

CORAZÓN CUBA

LEARN SPANISH, CULTURE & VOLUNTEER



FIELD MANUAL



GETTING THERE
WHAT TO BRING/PACKING LIST
DONATIVO
PHRASE BOOK
CONTACT DETAILS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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GETTING THERE

Entering the country

You will need to get a visa (also known as Tourist Card) to enter Cuba. These are easy to buy online – we recommend the following service, see;

<https://www.easytouristcard.com?aff=43>

The standard Tourist Card is valid for 30 days. However, this can be extended twice when you are in the country on payment of a small fee – our local team can help you. This means you can stay for up to 90 days maximum on a single visit.

A pink coloured 'Tourist Card' is required when flying to Cuba directly from the USA and a green coloured 'Tourist Card' is required to visit Cuba when flying from any country except the USA.

For US citizens / guests travelling directly from the US to Cuba we recommend the following service, see;

<https://www.onlinetouristcard.com>

Support the Cuban People

Our programs comply with ongoing US travel restrictions and are 100% legal for US and non US citizens alike. It is no longer necessary to apply to 'OFAC' for special permission to visit Cuba. When flying direct from the US to Cuba your airline will require you to sign and retain a one page 'affidavit'.

This document lists 12 permitted categories of travel to Cuba. Please simply tick the box marked 'SUPPORT THE CUBAN PEOPLE' as this is a travel category our programs comply with.

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Passport validity

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry into Cuba.

For more information about preparing for your trip see;

<https://corazoncuba.com/useful-info>

Currency & Money

Following the abolition of the CUC (convertible peso) in 2021 the only official national currency now in circulation is the **Cuban Peso** (also known as '*Moneda Nacional*'). However, USD and EURO cash is widely accepted and easily converted into local currency.

Bank cards drawn on US banks are still not accepted in Cuba so **US residents** should bring sufficient USD cash for **all** your spending requirements while in Cuba.

For other visitors, to ensure maximum flexibility and to achieve the best rate of exchange, we also recommend cash – ideally USD or EURO. However, bank ATM machines are widely available throughout Cuba. Only government owned business accept card payments.

WiFi & Internet Services

WiFi is still not widely available in Cuba except on a pay as you go basis in government hotels and internet cafes. However, inexpensive SIM cards can now be purchased on arrival – our local team can help you buy these. It may be advisable to ensure your phone is 'unlocked' and/or has a VPN service to ensure continuity of services when in Cuba. The situation is constantly evolving and improving so there is no need to be 'offline' for extended periods – unless you would like to be!

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WHAT TO BRING/PACKING LIST

Luggage – day pack is necessary for every day use

Clothing – The following list is not exhaustive but please bear in mind that most items can be purchased locally so try to travel light and leave room for goodies to bring home with you!

Shorts / T-shirt / lightweight long trousers / long sleeved shirts / fleece / rain jacket / good walking shoes / cap or hat / swimwear / towel / shades / head torch / dry bag

* smart clothes required for dance lessons (look good = feel good!)

Sandals/comfortable shoes - for evenings and time off.

Long sleeve trousers and shirt - As in all subtropical areas, insects can be a nuisance, especially in the evening. Long sleeved shirts and trousers are recommended to offer the best form of protection in the evenings.

Sun Glasses - A GOOD quality pair of sunglasses is essential. Make sure they offer 100% UV protection.

Water bottle – in a hot tropical country you should sip water regularly – little and often! – to avoid dehydration and discomfort. We recommend you carry a waterbottle/Nalgene when you are out and about exploring.

Camera If bringing a digital camera bring a number of memory cards.

Stationery Bring pens, pencils, notepads and A4 notebooks.

Headtorch If travelling outside Havana bring a headtorch as it is more useful than a normal torch.

Spare batteries for any electrical devices

Photocopy of passport Please bring a copy of your passport. Travel tip – email yourself a copy of your passport and other important documentation.

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Sun Cream / Aftersun You will be spending a lot of time in the sun so please bring adequate sun protection. We recommend a higher block than usual.

Medical Kit It is always useful to carry a **small** personal medical kit. This should include items such as: Plasters, wound dressings and bandages, personal medication to last the duration of the expedition, anti-histamine cream/ tablets, fungicidal foot powder/cream, antiseptic cream/solution, Immodium tablets (x30) and rehydration (e.g. dioralyte) sachets, mild pain killers (eg. Paracetamol), tweezers, scissors etc).

Emergency travel kits can be purchased at most pharmacies and outdoor pursuit shops. They contain sterile and sealed equipment, such as syringes, needles and suture materials. Make sure you have sufficient identification papers to accompany these kits to ensure compliance with Customs. The Kit should not be opened unless required and it is inadvisable to carry loose needles or syringes.

Insect Repellent and Afterbite Insect repellent is recommended. If you are allergic to repellents seek advice before leaving your home country.

Toiletries A lot of 'basics' that we take for granted may not be available locally, or if they are available are likely to be very expensive... these include toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, menstrual products and prescription medications.

Currency & Money Cuban 'pesos' are now the only local currency in circulation in Cuba. ATM machines are widely available BUT cards drawn on US banks do not work in Cuba. USD, EURO, GBP & CAD bank notes are easily changed into local currency OR can be used to purchase a tourist pre paid 'debit card'.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

www.fco.gov.uk - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office for up to date advice and information about the country you are visiting

<http://www.worldweather.com> - get an idea what the temperatures will be like!

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DONATIVO

In addition to personal items you are encouraged to allocate a few kg's of your luggage allocation to the following items – these will be donated to our donor partners and form an important part of your volunteering commitment – and create extra luggage space for the journey home!

Theme			
Arts & Crafts	<i>Pens, pencils, paints & brushes and other drawing materials</i>	<i>Crafts – adhesive shapes, glitter & jewels, glue, felt and other materials</i>	<i>Paper – plain, coloured, colouring in books, labels</i>
Kids Educational	<i>Boardgames – traditional (chess, chequers), new (Connect 4, Kerplunk)</i>	<i>School supplies – calculators, stationery, school bags</i>	<i>Books – picture and number books (Spanish & English), Spanish language reading (all ages)</i>
Sports Equipment	<i>Football – balls, boots, clothes</i>	<i>Baseball – balls, bats, gloves, clothes</i>	<i>Boxing – gumshields, gloves, headgear, clothes</i>
General Play	<i>Girls – dolls, accessories, dressing up</i>	<i>Balls, Lego, construction games & toys</i>	<i>Bicycle accessories and parts</i>
Electronics	<i>Old cell phones</i>	<i>Lap tops, handheld devices</i>	<i>Speakers, other consumer electronics</i>

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<i>General Other</i>	<i>Hygiene – soap, toothpaste & brushes, shampoo, feminine products. Home – cooking utensils, pots and pans. Outdoors – assorted camping, technical.</i>	<i>Clothing – assorted in good condition please, towels, bed linen, footwear.</i>	<i>Musical instruments – parts and supplies, e.g. reeds, valve oil, pads, guitar and bass strings, cables etc</i>
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PHRASE BOOK

It doesn't take much to be understood in Spanish – a phrasebook is a big help.

Here are the basic greetings:

- Hello: *hola (oh-lah)*
- Good morning: *Buenos días (bway-nos dee-ahs)*
- Good afternoon: *Buenas tardes (bway-nahs tar-des)*
- Good evening: *Buenas noches (bway-nahs noh-chess)*
- How are you?: *¿Cómo está? (coh-moh es-tah)*
- Good, thank you: *Bien, gracias (bee-ehn, grah-see-ahs)*
- Can you speak English?: *¿Habla inglés? (hah-blah een-glays)?*
- Please: *Por favor (por fav-ore)*
- Thank you: *Gracias (gra-see-uhs)*

Asking for directions:

- Where is...?: *¿Dónde está...? (DHOHN-dheh ehs-TAH)*
- Where is a restaurant?: *¿Dónde hay un restaurante? (Dhohn-dheh eye oon rest-ore-rah-n-tay)?*
- Where is the restroom? *¿Dónde está el baño? (Dhohn-dheh ehs-tah el ban-yo)?*
- How far?: *¿A que distancia? (Ah kay dhees-Tan-syah)*
- Right: *A la derecha (Ah lah dey-ray-chah)*
- Left: *A la izquierda (Ah lah eez-key-ayr-dah)*
- Ahead: *Derecho (De-rey-choh)*
- Can you help me?: *¿Puede ayudarme? (PWEH-dhe ah-yoo-dh-AHR-meh)*

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Eating out:

- How much is it?: *¿Cuanto cuesta?* (KWAHN-toh KWEH-stah)
- The bill, please: *La cuenta, por favor* (Lah KWEHN-tah, por-fav-ore)
- That was delicious: *Estuvo delicioso* (est-ooH-vo del-ish-ee-oh-so)
- I am vegetarian: *Soy vegetariano/a* (soy veg-et-air-ee-an-oh/ah)
- A table: *Una mesa* (oona me-sah)
- A menu: *Un menú* (oon mey-noo)
- A drink: *Una bebida* (oon-ah beh-beed-ah)
- Beer: *Cerveza* (ser-vay-sah)
- Water: *Agua* (ahg-wah)
- A coffee: *Un café* (uhn cah-fey)
- Sandwich: *Torta* (tore-tah)
- Burger: *Hamburguesa* (ham-burg-ess-ah)
- Chicken: *Pollo* (poy-oh)

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CONTACT DETAILS

Upon arrival Havana International Airport, you will be met by a driver holding a sign with YOUR NAME. He will take you to your Casa Particulares, address below;

Lamparilla 311
(entre Aguacate y Compostela)
Habana Vieja
Habana

This is the address you should use on your Tourist Card/Visa!

Key people who will be looking after you during your stay in Cuba and delivering your program are as follows;

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Landline</i>	<i>Cell</i>
Hostal Leonel	(normal office hours)	+53 7862 7416	
Leonel Hernandez	Program Manager		+53 5290 1738
Leandro Hernandez	Program Manager		+53 5253 9580

** the prefix '7' should only be used for landlines when calling from outside the city*

In the event of unforeseen problems or delays with international flights please email or phone Tim and he will contact your in country host. Email info@corazoncuba.com or phone +353 86 822 0333

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Isn't Cuba a dangerous country?

Actually, Cuba has the lowest crime rate in the Western Hemisphere! You will be surprised by the visible police presence in Cuba. They are there specifically to protect and help tourists.

Foreign currency and tourism is vital to their economy, they bend over backwards to make sure everyone has a safe and pleasant stay.

Although, be aware of your belongings in cities like Havana and Santiago de Cuba just like in every capital city.

Q. What is the best time to go to Cuba, and what is the cheapest period?

March, April October and November are the months with the nicest weather and less rain.^[SEP] The high season in Cuba is July / August^[SEP] Peak Season is December / January/ February^[SEP]. Hurricane season is from June 1 till November 30

Q. Do I need a Visa and a passport?

Yes and yes! Cuba will give you a visa / tourist card, however, you must acquire the visa before you arrive – see above. Ensure that your passport has at least 6 months left till it expires, calculated from your departure date ...

Q. Yikes!! I don't speak Spanish... !!!

Some Spanish is a definite plus. We suggest you learn a few simple phrases.^[SEP] However, many Cubans speak English and many of the people we will be in contact with speak English very well also. Cubans are very patient, don't worry, they will wait for you to find the right word.

Q. What about electricity?

Cuba has 110 volt, some more luxury hotels also 220.

Q. What about money? And can I use my credit card?

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Sure ... as long as it's not drawn on an American bank. Unfortunately, it's part of the US embargo restrictions on Cuba. No US travelers cheques either. Americans have to carry cash.

Q. I hear many prescription drugs are not available in Cuba ... what if I get sick?

Cuban doctors are known throughout Latin America as the best trained doctors in the region. However, they do lack many of the bare necessities that we expect. "Tourist Pharmacies" DO stock many prescription drugs. Nevertheless, we suggest bringing with you antibiotics, aspirin, band-aids, anything you may need for personal hygiene, etc. just in case. Besides, they make great gifts for the Cubans when you leave.

Q. I'm a woman traveling alone. Is Cuba a safe place to travel for me?

Yes! No problem ... but don't fall in love :) And don't go down dark streets at night, the same streets you wouldn't go in in your own hometown. Take a taxi when you go out at night – they are safe and reliable but remember to ask for the fare before you set off! Smaller towns like Trinidad or Vinales are safe at night time for female travelers, you can just walk home. ^[1]_{SEP} Use your female instinct!

Q. Where can I have a cheap and decent dinner?

The best dinners you will have at the Casa Particular you are staying or at a Paladar.

Q. Can my girlfriend / boyfriend / family and friends visit?

Of course.

Q. Will I get much time for myself?

Yes, plenty.

Upon arrival you will be supported by a Program Manager for the duration of your stay.

The Program Manager is an experienced member of our crew and will be available on pretty much a daily basis to answer any queries and generally make sure that all is well and you are having a GREAT TIME!

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BACKGROUND READING

Our Man in Havana - Graham Greene

Adios Havana - Andrew J. Rodriguez

Before Night Falls - Reinaldo Arenas

Conversations with Cuba - C. Peter Ripley

Broken Paradise - Cecilia Samartin

Blessed by Thunder - Flor Fernandez Barrios

Take Me with You - Carlos Frias

www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/cuba

www.worldtravelguide.net/cuba

<https://www.facebook.com/vivacorazoncuba>

https://www.instagram.com/corazon_cuba/