

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

General Tips:

- **Battery operated devices and cameras:** You may want to bring a small battery operated alarm clock. Make sure to purchase extra SIM cards, batteries, and film if you are using it, in the States. You will not be able to purchase these in Cuba. This is true of any battery operated device. Be sure to bring your camera battery charger as well.
- **Guidebooks:** There is a large guidebook that is called Moon Handbooks Cuba. It is a great resource. Lonely Planet also writes a smaller version.
- **Music:** There are numerous cafes and hotels that have fantastic little trios. Calle Obispo has several such cafes on it.
- **Time Difference:** Cuba Time is on Eastern Standard Time.
- **E-mail:** There is limited email access in Havana. The cost is higher than in the States, but a good way to send a quick message. Your hotel has email access on computers which you can use. You can purchase a card for one hour of internet access at the current rate of 2 CUC. There is sometimes Wi-Fi; in a limited area of the hotel you pay for, I do not advise bringing laptops.
- **Phones:** You can make calls from the hotel, but they can be costly.
- **Taxis:** Once in Cuba, you may want to use taxis to get around. You will find an assortment of taxis. The least expensive are the old American 50's cars converted to collective taxis. The older Russian cars are also inexpensive. There are taxi cocos, which are scooters converted to carry tourists. Newer model cars use the meter like we do in the States, but the older cars usually negotiate a flat rate before you enter the vehicle.
- **Vaccinations:** We recommend you check with your personal physician. See if you may need any vaccinations while traveling in Cuba. None are currently required to enter Cuba.
- **Luggage:** Pack light! We will be in and out of airports and on and off busses. Pack what you can carry, as porters are not always available. I strongly encourage that you pack light, just a carry-on bag and a small bag. Please confirm with American Airlines regarding their baggage policy as it can change up to the date of travel. Their phone number is 1-800-433-7300.
- **Electricity:** All hotels have at least one 110 volts to charge or use with your devices. If you would like to you can bring a converter.
- **Attitude:** Remember you are visiting a country that has only recently begun focusing on tourism. We will have to go with the flow and accept that we are in a different part of the world, with a different sense of time. Participation in the academic portion of the itinerary is mandatory. You are expected to participate in all the activities we have arranged for you. Humor and flexibility are the most important things to bring with you to Cuba. Things may be very different than what you are used to, but the Cuban people are wonderful- enjoy your time with them.
- Americans tend to be very logical and very demanding. You will be met with resistance if this is your attitude. It is common that water can grow cold quickly while in the shower or completely cut off. The electricity as well can shut on and off. Service is generally slower. Product choice (like food) is much more limited. Visualize American in the 50's and 60's. Cubans for the most part don't know what vegans are, and they think lactose intolerance means you don't drink milk with your cookies.
- **Passports, Visas and Tourist Cards:** You will need your passport when checking into the airport. We will provide a visa to enter Cuba in the airport. Please keep these in a safe place and do not lose them! You must show the visa exiting Cuba. Please keep the copy of your passport separate from the original. iPhones are extremely valuable in Cuba and we recommend you put them in the safe when not using them. Keep all boarding passes and all paperwork and visa information, do not throw anything away!

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Tips continued...

- **Safety:** Havana is safe, but common sense about your belongings is advised. Please keep your backpacks closed, don't wear flashy jewelry or carry large sums of money with you. You can carry a small amount of money you would need for daily use. Carrying around your passport is not advised. Make a copy of your passport before you leave. When you are exploring the town on your own, we always encourage you to be with a travel partner or buddy
 - **Weather in Cuba:** The weather in Cuba is a typical Caribbean climate, sunny, humid and warm. There can be an occasional rainstorm that passes quickly, so it's a good idea to have a light raincoat. Sunscreen is advisable also. I suggest you bring bug spray.
 - **Bringing items back:** Under the new U.S restrictions for travelers to Cuba which were implemented in January 2015, travelers to Cuba can bring back to the U.S. informational materials. Informational materials include CDs, books, films or tapes. There are no limitations on informational materials. Fine art requires official written documentation from the artist. Legal travelers to Cuba can bring back an unlimited supply of Cuban cigars.
 - **Money:** There are also new regulations regarding money in Cuba and the changes are still occurring as this is being written. Keep in mind that your ATM and credit cards will not be accepted in Cuba nor will traveler's checks. Bringing U.S dollars into Cuba is advisable. You must bring cash into Cuba. Your American dollars are then converted to Cuban pesos. You will need to bring enough cash or more than enough cash for all your purchases. Do not change money to Euros or any other currency before you arrive in Cuba. All exchanges are equal in Cuba, we will exchange money in our hotel.
 - **Tips:** While we are in Cuba we recommend tipping the maids \$1.00 a day. The tour guides usually receive a tip at the end of the trip, roughly \$5.00 a day. The bus drivers also receive a tip at the end of the trip, roughly \$5.00 a day. These recommendations are based on years of experience. These are typical international standards. Tipping at restaurants in Cuba is similar to tipping in the U.S; tips should be 10-15% of your bill. Most people in the service sector are living off of tips, so be as generous as you can. We also recommend that when eating at the hotel, you leave a dollar for your waiter or waitress on the table at the end of your meal. You should also leave a dollar in the morning at breakfast for the waiters and waitresses. Even though the breakfast is included, the tip is not.
 - **Health:** While in Cuba you will be covered for emergency medical and health insurance through the Cuban medical system. If you are taking medications, please bring plenty with you for the entire trip and keep them in their prescription bottles. Please keep them with you in a backpack or carry-on luggage. We highly recommend that you keep medications in your carry-on bag. Please don't forget to bring the medications with you, as you most likely will not be able to get your medications in Cuba. Keep your boarding pass from the airlines, this is also the proof for your Cuban insurance.
 - **Food:** The Cuban diet is composed primarily of pork and chicken, as well as fish. The food is bland, so you may want to spice it up by bringing chili peppers or packets of ketchup to give it a little flavor as condiments are rare. Vegetarian options in Cuba are often limited to pastas, beans and rice as well as vegetables. We will ask to accommodate for you but compared to the United States, vegetarian options are limited. We are in Cuba for the culture, which is spectacular, not for the food! The meals included in the program in restaurants usually include one drink; when we are eating in the hotel for lunch or dinner the drinks are not included. These will cost extra.
- 1) **Please keep all paperwork, boarding passes and visas as they are given to you. Please do not throw anything away.**
 - 2) **Please bring U.S. dollars as no credit cards or bank cards can be used. We suggest bring fifty, 1 dollar bill for tips, change is sometimes hard to find.**
 - 3) **Please do not carry passports around with you in Cuba, or large sums of cash.**