

## What to Bring to Cuba

In general there is not a lot to buy in Cuba so anything you might need you should bring with you and not expect to be able to find while you are there. There are no Targets, Walgreens, or any functional department stores. Remember to bring all your own shampoo, toothpaste, sunscreen, packets of tissues, and anything else you need to feel comfortable.

Dress comfortably. Cuba is a casual country. It will probably be humid and in the 80s, so you won't need many warm clothes but bring a sweater or warmer outfit in case there is a cold front. Make sure you have good walking shoes as there will be a lot of walking on sidewalks that are in need of repair. Bring a hat to keep sun off your face and sunglasses. We also recommend that you bring a small travel umbrella in case of rain. And of course you'll want a couple pairs of nice clothes for attending concerts.

Ear plugs can be helpful for sleeping because Havana can be noisy at night and early in the morning.

Bring your passport and a Xerox copy of it which you can leave in your suitcase. In the off chance that you lose your passport, you have this copy to facilitate the process of getting a duplicate.

Even though Traveler's Insurance isn't required we have [recommended you purchase it](#). If you have, remember to carry with you copies of your policy.

Please bring your updated vaccine card along with a digital copy as backup.

## Support for the Cuban People Donations

Although not required or expected, bringing supplies and other useful items to give as gifts to Cubans is helpful to fulfill OFAC's General License for Support for the Cuban People that we are legally traveling under. Since there is more scarcity, supply chain problems, and a US embargo, day-to-day goods can be difficult or impossible for them to acquire on the island. For example, over-the-counter medicine, art supplies, computer supplies, music supplies (strings, reeds, etc.) athletic equipment (esp. baseball), and many other tools of the trades are of received with a very high level of appreciation. You just bring it with you in your suitcase and we'll help find the best locals to give it too.

## Medications

Cuba requires that all travelers be "fully vaccinated from Covid-19" to enter the country. So please make sure you are up-to-date with a vaccine recognized by the WHO along with a booster if necessary by the time of our travel dates.

Because of Cuba's superb health care system they do not have many diseases found in other Third World countries. Vaccinations for tropical diseases (not Covid-19) before the trip are not recommended.

Please remember to bring all your own medications (both prescription and over-the-counter) and backup, especially for conditions such as asthma. It can be difficult or impossible to find your medications on the island.

The most common illness that travelers get in Cuba is a 12-24 hour stomach irritation that can cause vomiting and diarrhea. In our experience Imodium is the best over-the-counter medicine for this which we will have on hand for anyone who might need it.

The trip does come with medical insurance in Cuba so you will be covered if you need to go to a clinic or hospital while we are there. Hold onto your boarding pass to Cuba as proof of purchase for Cuban Health Insurance.

Recreational drugs are highly illegal in Cuba and are strictly enforced.

## Money in Cuba

Cuba is a cash economy that is not currently accepting the U.S. dollar. US banks and credit card companies are still not available in Cuba. You will not be able to use or access any of your US credit cards or US bank accounts while in Cuba. Traveler's checks are also not accepted in Cuba. For extra spending money you need to bring cash in Euros or Canadian Dollars. What you bring is all you will have while you are on the island, so I recommend you bring more than you'll need to spend in case of an emergency or special purchase.

We recommend that each of you bring the equivalent of at least \$100 USD per day in cash. You probably won't even spend half of it but since what you bring is all that you will have, it is best to bring more just in case of an emergency situation and then return home with the rest of the money you don't use. You also might find some art or expensive souvenirs you really want to buy.

Almost everything you buy in Cuba will be in CUP (Cuban Pesos) which equals \$1 USD = 25 CUP. You will be able to most conveniently change money from our tour leaders at any time during the trip. There are also banks and exchange kiosks on the streets and in hotels. US dollars are not accepted as currency in most stores and restaurants.

Don't worry about walking around with so much cash because Cuba is statistically one of the safest countries in the world and theft and violent crime is extremely rare.

## Internet in Cuba

We will not have WiFi access in most places outside of our accommodations. We will have a brief period in the early mornings, late afternoons, and late at night and get online from your laptop, phone, or tablet. You should plan on being mostly away from email and internet while you are in Cuba. Although there have been major leaps forward in recent years, Cuba is still one of the most offline countries in the world. Internet service is very slow and sometimes does not work at all however. Streaming audio and video or uploading or downloading large files is difficult in Cuba because of their small bandwidth.

## **Emergency Phone Contacts and Cell Phone Usage**

If someone in the US needs to get in touch with you while you are in Cuba there are a couple options.

International Roaming: Most US mobile carriers now offer international roaming service in Cuba. To set up your phone so that it will work in Cuba you must call your service provider and ask them if and how you can get it set up to work while you are in Cuba. Rates for local or international are around \$3 per minute of a phone call and \$2 per MB of data.

If you prefer to not set up your phone for international use, you can have them call you on the line of a group leader or our hotel number which will be provided shortly before our trip.

## **Power Converters and Adapters**

In Cuba you will find both 120V (what we use most commonly in the U.S.) and 220V power outlets and it is almost always marked. Just check the voltage before using appliances or other electronics that do not accept both 120V and 220V. If you have a plug adapter and power converter you might want to bring it with you as it could come in handy, but I wouldn't recommend buying anything special as it probably won't be necessary. Almost all electronics today come with power adaptors and will work in either 120 or 220 outlets (i.e. all Apple products).

## **Food & Water**

Food is clean and safe in Cuba, especially at all the high-end restaurants we'll be taking you to. The water in Cuba is much cleaner than most of Latin America but should still not be consumed from the tap. Ice that comes in the beverages at the places we will be eating is purified and need not be avoided. Bottled water will be provided at all times at the houses and in the vans.

All of the restaurants we eat at will have many menu options so that you can avoid certain foods that are not part of your diet. We will also look out for those of you who have allergies and strict dietary restrictions. Vegetarians should be extra well prepared

in Cuba and are encouraged to bring supplements. I recommend you bring Cliff bars, granola bars, and the like because snacks are difficult to find in Cuba.

## **Bathrooms in Cuba**

Our hotels and restaurants will have the nicest bathrooms on our trip. Public bathrooms throughout Cuba are typically old and in disrepair. It is common for a custodian to be sitting outside of a public bathroom and asking for a coin for their work maintaining the bathroom's cleanliness and stock of toilet paper and soap. It is handy to bring a small stash of toilet paper and hand sanitizer for situations where the bathroom is out of supplies. Cuban plumbing systems are weak so toilet paper is always disposed of in waste packets instead of flushing down the toilets.

## **Cuban Visas**

Your visas are included as part of the trip package. Your Cuban tourist visas will be mailed to you around April 15<sup>th</sup> along with a Support for the Cuban People Certification Letter from Lewis & Clark authorizing our trip to Cuba. All you'll have to do is fill them out and bring them with you during travel.

## **What You Can Bring Home**

Educational or cultural items including art, crafts, artisanry, and books can be bought in Cuba and brought home to the US. Rum and cigars are currently illegal to bring home.

## **Itinerary**

We will be sending you our final itinerary one to two weeks before departure. We intentionally hold the final itinerary until just before the trip since there will be a lot of happenings that we will be finding out about shortly before we travel and we want to ensure that everyone is using the same written information that is as final and fully up-to-date as possible. Until then, if you are curious about what we will be doing please see our [online itinerary](#) as an accurate reference for what our schedule will be.

Hasta pronto,

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