



Welcome to Cuba, Caribbean Pearl

Between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, Cuba is an island country bathed in sun and human warmth. Its tumultuous history and its legendary beauty have made a mythical island of it. When he set foot on the island of Cuba, in 1492, Christopher Columbus exclaimed: "this is the most beautiful place the man has ever contemplated !" The Cuban archipelago, composed of a main island, multiple cayos and rocky islets, presents a wide variety of landscapes with mountain ranges, agricultural valleys and long beaches full of white fine sand.

L'archipel de Cuba, composé d'une île principale et de multiples cayos et îlots rocheux, présente une grande variété paysagère, alliant massifs montagneux, vallées agricoles et longues plages de sable fin.

Cuban cities are full of worldwide famous architectural and cultural treasures that led the UNESCO designate Havana and Trinidad as World Heritage Sites. The different times of this country are still reflected on the buildings of the best preserved cities, and the numerous cultural manifestations show the spiritual wealth of Cuba.

The Cuban people has forged itself a reputation based on its joie de vivre and its sense of celebration. Very hospitable, this population likes to make you discover its very particular culture and share its customs with the visitor.

But this country, more than an attractive place to visit for its natural beauties, is a space of contrasts conveniently exploited to make happy its visitors... Diving in the coral lagoons, excursions to the humid mountains, fishing in salt or fresh water, bathing in the cascades' freshness, discovery of the colonial architecture... All these activities you dreamed about can become reality in this island of sun !

Presentation of the country

CUBAN GEOGRAPHY

Location

Cuba is located in the Gulf of Mexico, 170 km from the American coasts. This country has a 110 860 km² area. It stretches in length on 1 200 km and its width, according to the region, is 31 to 195 km. Its shape recalls a crocodile, a reptile that abounds in the Guama region. The coasts of Cuba are full of beautiful beaches and the rest of its territory shows cultivated lands, swamps, plains, hills and mountain regions. The island has some rivers and, even if they are not very frequent, they enrich the tourist scene.



Weather

Cuba has a subtropical climate. There are 2 seasons: a dry season (from November to May) and a rainy season (from June to October). Temperatures during both seasons do not vary much and the average temperature is 25° C. The precipitation rate marks the difference. The weather is good even during the humid season with all its downpours and drizzles

Average temprature in some cities

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	Janv	April	Juil	Sept	Nov	Taux max. d'humidité
Baracoa	24,5°	26°	29°	27,5°	27°	79% en Juillet
La Havane	22,5°	24,5°	26°	28°	24,5°	70% en Octobre
Isla de la Juventud	23,5°	26°	29,5°	28,5°	26,5°	73% en Sept
Pinar del Río	22,5°	25°	27,5°	27,5°	25°	73% en Août
Sancti Spíritus	21,5°	24,5°	28°	26,5°	23,5°	76% en Sept
Santiago de Cuba	24,5°	26°	28°	27,5°	26,5°	76% en Juin

Hours use

The time zone of Cuba is the 75 West meridian, similar to New York's winter time in North America and to the West time in South America. Cuba has a 5-6 hours difference with the countries of Western Europe. There are 6 hours time-lag between Cuba and France: when it is 7 p.m. in France, it is 1p.m. in Cuba. (Hours change in the same period in both countries, i.e. end of March and beginning of October).

Flora and Fauna

In Cuba, there are many endemic species. You can find the different animal species mainly in the mountainous and swampy regions and islets. Reptiles, birds and marine mammals are the main exponents of the Cuban fauna. Flora in Cuba still has more than 6 000 species in spite of the many deforestation campaigns that devastated the forests. At present, some tropical forests occupy a part of the territory again.



HISTORICAL REFERENCES DATES

1492: Christopher Columbus disembarks on the Cuban territory, while thinking he had reached the Indies.

1865: End of slaves' deportation.

1868: Beginning of the independence wars.

1898: End of the Spanish domination. It happens after the end of the war on the Cuban territory between Spaniards and Americans. Cubans didn't have time to enjoy their independence because the United States came to power immediately. For more than 50 years, the United States are going to control the island, appropriate the best lands, and make from Havana the capital of game, corruption and prostitution. Two dictatorships will follow each other under the rule of General Machado and Batista respectively.

1953 (26 July): The revolutionary movement, essentially composed of young men and conducted by Fidel Castro, fails in its attempt to attack the Moncada army barracks, the most important of the eastern region of the country, and another one in Bayamo. A terrible bloodbath and a countrywide repression followed the attack. July 26 has been declared the Day of the National Rebellion.

1959 (1st. January): The rebel army, commanded by Fidel Castro, takes the power and sets up the revolutionary government. The 1st. January has been declared the Day of the National Liberation. Since it came to power, the Revolutionary Government has disturbed the American government and its reforms earned the country a strong embargo imposed by the United States for more than 40 years.

PEOPLE, CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

The Cuban population is composed of a tasty mixture of ethnic groups that arrived to the island in different historical periods. Interbreeding is currently common and the different cultural characteristics have mixed in a very interesting multi-colored culture. Cuba has 11 million inhabitants mainly concentrated on the outskirts of Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Holguín, Matanzas and the central provinces of the country

Health and education

The Cuban government can be proud of its action in the fields of education and health. Illiteracy is almost non-existent thanks to a big campaign against illiteracy that took place in the most isolated regions of the island during the 60s with the sending of many professors and students to these distant regions. Many physicians also took the roads leading to these villages and multiple medical care centers were built: hospitals, schools, and clinics... This action has been so successful that health rates are similar to those of the developed countries.

Language

Cubans speak Spanish with very particular accent and vocabulary. In all tourist spots, their staff members speak at least English



Religion

Even if the religious faiths have evolved since the triumph of Revolution, there is a general tendency that still persists. Some Cubans are Catholic. On the other hand, the African beliefs that have subsisted, melted with Catholicism to give birth to particular cults as the Santería, the current majority religion.

Art and culture

The Revolution has made an important effort to promote the Cuban culture, long time ruined by foreign influences. Many cultural centers and Art schools were built and improved local culture.

Music and dance are inescapable in this country. The African instruments mix with the Spanish rhythms to create a worldwide appreciated melody. You can easily observe that the French minuet lasts in the Cuban folklore. This proves the influence of the French forebears in this country. The Cuban literature is also worldwide famous and some authors are only published abroad. Cuba has a very well known film industry. Its movies are very appreciated for their cynicism. "Fresa y Chocolate" (Strawberry and Chocolate) has represented a real open-mindedness on many themes that were taboo until then not only in Cuba but also abroad.

In general, the Cuban intellectuals and artists are very creative and their works are very successful in every artistic expression.

Handicrafts

You will be able to buy all kinds of articles made of marble and leather and black coral jewels. You will also bring with you some music instruments you cannot find in your country. Cigars and rum are other typical products you will be able to find in Cuba. Mistrust street sellers. The quality of the products they propose is not assured and this kind of sale is especially forbidden! .

Cuban cuisine

The Cuban Creole cuisine is not especially refined. It is the result of a gastronomic alliance between Spanish, African and Chinese dishes. Creole dishes are based on pork, beef, rice, beans (red or black) tomatoes, lettuce and fruits. It is possible to taste very good lobsters in most restaurants. The Cuban cuisine is not too spicy but rich in garlic and onions.

Useful information

Formalities

To travel to this country, you must be provided with a passport valid until the day you will return to your country and a tourist card, equivalent to a visa. This card will



be valid for 1 month but you will be able to renew it in Cuba for another month. It costs 25,15 EUROS. Its renewal costs 25 American dollars. There is an Airport Tax (\$ 25 US) to pay before your departure.

Health formalities

No vaccine is obligatory to go to Cuba. However, taking into account the difficult economic situation in which is plunged the country, some precautions are to be taken in order to have a calm stay. It is better for you to bring a personal drug kit mainly composed of aspirins, disinfectants, analgesics, and all other products you could probably need. You will find in Cuba well-known clinics because of the quality of their medical services and they will welcome you if by any chance you present a serious health problem.

Communications

If you want to make a telephone call to Cuba, you have to dial 00-53 and then the city code. To make telephone calls in Cuba, dial 0 and then the city code. Some special telephonic centers exist for international calls. The access code is 88 from your hotel room, and 119 from the phone booths operating with cards. To call the operator, dial 09. You can make a collect call to your country. The modernization of the Cuban telephone network is relatively fast. Therefore, these information we are giving to you can change. You will find some faxes in all international post offices as well as in big hotels. From August 15, 2001, the Enterprise of Portable Telecommunications in the Caribbean S.A., known as C_COM offers a portable telephony service with the GSM norm (Global System for Mobile Communication). Until now, this system is operational in Havana, Matanzas and Varadero. C_COM also offers you the International Automatic Roaming service with Spain, France, Germany, etc.

Main phone codes

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Bayamo	23	La Havane provincia	47	Sancti Spiritus	41
Camaguey	32	La Havane ciudad	7	Santa Clara	42
Ciego de Avila	33	Morón	33	Viñales	48
Cienfuegos	43	Nueva Gerona	46	Santiago de Cuba	22
Guantanamo	21	Pinar del Rio	48	Trinidad	41
Holguin	24	Las Tunas	31	Varadero	45



Currency

THE US DOLLAR IS NOT USED IN CASH IN CUBA ANYMORE.

The national currency is the Cuban Peso. However, the currency used in all transactions is the CUC(Convertible Peso). It's indispensable! Like the national peso, it has no value outside the Cuban territory.

As a reference: 1 CUC = 1.08 USD and

1 CUC = about 24 Cuban pesos.

All prices in Cuba are in CUC. There is some places where you can pay in EUR, like Varadero.

Banks

To buy your currency, you must have an international card: Visa International, Eurocard, Mastercard, etc. American Express cards and others issued by American banks are not accepted. You will be able to use them to pay in hotels and their stores, State restaurants (not in Paladar - small private restaurant), gas stations, etc. Traveller's Checks can be changed in banks and hotels. You can withdraw money in the agencies of the Banco Financiero Internacional (BFI), of the Cuban National Bank of Cuba (BNC) as well as at the Exchange Office (CADECA) of most of the hotels

What do you have to bring?

Before taking your flight to Cuba, take your time to put in your bag some items that will be very useful during your stay. First of all, bring light and comfortable clothes to stand the hot weather during the day. Bring also a raincoat and a light sweater for evening freshness, journeys by bus, and hotels that have a strong air-conditioning. Foresee some elegant outfits if you want to discover "Cuba by Night". Bring a 220/110 volts adapter for the different plug shape in Cuba (round, American type) for your electric appliances, if your hotel it is not equipped with 220 volts. Bring with you a drug kit containing aspirins, disinfectants, analgesics, and all other products you could need. Last recommendation: remember to bring a solar protective cream, sunglasses, a hat and a special product for protection against mosquitoes



Useful Adresses

IN FRANCE

Cuba Autrement Paris
C/O Destino World
38, rue de Berri 75008 PARIS
Tél : (00 33.1) 45 61 05 55
E-mail : info@destino-world.com

Office de tourisme de Cuba
280 Bd. Raspail 75014 Paris.
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Consulat de Cuba
14. rue des Presles
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