.



- **HOW MUCH TO BRING:** Though most of the activities and a majority of meals have been included in your program, you may wish to bring additional cash to spend on additional drinks and after-program entertainment and non-included dinners, as well as for any gifts you wish to purchase to take back home. Most **tips have been included in your program**, so please also account for this when considering the amount to bring. We also recommend bringing a small cushion for any extras that may arise.

In Cuba, tipping is a way of life. Local salaries are extremely low and don't suffice to buy everyday items. Tourism touches the lives of many Cubans and they truly depend on small donations and tips to feed their families. Though it may be a small amount to us, anything you offer these individuals that work hard to make a difference in your experience while there is greatly appreciated. Refer to provided guidelines below. Cuba Travel Services has taken this into consideration and has included as many of these extras as possible so you can rest assured that they are taken care of.

Recommended amounts to bring

- **MEALS:** can range between 15 and 30 CUC per person, including one or two drinks.

○ **TIPS/DONATIONS/GIFTS**

- **GUIDE/DRIVER:** gratuities for your local Cuban guide and driver have been included in your program. Some travelers may wish to tip additional if these individuals have exceeded their expectations. This is left up to your discretion.
- **TOUR DIRECTOR:** Your tour director will be there to assist you every step of the way and will be doing everything to make sure your trip is a successful one behind the scenes! They will gladly accept a tip as a gesture of your appreciation at the end of the trip. Recommended amounts for your Tour Director range from \$7 to \$10 per person per day, but if you felt they did an exceptional job, you are welcome to give them more.
- **RESTAURANT STAFF/PORTERS:** this has been included in your program price for all included features in the program
- **HOUSEKEEPING:** this is at your discretion, but customary amounts range from 2 to 3 dollars per day per room.
- **TAXI DRIVER:** during down time, if you take a taxi, you may just round up the amount you owe the drive, sometimes may equal less than 10%.
- **COMMUNITY PROJECTS/ CENTERS:** Most of these projects and centers you will visit will gladly accept any monetary donations to contribute towards their efforts, though we will also take care of them on your behalf (sometimes small gifts that will assist in their activities are also appreciated).
- **Small gifts for kids:** it is ok to bring small items such as pens, markers, and coloring books, small toys to give out to local kids or hard to find items such as art supplies. If you are asked at the customs area in Cuba, you are NOT BRINGING DONATIONS; you may have some small gifts to hand out. Donations require prior authorization and are usually given in large quantities, so this is not what you are bringing (or should be bringing).

● **CALLS AND INTERNET**

- **Cell Phones:** US cell phones do not work in Cuba, even if you have an international plan, though this may be changing soon with new regulations. As a foreigner it is possible to rent a local sim card at ETECSA offices throughout for use on your own unlocked phone. Though keep in mind that visiting these facilities are not easy to coordinate with your schedule.



- **Calling Home:** It is possible to call home from your hotel by visiting the business center or dialing direct from your room. If you wish to use the phone in your room, you will need to leave a cash-deposit at the front desk, so that they activate your line. It can be expensive to call home, sometimes more than 2.50 CUC per minute, and connection charges may also apply.
- **Internet:** Wi-Fi is not available throughout Cuba except at some hotels. Most hotels also have a business center with computer, with limited hours, where internet service is available. Charges can be up to 12 CUC per hour depending on the hotel. Because of the limited technology in Cuba, it is not uncommon to have internet outages. On this particular program, the hotel in Trinidad only has a business center with a computer for internet use, and the hotel in Havana will have Wi-Fi access in the public areas for a fee.
- **Communication with the US:** Though internet is the best way to communicate with family back at home, you may want to warn them of the difficulty in communications between Cuba and the US. Not only can it be costly, but sometimes business centers are not open at the hours that are convenient to your schedule, internet may be experiencing difficulties, or you may have problems getting a line to the US from Cuba, since they are often rerouted through third countries.
- **ELECTRICITY**
 - **Electric Current:** 220 V at most hotels, though it is common to find both 110 and 220 throughout Cuba. Sometimes both European and American plugs can be used. It is advisable to bring a converter, if your electronics are not travel-ready (105-240 V).
 - **Outages:** Though many hotels are well equipped, in Cuba it is possible to experience temporary power outages due to limited resources on the island. Though this seems to be happening less frequently in the past few years.
- **SAFETY**
 - **Safety Deposit Boxes:** Hotels are equipped with safety deposit boxes and may charge a per day fee. Check with the front desk. It is advisable to leave valuables, including passports in the safe. A copy of the passport should suffice for ID purposes. You will however need your passport for exchanging of currency.
 - **Pick-pockets:** though Cuba is generally a very safe place to travel (more than other parts of the world), it is always best to watch your belongings and beware of pick-pockets and purse snatchers. Leave expensive jewelry in the safe and only carry what you need for that day. You may see some kids or older adults begging on the streets, sometimes asking for soap, pens, etc. Though a nuisance, this is not considered to be dangerous.
- **TAXIS AND TRANSPORTATION**
 - Transportation has been provided while on tour for all included activities. Taxis are available throughout the city and are quite safe. Payment will be in CUC. There are different types of taxis and your local guide in Cuba can explain the difference.
- **FOOD & MEALS**
 - **Selection:** Restaurants don't always have as much selection as in the US, menu choices can be limited, but always another option for vegetarians or those that cannot eat what has been set up on the menu (guide will arrange in advance). Most restaurants do offer at least two choices for the main course, which the guide may communicate and take orders for in advance. Ordering in advance can speed up the service for larger groups.



- **Beverages:** Most included restaurants on this tour will provide you with one welcome drink (usually a cocktail, such as a mojito, Cuba Libre, etc.) and an additional national drink during your meal (examples can be beer, soft drink, water or juice). Coffee may not always be included after the meal, as some restaurants are not equipped to serve coffee to large parties. Check with the local guide to figure out what options you have for each meal, as not all restaurants are the same.
- For tea drinkers it is usually difficult to find tea bags at every restaurant, you may wish to bring your own tea bags just in case.
- **WATER:** It is best to drink bottled water while in Cuba. You will find that both still and sparkling water are available. Water is purified in the hotels and restaurants, and it is ok to drink beverages with ice wherever we take you on the tour. It is also not necessary to use bottled water to brush your teeth, as the tap water has also been purified. Salads and fruits are also acceptable to eat at all included or recommended restaurants.
- **WEATHER**
 - The rainy season in Cuba typically runs from May to November and the dry season is between December and April. Keep in mind that it may however rain at any time, so it is wise to always have rain gear when traveling to Cuba. The temperatures in Cuba can range from the 60's in the winter (though not very common) to the 90's in the summer months. Wear comfortable, cool clothing. It is common to have AC in restaurants, hotels, and other indoor facilities, so layering can also be wise. Do keep in mind that not all places have AC in Cuba, so sometimes it can also be quite hot.
 - Bring insect repellent as the tropical weather also means a lot of mosquitos at dusk and at dawn.
- **US CUSTOMS/RETURN TRIP**
 - Per US regulations, you are allowed to bring back \$400 worth of goods for personal use, of which \$100 of that can be brought back in tobacco and alcohol products. Informational materials, such as books, art, and music, are not included in this amount and do not count towards the \$400 limit.
 - Upon returning to the US, you will have to go through immigration and customs. Often travelers returning from Cuba are asked additional questions. You may need to provide a copy of the authorization letter you are traveling on (located in your ticket jacket). You may also be asked to undergo additional screening in the customs area, mostly for agricultural products.
 - **Cuban Departure Tax:** This is the departure tax that has not been included in your ticket and must be paid for in order to return to the US. This is paid for at the Miami airport, while you check in for your flight to Cuba. For faster service, it may be best to bring cash for this.
- **HOTELS**
 - **Standards:** please note that the star system in Cuba is quite different than that in the US. Expect slightly lower standards at the properties with less amenities. Remember that Cuba has had limited resources for a very long time and they do what they can to try to update their facilities as needed.
 - **Outages/AC/Plumbing Issues:** Again because resource in Cuba can be limited, it is not uncommon to have temporary power outages, problems with AC (either being too cold or not working properly), and problems flushing toilets due to lack of pressure, etc. Sometimes water pressure varies as well. Expect the unexpected and you may be pleasantly surprised, as things have been getting better and better in Cuba.



- **Breakfast and Other Meals at Hotel:** breakfast buffets are included and offer lots of variety, sometimes with limited products and different than you may be used to.
- **Porterage:** This service will be provided for groups automatically to facilitate luggage delivery. It is customary to tip for these services, and this has not been included in your tour cost.
- **TOILETS**
 - **Public:** be prepared with toilet paper and small coins when using public facilities. Avoid throwing away paper into the toilet due to flushing problems. It is advisable to use the waste basket placed next to the toilets.
- **TOUR TIPS**
 - Be on time and be courteous to fellow travelers. Be flexible, and go into it with no expectations.
 - Cuban National Guide will be there to assist with any and all matters, including emergencies, additional information required and recommendations, and any problems or concerns while on tour. Make sure you take down their cell phone number as they will not always be staying at the hotel with you. You can reach out to them at any time for assistance.
 - Remember that you are traveling to Cuba under a People-to-People License, which is not a standard tour and involves more educational and interactive experiences.
 - Please take into account that, despite the political differences and regulations that Americans must follow when travelling to Cuba, Cuba is a very special destination where the people welcome American tourists respectfully and always try to show you their most authentic traditions and ways of life in a very friendly and courteous manner.
- **EMERGENCIES**
 - Please provide your relatives at home with a copy of the trip details page with contact information for the hotels and emergency contact numbers in Cuba (Ariel Ricardo +53/53026423) and in the US (Cuba Travel Services office 1-800-963-2822 during regular business hours 9 AM EST-8 PM EST or (305) 748-2521 after hours).
 - There is a US Embassy in Havana and they are there to also assist with any emergencies that may arise while you are there. Their contact information:

U.S. Embassy
Calzada between L & M Streets, Vedado, Havana
Main switchboard (53)(7) 839-4100
Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed on U.S. and Cuban Holidays)
Emergencies/After Hours: call main switchboard at (+53)(7)-831-4100, dial 1 to speak with emergency operator
 - Don't hesitate to call the emergency number in Cuba should you need any assistance while there, and please also work with your local guide for assistance.