



FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE CUBAN EXPEDITION

We have put together the following information to make your trip to Cuba that much more enjoyable.



Getting there and Away

Almost all visitors to Cuba arrive by air, with scheduled flights arriving from Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Europe. The main gateways for US travelers continue to be Cancún, Nassau and Toronto.

There are direct flights available from the USA, but US citizens will need the permission of the US Treasury Department, which restricts travel to Cuba to journalists, researchers and a handful of other groups. There's a \$20CUC airport departure tax. If you would like to acclimatize yourself to the climate and pace of Cuba you can arrive a day earlier than the trip begins.

Exit and Entry Information

Virtually all visitors require a Cuban Tourist Card, available from travel agencies, tour operators or a Cuban consulate for a stay of one month.

Customs

Whilst in Cuba your equipment is supplied for you by SeaKunga Adventures, thus there is no need to bring a large amount of luggage. Cuban customs states that you may import personal effects such as clothing, shoes, toiletries and other articles of personal hygiene, in quantities reasonable for the length of stay in Cuba. If you are taking any medication where a prescription is needed make sure to bring the prescription and have all medication packed in its original packaging. If you have any further questions about what you can take in and out of Cuba you can visit the following web site: <http://www.acrosscuba.com>

Where will you stay?

In Havana: Here we will stay at comfortable heritage hotels in the heart of old Havana (La Habana Vieja) such as **Hostal San Miguel** (www.oldhavanahotels.com)



Camping option: We use top quality Walrus tropical tents. Fitted with mosquito netting, and ample room to relax after a day of kayaking or hiking. Our tents are specially made for tropical environments, they are light weight and have enough ventilation and protection to ensure that you have a sound sleep.

Lodge stay: For those choosing the lodge or combo trips we stay in comfortable, clean and friendly hotels through out Cuba such as the Horizontes las Cuevas in Trinidad (www.horizontes.cu).

(We are happy to arrange extra night in Havana for clients wishing to arrive early or stay longer)

Health Requirements and Cautions?

You do not need any inoculations before visiting Cuba. There are no major health risks in Cuba for travellers. Hepatitis A has been a common problem among travellers and although tap water is generally safe, it is recommended that you drink bottled water. Bottled water is easily accessible.

In all major hotels, doctors are on duty 24 hours a day. One Havana hospital is entirely reserved for foreigners, and several international clinics can be found in the most important tourist areas. It is recommended that before any trip overseas you visit your local travel clinic and for suggestions on what inoculations you may want to get or medications you want to bring. Antibiotic powder is extremely effective in treating cuts and scrapes acquired in the tropics.

How to prepare for this trip?

Physically

A good level of personal fitness makes the trip more enjoyable. Exercise regularly before the trip. For tours with a high component of kayaking such as our 'Contours of Cuba' and Cuba Cruising, it is advised that you do upper body exercise prior to the trip to strengthen your arms and shoulders. If you have the opportunity to visit a gym the weeks prior to your trip a couple of exercises that are helpful are dumbbell curls, push ups and the rowing machine. For Land portions we recommend that you do cardiovascular exercises prior to your trip. Walking, using the stairs rather than an elevator or riding a bike when you get the chance are all a good way to prepare your body. Although none of the tours are overly strenuous and we provide a support vehicle at all times. You will get more out of the experience if you are in good physical condition.



Mentally

Cuba is a place of fascinating history, culture and geography. You will get so much more out of your experience if you read some background on this amazing country. See the recommended reading list of books that can help you pass the time on your flight there. Although you will have a guide with you, who will be able to communicate in Spanish it is always nice to have a few phrases of Spanish up your sleeve to have a better idea of what is going. Not to mention the locals will be impressed that you are making an effort.

General facts for Travel in Cuba

Time: USA Eastern Standard Time

Electricity: 110-230V, three phase 60 Hz

Weights & measures: Metric with US and Spanish variations

Money

In Cuba there are basically 2 currencies in circulation. The Cuban peso, which is used to pay Cubans, is of little use for tourists. Usually the exchange rate is about 24 pesos for 1 CUC. The new peso (CUC) which has the value of 1.10/ US dollar is accepted everywhere and is the currency that all tourists use as of April 2005. Safes are usually available in hotel rooms. It is impossible for Americans to use any credit card issued by a U.S. bank. All major US travelers cheques including American Express, are now accepted at specially-designated Cuban banks (Banco Financiero Internacional, CADECA, Banco Metropolitano, Banco Popular Canadian travelers checks can be bought at exchange counters at any Canadian airport. All travelers checks will be exchanged for a 3% commission on weekdays and 4% on weekends.

Weather

Cuba is a tropical country, with a climate generally hot and wet (average relative humidity of 78%), There are only two seasons: WET (May to November) and DRY (December to April). The mean annual temperature is 25.2 degrees Celsius.

In general you can always expect a good weather for your holiday to Cuba (if you like the heat). On the off chance that you get some bad weather it usually lasts less than one day.

Please select the city where you need to see the current weather conditions. Clicking on the images will give you a full weather forecast.



Camera Information

Have enough film to last your whole trip. Although, it must be kept in a cool place as sometimes the heat can affect the quality of film. X-Ray machines in current times do not damage film or camera equipment so you can generally put them through. However, It is a good idea to ask and make sure before putting them through. When sea kayaking, ensure your lenses have skylight filters; a polarizing filter is often preferred when shooting on the water to reduce reflection. Water tight bags or hard water proof cases will protect your camera from water damage and fine dust. These boxes can be found at larger camera stores, diving and outdoor stores. As they have a foam protective layer on the inside they will also keep gear cool and can be placed on the deck for easy access to your camera when the perfect photo moment arises.

Air Travel

Arrive at the airport with ample time to check. International airlines ask you to be there 2 hours in advance of you flight. Ensure that your luggage is routed going to your final destination and that you do not have to pick it up and check it in again if you have a transfer. If you are tall it is always good to request a bulkhead or an isle seat for more leg room as most international carries have little room to move in economy.

If you have a dietary restriction it is important to let the airline know in advance and at the time of check in. To avoid the discomforts of Jet lag try to get plenty of rest prior to departure. Avoid coffee and alcohol as much as possible and during the flight try and drink as much water and juice as possible. If you have problems with flying there are herbal sleeping aids that you can purchase at you local pharmacy to help you get a good rest before your departure. The option to arrive a few days early to acclimatise yourself before your tour begins is a good idea and we can assist you with extra nights accommodation. Sometimes flight times are changed or flights are cancelled, reconfirming flights 72 hours prior to departure will avoid any disappointment at the airport.

Luggage and Protection of Valuables

When travelling to any destination especially overseas it is very important that your valuables are in a safe place at all times and that. A water proof or plastic lined money belt is advised to use for safe keeping of your passport, travel insurance, travellers cheques, cash and other important documents.

In the event loss of any documentation it is necessary for copies of all your important documents to be made. The first page of you passport, airline tickets, travel insurance numbers, credit cards, birth certificate and drivers licence. One copy left with a friend at home and the other copy kept in a different safe place in your bag.



Insurance

Medical insurance is recommended for the time that you are away, most plans will cover you for medical, flight delay and luggage. If you are bringing expensive camera equipment you may want to make sure that it is covered under your travel insurance plan. There may be an additional fee for items of particular value.

Reference list – Cuba

- At nearly 1700 pages, *Cuba, or The Pursuit of Freedom*, by Hugh Thomas, is a weighty and covers Cuban history between 1762 and 1962.
- Herbert L Matthews, the *New York Times* editorial writer, interviewed Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1957, and his book *Revolution in Cuba* sympathetically explores the personalities, motivations and achievements of the Castro revolution.
- Peter Bourne's *Castro: A Biography of Fidel Castro*, Tomás Borge's *Face to Face with Fidel Castro* and Beatriz Pagés' *Can Cuba Survive? An Interview with Fidel Castro* are just some of the better books on this icon of the 20th century.
- *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, by Jon Lee Anderson, is considered the best book on the mysterious Argentinean. *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution: Writings and Speeches of Ernesto Che Guevara*, edited by David Deutschmann, is an excellent collection of Che's thoughts and speeches. Guevara's own works include *Guerilla Warfare* (1960), *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (1963) and *Man and Socialism in Cuba* (1965). Deutschmann is also the editor of *Che - A Memoir by Fidel Castro* in which Fidel describes his relationship with Guevara.
- James A Michener and John Kings' *Six Days in Havana* is a worthwhile read, and Pico Iyer's Cuban impressions in *Falling Off the Map: Some Lonely Places of the World* are very amusing. Iyer's first novel, *Cuba and the Night*, is very good.
- *Dreaming in Cuban*, by Cristina García, is an interesting novel about real and imaginary worlds, Afro-Cuban religion and their impact on a Cuban family. Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana* is a funny story about a British vacuum-cleaner salesman.
- *Sailing to Hemingway's Cuba* by Dave Schafer. *A lifelong fan of Hemingway, Dave Schaefer decided he would sail to Cuba. This text is a fascinating glimpse of his 2000 mile journey to the Florida Keys and Havana in his 32-foot sloop 'Dream Weaver'.* An insight into Cuba's unique atmosphere is revealed, including Hemingway's home which has been perfectly preserved.