

SPANISH  
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ABROAD

The Center for Cross-Cultural Study



Know Before You Go:  
A Survival Guide to Havana, Cuba

## Know Before You Go: A Survival Guide to Havana, Cuba

As part of your cross-cultural experience, you will find that you will encounter different cultural attitudes and behaviors while you are abroad. This is a guide to help you better understand the cultural norms of where you will be studying, as well as to offer useful information about the city and country. The Havana Handbook, on the other hand, relates to Spanish Studies Abroad's policies and program-related information, and it is equally important to review that information as well. Think of this as an insider's guide to help you quickly and effectively acclimate to your new city and become a *Habanero* in no time. ¡Buena suerte y buen viaje!

### Country Profile: Cuba

At the end of your program, you will know more about Cuba than you ever could have expected. The following is information that will give you some idea about Cuban life before you go. Further up-to-date details on Cuba and other Latin American countries can be found on the website of the U.S. Department of State at <http://travel.state.gov>.





## BRIEF HISTORY OF CUBA

The first residents of Cuba were the Arawak, the Guanahatabeyes and Taíno Indians, who migrated there between 1050 and 1450. The Spaniard Diego Velázquez led the battle to conquer Cuba between the years of 1511 and 1515, founding Havana in 1514. It was later moved to its current location on the northwestern side of Cuba in 1519.

A cursory view of Cuban history can break it down into two periods: pre-1959 and post-1959. But in reality the historiography is much more profound and complicated than that. For many Americans Cuban history is demarcated by a number of important years and events. In 1492 Christopher Columbus landed on the easternmost point of the island Cabo Maisí and began exploring Cuba in the name of Spain. Much later in 1895 Cuba went to war against Spain for its independence and the US intervened on its behalf in 1898. The year 1903 witnessed the introduction of the Platt Amendment, an enactment whose consequences reverberate today. The Platt Amendment allowed Cuba to lease land to the US leading to the establishment of the US military base in Guantánamo. In 1959 Fidel Castro came to power after leading an uprising against the dictator Fulgencio Batista. Shortly thereafter, the US placed an embargo on Cuba which preceded an ill-fated invasion of the island (Bay of Pigs invasion) in 1961. The world was focused on Cuba during the tension-filled days of October 1962 in what came to be known as the Cuban missile crisis. Echoes of that semi-confrontation still reverberate today.

In 1980 the Castro government allowed thousands of Cubans to leave the island for Florida via the Mariel boatlift. Since that time, the country has maintained a complicated and oftentimes antagonistic relationship with the US, but has never had any problems exporting its music, as evidenced by the “Rumba Diplomacy” of the early 2000s. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Cuba entered what Castro termed “the Special Period,” in which the government asked its citizens to make sacrifices as the country adapted to its new situation without the chief subsidizer of its economy.

With the arrival of the age of social media and increasing advances in communication technology, Cuba has entered new terrain. Digital activists are becoming active and numerous blogs have appeared with a variety of views and opinions spreading throughout the blogosphere. This blend of history, social media, technology and the Cuban’s “choteo” provide an interesting environment for students to learn about this unique country and its people and to gain a better understanding of this country that finds itself at the crossroads of the historical and the modern.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Cuba has a total area of 42,426 square miles. It is 780 miles long and 191 miles wide at its widest point. It is 93 miles south of Florida, 130 miles east of Mexico and is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest island in the world. It has several impressive mountain ranges: the Sierra Maestra (southeastern part of the island), Sierra Cristal (south east), Escambray Mountains (center of the island), and the Sierra Rosario (northwest).

The oldest city in Cuba is Baracoa, founded by Diego Velázquez in 1511.

Cuba is divided into 15 provinces: Camagüey, Ciego de Ávila, Granma, Cienfuegos, Ciudad de La Habana, Guantánamo, Holguin, Isla de la Juventud, La Habana, Las Tunas, Matanzas, Pinar del Río, Sancti Spiritus, Santiago de Cuba, Villa Clara.

Over the last few years, Cuba and China have become close. China sends many students to Cuba to study Spanish.

<b>Federal Capital</b>	Havana
<b>National Population</b>	11,116,396 (as of July 2018)
<b>Health</b>	<u>Physician density</u> : 6.399 physicians/1,000 population 73 deaths/100,000 live births <u>Health expenditures</u> : 11.8% of GDP <u>Obesity-adult prevalence rate</u> : 11.8%
<b>Religions</b>	nominally Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish, Santeria
<b>Native Languages</b>	Spanish
<b>Ethnic Groups</b>	white 64.1%, mulatto and mestizo 26.6%, black 9.3%
<b>Time Difference</b>	UTC-5 (same time as Washington, DC during Standard Time). Daylight saving time: +1hr, begins second Sunday in March; ends first Sunday in November; <b>NOTE</b> - Cuba has been known to alter the schedule of DST on short notice in an attempt to conserve electricity for lighting

### Principal Government Officials

- Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez
  - President of the Council of State
  - President of the Council of Ministers
- Salvador Valdés Mesa
  - First Vice President of the Council of State
  - First Vice President of the Council of Ministers

The president and vice president are elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term; election last held on March 11, 2018 (next to be held in 2023)

### National Government & Legislature

Cabinet: Council of Ministers proposed by the president of the Council of State and appointed by the National Assembly or the 28-member Council of State, elected by the assembly to act on its behalf when it is not in session

Unicameral National Assembly of People's Power or *Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular* (number of seats in the National Assembly is based on population; 605 seats; members elected directly elected by absolute majority vote and serve 5-year terms)

Elections: last held on March 11, 2018 (next to be held in 2023)

Election results: Cuba's Communist Party is the only legal party, and officially sanctioned candidates run unopposed.

## Political Parties

Cuban Communist Party or PCC

## Judicial

Highest court(s): People's Supreme Court (consists of court president, vice president, 41 professional justices, and lay judges; organized into the "Whole," State Council, and criminal, civil, administrative, labor, crimes against the state, and military courts)

Judge selection and term of office: professional judges elected by the National Assembly to serve 2.5-year terms; lay judges nominated by workplace collectives and neighborhood associations and elected by municipal or provincial assemblies; lay judges appointed for 5-year terms and serve up to 30 days per year

Subordinate courts: People's Provincial Courts; People's Regional Courts; People's Courts

## Local Government & Administration

Each province has a capital that serves as the administrative center for the entire region. Named the Local Organs of People's Power (*Organos Locales del Poder Popular*), the 169 local government authorities (*municipios*) allow citizens to nominate candidates for public office and to elect representatives by direct ballot to a government body. This was unheard of before 1976 when the decree was promulgated to give citizens this voice in political affairs. Only at the local level is there a degree of completion allowed between candidates.

Policies are decreed through municipal assemblies which have executive structures known as municipal administrative councils or *consejos de administración municipales* that is elected by assembly members.

Local governments manage restaurants, garbage pickups, street cleanings and other local services in addition to finding ways to fulfill the regional equity goals of the revolution.

For years the main task of the local governments was to implement centrally planned development, but now they face new challenges such as the rise of unequal social and regional development in the country. Many younger inhabitants want to leave the rural areas for Havana and it remains a challenge for the local governments to reduce this outflow of people.

## Educational System

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education)	<b>total:</b> 14 years <b>male:</b> 14 years <b>female:</b> 14 years (2016)
Education expenditures	12.8% of GDP (2010)

**Literacy:** **definition:** age 15 and over can read and write  
**total population:** 99.8%  
**male:** 99.9%  
**female:** 99.8% (2015 est.)

Education	School/Level	Grade	Grade	Age	Age	Years	Notes
		From	To	From	To		
Primary	Escuela primaria	1	6	6	11	6	
Secondary	Escuela Tecnologica/Technical Secondary			15	18	3	Secondary education is divided into basic secondary education and pre-university secondary education. At the end of basic secondary education, pupils can choose between pre-university education and technical and professional education. Those who complete pre-university education are awarded the Bachillerato. Technical training leads to two levels of qualification - skilled worker and middle-level technician.
Secondary	Secundaria Basica/ Basic Secondary	7	9	12	15	3	Secondary School Completion Diploma awarded
Secondary	Ciclo medio superior/preuniversitario/ Higher Intermediate Cycle			15	18	3	Upper Secondary
Vocational	Technical/Vocational					3	Technical/vocational studies are provided in Institutos superior politécnicos. Studies last for two-and-a-half to three years.
Tertiary	Licenciatura					4	The first and main stage of higher education usually lasts for four or five years. In Medicine, studies last for five or six years.. Courses that are offered to workers usually last longer than traditional courses. At the end of the first stage, students are awarded a Licenciatura or a Título profesional (professional diploma).
Tertiary	Diplomado/ Maestría/ Especialista					2	University level second stage: Diplomado, Maestría, Especialista: Diplomado courses have three levels, each requiring some 200 hours of theoretical instruction, practical work, industrial internship and a final project. Students can gain academic credit towards completion of a Master's degree and are allowed to work on a Master's thesis as they progress through Diplomado studies. The second stage corresponds to a period of in-depth study and research which leads to the Maestría after two years.

Education	School/Level	Grade		Age		Years	Notes
		From	To	From	To		
Tertiary	Candidato a Doctor en Ciencias					4	Three to four year programs lead to the Candidato a Doctor en Ciencias. This qualification is required for entry to studies for the Doctor en Ciencias.
Tertiary	Doctor en Ciencias						The Doctor en Ciencias is awarded following additional years of scientific research. The thesis has to be defended before a jury, and once approval is forthcoming.

Source: <http://www.classbase.com/countries/Cuba/Education-System>

## People

With 65% of its population being white, nearly 25% mulatto and mestizo and 10% black, Cuba offers a very diverse population to visitors. In fact, the more alarming trend is urbanization, especially among the young: 75% of the population lives in cities. There is a significant number of Chinese-Cubans as well, and their presence is most visible in Havana's Chinatown.

## Language

Spanish is the official language of the country, but with its reliance on tourism, more Cubans are learning English and the languages of the island's more frequent tourists: Russian, French, Scandinavian languages.

## HAVANA OVERVIEW

Havana today is recognized as a center for arts and learning in Cuba with its theatres, and museums.

<b>Province:</b>	Havana
<b>Population:</b>	2.3 million
<b>Land Size:</b>	281.2 sq miles (728.3 km <sup>2</sup> )

## History

Havana was founded in 1514 on the Gulf of Batabanó and it was moved to its current location in 1519.

## Economy

The "Big Three"—sugar, coffee and tobacco—were the engines that ran the Cuban economy from its inception until the 1980s when Cuba welcomed tourists. Since then tourism has become the driver of the Cuban economy. In an effort to reap benefits from the inflow of tourists into Cuba, government officials created another currency. There are two currencies: the *convertible peso*, known as the CUC, which is what is used primarily by tourists. \$1 equals 1 CUC, roughly. The other currency is the *moneda nacional* and this is used by most Cubans. \$1 equals 24 moneda nacional. You can change money into moneda nacional at the Cadeca, a money exchange house. Hotels such as Havana Libre, although they will change money from USD into CUC, do not change money into moneda nacional.

Cuba has invested greatly in eco-tourism and while in Cuba you should visit Las Terrazas, an example of how the government successfully sustained the flora and vegetation in this area. You will be able to swim, hike, ride horses and do zip lining there.

### People

As in many countries there has been an increase in the number of people who move from the countryside to the cities and Havana is no exception. You will see young musicians and actors try to catch their big break and find a way to continue their livelihood. Every time you walk down the street you will encounter something different, whether it is children playing soccer on the street, old men sitting down at a table for a game of dominoes, or a small fire by the side of the street for an impromptu dinner/social. People come from all walks of life.

You will encounter a diversity of names that reflect the homogeneity of Cuban culture. In the 1990s there was a near obsession with giving children names that began with the letter 'Y.' Do not be surprised when you encounter a "Yoel" or "Yusnely." You will meet people with Russian names such as Vladimir. There are also Vietnamese names such as Lien. Cuba's most internationally recognized ballerina has a Laotian name: Viengsay Valdés.

### Language

Spanish. English is becoming more popular as Cuba depends very heavily on tourism and there is considerable effort in teaching Chinese and Arabic.

## Practical Information

The following section includes some additional information and hints to help further prepare you for your time abroad and lessen any confusion you may have on simple tasks such as making calls, handling money, and knowing what to expect from the weather. Reading these tips could save you that extra headache or frustrating moment.

### MAKING PHONE CALLS

Skype is not available in Cuba, but you can purchase international calling cards. If your family needs to know how to call your landline or cell phone number in Cuba, and if you need to be able to reach them from a regular phone, here is some calling advice below.

Cuba's country code is: **53**  
Havana's area code is: **7**

### Landlines

Cuba landline phone numbers total ten digits: a two, three, or four digit area code and a six, seven, or eight-digit phone number. The area code + the phone number should always equal 7 digits.

How to dial from the US/Canada:

Exit Code	Country Code	Area Code	Phone Number
011	53	7	xx-xxxx

From within Havana, you should just be able to dial the phone number from house to house without



entering the area code or anything before it. If you are somewhere else in Cuba, you will need to first dial the area code for Havana.

How to dial the US from Cuba:

Exit Code	Country Code	Area Code	Phone Number
119	1	xxx	xxx-xxxx

### Mobile Numbers

Cuban mobile phone numbers all have an area code +5 + the phone number when you are dialing from outside of the country.

How to dial from the US/Canada:

Exit Code	Country Code	Area Code	Phone Number
011	53	5	xx-xxxx

How to dial within Havana:

7	Phone Number
7	xxx-xxxx

\*If Dialing from the US/Canada: You must enter 011 before the phone number

\*If Dialing to the US/Canada from Cuba: You must enter 119 +1 + area code before the phone number.

\*If you call a Cuban on his/her cell phone from a landline, chances are they will not answer. Whenever they receive calls from someone using a landline, they are charged for the call.

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO

Although emergency situations are fairly uncommon during a study abroad term, it is always advisable to keep emergency contact information readily available in the event that something does happen. Below are emergency numbers to use within Havana and contact information for the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba.

**NOTE: For emergency contact information for the U.S. and Cuban Spanish Studies Abroad offices, please refer to the Spanish Studies Abroad Handbook.**

### Emergency Numbers within Havana

Just as we use 911 for emergencies in the U.S., Cuba also uses 3-digit numbers for emergencies.

Police Department: 106

Fire Department: 105

Ambulance: 104

Drug Hotline: 103

### United States Interests Section in Cuba

**Chief of Mission:** John Caulfield

**Location:** Calzada between L & M Streets,  
Vedado, Havana

**Telephone:** (+53)(7) 839-4100

**Emergencies/After hours:** (+53)(7)-831-4100 and dial 1

## Resident Director

**Rocio Haro** (+53)(5)-841-2920

## HOW TO HANDLE MONEY IN CUBA

Cuba is deceptively expensive. Beneath the veneer of old motor vehicles and traditional architectural styles are a vast array of opportunities for you to spend money. Be careful and be sure to monitor your spending habits in Cuba. Set a maximum spending limit per week and then stick with it. Keep in mind that you will not be able to access money via ATM or credit cards so you will have to economize with the money that you take with you to Cuba. Note that when you change money at a Cadeca, a bill might be returned to you if it is not deemed to be in perfect condition, so make sure that the bills you take with you to Cuba are in good shape (no tears or ragged edges, etc.). They prefer bills that are almost new.

If you have an iPhone you can download an application (before you arrive in Cuba) to help you monitor your spending habits. **Spense** is a free app (with upgrades for a price) that allows you to set a weekly budget and track your expenditures. This is a very helpful tool to have in Cuba. Even though you cannot use your iPhone to make phone calls, chat or send e-mails, you can use the apps available on it to help you manage your money.

### Credit Cards/ATM and Debit cards

The embargo prevents the use of any US ATM, debit or credit cards (Visa, Master Card, American Express) in Cuba.

### Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks (issued by American Express, Mastercard, Visa, Thomas Cook, and Citibank) can be cashed at the Hotel Melia Cohiba, the hotel nearest to the student residence. Travelers checks are accepted in denominations up to USD \$ 100. If you decide to use the travelers check option, we also recommend you bring at least some cash, as a precaution.

### Tipping

If you travel and stay at a hotel, be sure to leave a tip in the room at the end of your stay. Calculate what you feel is a fare figure. The same applies to when you eat at a restaurant.

## WEATHER IN CUBA

Cuba's climate is tropical; moderated by trade winds. The dry season runs from November to April and the rainy season falls between May and October. The average monthly temperature between August and December ranges between 70°F-88°F, while from January to July the temperatures oscillate between 70°F-93°F.

## Being a North American Abroad

Before you travel abroad to Cuba, it is helpful to be aware of the different stereotypes and predispositions that Cubans may have about you as a North American. Given the history of Cuba-US relations, it is not surprising that people on both sides approach one another with caution and maybe some reticence. North Americans (referred to as *Yanquis*, or *Yuma* in Cuba), and other foreigners in general, may have a bad reputation in parts of the world. They can be perceived as demanding, noisy, not speaking the local

language, and expecting everyone else to speak theirs—and that doesn't even begin to cover whether people in other nations agree with your home government's policies and actions. It is important to recognize that these stereotypes exist, but it is also your job to represent your country in a positive light and try to demonstrate that not every North American fits the above stereotypes. Below are some helpful tips to think about before you go abroad so that you can come across as knowledgeable and culturally aware.

1) Educate yourself about Cuba and its culture – This guide is a resource to assist you with learning background information and the cultural norms of the country, but you can also read books and go online to find out additional information before you go. **Read Ann Louis Bardach's *Cuba Confidential*.**

2) Read basic factual and historical information on your host country – Also, be prepared for questions that Cubans may ask you about the United States or Canada such as basic history, politics, and current events. You will be surprised by how well read some Cubans are and how well they know American history. Here is a good starting point: do you know how many times the US intervened in Cuban affairs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

3) Learn about current events in Cuba – It is also helpful to be aware of what is currently going on in the country in regards to the economy, politics, news, etc.

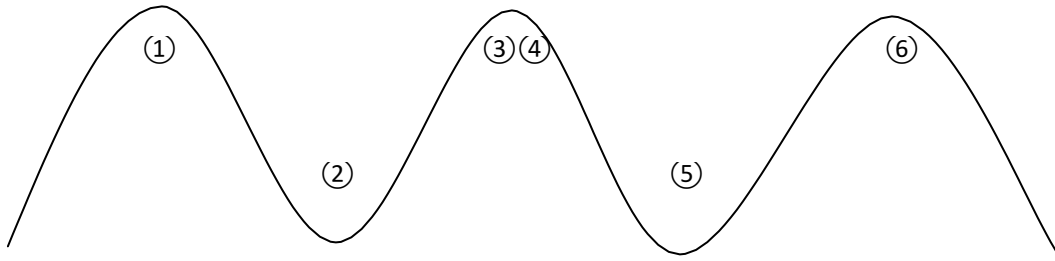
## CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is a natural and common feeling that many students may experience when they study abroad. Basically, it is a feeling of being overwhelmed and confused by how unfamiliar your new surroundings seem. Although it might feel unconquerable when you experience it, you'll get through it as everyone does. Culture shock is generally broken down into a number of stages:

1. *Honeymoon Phase*: You arrive in Cuba and you think, "This is great! Everything is new and exciting and I love it here!" You're going on tours of the city, you're meeting new people, getting to understand the language more easily; everything is going really well and you're so glad you decided to study abroad.
2. *Hostile Phase*: After the excitement starts to wear off of being in Havana, you may start to feel negative and frustrated with adjusting to the culture. You might feel like it takes forever to get anything done, you can't talk to your parents as much as you like, you're tired of all the new foods, locations, daily routines, and having to speak Spanish all the time. You might even start to wonder why you ever decided to study abroad in the first place.
3. *Understanding/Sense of Humor Phase*: After a while, you accept the cultural differences that surround you, and things start to feel okay again. As you get to be more familiar with the Cuban culture and lifestyle, you start to appreciate it more and become more confident in your surroundings. You are able to laugh at the misunderstandings that once made you so angry.
4. *Integration Phase*: You become accustomed to the good and bad aspects of Cuban culture and you incorporate them into your own life. Cuban lifestyle becomes part of your lifestyle; you like *arroz*, you feel comfortable and happy in Havana. This phase will last for the rest of your time abroad.
5. *Re-entry Shock*: When you go home again, you will experience another type of culture shock. You find that things at home have changed and that you have changed too. You don't know any of the songs on the radio or the phrases people are using. You may feel frustrated by others' lack of knowledge about issues that affect the country you've grown to love. You will miss your daily life in

Cuba and worry that you're talking too much about your experiences abroad.

6. *Re-Integration Phase*: You will get comfortable at home again soon; you'll be happy to see your family and friends, and you'll always remember your time in Havana. You'll be able to express to people what was so meaningful about your experience and will be able to take the lessons you've learned abroad with you as you go on in life. You'll find that you are a changed person, more mature, more experienced, and with great memories of Cuba.



The 'W Curve' is a graphic illustration of what some people go through before, during and after their study abroad experience.

If you feel like your culture shock is overwhelming you to the point where you need to talk to somebody about it, please speak directly with the resident director.

### **GENDER RELATIONS: MACHISMO**

*Machismo*, loosely defined as, "...an exaggerated masculinity," by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is a strong cultural influence in Latin American countries. If you are a woman, you may still receive cat calls from men and be exposed to *machista* comments and attitudes while studying abroad.

Things to remember when it comes to *machismo*:

- It's inevitable. Some expressions are worse than others, all are annoying, and you're going to hear them.
- If you get whistled at or called out to on the street, keep walking and don't respond. If the person is persistent, say "Déjeme en paz/Dejame en paz" or something similar.
- Forget your manners: you don't have to smile and respond to strange men yelling at you on the street.
- It is part of the culture, so men don't necessarily think that what they're doing is offensive.
- If any form of *machismo* turns into physical contact or if you experience any other uncomfortable incident, talk with the Resident Director and always feel free to call the Resident Director's emergency number.

### **GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender) STUDENTS ABROAD**

In recent years Cuba has become more open and accepting of the GLBT lifestyle. There is a club called **Las Vegas** that offers several nights a week for GLBT partygoers.

Still, it is important to note that GLBT acceptance is a relatively new concept in Cuban society, particularly for the older generations and for those living in more rural areas. If you identify as gay or lesbian and you intend to share this fact with others while studying abroad, be prepared to answer occasional frank

questions from your Cuban peers. Cubans are very direct and so these types of questions are simply their way of expressing interest and meeting their curiosity. Also be aware that throughout Latin America, acceptance of the GLBT community is usually less common outside the main metropolitan areas.

When talking with others about your sexuality, it is up to you to decide whom to tell and when to tell them. Be aware that the resident director and Spanish Studies staff in both Havana and the U.S. is always available to answer your questions and concerns, so you can feel comfortable speaking with them about this subject. Diversity is respected on all Spanish Studies programs. Whether or not you identify as GLBT, recognize that there may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender students on your Spanish Studies program or in your classes at the university. It is important to be respectful and to approach this reality with an open mind. The following link offers extensive resource information to help students better understand the benefits and challenges of studying, traveling, and living in a new culture as a GLBT student.

Please visit this website for even more resources for the GLBT community and study abroad:

<https://www.goabroad.com/downloads/lgbt-study-abroad-guide.pdf>

## **RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY**

Catholicism is the more popular religion in Cuba, but you will encounter other religions as well. Old Havana features a beautiful Russian Orthodox Church, there is a synagogue near the student residence and Santeria and Palo Monte are other religions practiced in the country. You will have the opportunity to visit some churches and sites where these religions are practiced.

## **RACE AND ETHNICITY IN CUBA**

One of the objectives of the revolution is the eradication of racism. Some people dispute how successful this has been, but you can look at how people interact with each other, especially young children and you will realize that the very notion of race is much different in Cuba.

## **SAFETY**

As a visitor in another country, it is always a good idea to try to blend in as much as possible in order to protect yourself and not stand out as a tourist. Havana is a safe city, but just like any other large city; you need to always be alert and aware of your surroundings. A lot of people may perceive North Americans to be affluent, so along with that comes being a target of petty theft. To avoid being labeled as a tourist or possible target, you should follow some basic guidelines below:

1. Don't speak English loudly in the streets. This can easily attract pickpockets and scam artists, and could get you in even more trouble late at night—especially if you are in a less safe area of a city.
2. Don't walk by yourself at night. Just as in any large city, nighttime is when many thieves will try to target tourists who are heading back to their hotels. Either walk with a friend or take a taxi anytime you are out late. There are also "remises" (hired car service, although the cars are very similar to taxis). Any restaurant or club will call one for you.
3. Don't wear clothes that will instantly identify you as a tourist (short shorts, flip flops, baseball caps).
4. Don't invite thieves by wearing expensive jewelry or by carrying cameras, cell phones, or electronic music players. In Latin America it is common wisdom not to take out your wallet on the street. Also, if you are at a restaurant, never put your purse on the back of your chair or on the floor where it can be easily snatched up. Try to keep it in your lap or somewhere where you can keep a close eye on it.
5. Don't leave your belongings unattended —no wallets placed on bars, no purses left at your table, no jackets left on the backs of chairs, and don't leave anything on the ground next to you.



6. Be extra cautious while using public transport (subway, bus, train) and hold on close to your belongings. Backpacks and purses are easy targets, so make sure to have your zippers somewhere where you can see them.
7. Take only the amount of money you need for the day/night. Don't take too much money with you.

Students unaccustomed to city life will learn to be more cautious when walking the streets of Havana. Cuba is a safe country, but while living in Havana, you should still follow the same safety precautions you would in any big city in North America, and basic common sense should rule your actions. Although petty theft is the most common type of crime in the city, this does not mean that you are immune from any other type of dangerous situation. If any emergency situation does arise, please contact the Resident Director immediately.

## TRAVEL THE LAND...

You may be used to having a car, but obviously while abroad you will not have one, and although many people in Cuba do have cars, they tend to use intercity buses as well. There is currently not a subway system in Havana.

### GETTING AROUND THE CITY

You will most likely walk or take a short bus ride to school from your residencia. In fact, you will find that you get around mostly by walking. You can take taxis or *maquinas* (the 1950s style cars that cost 10 moneda nacional). Buses run throughout the city and cost only 40 cents but expect them to be crowded.

Coco taxis, the yellow egg-shaped, three-wheeled vehicles are designed for tourists and are expensive. Expect to pay between 8-10 CUCs for a ride. The drivers frequently will not have change and so passengers decide to give a generous "tip." Early in the semester, take a ride in the Coco taxi, enjoy the ride, and then find other ways to get around the city.

Other options are radio taxis, where you can call for a ride. However, these are expensive.

### By Bus- La Guagua (the bus):

You will be walking to the university since it is not far from where you will be staying. If you want to go to other parts of the city, you might want to take a bus. Bus fares cost 40 centavos of a Cuban peso, and bus drivers don't give change. Many people end up paying 1 Cuban peso because they don't have exact change. The buses get VERY full, so be prepared to become intimately acquainted with Cuban passengers. The P1 goes down Linea, stops at Habana Libre (near the University), and goes into Centro Habana. The 190 stops at the same stop and goes to the University via Linea. You can catch the buses at Linea and Avenida de los Presidentes intersection, not far from where you will be staying.

## GETTING AROUND CUBA

The best way to visit other cities in Cuba is either the by bus or by plane, although a plane ride is significantly more expensive.

### By Bus- La Guagua (the bus):

If you want to travel outside of Havana by bus there are two options:

**Viazul** (for tourists) - 811413  
**Astro** (for Cubans) - 815652 and 811108

The bus station is located at Boyeros in Plaza de la Revolución and its phone numbers are: 703397, 792456 and 709401.

### By Train

The train station, Estación Central, is located on Egido and Desamparados. The phone number is (7) 861-4259.

### By Air

Travelling by air will be more expensive than travelling by train, but there are options for you if you want to fly somewhere.

#### **Aerocaribbean Cubana**

Calle 23 no 64, Vedado  
☎838- 1039

**Havanatur** and **Cubanacan** are also able to make flight arrangements for you.

## FUN PLACES TO VISIT

Check out **La Cartelera de La Habana**, a tourist publication available online at <http://www.creat.cult.cu/pub/cartelera/index.php>.

### In the City

**Acuario Nacional (Aquarium)** (on the corner of calle 60 and Avenida 1). This aquarium features dolphin shows and a large collection of animals and fauna. You can take the Habana Bus Tour there; one of its stops is near the aquarium.

**Ballet Nacional de Cuba** (Calzada 510, e/D y E). ☎886-0142.

**La Bodeguita del Medio** (Empedrado N° 207, e/ San Ignacio y Cuba). ☎866-8857. This is a tourist trap, but you have to go simply to take in the ambience that made Ernest Hemingway a regular customer.

**Casa de la Música** (calle Galiano e/ Concordia y Neptuno). ☎862-4165. If you enjoy live music and a lively ambience, this place is a must! Grab a friend and spend the evening listening/dancing to excellent music.

**Cine Charles Chaplin** (calle 23 #1155, e/10 y 12). ☎831-1101. Check out some great movies here!

**El Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas** (on the corner of calle E and 17<sup>th</sup>). ☎8309-848. It is a 10 second walk from where you will be living.

**Jazz Café** (Avenida 1ra esq. Paseo) ☎838-3556. If you like jazz, then you will definitely want to visit this place!

## Old Havana

**Rumba del Callejón de Hamel** (Callejón de Hamel e/Aramburo y Hospital). ☎878-1661. This is a lively area where you can check out some excellent rumba dancing and other exciting aspects of nightlife.

**Tropicana** (calle 72 e/41 y 45) ☎267-1010. This legendary place needs no introduction. It has featured the very best Cuban entertainment for years and hosted international stars such as Nat King Cole. A famous scene from Graham Greene's classic novel *Our Man in Havana* took place here. This is pricey, but you have to visit this place before you leave Cuba.

.....and so much more!!!

## Outside the City

You must visit Ernest Hemingway's old home, the **Finca Vigía** (calle Vigía y Steinhart, San Francisco de Paula). It is on the outskirts of Havana and will give you an opportunity to see the famous author's residence. You can take the P-2 bus from Avenida de los Presidentes y Linea.

**Trinidad** is a beautiful city that features beautiful colonial style architecture and Cienfuegos provides an excellent opportunity for you to see neo-classical architecture and visit the **Valle de los Ingenios**, where sugar was produced in Cuba. There is a discoteca in a cave just outside of Trinidad. You might want to check it out!

**Las Terrazas** is located just over an hour west of Havana and features a beautiful environment that allows you to pursue a variety of activities such as swimming, etc. Be sure to check out the old French coffee plantation Buena Vista. The view from there is unbelievable.

**Pinar del Río and Viñales** are worth a visit. This region is where tobacco is cultivated and produced. You will see prominent geological *mogotes* overseeing the area and while you are there you can visit **El Patio de Pelegrin**, a sustainable community that provides art/dance/gardening lessons to the young children there. The coffee alone is worth the visit and you will find no one friendlier than Mario.

**Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs)** is east of Havana and is worth a visit because of its history. It was here in 1961 when the US launched its doomed invasion involving Cuban exiles. Cuba has not forgotten this event and there is a nice museum nearby to check out.

**Santiago** is a must-see not only because of its history, but because it has the best Casa de la Trova in the country. For a wonderful musical experience, you must visit! The city is about 12 hours away from Havana by bus so consider flying there. Round-trip airfare to Santiago is about \$270.

## LIVE THE LIFE...

You will probably find that your daily life in Havana is not too different from your daily life in North America. You will spend most of your time studying, hanging out with friends, and participating in extracurricular activities that interest you. Although the lives of college students in Cuba and North America are fairly similar, here are some differences that you should be aware of.

## MAKING CUBAN FRIENDS

The key to making friends is to take part in activities organized by the Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU), the very politically and socially active student group on campus. They often arrange parties, speeches and other social events. This is a perfect opportunity to meet Cuban students. Event

announcements are posted on the bulletin boards in each *facultad* building. Another option is the Speaking Partners Program, an opportunity for you to pair up with a Cuban student to fine tune your conversational skills. Try to meet with that person on a regular basis. Chances are you'll get along and he or she will introduce you to friends.

Another suggestion is to join a club. One semester a student joined a fencing club and continued her training there. Other students have become involved in theater and salsa dancing while others took guitar lessons. There are many opportunities, but you must take the first step. You will find that it is very rewarding!

## DRESS CODE

In general, you may find that most Cuban people tend to dress up a little more than what you might be used to at home. You will see some young men wearing t-shirts or soccer jerseys and sneakers. Many people, especially when they work, will wear *guayaberas*. Due to the heat and humidity in Cuba, people will wear short-sleeve shirts. Rarely will you see a sport coat or suit worn unless it is a very formal event. A recent phenomenon is the number of people who wear shorts. Years ago, this was rare, but times have changed. In the US it has become fashionable to wear pajamas and slippers in public. Do not try this in Cuba. There is still a distinction between what one wears to lounge around at home and what one wears in public. You should plan on packing a couple of nice dress up shirts, pants, skirts, etc. for formal dinners or an evening at the theater.

It can become cool in the evenings so be sure to pack a light sweater or wind breaker with you. Don't forget your umbrella!

## UNIVERSIDAD DE LA HABANA CAMPUS

Founded in 1728, the Universidad de La Habana has become one of the most important symbols of Cuban culture, philosophy and history establishing a strong connection between student political activity on campus and the course of history that the country has followed. This is especially true regarding Fidel Castro when he was a student there.

With over 60,000 students and 300 academic staff, the Universidad de La Habana has become the cultural, political and educational pulse of the country. It has 15 faculties (*facultades*) divided into three fields: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities and Economic Sciences. It also has a growing distance education program.

Unlike most university campuses located in the United States, the Universidad de La Habana does not have a sprawling and manicured landscape punctuated by lush verdant fields, trees or lakes. In fact, it has something unique on campus: a tank!

Another fact that distinguishes it from US campuses is the role of the student population. Inheriting a tradition from Europe that you can see in most Latin American universities, the student body of the Universidad de La Habana is very active in politics and very well informed about what is going on in the country and in the world, which naturally extends to the role played by the United States. The Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU), or University Federation of Students is a very prolific organization that played a prominent role in the 1950s. It was founded in 1922 by Julio Antonio Mella, a student, who led students to take control of several buildings on campus and demand university reforms and free higher education among other things. Since then the FEU has become a prominent part of the university and you shouldn't be surprised if you see a FEU banner waving in locations around Havana.

## HOUSING

You will be staying at a *casa particular*, a private residence offered as a place to reside for foreigners. The *casa particular* will be within walking distance of the Universidad of La Habana. Meals and laundry are included and there is one computer available for use only to communicate with family via e-mail. You will have a private bathroom, a safe and air conditioning in your room and community kitchens are available. If you plan on having a meal with friends somewhere else, you must inform the owner of the *casa particular*. She will prepare all your meals for you unless told otherwise. No overnight guests are allowed in the *casa particular* and no smoking or consumption of alcoholic beverages is permitted.

There is a phone number that your family can contact you at in the event of an emergency. There is someone at the front desk 24-7.

Energy costs are high in Cuba, so you may be asked to turn the lights off if you are not using them. You might also be asked to take a shorter shower. Be respectful of these differences and do as your host does—be conservative with water, heat, and electricity. In your home you will have a bed, bed linens, towels, blankets, and a place to hang or store your clothes. Cuban homes do not usually have central heating or air conditioning, which might come as a surprise to you in the months when you want it most. Plan to dress for the season and see how others deal with the different temperatures.

## MEALTIME & FOOD

You will be provided with three meals per day – *desayuno, almuerzo y cena*.

### *Desayuno*

Breakfast is not a major meal in Cuba. You get up in the morning and have coffee, tea, and fruit juice—usually *guayaba* or papaya. You will have a lot of fruit. Enjoy! On weekdays at your residence breakfast is served between 7-8:00am; on weekends, breakfast is served at 9. Be sure not to miss breakfast as you will not have another meal until lunch.

### *Almuerzo*

Lunch is generally eaten between 1:00 and 3:00pm and includes rice, beans, chicken or fish along with vegetables or a side salad. Dessert is usually fresh fruit (*ensalada de fruta*), cake (*torta*), or pastries. You will soon realize that rice and black beans are staples of the Cuban diet. *Ropa vieja* is another classic dish. You must try the malanga and yucca!

### *Cena*

Dinner takes place at 6:30pm and you will eat well. You will eat with other students studying in Cuba. No alcohol is served during dinner, but water is available.

### What You Might Expect From Cuban Food

Rice and beans are a fundamental part of the Cuban diet. Malanga and yucca are also frequent elements of Cuban menus. Beef is rare and is considered a luxury for Cubans. Chicken is available and the seafood is very good. Keep in mind that Cubans live on rationing so when you visit friends serving portions will be smaller than what you are used to.

Cuban food is not spicy, but if you are in the mood for something with a bit more bite, you can easily find a restaurant.



### Places to Eat Near Your Residence

There are several places for you to eat near your Cuban home. **El Idilio** is located on the corner of Avenida de las Americas and 15<sup>th</sup>; **Dolce La Habana** is located on the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and D. Not far away is the **Gringo Viejo** paladar.

### Other Places to Eat in Vedado

**El Puzillo:** International food, light menu. \$8 - \$14 cuc.  
Calle 5ta, 604 e/ 4 y 6. Vedado, Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78351106

**Don Martín:** International and Cuban food. \$7 - \$10 cuc.  
Calle 4 apto 22 e/ 3ra y 5ta. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78353693

**Café D La Esquina:** Italian food, big salads, ice cream. \$7 - \$10 cuc.  
Paseo 101 esq. 5ta. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78362565

**La Catedral:** Cuban, Italian, Spanish, and International food. \$7 - \$14 cuc.  
Calle 8 e/ Calzada y 5ta. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78300793

**El Portal de Calzada:** International and Cuban food. \$8 - \$14 cuc.  
Calzada 710 e/ Paseo y A. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78335008

**Flavio Fast:** Hamburger bar. \$5- \$7 cuc.  
Calle 5ta 420 e/ A y B. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78338422

**Mr. Mango:** Italian and light food. \$7 cuc.  
Calle 3ra esq 12. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 78356154

### Special Dietary Needs: Vegetarians and Vegans

Although some restaurants catering to vegetarians have appeared, this is still a very rare occurrence. Keep in mind that some Cubans might be surprised to hear you are a vegan. Purposely restricting your diet is still a new phenomenon for them, especially since they live on rationed meals. Don't be surprised if they cajole you with comments such as, "Give it a try!" or "Be flexible." As a vegetarian, you should be careful in restaurants and make sure that the meals you order do not contain meat. Some Cubans may simply take meat out of a soup to comply with a vegan's request. Many vegetarians will opt to eat fish while in Cuba; this will likely give you a wider range of food options. A handful of vegetarian restaurants and cafes may also be found around Havana and in other major Argentine cities. Be sure to ask the Resident Director if you have any questions.

Vegans will be hard pressed to eat very well in Havana. Food may be cooked in butter (although vegetable cooking oil is more common), and meat may be used to flavor some bean and vegetable meals. If you plan to change your diet and begin eating fish, meat, or even dairy, you should start incorporating these foods into your diet before you leave so that you will not become sick at the start of your program.

Some vegetarian and vegan restaurants in Havana are:

**Mojito\_Mojito:** \$8 - \$14 cuc.  
Calle Muralla 66 e/ Cuba y San Ignacio. La Habana Vieja. Tel: 55816361

**Opera:** \$8 - \$14 cuc.

Calle 5ta 204, e/ E y F. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 783122255

**Shamuskiao:** \$7 - \$14 cuc.

Muralla 308 A e/ Habana y Compostela. Habana Vieja. Tel: 78639150

**Torrezón:** \$8 - \$14 cuc.

Malecón 27 e/ Prado y Cárcel. Centro Habana. Tel: 78617476

**El Café:** &8 - \$14 cuc.

Calle Amargura 358 e/ Villegas y Aguacate. Habana Vieja Tel: 78613817

You must let Spanish Studies know about any dietary restrictions or food allergies. You can do that by including this information on your housing and health forms, emailing [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org), or calling (413) 256-0011.

**\*Note: Some dietary accommodations may require an additional fee. See the student handbook for additional information.**

### Ice Cream and Candy Stores

**Coppelia:** Calle 23 e/ K y L. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución.

**Bimbón:** Calle 23 y Malecón. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución.

**Amor Amor:** Línea esq L. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución.

**Dulcería del Hotel Habana Libre:** Calle L esq 23. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución.

**Dulcería El Biky:** San Lázaro esq Infanta

**Dulcería de la Calle:** J, e/ 25 y 27. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución.

**Café D La Esquina:** Paseo 101 esq. 5ta. Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución.

### SHOPPING

Shopping options are limited in Cuba. You will not see malls or large selections of a particular item to choose from. For example, you will not find 50 different types of cereal on the store shelves. But you can shop for shoes, clothing and other items at select locations.

Here are a few helpful hints on where to look for what you need:

I need to get...	Go to...
School supplies (notebooks, folders, pens...)	<i>Una librería</i>
Books	<i>Una librería</i>
Stamps	<i>El correo</i>
Cold medicine, hygiene products, condoms	<i>Una farmacia</i>
Adapter plug, electronic devices	<i>Una ferretería</i>
Food	<i>El mercado/ La bodega</i>
Convenience stores (phone cards, drinks, snacks, gum, bus tokens)	<i>kioscos</i>

## Craft Markets

**Almacenes San José:** Avenida del Puerto e/ Cuba y Damas

Calle Obispo e/ Aguacate y Compostela

Calle 23 e/ M y N

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Cubans are very sociable and outgoing and communicate often in close spaces. Americans are used to having ample space around them and sometimes it is difficult to get used to someone who “encroaches” on your “space” to talk with you. It is not a far stretch to apply the axiom “a stranger is a friend you haven’t met yet” to Cubans. They have a great attitude and a wonderful sense of humor that makes conversing with them fun and easygoing.

They enjoy spending time with friends and family whether it’s enjoying a cup of coffee at a café, kicking around a soccer ball or playing baseball on the streets, or chatting on the Malecon. Live music is abundant in the city, and as the nightlife section mentions below, there are various events going on throughout the city every day.

Many exciting outdoor activities such as scuba diving, horseback riding, mountain biking, hiking or kayaking are reserved for tourists only so Cubans rely on the more quotidian activities like a walk in the park or a drink at a bar, or a good game of dominoes for their social activities.

But by far the most popular activity is dancing and there are plenty of places to dance in Havana. There will be no shortage of music!

## EL CHOTELO CUBANO

This attitude of Cubans is one of the most remarkable features that distinguish them most markedly from Americans. It is a positive attitude, a defiant resistance to the despair and adversity that permeate their lives. How do Cubans express their “choteo?” By sharing stories (often very humorous!), telling jokes, playing or listening to music, or complimenting a beautiful woman. A Cuban writer said it best when he wrote, “En esas levedades, a veces sanas, otras premeditadas, el cubano desarrolla una resistencia que le permite encontrar luz donde todo parece apagado.” This best captures the Cuban choteo: to find light where there is total darkness. Perhaps the biggest lesson that American students can learn when they go to Cuba is one regarding perspective of life.

## NIGHT LIFE

Spanish Studies Abroad wants you to have fun while studying abroad and understands that your social life will serve as a major influence on your education abroad. However, regardless of your social life, you are expected to meet all of your academic responsibilities, which may be very different from the academic responsibilities of your Cuban peers. It is important that you don’t let socializing with friends interfere with your school work or academic performance.

Since Havana is such an important cultural center, there are various musical, theatrical, and artistic performances happening everyday across the city. In addition, you will encounter many movie theatres which show Cuban and international motion pictures. Your professors and the Spanish Studies staff will provide you with more information on cultural activities throughout your time in Havana. You can also

pick up current information on cultural events in the magazine *Bohemia*.

Oftentimes events will be posted on boards at the Universidad de La Habana. Your best resource for activities in the city will be your Cuban classmates!

**Some activities for you to consider:**

**El Sauce:** Cultural Center. Concerts, Expositions, and Films.

Avenida 9na e/ 120 y 130. Tel: 72047114 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/El-Sauce>

**La Bombilla Verde:** Tapas and Bar, Trova concerts, Expositions.

Calle 11, 905 e/ 6 y 8. Vedado. Tel: 58481331 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lacasadelabombillaverde>

**Barbarán:** Cultural Center. Concerts and live music. Trova and fusion music.

Calle 26 e/ Ave Zoológico y 47, Nuevo Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78811808

**Submarino Amarillo:** Rock Pub with live music.

Calle 17 e/ 6 y 4. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78306808

**Teatro Bertolt Brecht:** Pub, live Cuban music, dancing.

Calle 13 259 e/ I y J, Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78329359

Website: <https://conocecuba.com/centro-cultural-bertolt-brecht/>

**La Brújula:** Cultural Center. Live pop and fusion music.

Calle 21 Esq N. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78309558 Website: <https://conocecuba.com/la-brujula/>

**El Tablao:** Cultural Center. Flamenco and traditional music.

Paseo Martí 458. La Habana Vieja. Website: <https://conocecuba.com/el-tablao/>

**Restaurante 1830:** Salsa dancing center. Live music.

Calle 22 y Malecón. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución.

Website: <https://www.dcubanos.com/rinconcuba/restaurante-1830/>

**Fabrica de Arte:** Expositions, photography, live music, pub, theater and films.

Calle 26 esq 13. Vedado. Website: <http://www.fac.cu/>

## **Other Things to Do for Entertainment**

**Café Miramar:** Matinee, live traditional, salsa and trova music. Dancing.

Calle 5ta Ave esq 94. Miramar Playa. Tel: 72037676 Website: <https://conocecuba.com/cafe-miramar/>

**Cuba Libro:** Coffee and books. Community Project. English books available.

Calle 24 esq 19. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cubalibroHAV/>

**Casa del Alba Cultural de la Habana:** Cultural Center. Live music.

Línea y D 556. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78332151 Website: <https://albaculturalhabana.cubava.cu/>

**Pabellón Cuba:** Live music.

Calle 23 esq. N. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución.

## Theaters and Movies

**Teatro Amadeo Roldán:** Calzada y D. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78324521

**Argos Teatro:** Ayestarán 307. Cerro. Tel: 78785551

**Teatro Bertolt Brecht:** Línea 657. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78329359

**Teatro Casona de Línea:** Línea 505 e/ D y E. Tel: 78325373

**Teatro Ciervo Encantado:** Calle 18, 55 e/ Línea y 11. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78336982

**Teatro Karl Marx:** Calle 1ra 802 e/ 6 y 8. Miramar, Playa. Tel: 72030801

**Teatro Fausto:** Parque de Martí y Colón. La Habana Vieja. Tel: 78631173

**Gran Teatro de La Habana Alicia Alonso:** Parque de Martí 458. Centro Habana. Tel: 78613077 / 78615873

**Teatro Hubert de Blank:** Calzada 657 e/ A y B. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución.

**Teatro Mella:** Línea 657 e/ A y B. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78335651 / 78338696

**Teatro Nacional de Cuba:** Paseo y 39. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78780771

**Cine Chaplin:** Calle 23, 1155 e/ 10 y 12. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución. Tel: 78311101

**Cine La Rampa:** Calle 23, 111 e/ O y P. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución.

**Cine Yara:** Calle L 363 esq. 23. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución.

**Cine Riviera:** Avenida 23, 507 e/ G y H. Vedado. Plaza de La Revolución.

**Cine 23 y 12:** Avenida 23, 1212 e/ 12 y 10. Vedado.

**Multicine Infanta:** Calzada de Infanta 353. Centro Habana.

**Cine Payret:** Parque de Martí 513. Habana Vieja.

## Festivals in Cuba

**JANUARY – Triumph of the Revolution Day:** January 1

**International Jazz Festival:** held in January each year; website: [www.festivaljazzplaza.com](http://www.festivaljazzplaza.com)

**FEBRUARY – International Book Festival:** (Fortaleza San Carlos de la Cabaña); website: [www.filcuba.cult.cu](http://www.filcuba.cult.cu).

**Habano Festival:** Seminars, expositions and tasting; website: [www.habanos.com](http://www.habanos.com)

**MAY – Cubadisco:** Annual Cuban music festival, including concerts, and exhibitions, May 13; **Diversity Day**

**JUNE – International “Boleros de Oro” Festival:** various events at Teatro Mella; **Fiestas Sanjuaneras** (Trinidad): Typically on the last weekend of June, cowboy exhibitions.

**JULY – Caribe and Carnaval Festival** in Santiago de Cuba; **National Rebellion Day:** July 26.

**AUGUST – International Hip Hop Festival** in Havana; **Carnaval Festival** in Havana.



OCTOBER – **International Ballet Festival** in Havana; website: [www.balletcuba.cult.cu](http://www.balletcuba.cult.cu)

NOVEMBER – **Marabanda Marathon** in Havana; website: [www.maratondelahabana.com](http://www.maratondelahabana.com)

DECEMBER – **International Latin American Cinema Festival**; website: [www.habanafilmfestival.com](http://www.habanafilmfestival.com)

## LEARN THE LANGUAGE...

### DIALECT

The Spanish you hear in Havana may seem different at first, since the accent and some vocabulary are probably distinct from what you have learned in previous Spanish classes. The Intensive Language & Culture class is designed to help you become more comfortable with the local variation of the language, and since you'll be using it in your home and with all the Cubans you'll be meeting, it won't be long until you start to sound like a *habanero* yourself!

### HELPFUL VOCABULARY

#### Food Related

##### **Breakfast**

- **Huevos** - Eggs
  - **Duro** - Hard Boiled
  - **Tibio** - Soft Boiled
  - **Revueltos** - Scrambled
  - **Fritos** - Fried
  - **Tortilla** - Omelet
- **Tocino** - Bacon
- **Jamon** - Ham
- **Queso** - Cheese
- **Pan** - Bread
- **Pan Tostada** - Toast
- **Mermelada** - Jam
- **Miel** - Honey
- **Mantequilla** - Butter
- **Yogur** - Yogurt
- **Leche** - Milk
- **Agua** - Water
- **Jugo** - Juice
- **Café** - Coffee
- **Café con leche** – Coffee with milk
- **Té** - Tea
- **Azucar** - Sugar
- **Fruta** - Fruit

##### **Lunch**

- **Bocadilla** – Sandwich
- **Escabech** - fillets of serrucho, a type of fish, breaded and fried with onions, then pressed under a weight, in vinegar, for a week
- **Jamón biki** - a salami-shaped ham made of many parts of the pit

## Dinner

- **Ensalada** - Salad
- **Veduras** - Vegetables
- **Arroz** - Rice
- **Tarta** - Cake
- **Helado** – Icecream
- **Mojo** - garlic sauce
- **Postre** - Dessert
- **Papas** - Potato
- **Carne** - Meat
  - **Carne de res** - Beef
  - **Cordero** - Lamb
  - **Cerdo** - Pork
  - **Pollo** - Chicken
- **Pez**- Fish
  - **Camarones** - Prawns
  - **Langosta** - Lobster
  - **Atún** – Tuna
- **Tostones** - green bananas that are fried, then flattened
- **Vino** - Wine

## Other Helpful Vocabulary

**Qué bolá?** - What's up? or How's it going?

- **No me digas!** - Don't tell me!
- **Dale!** - Hit it! or Let's go!
- **Dale a todo meter!** - Give it all you got
- **Para de chivar!** - Stop hassling!
- **Qué paqueté!** - What a pack of lies!
- **Qué guayaba!** - What a lie!
- **Qué relajo!** - What a total mess!
- **Hay que hacer la cola!** - Get in the queue!
- **Ya eso esta liquidado** - That's done
- **El Radio Bemba** - Mister or Miss Gossiper
- **Me di tremendo tanganazo!** - That's gossip I never knew!
- **Qué paragüero!** - What a bad driver!
- **Qué pasa compadre?** - What's up, man?
- **Vamos a echar un pie!** - Let's dance until we drop!
- **El echo un pie** - He took off running
- **Me voy para la pincha** - I'm going to work
- **Arranca!** - Get going!
- **Arranca el carro** - Start the car
- **Meter mano!** - Get into it!
- **Apagón**-blackout
- **Asere** : friend, mate ( qué bola asere = how are you mate)
- **Babaloa** : Santeria priest
- **Baro** : money
- **Bemba** : lips - Radio Bemba : Gossip, Grapevine
- **Bici** : bicycle
- **Bici-tax** : bicycle taxi

- **Bodega** : ( state owned) grocery store
- **Bolsa negra** : black market (translated: black bag)
- **Borracho** : drunken
- **Blumer** : knickers
- **Bruja** : without money, broke, I have no money
- **Bisnero** : business man ( hustler)
- **Campesino** : farmer
- **Camello** : camel bus
- **Cardosa** : sopa (Spanish) soup
- **Carro** : car
- **Carnet (de identidad)**: Cuban identity card
- **Chancletas** : flip-flops
- **Chebi** : taxi ( official state taxi)
- **Chopin** : shopping ( refers to dollar shop , tourist shop)
- **Chocolate** : a mobile telephone with a glider..  
Because it is more expensive and the latest, the Cubans call it "Chocolate" as something more valuable and expensive: a chocolate.
- **Cola** : Cuban queue (Cuba has a very organized way of making lines. Ask who is the *ÚLTIMO* or *ÚLTIMA PERSONA* for the bus you want to catch. Note who answers: you are behind them. You are now the última persona, and when the next person approaches and calls out *ÚLTIMO*, you raise your hand.
- **Compay** : companion (compadre) buddy, comrade
- **Consorte** : friend
- **Chao** : (good) bye
- **Chivato** : squeaker, police informer
- **Cuarto** : a room (in a hotel) (Spanish: habitación)
- **Dale** : go for it, it's OK - also used Vale : it's OK
- **Delgado** : slim person
- **Descarga** : jam session
- **Entufado** : drunken (also borracho)
- **Espejuelos** : glasses (Spanish anteojos - gafas)
- **Fardo** : pants, trousers
- **Filtro** : smart person
- **Fiana** : police
- **Fosforera** : lighter (Spanish: encendedor)
- **Frigi** : refrigerator (from frigidaire)
- **Gringo**: foreigner (also: Yuma)(yuma is more used)
- **Guapo** : good looking, afraid of nobody.
- **Guagua** : autobus (also: Rufa)
- **Guajira** : peasant - farmer (female) Guajiro (= male)
- **Guayabera**: loose men shirt also named Mexican Wedding shirt
- **Intima** : sanitary towel
- **Izquierda** (translation=left) : por izquierda : through the black market (with the left hand =black market or bolsa negra)
- **Jama**: food (jamar: to eat)(Spanish: comer)
- **Jamoner**: Cuban slang word for a guy who groped chicas on a crowded camello (camel bus)
- **Jinetera** : escort girl, part-time prostitute; jinetero-for males
- **Jaba** : plastic bag (to carry groceries)
- **Jeva** : woman (Spanish: mujer)
- **Kiosko** : little shop
- **Mami** : mam (used when addressing a woman) Mamita: (expression used to address a woman with affection)
- **Mangon / Mango** : good looking, pretty
- **Máquina** : car (Spanish: coche, carro)

- **Maté** : deep kiss, French kiss, (Spanish: beso largo)
- **Monado** : police
- **Moni** : money
- **Moreno or prieta** : black people, (Spanish los negros)
- **Mulatón** : a mixture of mulata and black race
- **Ohrishas** : the Gods (religious)
- **Papi** : dad ( used when addressing a man)
- **Palestino** : stupid, retarded ( used by people from Havana to refer to farmers from Eastern Cuba)
- **Padrino** : Santeria priest, counselor
- **Paton** : bad dancer
- **Pasta** : fiancée (Spanish: novio or novia)
- **Pipo** : chap (used when addressing a waiter)
- **Pinguero** : male prostitute
- **Pinchar** : to work (Spanish: trabajar)
- **Playero** : beach shirt (similar to guayabera but more colorful)
- **Pulover** : T-shirt
- **Queik** : cake
- **Singao** : bad person
- **Sardina** : slim woman
- **Serrucho**: fish
- **Suerte** : good luck, happiness
- **Socio** : buddy , mate
- **Tacos**: shoes (women) (also: llanta)
- **Taxi Colectivo** : a shared taxi for Cubans only
- **Tenis** : sneakers, training shoes, sports shoes
- **Temba** : a person over 40 (he/she is over the hill)
- **Tortillera** : lesbian (Spanish lesbiana)
- **Un duro**: a hard-liner
- **yin** : (blue) jeans
- **yuma** : foreigner; La Yuma-the United States
- **Zafra** : the sugar cane harvest

## SUGGESTED READING/VIEWING/LISTENING

To get an idea of what life might be like in Cuba, it is good to do a little research. The following are some recommended books, movies, music, and news sources. Most of these titles are available online at sites like Amazon.com or Netflix. You should also ask your Spanish professor or any friends who might be familiar with Cuba if they have any other suggestions for you.

### Reference Books

- Moon Handbooks: [Cuba](#)
- Margarita Gorrissen, Barron's [Foreign Language Guides: Mastering Spanish Grammar](#)
- Christopher & Theodore Kendris, [Barron's Foreign Language Guides: 501 Spanish Verbs Conjugated](#)
- Clifford Staten, [The History of Cuba](#)
- Hugh Thomas, [Cuba](#)
- Eyewitness Travel, [Cuba](#)

### Books

- Ann Louis Bardach, [Cuba Confidential](#)
- Aviva Chomsky, [The Cuba Reader](#)
- Esteban Morales Domínguez, [Race in Cuba](#)

- Wendy Gimbel, Havana Dreams
- Graham Greene, Our Man in Havana
- Jonathan Kozol, Children of the Revolution
- Geraldine Lievesley, The Cuban Revolution: Past, Present and Future Perspectives
- William Luis, Culture and Customs of Cuba
- Mandy McDonald, Cuba-Culture Smart!
- Louis Pérez, Cuba: Between Reform & Revolution
- Yoani Sánchez, Havana Real
- Julia Sweig, Cuba: What We Need to Know
- Isadora Tattlin, Cuba Diaries: An American Housewife in Havana

## Movies

- *Comandante (2005)*, Directed by Oliver Stone
- *Greener Grass (1999)*, Directed by Aaron Woolf
- *Guantanamo (1997)*, Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío
- *Habanastation (2011)*, Directed by Ian Padrón
- *Juan of the Dead (2012)*, Directed by Alejandro Brugués
- *La muerte de un burócrata (1966)*, Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea
- *La última cena (1976)*, Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea
- *La vida es silbar (1998)*, Directed by Fernando Pérez
- *Lista de espera (2000)*, Directed by Juan Carlos Tabío
- *Lucía (1968)*, Directed by Humberto Solás
- *Soy Cuba (1964)*, Directed by Mikhail Kalatozov
- *Strawberry and Chocolate (1994)*, Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea
- *Suite Habana (2003)*, Directed by Fernando Pérez
- *Viva Cuba (2005)*, Directed by Juan Carlos Cremata
- *Voices from Mariel (2011)*, Directed by José García
- *Una Noche (2013)*, Directed by Lucy Mulloy

## Music

- Pablo Milanés
- Silvio Rodríguez
- Polo Montoñez
- Descemer Bueno
- Toni Avila

## News Sources

- *Granma*-Cuban daily newspaper
- *Tribuna de La Habana*-daily newspaper in Havana
- *Bohemia*-weekly cultural publication
- *Cartelera*-information about arts and culture

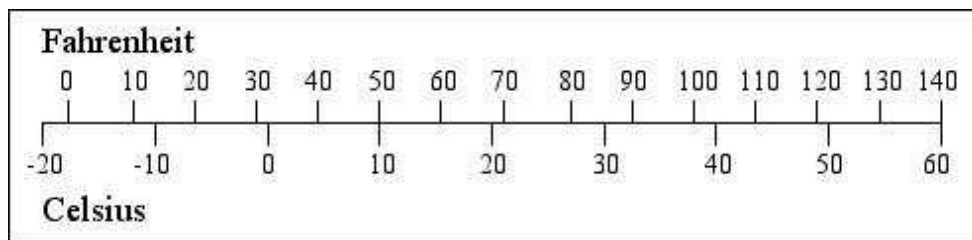


# Conversion Charts

## MEASUREMENTS

Length		Volume		Weight	
English	Metric	English	Metric	English	Metric
1 in.	2.54 cm	1 fl oz.	30 ml	1 oz.	28 g
1 ft.	30 cm	1 pt.	0.47 l	1 lb.	0.45 kg
1 yd.	0.9 m	1 qt.	0.95 l		
1 mi.	1.6 km	1 gal.	4.5 l		
0.4 in	1 cm	0.03 fl oz.	1 ml	0.035 oz.	1 g
3.3 ft.	1 m	2.1 pt.	1 l	2.2 lb	1 kg
1.1 yd	1 m	1.06 qt.	1 l		
0.6 mi.	1 km	0.26 gal	1 l		

## TEMPERATURE



## IMPORTANT DATES IN CUBAN HISTORY

1100-1450	Migratory waves of Arawak Indians across Cuba
1492	Christopher Columbus explores the northeastern coast of Cuba and establishes Spain's claim of possession
1514	Havana is founded (on the Gulf of Batabanó)
1519	Havana is relocated to its present location
1538	Santiago is selected as capital of Cuba
1602-1607	First colonial rebellion against Spanish authority
1728	Universidad de La Habana is founded
1762-1763	English forces seize and occupy Havana for ten months
1818	Spain opens Cuban ports to free international trade
1853	José Martí is born
1868-1878	The Ten Years' War in Oriente province
1892	José Martí founds the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC)
1895	Cuban war for independence begins; José Martí dies in May
1898	The United States enters the war; Spain surrenders; the Treaty of Paris is signed which transfers sovereignty of Cuba to the US
1899-1902	US military occupation of Cuba
1903	The Platt Amendment is enacted; Cuba leases Bahía Honda and Guantánamo to the US; US naval base is established in Guantánamo
1906-1909	The US military occupies Cuba and governs it through a provisional government
1917	Cuba declares war on Germany
1924	Gerardo Machado elected to first term as president
1934	The US abrogates the Platt Amendment
1940	The Cuban constitution is promulgated; Fulgencio Batista is elected president
1944	Ramón Grau San Martín elected president
1948	Carlos Prío Socarrás is elected president
1952	Batista seizes power through a military coup

- 1953 Fidel Castro leads an unsuccessful attack against the Moncada barracks in Santiago; he delivers the "History will Absolve Me" speech
- 1954 Batista is elected to another four-year term
- 1959 Batista abandons the government and leaves Cuba; Castro becomes Prime Minister
- 1960 Cuba nationalizes US properties; US places an embargo on Cuba
- 1961 The US and Cuba sever relations; Bay of Pigs invasion; Cuba declares the "Year of Education"
- 1962 October 22-28: the Cuban Missile Crisis
- 1980 The Mariel boatlift leads to the emigration of 125,000 Cubans to Florida
- 1991 Collapse of the Soviet Union; beginning of the Cuban "Special Period"

