



Cuba

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Introduction

Welcome to Cuba! We've designed this planning guide to give you an idea of what to expect while you're abroad. Because everyone has a unique experience abroad, we can't begin to address all the surprises ahead of you. We've incorporated many of our past participants' suggestions into these pages.

To keep things simple, we have categorized our advice into different sections: Academics, Insurance and Health Care, Finances, etc. Please read the "Academic Differences" section carefully. The IFSA-Butler Cuba staff focuses on this issue during orientation are always happy to answer questions throughout your semester or year abroad.

Keep this guide with you while you are abroad and once you return so you can refer to it. Our U.S.-based program advisors and staff abroad have studied in a variety of countries. They have personally experienced the joys of living and studying abroad. Our staff know how challenging and rewarding living in another country can be. Their enthusiasm for international study helps us give each IFSA-Butler student a successful and enjoyable academic experience abroad.

We wish you an exciting and successful semester in Cuba. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Institute for Study Abroad
U.S. Office
800-858-0229

A Word from Our Cuba Office

The University of Havana welcomes you to its campus and opens its classrooms in a gesture of genuine friendship. The essence of the program is the academic exchange between U.S. and Cuban students as they share experiences in an academic environment.

Your experiences in the city of Havana, the heart of the country, will expand on your studies and give intensity to your cultural explorations. According to students who have participated in previous semesters in Cuba, the social and cultural differences are enormous and require a unique effort to adapt. Living temporarily in a socialist system will help you to grow on a personal level, enrich your critical thinking skills, and sharpen your views of Latin America and your own country.

Our program staff in Cuba are prepared to help you in your semester of social immersion. Each week, students and staff have a group meeting, and our resident director's visits to the student residences are frequent. These meetings and visits allow our staff to announce program updates or to organize activities. More importantly, they allow students to share their questions about Cuba, as well as any concerns and successes with our staff and their fellow students.

We are convinced that your stay in Cuba will be productive and educational. The IFSA-Butler Cuba staff look forward to making your period of study in Cuba one of your most formative educational experiences.

IFSA-Butler Cuba Staff



Michelle Ranieri, Cuba Resident Director

Section I: Cuba

An Overview

Geography

Set where the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico meet the Caribbean Sea, this nation of islands is just 90 miles southeast of the Florida Keys. Cuba's main island is surrounded by smaller islands and keys. The length of the main island runs east and west for 777 miles, and at its widest point, Cuba stretches only 119 miles north and south.

The climate is tropical, although less torrid in the north (near Havana) than in many other tropical islands. Nonetheless, summers are hot and steamy, with an average temperature of 81°F during the summer months. The humidity can be oppressive, although the ocean breezes provide some relief. Temperatures dip a bit in the winter, with an average temperature of about 72°F. The rainy season extends from May to October, with drier winter months.

Havana's predominately tropical heat is interrupted by occasional cold fronts that can last three to five days. These brief weather changes are characterized by a fall in temperature, sudden rain and wind. The weather heats up as you move east.

History

Cuba's geographic location made it the focus of Spanish colonization and the most important trade center in the New World for more than 300 years. From the Cuban shores, Hernán Cortes and Francisco Pizarro planned their respective expeditions to Mexico and Peru. Havana funneled trade from the Americas and Asia toward Spain, turning Spain into the leading world power. Old Havana is an impressive architectural reminder of that colonial splendor. In addition, the ongoing impact of African traditions gives a multicultural character to the country. Religious and musical expressions are especially strong, and the people are proud of the spiritual syncretism they celebrate in their daily lives. This singular and inimitable mix of old and new gives Cuba a unique look that has made it famous throughout the world.

On January 1, 1959, Cuba began a process of sweeping political and social change that had national and international repercussions. Since then the process of change, characterized as a "socialist revolution" has been reflected in a global political context. Without losing its identity, Cuban society has evolved from the rigors of the Cold War to the present time, in search of international support in a climate of mutual respect with the United States. Undoubtedly this has made Cuba noteworthy among the world's nations.

Integrating into Cuban Society

Former participants have mentioned that they had difficulty meeting Cubans. You will encounter barriers, both real and perceived, that do not exist in other countries. This division is due in part to the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba and in part to conditions on the island.

One barrier mentioned by past participants is the dual economy. Foreigners and privileged Cubans have access to Convertible Pesos (CUCs); most Cubans have access only to National Pesos (CUPs), which have a lower value. Only one currency operates in places such as certain restaurants or tourist facilities. For your Cuban friends to go to these places, you may have to invite them. Although program students have found creative ways to deal with these restrictions, they report that the dual economy creates an invisible barrier between them and their Cuban friends. Be sure to convert some of your money to pesos and patronize establishments that operate with CUPs. This will give you a better feel for daily life in Havana.

Life in Cuba

Havana lacks many of the comforts that you would expect to find in most other large cities. Although our student housing has been modernized and is considered excellent by Cuban standards, 40 years of disrepair and a high number of students living there sometimes combine to create a hot water shortage in the mornings. You also may have to deal with a shortage of transportation and, while you'll find plenty to eat, do not expect the variety of foods available at home.

Nightlife

Cuba is home to a dizzying array of music, including salsa and Cuban jazz. Rumba, cha-cha-cha and the mambo all drift out of the windows and up from street corners. Take time to learn about the Cuban music scene, because music is an integral part of the culture. Past students also recommend dancing lessons as a great way to immerse yourself in the culture.

People

When the Spanish colonized Cuba, the native people were eliminated. As a result, there is far less indigenous influence in Cuba than in most other Latin American countries.

The people of Cuba are open, friendly, and welcoming. Total strangers begin conversations in the street, and the concept of privacy is practically nonexistent in Cuban society.

Cubans are known for their spontaneity and hospitality. Cuba's proximity to the U.S. has created familiarity with American culture. Whether walking along the malecón bordering the sea, eating a cajita of food in the

neighborhood that surrounds the university, spending time in Habana Vieja, trying Coppelia ice cream, or attending a concert, you will find yourself surrounded by friendly and open people.

Relations Between the United States and Cuba

In keeping with IFSA-Butler policy, all students will be registered with the U.S. Embassy by the IFSA-Butler resident director when they arrive. The U.S. Embassy is in touch with all resident directors of U.S. programs in Cuba and provides a newspaper clipping service to keep all of them updated on news from the U.S. press. As a U.S. citizen, you are entitled to access your U.S. government representatives should you feel the need to contact them.

However, we urge you to show sensitivity to your Cuban hosts, for whom the U.S. Embassy might be a source of concern. Please check with the IFSA-Butler resident director about any contact you might want to make with the U.S. Embassy before doing so.

As stated in your student participant agreement, **you are prohibited from participating in any political or social activism, demonstrations or other political gatherings while in Cuba.** Violations of this policy may result in immediate dismissal from the program and program housing without a refund.

Religion

Cuba has a secular society, particularly compared to the largely Catholic countries predominant in Latin America. While the government never banned the practice of religion, organized religion was frowned upon during the revolutionary period.

The melding of Catholicism and the Yoruba (West African tribe) religion known as santería has a widespread following among Cubans of many backgrounds. Other Afro-Cuban religions are common as well.

Social Customs

Cubans believe in community. People feel free to call upon their neighbors and friends for help. This sense of community also contributes to a certain amount of optimism in the Cuban culture.

Expect to be asked your opinion on nearly everything. Not only will total strangers feel comfortable striking up a conversation with you, but they often ask questions you may feel are very personal. The Cuban reaction to an uncomfortable foreigner is usually “No tengas miedo.” While the literal translation is “Have no fear,” the message means, “Relax. We just like to talk.”

We highly recommend reading *Culture Shock! Cuba* by Mark Cramer for more information about the social customs you can expect to encounter.

Section II: Institute for Study Abroad Services

As a participant on this program, you will receive a series of student services. We've highlighted some of them here.

Program Duration

Your program services abroad are in effect between the dates listed as “program starts” and “program ends” on the program calendar.

All program activities cease after the official end of the program, as do services, academic and otherwise.

IFSA-Butler Cuba Office

Once you arrive in Cuba, you will be in the capable hands of our office in Havana, which exists to provide on-site support to IFSA-Butler students in Cuba.

Our Cuba staff provide services from the designated start of the program until the end of the program.

Orientation

The IFSA-Butler orientation, scheduled before the start of classes, gives us a great opportunity to inform you of our services and to prepare you for the academic and cultural changes that await you in Cuba.

During orientation, our Cuba staff hold information sessions on housing, health and safety, academics, immigration and general tips for living in Cuba. You must attend all orientation meetings and are responsible for the materials covered and distributed there. No refund is available if you miss the orientation.

Don't forget to budget about \$500 in cash for your first two weeks in Cuba. Please see the “Cost of Living” section of this book, or consult the budget planner included in your welcome packet.

Excursions

In addition to the orientation excursion, our Cuba staff arrange social, cultural, sporting and outdoor activities throughout the semester. IFSA-Butler subsidizes these outings, but students must pay for some meals and other incidentals. There is no refund if you choose not to participate in the excursions.

Section III: Finances

Managing Money

Students must take **all** of their estimated spending money in cash when traveling to Cuba. You will have a shared safe box in your bedroom where you can store your money after your arrival. We recommend bringing more cash than you think you'll need, as it will be difficult to acquire additional money once you are in Havana. We suggest bringing cash in denominations of \$20 or less.

Exchange Rates

The currencies in Cuba are the Cuban National Peso (CUP\$) Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC\$). The latest exchange rate is available at any bank, in most major newspapers and on the web at www.oanda.com. However, there is a 10 percent tax on any U.S. dollars exchanged, plus a 3 percent exchange fee.

Banking

You cannot open a bank account while in Cuba. **Checks written in U.S. dollars cannot be cashed in Cuba.**

ATM Cards

You will have difficulty finding ATMs in Cuba, although you may be able to find them in some of the more expensive hotels. ATM cards issued by a U.S.-based bank will not work in Cuba.

Credit Cards

Credit cards (and debit cards) issued from U.S. banks cannot be used in Cuba, although this could change in the coming months. You might be able to use a credit card issued by a bank outside the U.S., although many Cuban merchants do not accept credit cards of any kind. Of those that do, MasterCard and Visa are the most widely accepted.

Consider using a U.S. credit card if you plan on traveling outside of Cuba at any time. Regardless of what kind of credit card you take to Cuba with you, the card **must** have your name on it as given on your passport.

Wire Transfers

Western Union can be used to transfer money on an emergency basis only and carries high transaction fees.

Cost of Living

We've designed this section to give you and your parents an idea of what it costs to live as a student in Cuba.

You probably will spend a lot of money in your first weeks in Cuba. Don't panic if you find your funds rapidly disappearing. Initially, you will spend more money getting settled, exploring and socializing. As you establish a routine and start to live like a Cuban student, you'll probably spend less.

Costs in this section are as of March 2016.

Insurance

Students in Cuba will be covered by two insurance plans: ASISTUR Cuban insurance and travel assistance (a national health plan) and CISI (Cultural Insurance Services International). Both of the policies are mandatory.

You should review these plans carefully to determine whether you will need additional insurance. If so, you will need to budget for this expense. We recommend that you also purchase travel and personal property insurance.

Orientation

Your orientation lasts about a week, and housing, some meals, and some entertainment are provided.

Dining Out

The program fee includes breakfast and dinner each day, but you must budget additional money for other meals and snacks. We recommend budgeting \$40 to \$50 per week for these meals. An expensive dinner out may cost around \$25, but a small family restaurant meal costs between \$5 and \$8. For more information, see the "Meals" section on page 24.

Personal Expenses

Students report personal spending at about \$30 weekly. They recommend stocking up on toiletries and prescriptions before leaving the U.S., if there is room in your luggage. In your budget planning, be sure to include laundry, school supplies, photocopying, etc.

Transportation

Student housing is located near your classroom space. For other trips, you'll take the bus. The bus is incredibly inexpensive, a one-way ride costing only 40 centavos of a peso, or about U.S.2¢. Factor in about two to four bus trips for an average school day.

Some students take peso taxis; the usual rate for a peso taxi (one that runs a regular route like a bus) is U.S.50¢, no matter how long the ride. Convertible Pesos (CUC) taxis are considerably more expensive and fares vary by cab company.

Past students also have traveled around Havana by bicycle. Purchasing a new one costs around \$110. Rented bicycles are available, but these rentals tend to be in extremely poor condition.

Communications

Telephone cards are available in increments of \$5, \$10 and \$20 and can be used to call the U.S. An international calling card call from Havana to the U.S. is about \$2.50 per minute. Generally speaking, it's cheaper to have someone from home call you or to use the telephone cards. A local call within Havana is only 5 centavos, or about one-fourth of one U.S. cent. More information about telephones will be available at orientation.

Some U.S. long distance companies offer calling plans from the U.S. to Cuba, but no plans are available for calling from Cuba to the U.S. Students may be able to get a Cuban cell phone during IFSA-Butler orientation. U.S. cell phones will not work in Cuba.

Entertainment

Past students report spending about \$25 a week on entertainment. For some students, the cost of alcohol should be considered—a night in the clubs could cost as little as \$3 or as much as \$30, depending on lifestyles. Some people find this to be a major budgeting problem!

With a Cuban ID, a night at the theatre costs about \$20. Movies cost \$3.50 to \$7. Our Cuba staff can give you suggestions for entertainment that won't wreck your budget.

Travel

Get a good guidebook to use when planning and budgeting for your travel. The *Lonely Planet* guide and *The Rough Guide to Cuba* are particularly good ones. Past students highly recommend the Time Out Guide to Havana, even if you have to special order it.

Most students travel around Cuba by bus or train, as these are the cheapest ways to travel. Via Azul is Cuba's bus service, with comfortable and inexpensive service. The Via Azul office can provide a schedule of departures and destinations. Check with our Cuba office for advice on the cheapest and safest ways to travel, and bring your Cuban student ID for discounts.

Hotels throughout Cuba are very affordable. Consult a guidebook for the best deals on lodging during your vacations; a guidebook also can be a big asset when planning your travel budget. Remember that the U.S. government will not allow you to remain in Cuba as a tourist after the end of the program. You must return to the U.S. with the group and use weekends and university breaks for travel.

Overall Budgeting

Because of the different spending habits and resources of each of our students, we can't estimate any one person's budget needs.

Section IV: Getting Ready to Leave

Official Travel Documents

You will need the following documents for travel and immigration purposes:

- Passport
- Visa

Passport

You must have a passport that is valid for six months past the time you plan to be abroad. If you don't have a passport, apply for one immediately. Normal processing takes six weeks, but may take longer during peak travel times.

We provide the following information as a guideline to get you started, but you should investigate current requirements immediately. For complete information about applying for a passport and application fees, go to the State Department's website at www.travel.state.gov, then click on "Passports."

You can apply for your passport through a passport acceptance facility; a list of locations is available at the State Department's website.

You must present the following documentation to obtain a U.S. passport:

- Proof of U.S. citizenship—either a certified copy of a birth certificate, a previously issued passport, a naturalization certificate, a certificate of citizenship or a consular report of birth of a U.S. citizen born abroad
- Two recent, identical passport photos (2" x 2")
- A completed passport application and fee

If you are not a U.S. citizen, make sure both your green card and passport are current and valid. To apply for a non-U.S. passport, contact the appropriate government agency or your embassy in Washington, D.C., and allow several weeks for processing.

If your passport is lost or stolen while you are abroad, contact the U.S. Interests Section in Havana or a U.S. Embassy or Consulate if you are traveling outside of Cuba.

When you arrive in Havana, the Cuba office staff will collect your passport to secure your Cuban ID. Securing your Cuban ID usually takes a few weeks, after which your passport will be returned to you.

Visas

Visas are documents supplied by governments of all countries (including the United States) to grant permission to study, visit, or live abroad.

Your Cuban visa is valid for only 30-90 days. Once you arrive in Havana, IFSA-Butler help you obtain a temporary Cuban residence card. In accordance with the legal requirements of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, all students must depart on the last day of the program. You may not remain in Cuba as a tourist.

If you plan to travel outside of Cuba after receiving your temporary residence card, please contact the IFSA-Butler resident director to find out if you must obtain a tourist visa for your destination country. Always check before departing on your travels. Sometimes you will have to apply for a tourist visa before you arrive at the border.

OFAC License Regulations

You are traveling to Cuba pursuant to your university's license for travel to Cuba, granted by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of Treasury. Keep the copy of the letter they issue you as you travel to and from Cuba.

Travel under this license means you'll need to follow OFAC's guidelines, which primarily address how you spend money. First, you are to keep a record of all money you spend in Cuba, and that is subject to review by the U.S. government for five years. We recommend creating your own receipts and getting signatures for small items, such as taxis and peso restaurants, and keeping a running tally of expenses, such as tips.

Students of Cuban Parents

Once in Cuba, students will complete a Ministry of Foreign Affairs form that asks the place of birth of their parents. If one or both of your parents are Cuban, be aware that the Cuban government will consider you to be Cuban as well, even if you were born in the United States. Students whose mother and/or father were born in Cuba are not issued a *carnet de extranjeros residente temporal en Cuba*, as they are technically considered to be Cuban.

Copies of Your Travel Documents

Keep track of your travel documents. Make two copies of your passport; leave one copy with your parents and pack the other copy in your luggage. If you lose your passport, having a photocopy to take to the U.S. Embassy Section will speed the replacement process. You should also make a copy of your visa and return plane ticket when you arrive in Havana.

Insurance and Health Care

IFSA-Butler Group Medical Insurance

The IFSA-Butler program fee includes a medical insurance, emergency assistance and evacuation plan through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). CISI specializes in providing insurance for U.S. students who will receive treatment when outside the United States. All IFSA-Butler students are enrolled in the CISI insurance plan as a part of their study abroad program.

The CISI coverage includes the following:

- Eligible medical expenses covered at 100 percent to \$350,000 with no deductible
- Emergency medical evacuation to \$250,000
- Emergency medical reunion to \$10,000
- Pre-existing condition coverage up to \$10,000
- Mental health condition coverage to \$10,000 (outpatient) and \$50,000 (inpatient)
- Partial coverage for alcohol and drug abuse assistance
- Emergency medical and travel assistance services include:
 - Worldwide hospital, physician and mental health provider referral
 - Prescription replacement/shipment
 - 24 hour emergency travel arrangements and emergency services
 - Translation service
 - Lost document and credit card assistance

There are exclusions to coverage that are outlined on the website at www.culturalinsurance.com/ifsa. All students should review the CISI coverage to determine if additional insurance will be needed while studying abroad, in particular students with pre-existing conditions. Costs of any additional insurance purchased is the responsibility of the student.

You can print an individual insurance card and plan details before departure via the CISI website (www.mycisi.com) utilizing your personal account. Students will receive an email from CISI notifying you of enrollment in the insurance plan. Coverage begins one day before the program start date and ends on the program end date. It can be extended 30 days before or after the program by contacting CISI directly. Coverage is applicable anywhere outside the U.S., not just the location in which the student is studying.

Specific questions about the insurance plan and coverage you may need while abroad should be directed to CISI at www.mycisi.com or by calling 800-303-8120.

Please remember that IFSA-Butler does not provide travel or personal property insurance. If you want to insure your trip or belongings while you are abroad, contact a reputable travel insurance provider.

Additional Insurance Sources

To obtain travel, property or additional medical coverage for a pre-existing condition, we recommend contacting an insurance company that specializes in coverage for U.S. students abroad. Cultural Insurance Services International, which provides the insurance plan for IFSA-Butler students, can provide a range of insurance services.

Cultural Insurance Services International
800-303-8120
Fax: 203-399-5596
www.culturalinsurance.com

Health Care

Have your family physician prepare a summary of ongoing treatment, and bring a list of any medications you take regularly. Bring sufficient quantities of your medications for the entire semester and leave them in their labeled containers. We recommend complete physical and dental exams prior to departure and an update of any vaccination(s) your physician recommends.

IFSA-Butler requests a medical form from every student. If you have a specific health problem of which we should be aware, please inform us using the medical form. We keep all students' medical issues confidential. Telling us about any health problems can help make your study abroad experience more comfortable and ensures that you will receive appropriate assistance as quickly as possible.

Prescription Drugs

Cuban pharmacists are under no obligation to fill U.S. prescriptions. Many prescription drugs that are readily available in the U.S. are not available in Cuba. We recommend that you take enough prescription medication with you to cover your entire semester in Cuba. Be sure to pack it in your carryon bag and not in your checked luggage.

Packages cannot be sent to Cuba. Therefore, we highly recommend that you take sufficient prescription medication with you to cover your entire time in Cuba.

Specific Health Issues

Generally, sanitary conditions are good in Havana, but less so in rural areas. Take precautions when you travel. Drink only bottled water and avoid ice

made with tap water. Try to eat fruits and vegetables that can be peeled or cooked before eating to cut down on the risk of food borne illnesses.

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov to learn the current conditions in Cuba. See the website's section on "Traveler's Health" for CDC recommendations on immunizations or precautions.

Turista

A common illness associated with going abroad is called *turista*, meaning traveler's diarrhea and related symptoms. Nearly everyone gets it while traveling in Latin America. Signs that you may have *turista* include abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. You should be especially careful in rural areas.

If you have *turista*, you will lose fluids, so dehydration and loss of body salts may result. Drink plenty of clear liquid such as 7-Up, Sprite, ginger ale, bottled water or broth. Avoid coffee and milk. Bananas or yogurt are a good first "solid" meal after you've had *turista*.

To avoid *turista* when you travel, wash your hands with soap and water frequently, especially before handling foods. Always drink boiled or bottled water, peel fruit and be careful of uncooked fish and vegetables. Commercial water sterilizing tablets are easy to use but hard to find in Cuba, so plan to buy them in the U.S. before you leave. You might want to bring some over-the-counter remedies, such as Paregoric or prescription medicines like Lotomil, with you. Remember to get plenty of rest and watch what you eat.

Immunizations

For travel purposes, we recommend that you keep all standard immunizations (e.g., typhoid, diphtheria, tetanus) up to date. Make an appointment with your physician or university health center to check on any immunizations you might need. See your doctor at least four to six weeks before your departure to give the immunizations time to take effect.

In addition, the CDC maintains a list of recommended immunizations on its website at www.cdc.gov. The CDC recommends the following vaccinations for travelers the Caribbean:

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG)
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, healthcare workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than six months or be exposed through medical treatment
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation

- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles

Students with Disabilities

We encourage students with disabilities to explore studying abroad through our programs. Laws governing access, support and services for the disabled vary from country to country. We work with you and our affiliates abroad to find a program that most closely meets your needs in a community that is as accessible as possible.

If you require modified facilities or specific equipment, we can investigate their availability. We also can seek information about local medical facilities or relevant services accessible from your proposed study site. If you have a learning disability documented by a health care provider who describes your academic needs, we can work with you to try to find a program to meet those needs. Equipment or services may result in additional cost to you.

Resources abroad may be limited because many institutions cooperate in sharing special equipment like phonic ears or print-enlarging computer programs. Please provide documentation and specific details about the equipment, services or other modifications you need as early as possible.

You can inform IFSA-Butler of any medical condition by filling out the medical form. Medical conditions have no bearing on your admission, but your study abroad experience may be negatively affected if all parties involved are not adequately informed of your needs. Please supply us with any pertinent documentation.

Packing

Don't pack more than you can carry at one time. Rooms have minimal storage space, and you'll have to carry your own luggage everywhere. Pack wisely and use suitable luggage. Trunks are impossible to handle alone, and suitcases are bulky and tiring to carry. Past students suggest a suitcase on wheels and a sturdy backpack as the ideal pieces of luggage.

A backpack, small suitcase with wheels and a small carry-on is all the luggage you should need. A money belt or waist pouch is also practical for vacation travel.

Climate

Cuba has a tropical climate. Average temperature in the summer is 81°F, and the average temperature in February is 72°. Factor in the 80 percent humidity that's common throughout the year, and you have a warm, wet environment. However, winter evenings can be cool, so bring a jacket, sweater and long pants.

Packing Tips

When you pack, make luggage tags to identify all your luggage, including your carry-on. Put labels inside your luggage in case the outside labels fall off. You might want to purchase small padlocks for your luggage, as well. Although airline security may limit your use of padlocks, they are useful for traveling. Make sure your locks are Transportation Security Administration approved (see www.tsa.gov).

Do not pack your tickets, passport, travel documents, prescription medication or valuables in your checked luggage. Keep them on your person in a money belt or in a bag worn across your chest at all times. Do not put valuables in a backpack; backpacks are prone to theft.

Other suggestions and reminders from past students include the following:

- Airlines have stringent baggage and weight requirements and people flying to Cuba have even stricter requirements. Do not attempt to exceed the baggage limit. If you do, the airline staff can make you purchase additional luggage and repack in the airport. They may also charge you an extra weight fee.
- Keep FAA regulation in mind when packing your carry-on. Do not bring anything that could be considered a weapon onto the plane.
- Pack your carry-on so that you can live out of it for a few days if your checked luggage gets lost. In addition to your essential paperwork, pack toiletries and a change of clothes.
- Carry-on luggage must fit under the seat in front of you or in the overhead bin. We recommend that you keep your carry-on weight to about 10 pounds because you'll have to carry it everywhere.

Packing 101

- If losing something would affect your happiness, leave it at home.
- Consider obtaining travel and personal property insurance before you leave the U.S.
- Leave room in your luggage to bring home the things you acquire while abroad.
- Laundry methods may be hard on your clothes, so pack clothes that can take some abuse. You might have to dry your clothes on a line.

- Break in your walking shoes before you go.
- Pack what you'll need first on the top of one bag.
- Pack shampoos, toothpaste and any other toiletries that may leak or ooze in resealable plastic bags in your checked luggage.
- A plastic bag can also be used to separate clean and dirty laundry and to hold wet clothes.

Suggested Packing List

Remember that the climate is hot and humid, and you will sweat. You will need clothes suitable for the cooler winter evenings as well as the heat of the summer. Pack clothes that are thin enough to wear in layers. Cuban students normally wear casual and comfortable clothes to class.

Feel free to adapt the following list to your personal preferences, but remember that even your casual clothing should look nice.

Clothes

- Short-sleeved dress shirts and/or tops
- Dress pants or skirts
- Casual cotton dresses or skirts
- Casual pants (light cotton is best; you'll likely find it too hot for jeans)
- Short-sleeve casual shirts
- Shorts
- T-shirts
- One or two light sweaters
- A sweatshirt
- A swimsuit
- Waterproof jacket
- Underclothes
- Workout clothes
- Pajamas and lightweight bathrobe
- A pair of hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes
- A pair of sandals or flip flops
- Waterproof, outdoor clothes for hiking
- Beach towel

Health and Safety

- Hygiene kit, comb, brush, toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo, shaving gear and washcloth. Bring enough toiletries and cosmetics for orientation.
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Prescription medicine in labeled containers and a written copy of the prescription (this includes birth control pills)
- Contact lens solution, an extra pair of contacts or glasses and a copy of your prescription.

- A small first-aid kit (include band-aids, antibiotic cream, aspirin, cold and flu medication, cough drops, Pepto-Bismol, Immodium AD, laxatives and anti-itching lotion)
- Tampons and sanitary napkins for the duration of your stay in Cuba. They are difficult to find in Havana and what you can find is low quality.

Miscellaneous

- Portable alarm clock
- Flashlight
- Umbrella and rain gear
- Phone numbers of family and friends
- Spanish/English dictionary and grammar book
- iPod
- USB storage device
- Guidebook for Cuba
- Money belt or pouch to hold passport, money, etc.
- Swiss Army knife, which is very useful when traveling. **Do not pack it in your carry-on bag.** FAA regulations state it must be in your checked luggage.

Your Carry-on Bag

- Passport. Check your passport to ensure it is valid six months past the time you are scheduled to be abroad. Also, make two photocopies of your passport (i.e., the page with your photo and passport number). Pack one copy (separate from your official documents) and leave the other copy with your parents.
- Plane tickets or e-ticket confirmations
- Travel-size toiletries
- Medication, including a written copy of any prescriptions and the generic names of those prescriptions
- Credit cards and cash
- Something to read
- Something to listen to
- This booklet
- Your journal and a pen
- A change of clothes in case your luggage is lost
- A sweater or waterproof jacket
- Spare glasses or contact lenses and solution. The plane can be very dry, so you may want to wear glasses instead of contact lenses.
- Water. The airlines serve drinks, snacks and meals, but flying can leave you dehydrated.
- A snack
- A camera

You should also pack in your carry-on all of your important **paperwork**:

- Name, address, phone and fax numbers of your physician
- Name, phone and fax numbers and email of your home college advisor
- Name and email of your IFSA-Butler program advisor
- Details of your insurance coverage
- Documentation of disabilities and required accommodation for physical or learning disabilities
- Updated home university transcript. A student copy is fine; you may want it during registration.

Linens

Sheets and towels will be provided to you by your housing.

Medication

Prescription medication should be properly labeled and left in its original packaging. Bring enough for your entire time in Cuba. You may need the written prescription to show at Customs, so don't forget to include it in your carry-on bag. Also bring a full supply of your regularly used over-the-counter preparations, vitamins and cosmetics from the U.S.

Contact Lenses and Glasses

If you wear contacts, ask your eye doctor about what to do while you are abroad. Pack a spare set of lenses and your eyeglasses in case of emergency. Bring a copy of your lens or glasses prescription. You cannot ship contacts or glasses to Cuba.

Your favorite contact care brands probably will not be available in Cuba, and the cost of contact solution in Cuba is high compared to in the U.S. Try to take enough to last the entire period abroad.

Computers

Past students highly recommend bringing a laptop computer if you already own one. Insure your equipment before you go.

The electrical current is 110V, although some newer buildings have a 220V supply. Always check before plugging something in. You may need both a converter and an adapter to run a computer unless your machine has a voltage switch. Make sure your computer has adequate surge protection; power surges are very common.

Many hotels in Havana offer Internet access terminals on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Musical Instruments

If you choose to bring a musical instrument, make sure it is enclosed in a hard case and insured. Instruments count as extra luggage on your flight. If you bring a stringed instrument, loosen or remove the strings to lower the tension on the neck during the flight.

Items to Leave at Home

Please do not bring expensive jewelry, sentimental objects, designer luggage or trunks. If you can't decide whether or not to take something sentimental, ask yourself how you would feel if it were lost or stolen.

We cannot emphasize enough that you should not overpack. **You have to carry your own bags everywhere.** While you travel, you have to store excess baggage or take it along. Trunks may have to be transported separately; if so, they must pass through customs upon port of entry and may incur a high fee in addition to the shipping costs. IFSA-Butler staff do not carry luggage, so be sure you can handle yours on your own.

Shipping Parcels

It is not recommended that you ship any parcels between the U.S. and Cuba.

Section V: Living Abroad

Housing

The IFSA-Butler program fee includes housing while classes are in session. We provide a comparable standard of accommodation for all program participants, but exact conditions, equipment and amenities vary from residence to residence.

Please remember these important points regarding housing:

- Choice of housing is subject to availability. We guarantee housing, but not your first choice.

Housing in Havana

Students live in a private home with a small Cuban family and two or three other students. Housing includes breakfast and dinner, air conditioning, in-room safe box, land-line phone (per house, not per student), access to a kitchen and laundry service. Students **must** live in the housing assigned by IFSA-Butler.

Bedrooms

All bedrooms in the residence are doubles. Roommate requests must be made mutually and in writing. While we make every effort to accommodate roommate requests, we cannot guarantee them.

In Cuba, the regulations for guests are much stricter than in a dormitory or university residence in the United States. You may not invite friends to the bedrooms. Only registered guests are authorized to enter the bedrooms. Students who live in these residences are not allowed to invite nonregistered guests into their rooms.

Cleaning of rooms

Each house provides cleaning. It is your responsibility to keep the room neat so that the maid can clean. The maids change the sheets and towels every three days. Maids do not use the television while cleaning, nor do they use students' private belongings.

You will not be allowed to cook in your bedroom, but each residence has a refrigerator where you can store food. Label your food before putting it in the refrigerator, and keep refrigerators neat and clean.

Meals

IFSA-Butler students receive breakfast and dinner each day as part of their program fee. Numerous restaurants are located near the university and student housing for lunches and snacks.

Traditional Cuban food, or *comida criolla*, is found everywhere in Havana from inexpensive peso eateries to upscale tourist establishments. A typical *criolla* meal consists of beans and rice, pork or chicken, yucca and an *ensalada* of tomatoes, cabbage and cucumber. For 20 pesos you can buy a *cajita*, a box of *comida criolla* to go.

We recommend that students drink only bottled water while in Cuba.

Special Diets

If you have special dietary needs (kosher, vegetarian, food allergy, etc.), please discuss with your host mother the best way to accommodate your eating habits.

If you are a vegetarian accustomed to eating nuts or soy products like tofu, you may have to purchase them yourself because they are expensive items not included in the regular Cuban diet. Restaurants and grocery stores that accommodate a vegetarian diet may be hard to find.

General Housing Information

Bathroom Usage

Toilet paper is generally not flushed down the toilet but is thrown in a wastepaper basket. Because the pipes are smaller, flushing toilet paper can lead to clogged sewer pipes. While most Americans are understandably uncomfortable throwing toilet paper away, the practice is a necessity in Cuba. Travel packs of tissue make excellent toilet paper.

You will notice that Cuba has few public bathroom facilities and that the public toilets that do exist are usually in miserable condition. Toilet paper is almost never provided, so keep some with you at all times. When you arrive in Cuba, you can identify the toilets that meet your cleanliness standards.

Housing changes

You may not change rooms without the permission of the IFSA-Butler resident director. Please discuss any concerns with the Cuba office staff.

Pets

No pets are allowed in any IFSA-Butler student housing.

Telephones and Mail

Cell Phones

Most U.S. cell phones will not work in Cuba, and text message cannot be sent between the U.S. and Cuba. If your mobile carrier is Verizon Wireless, you should be able to make and receive calls, as well as text messages.

Students can purchase a basic Cuban cell phone after their arrival in Havana. Cell phone plans in Cuba work like a prepaid phone service. More information on cell phones will be given during the IFSA-Butler orientation.

Telephones

There is one landline telephone in the student residence. Students can make local calls and receive international calls, but they cannot make international calls from the telephone.

Long-Distance Telephone Calls

We recommend calling home on public phones (blue phones) using a prepaid international calling card. International calling cards are sold in units of U.S.\$10 and \$20. Calls to the U.S. from Cuba with these cards cost \$2 to \$2.50 per minute.

U.S.-based calling cards do not work in Cuba; the most economical way to communicate by phone between the U.S. and Cuba is to have friends and family call you in Havana. Many families have sought out U.S. to Cuba phone rates as low as 65¢ per minute.

You may also make collect calls to the U.S. by dialing 66-12-12 and requesting a *cobro revertido*.

A local call within Havana is only five centavos, or about one-fourth of one U.S. cent. You can make local calls from gray public payphones.

Skype

Skype is not available in Cuba.

Mail

There is limited weekly mail service between the U.S. and Cuba.

Legal Matters

Student Status/Employment

In accordance with the legal requirements of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, all students must depart together on the last day of the program. You may not remain in Cuba as a tourist.

Students are allowed to enter the country only with student status, which means you are not allowed to seek any kind of work. If you are found in violation of this law, you may be deported immediately at your own expense.

Legal Status

While abroad, you are subject to local laws and customs that may vary considerably from U.S. practice. Ignorance of the law never serves as a defense for criminal activity. Wherever you are, be careful not to break the law.

Do not participate in political or social protests of any kind while in Cuba.

If you are arrested abroad:

- A consular official attempts to visit you in jail, provides you with a list of attorneys and clarifies your legal rights.
- The consulate can also help you contact family or friends for further assistance.
- The U.S. Department of State maintains contact with you, the attorney and local authorities to determine how you are being treated and to ensure the process of making legal charges is not delayed unnecessarily.

IFSA-Butler does not provide legal advice or support to students arrested abroad. IFSA-Butler reserves the right to dismiss you from the program if you are charged with a crime.

U.S. Embassy

Upon your arrival in Cuba, our resident director in Cuba will register you with the U.S. Embassy in Havana. Before your departure, IFSA-Butler will collect a copy of your passport.

The U.S. Embassy provides the following services:

- Replacement of passports
- Assistance in notifying friends and family in case of emergency
- Assistance with finances if money is lost or stolen
- Attorney lists, transfer of money, and notification of family for U.S. citizens in jail
- Disaster or emergency evacuation assistance

If your passport is lost, stolen or badly damaged, contact the IFSA-Butler resident director in Cuba. She will help you to obtain a new passport from the U.S. Embassy in Havana. The Embassy can replace your passport when you produce the relevant documents to support your application.

Customs

When you re-enter the U.S., Customs will require you to declare all items purchased abroad. Keep an account of the costs of purchases, including sales slips. U.S. Customs officials have the right to see them. You may be asked to show the sales slip or other proof of ownership at Customs. Call the Customs office before your date of departure to make sure you have the proper documentation.

Safety Abroad

Crime

Petty theft is common in Cuba, especially in crowded conditions. Be careful when riding on crowded buses, and do not leave valuable possessions on the beach when swimming. Don't invite trouble by flashing jewelry, watches, or wallets, and do not carry American credit cards and driver's licenses with you in Cuba. Keep your camera in a sturdy camera bag rather than slung on a strap around your neck or over your shoulder. When packing for Cuba, don't bring anything with you that you would be devastated to lose.

To stay safe in Cuba, avoid traveling alone late at night. While the areas around our student housing and near the university are nice, please stay in pairs if you are walking at night.

Students studying abroad have a tendency to let down their guard and trust people more than they would at home. During the IFSA-Butler orientation, we focus on personal safety and teach you practical tips and common sense rules of living abroad. Remember, personal property insurance is not provided by IFSA-Butler, so contact your insurance agent to obtain it.

Natural Disasters

Cuba's geographical location makes it prone to hurricanes and tropical storms June through September. During the IFSA-Butler orientation, our resident director will review safety measures and instructions should a hurricane or tropical storm be forecasted for the island. If an evacuation is necessary, IFSA-Butler will coordinate with our emergency assistance provider to move students to safety.

Cuba also has occasional earthquakes.

Program Safety

The Institute for Study Abroad is committed to ensuring the safety of all students on our programs. We spend a great deal of our orientation abroad describing risks that can occur in Cuba. We also spend time discussing the issues that are described in the “Student Affairs” section of this booklet. Both aspects are clearly and fully covered in the *Student Handbook* distributed at orientation.

We ask you to read the descriptions of and sign waivers for certain activities that we organize during the semester. The activities offered during our weekends are completely optional. We use only licensed and bonded transportation companies for taking you on excursions.

We have support systems on site to help you with any personal or academic problems. In an emergency, our Cuba office staff can be contacted 24-hours a day. We give you a laminated emergency card with contact information during your orientation. Keep it with you at all times.

We cannot emphasize enough how important it is to have adequate health coverage while abroad. **Review the medical insurance and assistance plan included in your program fee to determine whether you need additional coverage.**

Security Measures (Evacuation Scenarios)

IFSA-Butler follows certain procedures if and when a specific threat is made against U.S. citizens abroad in a geographic location where we have programs. In some cases, political instability might make it necessary to follow these procedures; likewise, threats made against the general population within that country would also trigger our security procedures.

Should any of these scenarios occur, IFSA-Butler immediately notifies both students and their parents. The emergency assistance provider helps IFSA-Butler students should an evacuation from Cuba be warranted.

The IFSA-Butler U.S. office remains in constant contact with and relies on detailed reports from the resident director and emergency assistance provider regarding any developments.

We recommend travel or evacuation only as a last resort and only if required by the U.S. State Department. Please refer to our website, www.ifsabutler.org, for more information.

Student Safety Precautions

Unfortunately, nowhere in the world is completely safe. However, the following precautions can help protect you as you study in Cuba and travel throughout Latin America.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you may need to register with your own country’s embassy or consulate in Cuba. Our staff will provide information and assistance at orientation.

Read the State Department travel advisories

These are available for all countries, so be sure to read them for any place you plan to visit. Our Cuba staff routinely update students on new State Department travel advisories, cautions, and warnings. Detailed information about Cuba can be found at travel.state.gov.

Dress conservatively

Avoid university and fraternity or sorority shirts that mark you as a U.S. citizen. Try to blend in with the local population.

Keep a low profile

Try to blend in with your surroundings as much as possible. Avoid speaking loudly or in English. Don’t hang out at tourist gathering places and do not travel in large groups of Americans. Avoid large public gatherings and protests. It is illegal for foreigners to participate and you may be arrested.

Be cautious with new people

Don’t give out your address or telephone number. Be alert to your surroundings and the people with whom you have contact. American women have a reputation for being “easy”—a ludicrous stereotype that many Cuban men believe to be fact.

Be aware of your surroundings

When walking in Havana, it is best to leave your iPod/iPhone in your bag. Listening to music or talking on the phone while walking down the street makes you an easy target for thieves. Pay attention to traffic patterns and be careful when crossing the street.

When traveling, leave a daily itinerary

When leaving Havana, leave a detailed itinerary with the IFSA-Butler resident director. Make sure you have sufficient funds (in cash) with you. Please feel free to travel, but let our staff know where you are going and how to find you. Female students should travel in pairs for added safety and security.

Do not leave your bags unattended at any time

If at a café or restaurant, take your belongings with you to the restroom.

Avoid hanging bags or backpacks from the back of chairs or lying them on the floor. Always keep a hold of our bags or they may go missing. Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone.

Keep in touch with current events

Know what's going on politically in the world by listening to the television or radio, or reading the local newspaper on a daily basis. In the event of an emergency, advisories may be made to the general public through the media.

In case of an emergency, contact the IFSA-Butler resident director or your on-site instructor in Cuba immediately.

Being a U.S. Citizen Abroad

Occasionally, you will encounter negative comments made about all U.S. citizens or you personally, either to irritate you or out of prejudice or ignorance. As everywhere in the world, including the U.S., Cuba has a wide variety of people with a wide range of opinions, including some whose negative views are based on ignorance or on sweeping generalizations.

Before you go abroad, brush up on U.S. history and politics, as well as the reasoning behind U.S. foreign policy. This knowledge will help you participate in conversations or debates without feeling helpless or personally attacked.

Study abroad is full of academic and cultural challenges, including the reality that a wide range of opinions about the U.S. exist. Remember that our staff in Cuba are happy to lend a sympathetic ear and offer further advice for dealing with these situations.

Emergencies Abroad

Please take reasonable precautions while abroad. Avoid risky behavior, walking alone at night, and exploring or hiking on your own. Pay attention to warning signs. Carry next of kin details in your wallet along with the emergency contact wallet card we give you during the Cuba orientation.

Should any of these scenarios occur, IFSA-Butler immediately enacts the Critical Incident Response Procedure and notifies our emergency assistance provider, students, parents and home university advisors.

The IFSA-Butler Havana staff emergency numbers are for use after business hours or on weekends. Be sure to program the emergency number into your cell phone if you have one.

If you are hospitalized abroad, call our Cuba staff immediately. We can help you with translation, insurance questions, and paperwork.

If you are the victim of a crime, contact local authorities and the IFSA-Butler Cuba staff immediately. We will help you file a police report and get medical attention, if necessary.

If you have been arrested abroad, call the Cuba resident director's emergency number. We can't provide you with legal help, but we can direct you toward legal resources.

Most importantly, if you have an emergency abroad, please contact your family in the U.S. once you are safe to assure them that all is well.

Local Area Emergency and Student Check-In

If a local emergency occurs while you are studying in Cuba, we want to make sure you are safe. Please contact IFSA-Butler via phone according to the information provided on your IFSA-Butler laminated emergency contact card. Then contact your parents by phone or email to let them know you are safe.

Student Affairs

This section is designed to help you and your parents prepare for your time in Cuba and cope with issues once you are abroad. Some of this information is also touched on in other sections of this guide.

Alcohol

The legal drinking age is eighteen in Cuba, and alcohol has a pervasive presence. Bars are a large part of the social scene, and alcohol usually is available in most situations. Think about how you'll deal with the easy access to alcohol before going abroad.

IFSA-Butler events are alcohol free. Students who are intoxicated or carrying alcohol at IFSA-Butler events may not be allowed to participate.

Socializing with Cuban students doesn't mean you have to drink. Many students choose to avoid alcohol, and ordering a soft drink at a bar is perfectly acceptable. We recommend that you drink moderately if you choose to drink.

Watch your drink at all times and never accept a drink from a stranger. Incidents of students being given Rohipnol ("date rape drug") happen frequently abroad.

Drinking is expensive, and binge drinking is extremely dangerous. We cannot emphasize enough how many discipline and safety issues are caused by overindulgence with alcohol and how many study abroad experiences are soured because of it. Most complaints and police encounters that involve IFSA-Butler students (including evictions, violence and vandalism) both on campus and off campus stem from the abuse of alcohol.

If you are arrested in Cuba for an alcohol-related crime, you are subject to all local laws. IFSA-Butler does not provide legal support to students who are arrested.

Alcohol Abuse

If you are currently in a program to control your alcohol abuse, please inform us on the medical form that we send with your acceptance packet. Any information you relay to us will be kept confidential and will not affect your ability to participate on this program. We can help you find continuing counseling and support in Cuba.

IFSA-Butler supports students who are actively working to control a substance abuse problem. However, we cannot permit any type of behavior that

is illegal or that may result in danger to you or others. IFSA-Butler reserves the right to remove from the program any student who behaves in a violent or self-destructive manner or who is charged with an alcohol-related crime (also see "Legal Status" in the "Legal Matters" section of this book).

Counseling

Counseling practices in Cuba are limited. If you have a pre-existing mental health condition that requires regular counseling, you should consider another study abroad location. Contact your IFSA-Butler program advisor for more information.

Students with pre-existing mental health conditions (including eating disorders, substance abuse problems, depression, etc.) are particularly susceptible to increased stress while studying abroad. We ask that you fully disclose to us any mental health condition before departure. Any information of this sort that you relate to us will be kept confidential.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough that students who are on medication for a mental health condition should continue treatment unless advised by another physician to stop. Temporary changes in scene can make students feel over-confident that they are fine and no longer need their medication, but in reality, ceasing medication can have disastrous effects. Please continue your regimen unless advised otherwise by a physician. Please remember that many medications for mental health conditions are not available in Cuba. Bring a supply to last your entire semester in Cuba.

Discrimination

The revolutionary process initiated in 1959 has implemented a general policy against racism and discrimination and has enhanced the role of women in society. However, subtle manifestations of racial prejudices still persist and the male-dominated social patterns which prevail all over Latin America also are visible. It is important to note that despite the political differences between the U.S. and Cuba during the last 50 years, you won't find much anti-American feeling in Cuban daily life. The majority of Cubans are open-minded people who will be interested in meeting you regardless of your background.

If you are African-American, Cubans may assume that you are from Cuba, Brazil or a Caribbean island. In some cases, African-American students have been required to present identification outside of hotels and their housing to prove that they are not Cuban.

Some African-American students have found these hassles insulting, while others have taken them as complimentary evidence that they are fitting well

into Cuba. While discrimination can be very frustrating, try to keep in mind that one of the reasons you are studying abroad is to learn about other cultures.

Also be aware that Cubans may use terms that in the United States would be considered strong cases of bigotry. *Negrta* or *negro*, *gordito(a)*, *flaquita(o)*, *chinito(a)*, *machito(a)* and *gringuito(a)* are just words that carry a sense of closeness, even if they refer to your skin color, ethnic heritage or physical appearance. They are used as terms of endearment and are not meant to offend anyone.

We recommend that you ignore any incidents and move on to the majority of Cubans who are open to people of all backgrounds.

Diversity

In addition to its own citizens, Cuba is host to immigrants and visitors from around the world, including Africa, China and other Caribbean countries.

Gender Relations and *Machismo*

U.S. students tend to carry a stereotypical idea that gender roles are very traditional in Cuba and that gender relations are defined by a principle of strong male dominance (*machismo*). U.S. students also have a related tendency to assume that women are willing to be subservient to men, staying within the home, raising families and arranging their time around anticipating the needs of their male relatives.

In Cuba and in much of Latin America, the traditional male-dominated structure has changed. It's common for both parents to have jobs outside the home, and even women who do not work outside the home have active lives in the community. Women may seem to adhere to their male relatives' wishes, but there is a sense that women rule the home.

Both men and women should be aware that dating patterns might be very different in Cuba. A lot of it depends on the context, relationships and cultural differences.

You will be surprised at the number of compliments (*piropos*) directed toward women. These comments are not meant to be malicious or threatening; they are instead a sort of game. The best strategy is to act as any young Cuban woman would—just ignore these comments and keep walking.

Hitchhiking

Do not hitchhike. You may be tempted, especially when traveling around the countryside. Local students may tell you hitchhiking is safe, but hitchhiking is no safer in Cuba than in the United States.

Illegal Drug Use

If you are found possessing, using or dealing drugs, you can and will be prosecuted. All local laws apply, and your U.S. citizenship will not protect you.

In Cuba, possession, use and trafficking of illegal drugs is a criminal offense. The State Department warns U.S. citizens that if caught, penalties are strict. Offenders can expect extended pretrial detention without bail (up to a year) and lengthy jail sentences and fines when convicted. Possession carries a minimum 10-month sentence and can be as much as 25 years plus fines.

As stated in the student acceptance agreement, if you are arrested, we reserve the right to dismiss you from the program. IFSA-Butler does not offer legal assistance to students arrested abroad.

Loneliness and Homesickness

Adjusting to a new way of life can be very stressful, and many students react by becoming homesick. We encourage you to share your feelings with someone. The IFSA-Butler Cuba office is only a phone call away and our staff can direct you to available counseling services.

To combat homesickness, get involved in a sport or group. Keep a regular, healthy diet and exercise schedule, get enough sleep and continue your hobbies. Call the IFSA-Butler staff for help if you feel overwhelmed.

Sexual Harassment

IFSA-Butler does not tolerate sexual harassment among its employees or students. Any complaints will be treated with confidentiality and sensitivity. Sexual harassment may be described generally as unwanted sexual advances or behavior, such as physical contact or verbal comments or suggestions that offend or intimidate and adversely affect the victim. Examples of sexual harassment include the following:

- Leering, patting, pinching
- Displays of offensive pictures, posters or graffiti
- Dirty jokes, derogatory comments, offensive written messages and offensive phone calls
- Groups of people ridiculing, leering, wolf whistling or making sexual comments at a person or group of people

Many victims of harassment do not report their experiences because they fear others may not believe them. Feel free to talk to the IFSA-Butler staff in Cuba; they can give you the support you need to confront your harasser and stop the problem. You also can contact the IFSA-Butler U.S. office for help.

Be aware of the fact that Latin Americans communicate in different ways. People tend to maintain closer physical space. Sometimes they touch while conversing (to make a point) or stare (to make eye contact). Keep in mind the cultural context and don't misconstrue these cultural differences. At the same time, be firm and let people know if you find that some of their actions are offensive or if you feel uncomfortable in certain situations.

Sexual Health

Anyone who is sexually active can get or transmit a sexually transmitted disease. STDs are as large a health threat abroad as they are in the U.S., and you must take the same precautions that you would at home. If you are sexually active, be sure to continue safe sex practices and pack birth control and/or condoms to take with you.

Student Participant Agreement

Several of the student affairs issues covered in this section are also covered by the student participant agreement. Program participants must sign the student participant agreement.

The student participant agreement addresses: participation in the program, refund rules and regulations, academic responsibilities, liability, medical and personal coverage, housing, personal conduct and disciplinary action.

Culture Shock

As you adjust to life in Cuba, you're bound to have moments of both exhilaration and frustration. In addition to difficulty with the language, you may find that the tiny details of daily living are different, or that the rules that govern social interaction in the United States are not appropriate in Cuba. Your adjustment through these realizations and frustrations is what experts call culture shock.

The culture shock curve has several phases. You may experience these phases in a different order and for different periods of time. Everyone has a unique way of coping, so don't worry if you don't fit this pattern. Call the IFSA-Butler Cuba office if you want advice.

Phase I: The Honeymoon

You may experience an initial euphoria about being in a new place. During this period, you cannot envision anything better than being abroad.

Phase II: End of Honeymoon

The end of the honeymoon usually begins about the third week into the program and is characterized by an acute dislike for anything having to do with the location, the people, the new words or the customs of the new home. You might feel a general sense of distress and frustration. Luckily, this period of disillusionment usually passes quickly.

IFSA-Butler's Cuba staff understand the problems of culture shock and attempt to make the adjustment period easier. They will encourage you to meet local students and to participate in activities you enjoy at home.

Here are a few things you can do to help get past this phase:

Plan to Be Homesick

Homesickness is natural, but it's important not to dwell on it. Try to enjoy the new experiences available to you.

Expect to Be Frustrated

You will encounter communication problems when you are speaking in another language. You'll also find that people in your host country behave differently. Once you realize that nothing you can do is going to radically change deep-seated cultural norms, you will save yourself a lot of frustration.

Speak Spanish Before You Leave Home

Do some preliminary research about Cuba before you leave home. Watch Latin American movies to get a feel for the rhythm and sounds of Spanish. Most of all, don't be afraid to speak Spanish.

Know Your Own Country

People are going to ask you your opinions on current events and the role the U.S. plays in them. Read magazines and newspapers to brush up your knowledge of U.S. foreign policy and domestic issues. Plan to accept criticism of U.S. policies good-naturedly, and don't take them personally. Latin Americans take a great interest in politics.

Read About Cuba Before You Leave

Familiarize yourself with the history of Cuba before you leave. Read Cuban newspapers and U.S. newspapers that cover international news.

Meet Cubans

Make an effort to meet Cubans. Join clubs, participate in sports and attend other functions.

Laugh Off Minor Irritations

Try not to let the little things get you down.

Write

Keep a journal to help you sort out your feelings. It also will serve as a wonderful reminder of your time abroad.

If you experience culture shock or loneliness for an extended time, phone our Cuba office. Our staff have years of experience assisting international students in adjusting, and they are happy to take the time to speak with you about the challenges you face. We are as interested as you are in making sure that your study abroad is a success, both personally and academically.

Phase III: Adjustment

After the period of disillusionment, you will begin to adjust to the new environment. Some students adjust by “going native” (adopting wholeheartedly the new culture) and end up with a new haircut, a new accent or a whole new style! Fortunately, as the semester progresses and you settle into a routine, your cultural adaptation should become more natural. The third phase is the settled phase and is characterized by seeing both positive and negative aspects of the culture of which you have become a part.

Phase IV: Re-entry

Returning home often exposes you to these same feelings all over again. During a period of study abroad, you benefit by becoming self-sufficient and more independent. Returning to college for another year is a risk; the friends that you left behind might not have grown up quite so dramatically and might not want to hear all about your experience or see the photographs.

On one hand, you may be happy to be home and to see family and friends. On the other hand, you may miss the friends and the lifestyle you have left behind. If you find that you’re having difficulty readjusting to the United States, the study abroad advisor on your home campus can help. Volunteer as a peer advisor in your home university study abroad office to help make the transition easier by sharing your positive experiences with others.

Causes of Culture Shock

Study abroad is not a vacation in a foreign country; rather, it is an acculturation exercise, and you are expected to blend in with and live like members of the new student population. You may become frustrated by all the daily differences in standard of living and lack of conveniences—operating a phone, finding late shopping hours, dealing with pollution, getting around on the bus and most of all, communicating in Spanish. The facilities available in the United States are not always available in Cuba.

Adjustment is an opportunity to discover why most students find study abroad so rewarding; it forces you to learn about your personal limits and strengths.

Solving Problems Abroad

We’ve already discussed the issue of culture shock, but other issues may arise that make your study abroad experience more challenging. Our Cuba staff can assist you throughout your semester in Cuba.

Some of the issues you might face abroad are ones that can cause you problems at home. Housing, banking, telephone and email usage, the postal system and registering for classes are all issues that can cause frustration.

If you experience a problem while abroad, please call our Cuba office or your on-site instructor first. They might be able to solve what seems like a big problem relatively quickly. Remember, they live in the same time zone you do, deal with the same officials you do and can be at your side in a short time if necessary.

Please don’t call your parents until after you have contacted our Cuba office or your on-site instructor. Although your parents can lend a sympathetic ear, they can’t help you solve the problem from the U.S., and knowing about it can cause them undue distress. Once you have contacted our staff abroad, you can call your parents to let them know that steps are being taken to solve the issue.

Our mission is to help you make your study abroad experience as rewarding as possible. We’ll do all we can to help you succeed while you’re abroad.

Summary

We are here to help you prepare for your study abroad experience and to provide academic and personal support once you arrive abroad. If you experience problems in Cuba, please contact the IFSA-Butler Cuba office or your on-site instructor immediately. If we don’t know about a problem, we cannot begin to help. Call our Cuba office for advice, or even just to check in.

You may want to pick up a travel guide or video about Cuba. Books can help you find out-of-the-way attractions as well as inexpensive accommodation and food. Past students have recommended *Let’s Go Guides*, *Lonely Planet Guide* and *Rough Guides*.

We hope this booklet has addressed most of your questions and that it continues to be a resource for you and your family throughout the study abroad period. Please consult page 44 of this book for phone numbers and addresses of our offices if you need further explanation of any of the points in this guide.

Appendix I: Information Resources

Learn About Your Own Country

Before going to Cuba, brush up on your understanding of U.S. government, history, and foreign policy. Many Cubans are keenly interested in these subjects, and you can expect to be asked your opinion on a regular basis. Read newspapers and news magazines to keep current.

Travel Resources

We highly recommend the Lonely Planet guide, the Rough Guide to Cuba, The Time Out Guide to Havana and Moon Guidebook: Cuba. Other good guidebooks are available, but be sure to buy one geared for budget travelers. We also recommend Culture Shock: Cuba, an entertaining guide to customs and etiquette in Cuba. Consider it a supplement to a regular guidebook.

In addition to the above guides, you should check out the following websites:

The Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University www.ifsabutler.org
The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) Travel Page www.cdc.gov/travel
The Lonely Planet www.lonelyplanet.com
Havana Tourism www.lahabana.com
CIA Factbook Cuba www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html

Current Events

The following websites are a good place to start for Cuban news:

Cuba Free Press www.cubafreepress.org
Granma Internacional www.granma.cu/
Trabajadores www.trabajadores.cu/

Films

Buena Vista Social Club
Conducta
El Ojo del Canario
Fresa y Chocolate
Juan de los Muertos
La Película de Ana
La Vida es Silbar
Lista de Espera
Suite Habana

Books

Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing On Race, Politics and Culture by Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs

Afro Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba by Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs

The Aguero Sisters by Cristina Garcia

Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life by Jon Lee Anderson

Children Of Che: Childcare and Education in Cuba by Karen Wald

Cuba And the United States: A Chronological History by Jane Franklin

Cuba Diaries: An American Housewife In Havana by Isadora Tattlin

Cuba Handbook by Christopher P. Baker

The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course And Legacy by Marifeli Pérez-Stable

Dancing With Fidel by Stephen Foehr

Havana Handbook by Christopher P. Baker

Jose Marti Reader: Writings on the Americas by Deborah Schnookal

New Art of Cuba by Luis Comnitzer

Revolution In the Balance: Law in Contemporary Cuba by Debra Evenson

Appendix IV: About Us

Institute for Study Abroad

The Institute for Study Abroad is a nonprofit organization founded at Butler University to provide high-quality international study opportunities, plus academic and personal support services, for qualified undergraduates at U.S. universities seeking to earn academic credit through study abroad. While the Institute for Study Abroad is affiliated with Butler University, it is not part of the University.

IFSA-Butler is organized to assist our students from the time they apply until after they return. Staff at the IFSA-Butler office in the U.S. and around the world are committed to our students. We help students develop realistic expectations and adjust easily to the very different student lifestyles and academic expectations of their host institutions.

For a list of programs available in Argentina, Australia, Czech Republic, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, England, Mexico, Northern Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Peru, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Spain and Wales, please check our website at www.ifsabutler.org.

Butler University

Butler University is a nationally recognized, comprehensive university encompassing six colleges: Arts, Business, Communication, Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Together, these colleges offer more than 60 undergraduate majors, eight pre-professional majors, one first professional and 18 master's degrees. Approximately 4,700 students are enrolled at Butler University, representing 45 states and 52 countries.

Approximately 77 percent of Butler University students will have participated in some form of internship, student teaching, clinical rotation, research or service learning by the time they graduate. In addition to this professional experience, Butler University students develop lifelong skills in critical thinking, effective communication, cooperative teamwork and ethical decision making. Butler University endeavors to prepare students not simply to make a living, but to live lives of purpose in which personal flourishing is intertwined with the welfare of others.

IFSA-Butler Directory

Cuba Office

Resident Director

Michelle Ranieri

U.S. Office

Telephone

317-940-9336; 800-858-0229

Fax Number

317-940-9704

Email

studyabroad@ifsabutler.org

Website

www.ifsabutler.org

Address

Institute for Study Abroad
6201 Corporate Drive, Suite 200
Indianapolis, IN 46278

Emergencies Abroad

Please take reasonable precautions while abroad. Avoid risky behavior, walking alone at night, and exploring or hiking on your own. Pay attention to warning signs. Carry next of kin details in your wallet along with the emergency contact wallet card we give you during the Cuba orientation.

The IFSA-Butler Havana staff emergency numbers are for use after business hours or on weekends. Our staff will always help in a true emergency, but they cannot stay on the line with you if your concern can be handled during regular business hours.

If you are hospitalized abroad, call our Cuba staff immediately. We can help you with translation, insurance questions, and paperwork.

If you need to file a police report, we will help you do so. Contact the IFSA-Butler Cuba staff immediately if you have been the victim of a crime.

If you have been arrested abroad, call the Cuba resident director's emergency number. We can't provide you with legal help, but we can direct you toward legal resources.

Most importantly, if you have an emergency abroad, please contact your family in the U.S. once you are safe to assure them that all is well.

Institute for Study Abroad

BUTLER UNIVERSITY

Introduction to Havana



Universidad de La Habana
Alma Mater

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PREPARING FOR YOUR TRAVEL

What to Bring

Clothes

Dress for hot weather and warm sun. As there are occasional cold fronts, you'll want bring thicker sweater or jacket, and pair of pants. Cubans typically dress nicely but casually. Fun note: the Caribbean *guayabera* (shirt worn in photo) is considered formal for work, weddings, etc. It is traditionally for men, but you can now find women wearing it occasionally. You can purchase one at local markets or hotels for those hot humid days.

Other recommended clothes and personal items:

- Short-sleeve shirts or blouses
- Pants, shorts, jeans and/or skirts/dresses (everyone should have at least one pair of long pants and/or skirt)
- Swimsuit
- Light sweater or waterproof jacket
- Umbrella for rain *and* sun protection
- Sandals or flip flops
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Money belt or pouch
- Iron and hairdryer (not available in most hotels)
- Gifts for hosts or others
- A photocopy of your passport to carry for identification purposes



Medical Supplies and Sundries

Even though larger hotel stores carry some essential goods, many items are expensive and hard to find while in Cuba. Since bathrooms rarely have soap or toilet paper, we recommend carrying tissues and hand sanitizer with you at all times.

Recommended medical supplies, as relevant:

- Bandages
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrush
- Shampoo
- Soap
- Hand sanitizer or wet wipes
- Pre-moistened towelettes
- Travel tissue packs
- Feminine products
- Contraceptives*
- Vitamins*
- Prescription medications (in their original bottles)*

Since it is difficult to purchase many of the recommended items and medical supplies in Cuba, we recommend bringing enough for your entire stay.

****If currently taking any of these items, bring a sufficient supply for the entire duration of your trip***

Technology while in Cuba

GPS and satellite phone are illegal in Cuba but smartphones are OK.

Electrical System

Both 120 and 220 watt outlets are available throughout Cuba, while older more historical hotel rooms usually only have 120 watt outlets.

Apps to Download Before You Arrive

Below are some useful apps our students have used in the past. Download all desired apps before you leave for Cuba. You will not be able to download apps while in Cuba. Apps may also work while websites are unavailable.

Recommended Apps:

- IMO: WiFi calling and texting internationally to others with same app
- Gmail, Outlook, or Yahoo Mail: these apps download incoming emails so you can work offline
- SpanishDict

Airline Luggage Restrictions

The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) permits licensed travelers to carry baggage that contains only the usual and reasonable kinds and quantities of items for the travelers' personal use. The DOC does not permit licensed travelers to carry items that they intend to leave in Cuba (although it is common to take gifts).

Money

Bring enough cash to last your full stay in Cuba. U.S. credit cards and bank cards are not yet accepted in Cuba, nor can you receive wire transfers. Plan to exchange \$100 on your first day, and play it by ear after that. Below is a per day estimated breakdown of possible expenditures while in Cuba:

Expense	Cost
Breakfast	2-12 CUC, if not included in the hotel
Lunch	4-15 CUC
Dinner	8-60 CUC
Water/Snacks	5 CUC
Taxis	5-30 CUC per ride
Evenings Out	3-50 CUC
Tips	3-10 CUC
Emergency Expenses	USD \$100, plus the cost of two hotel nights
Souvenirs	Varies per individual

Don't forget to include the additional amount you would like to spend on souvenirs. Check with your airline for regulations on bringing items back. There is no limitation on informational materials such as art, books, magazines, CDs, and DVDs.

Tipping for services is customary in Cuba. It is expected to tip for services such as using the bathroom, receiving directions, or help with a taxi.

While you are in Cuba, be sure to keep a record of the money that you spend. This is subject to review by the U.S. government for five years. Consider taking a receipt book with you, as many businesses, especially taxis, do not have receipt paper (or “*comprobantes*”).

Currency

Two currencies operate in Cuba.

- Cuban Convertible (CUC): This is the currency created for and mostly used by tourists. The official exchange rate is USD\$1 to 1 CUC. However, you will be charged 13% fee each time you exchange money. Therefore an operational exchange rate is USD\$.87 US to 1 CUC. You might use this exclusively.
- Cuban Peso (CUP): This is the currency created for and mostly used by locals; local salaries are paid in CUP. The official exchange rate is USD\$1 to 24 CUP. Students use this for local taxis or buses and some basic restaurants or food stands. The CUP is sometimes called *moneda nacional* or MN, or simply peso. Visitors are allowed to use this, but few do.

Money Exchange

You can exchange cash at the airport, hotels, banks and *casas de cambio* or CADECAS. You must present your passport when exchanging money; a copy will not be accepted. There is a money exchange desk in the airport right before you exit the secure area that may be open to exchange funds. Many travelers exchange money at their hotel’s front desk after check-in. If you are going in a big group, you might ask one or a few people to change money for all of you, to save time in line.

When exchanging currency, use official offices to convert dollars and avoid street vendors. Because U.S. credit and debit cards do not work in Cuba, many U.S. visitors carry large sums of cash. Criminals are aware of this.

ARRIVING IN HAVANA

Havana has two international airport terminals. One terminal is primarily for flights to and from the U.S., and the other terminal handles the rest of the flights. You will deplane directly to the terminal. When you exit the plane, walk straight into the immigration room, and get in line. This line leads to the Immigration Control booths where your picture is taken and your passport reviewed. An immigration officer may question you or request to see your passport while waiting in line. Once you finish this process, you will be buzzed through to the next room, where you will stand in another line while your carry-on baggage is x-rayed. Next, if you checked luggage, proceed to the two luggage carousels to collect your checked luggage. Keep in mind that your luggage may appear on either carousel; it does not always come out on the one indicated. Once you locate your luggage, a Customs Officer will collect your Custom Declaration Form. He/she will also check if your bag was marked for a manual search (only if they suspect something). If no Customs Official is present and you have nothing to declare, proceed to the exit.

****Put your passport, return ticket and Cuban visa in a secure location before exiting the building.****

At any time in this process, you may be questioned further. You may also be asked what electronics have you brought or where are you staying. The officials are not antagonistic, just thorough.

Upon exiting to the secure area, you will enter a gated in area surrounded by a large crowd. Make your way towards the left where you will see taxis or a person waiting to pick you up (if you have pre-arranged that).



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

IFSA-Butler Havana Staff

Michelle Ranieri, Resident Director
mranieri@ifsa-butler.org
Cell: (5) 481-8397
Office: (7) 830-2800

Sol Rheem, Program Coordinator
srheem@ifsa-butler.org
Cell: (5) 551-5107

**Note: In order to call Cuba from the U.S., dial 011-53- plus the number listed above.*

Emergency Contact Numbers

Michelle Ranieri:	(5) 481-8397
Police:	106
Fire:	105
Ambulance:	838-1185 or 838-2185
U.S. Embassy:	(7) 839-4100 Calzada between L & M Streets
Cira García Clinic:	(7) 204-2811 Calle 20 #4101, Esq. Avenida 41, Miramar

Michelle Ranieri, Resident Director

Michelle has a Master's from the University at Buffalo in transnational studies. During her Master's program, she spent semesters in Mérida, Mexico and Sevilla, Spain, in addition to conducting research in Cuba. Michelle chose to pursue a Bachelor's at SUNY New Paltz because it supported her dream of studying in Cuba, and her love of Cuba and the Caribbean only grew after studying abroad at the Universidad de La Havana for a semester. Michelle coordinated Road Scholar programs in Cuba before joining IFSA-Butler in 2014. Michelle is one of the last people to see Fidel Castro speak in public, and her first scuba diving experience was done in the Bay of Pigs, both while studying abroad.

Sol Rheem, Program Coordinator

Sol spent a semester in Cuba as an undergraduate student at Bowdoin College and returned afterwards to do research. She has worked as a teacher for migrant adolescents in Harrington, Maine; a civic engagement fellow in New York City; and a tutor in Guatemala City. Sol speaks English and Spanish fluently, and is proficient in Korean.

KEY PROGRAM INFORMATION

History of IFSA-Butler in Havana

IFSA-Butler was the first study abroad provider with a program in Cuba, opening at the Universidad de La Habana in 2000. The program received outstanding reviews, and grew to over 75 students per semester. At that time, IFSA-Butler ran the largest study abroad program in the country until it was suspended in 2004 due to U.S. government regulations. In spring 2004, 142 U.S. students from six programs studied at the University of Havana. That number dropped to only 13 U.S. students, in fall 2004. Over the years the numbers slowly rose again. By fall 2012, the number of U.S. programs in Havana grew to 11, with roughly 5 to 10 students in each program. After the 2011 change in U.S. regulations, IFSA-Butler began steps to re-open the program, and enrolled our first group in fall 2014. The Cuban government regulates the size of each program and we are optimistic they will raise our cap in the near future to meet increasing demands.



HOUSING

IFSA-Butler started placing students in homestays in fall 2015. Previously, students had been in large group residences. This change represents a significant cultural shift for U.S. in Cuba, as it is a new experience for all involved.

The Cuban homestays are not structured in the same way as our other Latin American homestays. These families are licensed by their governments to be able to host foreigners overnight. Without IFSA students, the families would typically be renting the rooms to international visitors (researchers, tourists, etc.). Given the limitations in Cuba and high demand for housing, we place two students per bedroom, and up to four students per family. This is a compromise we made in order to keep students centrally located and within walking distance to classroom facilities and WiFi access points. Our semester students agree that due to the spacious accommodations in their homestays, they are always able to find a quiet space to study. Also, they appreciate that they are among the very few U.S. students living so close to the university.



Also, although our host families are warm, welcoming, and serve as cultural hosts for our students, the families may not be as engaged in a family-style relationship with our students as they are in other IFSA programs. We ask that they join the students for some meals, but don't require them to join all meals. U.S. students require more food, and a greater variety and balance, than Cubans typically get. Due to the Cuban market, host families spend a significant amount of time searching various stores for a sufficient amount and variety of food to feed the U.S. students.

Note on housing in the region: many houses are made of concrete, and the rooms shaped like blocks. It is easy to build on one room at a time, and when you want to add space for family or to rent, you build on another block or even a whole floor. This is a common way of investing money throughout the region, where depositing money in a bank can be less secure. This ease of building on to houses is more flexible in the Vedado neighborhood of Havana where the university is located, whereas in Centro Habana and Habana Vieja, housing is scarce and in varying states of disrepair. Vedado is mainly comprised of single-family homes, whereas the housing in Centro Habana and Habana Vieja are mostly multi-story apartments, built tightly together.

What is Included

- A double room with a bed, linens, towels, closet space, a table, and a shared bathroom
- Breakfast and dinner while in Havana
- All utilities, but be conservative - water, electricity and gas are expensive in Cuba
- A shared hotel-style safe in each bedroom
- Keys to the house

LIVING IN HAVANA

Havana, Cuba

The City of Havana, La Habana, sections of which were declared part of the Cultural Patrimony of Humanity by the UNESCO in 1982, was founded in 1519. For more than three hundred years thereafter, it was the largest and most important city in the Atlantic coast of the Western Hemisphere, and by 1766 it was also one of the best fortified cities in the New World. The commercial success and wealth of Havana during that time was partly due to the fact that once a year the Spanish galleon fleet, carrying the treasures of Mexico, Peru and elsewhere, would rendezvous there before setting out on the transatlantic voyage back to Spain. During the nineteenth century, as a direct result of the growth of the sugar industry and slavery, the city experienced an extramural expansion which turned it into a jewel of turn-of-the-century architecture and city planning, a boom comparable in scope and monumentality to the expansion of cities like Barcelona or New York. But the real growth of the city in terms of sheer scale and surface took place during the first part of the 20th century. Today, Havana has a population of over two million people: one out of every five Cubans lives in the nation's capital, making it the largest city in the Caribbean. Havana is also the center of Cuban government, communications, trade, tourism, education and medical research. In addition, most of Cuba's industry is located in or near the city, including a thermoelectric power plant, an oil refinery, the shipyards and the larger part of Cuba's fishing fleet, paper mills, textile factories, food processing plants and, of course, the cigar factories.

The marvels of Havana are many as the city was spared from damage during Cuba's independence wars (1868-1898) and in the Revolution of 1958. But the scarcity of resources over the last four decades has taken a toll. If it is true that Havana has been spared from the tourist-oriented development projects that have destroyed or "Disney-fied" important historic areas of other Caribbean cities, it is also true that scarcity and neglect have their price. It is estimated that some 300 buildings collapse in the city every year and more than 80,000 dwellings are said to be marked for demolition due to improper maintenance. Similarly, most of the infrastructure of the city is in a state of accelerated decay.

Today, the future of one of the Caribbean's largest cities is compromised between a policy of selective intervention which once again responds to the dictates of the tourism industry, and the realities of inevitable dilapidation. Surprisingly, in the face of this, Havana has managed to survive and continues to thrive as a metropolis with a vibrant culture and tradition.

Havana bore 300 years of wealth from slavery, brothels, churches, pirates, and mafias, all culminating into periods of self-deprecation from takeovers from the British, the United States, Batista, and the Castros. The city of Havana is old and resilient, not defined by its conquerors, failures, or victories. Since its founding, the capital city has seen waves of architecture, wealth, poverty, battles and revolts. These ebbs and flows of history are the contradictions that make up its multi-faceted façade that you will soon witness. Each neighborhood, or *Barrio*, seems to stand for a different economic class or time period.

Orienting Yourself

The city's layout can be separated into four parts: Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, Vedado, and Miramar (from East to West). As long as you know where you are in relation to the *Malecón*, the waterfront avenue, you can find your way. Recognizing the following easily seen landmarks while in their respective barrios may assist you during you stay. The *Capitolio* is in Centro Habana, the *Hotel Habana Libre* is in Vedado, and most embassies are in Miramar.

Going from East to West, we begin in Habana Vieja, the colonial core of Havana, much of it under recent restoration. From the eastern port of Havana, beginning at the Paseo del Prado, go east from Parque Central, where you'll find domino-playing, baseball-debating *viejitos*. Habana Vieja is full of neocolonial churches, disintegrating mansions, and quaint plazas. UNESCO declared Habana Vieja a World Heritage Site in 1982, and it holds one of the 16 *camera oscuras* in the world, a *cerveceria*, or beer bar, and many stray dogs. There is a high concentration of museums and fine hotels in this area, and tons of bici-taxis!



Centro Habana is the cramped and crumbling area that includes Barrio Chino. It is hugged by Habana Vieja and Vedado. Centro is defined on the Eastern edge by the University's hill and the *capitolio*. Be careful with your belongings. Centro Habana is primarily a residential area filled with laundry flapping, dogs on balconies, and drinkers on stoops. Some of the longest-residing Habanero families live here.

Vedado begins around the *Malecón* point in front of the Hotel Nacional and flows west to the Almendares River. It encompasses things like ICAIC, Cuba's largest film producer, Centenario de Colón, and to the south to the Plaza de la Revolución. This is the more laid-back residential area where our students spend most of their time. When Habana Vieja and Centro Habana began to expand in the late 1800s, Habaneros were pushed to the outskirts of the city where they took up businesses and housing. This area became quite lucrative because of the hotels, like the Nacional, and the capital's famous university. Many memorial statues, government buildings, and bus routes can be found on Calle 23, as well as *relojeros* (watch repairmen), international phone booths, and "frozen," a cheap ice cream-like treat!

The more foreign residential and embassy district west of Vedado, past the Almendares River, is Miramar. Miramar is one of the wealthier neighborhoods in Havana, which can be seen in the architecture here. It is reminiscent of the mafia-Batista era in Havana, with backyard pools, shackled tennis courts, and lots of guards. The Sol Melia business-class hotel is here, as well as expensive tobacco shops, seafood restaurants, and clubs with ocean views.

Current Issues

In general, Cubans are conversational and spontaneous. Among the most popular themes of discussion is sports. They may not be willing to openly discuss political problems, especially with visitors, because this could imply openly disagreeing with the government. However, economic themes affect every-day life and often appear in the media.

- The Economic Embargo: the embargo refers to the restrictions that the U.S. government has put on commercial transactions with Cuba, and that also affect travel from the U.S. to the island. Depending on the political perspective, this problem can be called the “embargo,” “disagreement” (*diferendo*), or “blockade” (*bloqueo*). Cubans officially support ending the embargo, and according to the latest surveys, the majority of people in the U.S. also support ending the embargo and they favor reestablishing diplomatic relations. This could be seen and heard before and after Obama’s visit in March 2016.
- Economic Transition: In the last five years, the centralized economic system, regulated by the state, has begun to adapt more directly to the international economy. Some bureaucratic pressures and non-productive industries have been eliminated, and they have opened opportunities for people to establish private businesses. These are often small *paladares* (family restaurants), hair salons, technical computer services, photographic studios, *máquinas* (taxis), bakeries, etc. People talk about the possibility of even greater presence of private business.
- Dual Currency: Although healthcare and education are free, and there is a small ration of food that Cuban families receive, *la libreta*, the state salary isn’t sufficient to buy products for daily use. The average monthly salary is between 400 and 500 CUP, or around \$24. The possibility of combining both of these monetary units (the CUP and CUC, see below for more information) is being discussed, as well as increasing the public salary.

United States – Cuba Relations

Since January of 2015, various new travel and trade regulations have been enacted that enable U.S. travelers to visit Cuba without first obtaining a government license. New regulations are beginning to change economic sanctions by allowing, among other things:

- Travelers to use U.S. credit and debit cards
- U.S. insurance companies to cover health, life, and travel insurance for individuals living in or visiting Cuba
- Banks to facilitate authorized transactions
- U.S. companies to invest in some small businesses
- Shipment of building materials to private Cuban companies

During Obama’s March 2016 visit with Raul Castro in La Habana, he declared “the embargo’s going to end,” though he could not say when. You are witnessing a very exciting time in history!

Other Useful Facts (From www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/countries/cuba.html)

- The official name of Cuba is the Republic of Cuba.
- Cuba is an independent socialist republic that is controlled by one party: The Cuban Communist Party (PCC), which is led by 25 individuals chosen by its head – currently Raul Castro.
- Cuba is the largest of all islands in the Caribbean. The country also includes more than 4000 other much smaller islands and cays.

- Cuba is renowned for its music; bands play everywhere in the capital Havana. The main musical form is called *son*, which is a combination of upbeat rhythms with classical guitar.
- Sugar made from sugar cane is the main crop grown in Cuba, followed by tobacco which is used in the making of hand-crafted cigars that are famous for being the finest cigars in the world.
- Nickel is Cuba's most important mineral resource at 21% of total exports in 2011 nearly 4% of the world's production.
- Baseball is the most popular sport in Cuba. The country is also dominant in boxing and has produced a number of Olympic boxing champions. Other sports of interest include basketball, volleyball, cricket, football (soccer) and athletics.
- As of 2013 Cuba had 9 sites on the UNESCO World Heritage list, 7 of these cultural sites and 2 of them natural.

Television

All Cuban television is state-run and has a variety of programming focusing on news and commentary about national and international themes. There is usually a movie offered daily, including recent North American and European movies. There are also educational channels with emphasis on cultural programming. Classical movies (Latin American, North American and European) are shown in the programs *Historia del Cine* or *Cine de Nuestra América*. The majority of Cubans don't have access to cable TV. It is available in hotels, places related to tourism and certain state institutions. However, they do have access to various "*paquetes*," or packages, which they purchase at a video store and take home on a pen drive. *Paquetes* are often a season of a favorite show a series of recent movies. Other relevant information can be found here: Havana: www.Havanaturisme.com/ and www.bcn.es/.

Photographs

As in most places around the world, it is courteous to ask permission before taking a photo of a person. It is absolutely prohibited to photograph police or military personnel and facilities, as well as harbor, rail and airport facilities.

Getting Around in Havana

CUC Taxis

CUC Taxis are the taxis you are most likely to take. To take a CUC taxi, have a hotel staff member pull one up, flag one down, or call for one from Cubataxi at 855-5555. You also can look for a taxi and flag them down on 23 or Línea in Vedado, or towards the sea from the Plaza de la Catedral in Habana Vieja.

Make sure they put their meter on because in most cases, the set "bargain" price the driver gives you will be more expensive than the meter price. They are supposed to charge per ride not per person. Taxi drivers will not usually take more than four people in their car, although some are more flexible than others. In addition, travelers should not accept rides in unlicensed taxis, as they may be used by thieves to rob passengers.

Coco and Bicycle Taxis

We discourage the use of coco taxis (the three-wheeled vehicles that look like yellow coconuts) as well as bicycle taxis. They are not as safe as cars, and cannot protect you in an accident. If you do take them, agree on a price before getting in, then double and triple check the price by repeating it back to the driver to make sure you understood.

Bus

The *güagüa* (bus) is a common mode of transportation for many Cubans. We discourage the use of buses because they can get crowded and theft is common in such tight spaces. If you need to take a bus, the cost is 40 cents to 1 peso and they can take you just about anywhere you want to go.

Máquinas

A slightly faster and calmer method of getting around is the *máquina* (also called *almendrón* or peso taxi). *Máquinas* operate on fixed routes, and pick up as many passengers as fit. *Máquinas* are very easy to distinguish from regular taxis because they are often the pre-1959 U.S. cars. (*Máquinas* are the run-down looking old cars. The nice and shiny ones have been fixed up for tourists and can cost 50-100 CUC/hour. Note that if IFSA-Butler has organized a ride for you in an old car, we have arranged a significant discount.) No matter how far you're going, *máquinas* are 10 pesos or 50 cents. To avoid getting scolded, don't slam the door!

The Ultimo System

Waiting in long lines is a way of life in Cuba. The *último* system, a practical solution for making lines stress-free, is the law of the land for just about any place involving a wait – the money exchange, bus stops, the computer center, restaurants, etc.

Step One: Approach the line. (It may not actually resemble a line because the *último* system allows for freedom of movement.)

Step Two: Call out, “¿Quién es el ultimo?”

Step Three: Take note of who responds. You are behind them, and you are now the *último*.

Step Four: When the next person arrives at the line and completes steps one and two, you raise your hand. If they ask who you are behind, point to that person. Your job is done.

Step Five: The bus comes. A straight line is formed because everyone remembers their exact place.

Don't think that just because you've been waiting means that you're part of the line. You must call *último*. Also, make sure you're paying attention when you're the *último*. Once you understand the rules, you can appreciate the beauty of the system.



CUBAN ECONOMY

Shortages

The U.S. embargo and travel restrictions, along with rules the U.S. has made limiting ships and airplanes from trading in Cuba, have had a large influence on the Cuban economy and quality of life. Since Cuba doesn't have as much access to trade and imports, and much of what they do import comes at a very high price due to traveling long distances, goods tend to be expensive or hard to find. Most Cubans therefore endure a difficult day to day experience. While there is little actual starvation, there are serious shortages and people are forced to do the impossible in order to, as they say, *resolver* - the Cuban expression meaning something to the effect of learning to make do the best one can. In a large city like Havana, there are as many ways to *resolver* as there are people.

Cubans receive free housing. However, until recently, they couldn't purchase housing; if they wanted to move, they typically had to find someone to trade houses with them. This is still true to some extent, as the low state salary means it is nearly impossible to save enough to buy a house. There is also a severe housing shortage in Havana in particular, so you'll see many people in a small house/apartment (particularly in the downtown areas), including multiple generations. When a couple marries, they usually must decide which parents they will live with. Shortages in building materials contribute to deteriorating living conditions, heightened in some areas by the damaging moist, salty air near the sea.

Due to import restrictions, it's so hard to get new cars that Cubans are experts at fixing up old cars. That's why you see so many older U.S. cars – the same ones that were left from before the revolution. However, the engines are often much more up-to-date. With the improved economy due to recent investment, more new cars are imported. Many old U.S. cars are getting make-overs and moved to the tourism industry to reflect that they've become a part of Cuba's international image.

Students from around the world come to Cuba to study medicine in part because of generous medical school scholarship programs and Cuban doctors are sent around the world as a form of foreign aid to countries with doctor shortages. Although Cuba is high on medical human resources, they are so low on physical resources that visitors are encouraged to bring their own medicines, syringes, etc. That said, foreigners who pay the required foreign medical insurance have access to a special hospital that is privileged and therefore better equipped. This fee is included for semester and custom programs.

Food is often in short supply for Cubans. They are guaranteed a certain amount of basic foods, although quantity and quality are less than many people require. (Those with access to foreign money, such as IFSA host families, have much more access to a variety of food.) The increase of visitors from the U.S. has placed a further strain on the food supply, and much of it goes towards the tourism sector, creating further scarcity for Cubans.

Other goods are often in short supply, in particular anything related to technology.



Tipping

10% is common. People tip almost for almost every service: bathroom attendant (even at the airport), getting your taxi, carrying your bags, the person who allows you to take their picture, musicians, etc.



Bathroom Usage

Toilet paper is generally not flushed down the toilet but is thrown in a waste basket. Because the pipes are smaller, flushing toilet paper can lead to clogged sewer pipes. Be prepared to pay/tip (usually small change or 1 CUC) to use the restroom, even in the airport and some nice restaurants. Don't be surprised if bathrooms don't have toilet seats. They are expensive and hard to find in Cuba.

Phone Calls and Technology

Phone Calls

Phone calls to the U.S. are \$2-3 per minute. A collect call is called *cobro revertido*. There are phone kiosks in hotels where you can make calls to the U.S. and pay when you are finished. You can also use these kiosks for much cheaper local calls. When connected to WiFi you can use apps, such as IMO, to call or text an IMO user in the U.S. Your U.S. phone won't work, with the exception of Verizon. You may call and text from your U.S. Verizon phone, although expect hefty international fees (see your carrier for more information).

It is reported that you could unlock your U.S. phone and rent a Cuban SIM card for approximately 3 CUC per day. However, we don't recommend that you rely on this option as there are no guarantees that a SIM Card would be available or that the SIM card would work in your current phone. Also, you might accumulate a very large roaming phone bill. Older phones or those you purchase with pre-paid minutes are more likely to accept a Cuban SIM card.

To call a number inside Cuba, simply dial the number, which will start with a 5 (cell phones) or 7 (land lines). You only have to dial the 53 first when calling a Cuban phone located outside of Havana.

Cultural Note! – When Cubans receive a call on their cell phone, they often will not answer it. Instead, they'll go to a land-line and call that number right back, as it is cheaper for them to call from a land-line. So if you make a call and don't get an answer, wait by the phone for a minute to see if you get a call back. However, Resident Director Michelle Ranieri will always answer her cell phone when possible.

Please make sure not to take a GPS or Satellite phone to Cuba, because they are illegal. Smart phones are fine.

Computer and Internet

Internet access is slow and unreliable compared to what you are accustomed to in the United States. It is common for internet service to be down through the entire island, such as following a rain storm. There are a few internet public hotspots throughout Havana, which are typically located in parks or along major avenues, such as Avenue 23 in Vedado. You purchase a WiFi access card to use the public internet, which costs 2-3 CUC per hour. WiFi is also available in many hotels such as the Havana Libre and Nacional. The cost to utilize hotel WiFi is higher at around 5-12 CUC per hour. Be cautious with your phone/computer when using WiFi on the streets.

You CANNOT download any media while in Cuba. This includes apps, music, books and podcasts. **You should download everything you need in advance of arriving.** When downloading from iTunes prior to departure, be sure they are downloading to the device and not the cloud, to which you will not have access.

You should not plan on having access to all of your social media accounts. Skype, WhatsApp and FaceTime do not work in Cuba. iMessage, GroupMe and Facebook messenger do, although pictures cannot be sent through iMessage. The **ONLY** calling and video calling app that we have found to work is **IMO** (both you and the person you are calling need to download this). Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram do work, although Snapchat does not. Most cloud-based or internet-based file storage or sharing sites, such as Google Docs or Drop Box do not work. Please note that some students have reported not being able to access their .edu e-mail accounts, so you may want to set up an alternative e-mail address where you can be reached (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.).

Remember that the Internet connection in Cuba is NOT secure, so you will not be able to access websites that take additional security measures, such as your bank account.

You should not rely on any application that requires Internet because you will not have Internet access all the time. For translations, Google translate works, if you download the Spanish language before you leave. SpanishDict also works offline. WordReference does not work offline.

AlaMesa and Triposo are good apps to download before departure. AlaMesa is extremely helpful to find restaurants, while Triposo has city guide information. Ensure that you have downloaded the necessary information for these apps so you can use them offline while you are in Cuba. The app Havana Good Times is no longer available.

Spotify Premium works for a limited amount of time, but it will time out eventually because Spotify cannot connect to its servers. When this happens, you will lose the music you have downloaded.

Locked U.S. cell phones that cannot get cell service in Cuba will still work on WiFi, with some limitations.

Cuba uses the same voltage as the United States, so you will not need a voltage adapter for your laptop if you choose to bring one with you. If you take a laptop, we recommend that you insure it in the event it is damaged or stolen.

We strongly recommend students bring a USB drive with them. For longer programs we recommend at least an 8 GB USB drive, but students have suggested a 16GB USB drive is best.

CULTURAL LIFE IN HAVANA

The city of Havana is the most vibrant cultural center of the country and it offers international musical, artistic and literary events. For example, throughout the year, the Gran Teatro de la Habana and the Teatro Nacional de Cuba offer presentations of the famous Ballet Nacional de Cuba, founded by the great classical ballerina Alicia Alonso in 1948. In addition, each February, the Feria Internacional del Libro is celebrated in the imposing Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña, where the Premio Casa de las Américas, one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the Spanish-speaking world, is awarded. Writers from all over Latin America participate.

The University of Havana also contributes to the cultural climate of the city. The Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU) organizes popular music concerts during the semesters to celebrate major patriotic and academic events and dates. The large steps at the entrance of the campus also function as an excellent stage for music shows. The Aula Magna, the most illustrious room in the university, offers public talks about academic themes of national and international interest.

Live Music

Music abounds in Havana. Every other restaurant will have live music during dinner. [See appendix 1 for recommended evening activities.](#)

Food

Breakfast is usually eaten around 8:00 am. A typical Cuban breakfast consists of coffee and toast or sweet bread. A light lunch is eaten around 1:00 pm, and usually consists of a light soup or salad and a small piece of meat (pork or poultry) with rice or black beans (cooked apart or together; when cooked together, it's called *congrí* or *arroz moro*) and a slice of toasted bread. Dinner is traditionally the most important meal of the day, often eaten around 7:00 pm. Dinner includes a small salad (depending on the season, it could include tomato, avocado, cucumber, carrot, lettuce, cabbage or bell peppers) and an entrée of meat (pork, chicken, fish, shrimp or lobster), accompanied by rice and beans, *vianda hervida* - usually *boniato* (sweet potato), *malanga* (tania root), *calabaza* (pumpkin/squash) or fried *plátano* (plantain). At the end of dinner, there is usually a serving of seasonal fruit by itself or as part of a dessert, such as *fruta bomba* (papaya), *piña* (pineapple), *guayaba* (guava) or *mango*.

Most cafes or restaurants offer strong coffee in small cups ("*un cafecito*"). Café El Escorial located in Habana Vieja in the Plaza Vieja (at the corner of Escorial y Mercaderes) is one of the best places to enjoy a Cuban coffee. Small *churro* stands can be found on Calle Obispo or Calle Muralla in Habana Vieja. Churros are similar to a long, fried donut. They are delicious!

The economic crisis of the 1990s affected Cuban food more than anything. Since Cuba wasn't a big food producer, many basic products were difficult to find for years. The diet has improved since then, but the good food products are still bought with CUCs and in general remain expensive for the majority of Cubans. A big part of the national budget is spent on food.

Fortunately, the Cuban economy has been recovering, and small businesses have opened selling food in *Moneda Nacional* (CUP). Many students eat lunch at these small peso restaurants near the university.

Paladares: these are small restaurants located in private homes and usually staffed by the family that lives there. Unlike in the state-run restaurants, *paladares* tend to offer larger portions, with better, well-prepared ingredients. Many *paladres* such as Atlier have received rave reviews from American food critics.

Drink

Often you will be served coffee or homemade fruit juices called *jugos naturales*. When purchasing a bottled water you may be asked if you want it *con gas* (with carbonation) or *sin gas* (without carbonation) and soft drinks are available almost everywhere. You can use tap water for personal hygiene but not for drinking. Consume only bottled water.

Smoking

Although Cuba is traditionally one of the international centers for production and consumption of tobacco, it is now prohibited to smoke in public, enclosed spaces. However, smoking is a deeply-rooted custom and non-smokers are much more exposed to smoke than in the U.S. Additionally, non-smoking areas aren't always clearly marked and enforcement is hard to carry out. Despite this new attitude to protect the health of the population, smoking remains one of Cuba's most popular activities.

Cuban Spanish

The Caribbean Spanish spoken in Cuba has special characteristics of pronunciation.

- Frequently, you hear a reversal of the /l/ and /r/: *mejor* > *mejol*; *caldo* > *cardo*. There are also cases in which the /r/ turns into a consonant: *cerdo* > *ceddo*, *puerta* > *puetta*.
- The final /s/ tends to get dropped: *él trabaja* = *tú trabaja(s)*; *el diente* = *los diente(s)*.
- Sometimes in questions, the subjects are placed before the verb: *¿Cómo estás (tú)?* > *¿Cómo tú estás?*, *¿Dónde va ella?* > *¿Dónde ella va?*, *¿Qué crees tú?* > *¿Qué tú crees?*
- The /d/ tends to get dropped when it's finishing a word: *-ada*, *-ado*, *-eda*, *-edo*, *-ida*, *-ido*, *-uda*, *-udo*. For example: *pasado* > *pasa(d)o*, *vestido* > *vestí(d)o*; *puede* > *pué(d)e*; *dedo* > *de(d)o*, *comida* > *comí(d)a*. It can also happen at the beginning of a word: *dónde* > *(d)ónde*. In the final position, the /d/ is dropped or changes to a /t/ sound: *verdad* > *veddá* or *verdat*; *calidad* > *calidá*, *calidat*.
- The /s/ tends to get dropped: *los tomates* > *lo tomate*; *basta* > *bata*; *aspirina* > *apirina*; *espalda* > *epalda*. Sometimes this generates a small aspiration (breath, or an h sound) or lengthening of the vowel: *bosque* > *bohque*, *bo-que*.

Cuban Modismos (Slang):

CADECA = money exchange booth

congrí = rice with black beans

criollo = creole or Cuban itself

el último = the last in a line

güajiro = country folk

güagüa = bus

güarapo = fresh sugarcane juice

jinetero = a male tout who hustles tourists

jinetera = streetwalker

máquin, almendrón or *pesero* = shared taxi

moneda nacional (MN)= Cuban pesos

período especial = Cuban economic crisis during the 1990s

resolver = to fix a problematic situation or to obtain something

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The following section highlights how you can keep yourself and your belongings safe while here in Cuba and what to do in an emergency.

Country Specific Information

The U.S. Department of State issues specific country Fact Sheets, Travel Alerts and Travel Warnings, which provide helpful country information from visa requirements to health and safety issues in Cuba. Refer to www.travel.state.gov for current information on safety and security in Cuba.

Worldwide Cautions

The U.S. State Department also provides current information on travel, entry visas and cautions which have been issued for countries around the globe.

Refer to <http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/worldwide-travel-alert.html>.

Safety and Security

Cuba is a police state, which means that there is a heavy police presence in the streets, resulting in a safer environment for residents, tourists and students. Cubans are generally very welcoming of Americans. However, it is important to remember that dangers do exist in Cuba as they do in your hometown.

Crime

The majority of crime reported to the U.S. Embassy in Cuba tends to be non-violent, petty theft. Students and tourists sometimes fall victim to crime while visiting busy tourist destinations, in particular Habana Vieja or the Prado area, or crowded markets and beaches, riding on public transportation or leaving their belongings unattended for even a short amount of time. Most don't even realize their wallets or phones are missing until well after the crime was committed.

Social Interactions

In Havana, you may feel like your private space has been reduced especially walking down the streets where many foreigners tend to walk. Cubans frequently yell compliments or catcalls (*echar piropos*). They even ask questions to catch you off guard and to call your attention. You may find somebody of either sex staring directly in your eyes, or speaking directly to you. Similar with other Latin Americans, Cubans tend to be more expressive with their gestures and body language when they communicate. It is also common for Cubans to touch one another while talking: a hand on the shoulder, a pat on the back, a kiss on each cheek and so on.

Jineteros

Visitors should also beware of Cuban *jineteros* (hustlers) who specialize in swindling tourists. While most *jineteros* speak English and go out of their way to appear friendly, e.g., by offering to serve as tour guides or to facilitate the purchase of cheap cigars, some are professional criminals who may resort to violence in their efforts to acquire tourists' money and other valuables. Politely refuse an interaction with them. If you want to respond in Spanish, you might say, "No, gracias. Hasta luego." Or simply, "Adiós. Buen día." You may need to repeat "buen día" or "adiós" in an elevated volume, while walking away, if someone continues to make you feel uncomfortable. This assertiveness will communicate that you are in control, and your elevated tone will likely make them aware that you are ready to get louder, which would get police attention that the *jinetero* doesn't want.

Do remember that not everyone is a *jinetero*. Cubans are open and welcoming. They may start a conversation with anyone, anywhere. As long as you feel safe and not targeted or followed, it's often harmless to engage in the conversation.

Bags and Laptops

While in Cuba, you will need to exercise a degree of caution with your personal belongings. Purses and bags should be held in your lap or between your feet on the floor in front of you. Laptops and other electronics should never be left unattended. You run a very high risk that your laptop will be gone by the time you return to your table, even if you were only absent for a minute.

Passports

Leave your passport in your hotel safe unless you are exchanging money. Carry a photocopy of your passport at all times.

Pedestrian Safety

One of the first things you will notice in Havana is that *peatones* (pedestrians) have fewer rights than in the U.S., and drivers sometimes do not respect pedestrian crossings or stop signs. Do not trust that oncoming traffic will stop.

Public Demonstrations and Protests

It is illegal for non-Cuban citizens to participate in public demonstrations and protests. Avoid these demonstrations and/or any involvement in these types of events.

In recent years, the Cuban government has detained U.S. citizens it suspects of engaging in activities perceived to undermine state security. U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba should be aware that the Cuban Government may detain anyone at any time for any purpose.

Contraband

Private entrepreneurs in the streets of Cuban cities and tourist resorts risk imprisonment and heavy fines by offering tourists cigars, drugs, sex and other items. It is illegal to buy from these people and in recent months the government has been cracking down on these "private entrepreneurs" and their clients.

Hand-outs

People will approach you asking for all sorts of things. Sometimes they will share a sad story and then ask for monetary support for food, medicine, etc. The best policy is to decline politely. You may say, "No tengo," or "No gracias,"

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

National Healthcare

The healthcare system in Cuba is public and run by the government. Cuba is proud of its system and quality of care given to all residents. Students from across the globe attend medical school in Cuba for high quality training and experience in this type of health care system. While in Havana, foreign tourists and students receive health care at one main hospital. We suggest you use the following for all your health care needs:

Cira García Clinic
Calle 20 # 4101 esquina Avenida. 41, Miramar
Phone: (7) 204 2811

Cira García Clinic is a hospital and clinic for foreigners that offers high-quality medical service. If you have a medical problem, it is not necessary to make an appointment. With your confirmation from ASISTUR and your passport (or a copy), you may just go to the reception and wait for your turn to be seen. Inside the hospital there is also a pharmacy.

ASISTUR Medical Insurance

Medical services are free for Cuban citizens, but the Cuban government requires that visitors be covered with special insurance.

ASISTUR, Asistencia al Turista, is the Cuban medical insurance coverage for tourists. When you purchased your flight to Havana, if it departed from the U.S. or Canada, it probably included 30 days of ASISTUR coverage, and you should have your 30-day ID card with your flight information (possibly as a stamp on the back of your boarding pass). See www.asistur.cu/indexi.php for more information. If your flight did not depart from the U.S., but rather from Canada or Mexico, etc., you will need to purchase separate Cuban insurance.

ASISTUR will cover the full cost of most routine and emergency health care needs. You will not pay additionally for these covered services. At the time of this printing, the following is provided through ASISTUR, and it is subject to change. (See information on site for the most up-to-date information.)

Guarantees and Limits for Insured per Trip	Coverage
Medical expenses for illness and accidents	25,000 CUC
Repatriation and Transport of deceased	7,000 CUC
Repatriation and Transport of wounded and sick	7,000 CUC

Exclusions

The following are not covered by the accident or medical expenses nor the repatriation or transport policy:

- a) Services that were not requested to the Insurer and carried out without permission, except in case of an act of God or the impossibility to physically demonstrate it;
- b) Accidents caused by fraud by the Insured, the Receiver of Insurance or by people traveling with the Insured;

- c) Accidents that occur through war (declared or not), manifestations and popular movements, acts of terrorism and sabotage, strikes, detentions by any authority for crimes not derived by traffic accidents, restrictions to free moving traffic, or any other act of God, unless the Insured proves that the accident does not have any relation with the aforementioned;
- d) Participation in dangerous competitions of any nature, such as trainings, tests, bets and consequences that ensue from practice of dangerous hobbies such as: hunting, subaquatic activities, hang gliding, mountaineering, etc. This exclusion can be voided through a special agreement with the Insured;
- e) Accidents caused by radiation from transmutation or nuclear disintegration or radioactivity;
- f) Mountain or sea rescue;
- g) Pre-existing, chronic, recurring or congenital illnesses, known or unknown by the Insured, as well as their worsening conditions and consequences;
- h) Suicide or resulting injuries or illnesses resulting from a suicide attempt or intentionally caused by him or herself, the Insured;
- i) Treatments, illnesses and pathological states, such as any consequence produced by the intentional ingestion or administration of toxins (drugs), alcohol, narcotics or by taking medicine without a prescription;
- j) Any type of prosthesis such as contacts, hearing aids, glasses, etc., even in those cases where the Insured takes responsibility of assistance in all of its facets; or
- k) Pregnancies, births and abortions, independent of their etiology, such as any consequence derived from a gestational state.

Vaccinations

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) has published a list of recommended vaccines and immunizations for Cuba. Please review this list. It is recommended that you keep routine vaccinations up-to-date (measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and flu). As of January 2016, the CDC is also recommending that most travelers to Cuba be vaccinated for typhoid and hepatitis A. Make an appointment with your physician to check on any shots you might need. See your doctor four to six weeks prior to your departure to give the immunizations time to take effect.

PREPARING TO LEAVE CUBA

OFAC License Regulations

Remember that you are traveling to Cuba pursuant to your employer's license for travel to Cuba, granted by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of Treasury. Keep the copy of the letter your employer issues you as you travel to and from Cuba. IFSA can provide a sample letter if your employer needs guidance.

Travel under this license means you'll need to follow OFAC's guidelines. The guidelines primarily address how you spend money. First is to note that you are to keep a record of all money you spend in Cuba, and that is subject to review by the U.S. government for five years. We recommend creating your own receipts and getting signatures for small things such as taxis and peso restaurants and keeping a running tally of expenses such as tips.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Cuba on the Web

Cuba on the IFSA-Butler Website

<http://www.ifsa-butler.org/cuba-overview.html>

Travel to Cuba: The Latest on Flights, Hotels, and Credit Cards

http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/07/20/travel/travel-to-cuba-the-latest-on-flights-hotels-and-credit-cards.html?referrer=&_r=0

Cuban Tourism is a Work in Progress

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/cuban-tourism-is-a-work-in-progress-1442437838>

For Cubans, the struggle to supplement meagre rations is a consuming obsession

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/24/cubans-food-struggle-rations-consuming-obsession>

Cuba: We Never Left

<http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/08/14/cuba-we-never-left/>

Is Cuba Safe for Gay Travelers? What You Need to Know

<https://www.yahoo.com/style/is-cuba-safe-for-gay-travelers-what-you-need-to-126466553037.html>

Cuban internet delivered weekly by hand

<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-33816655>

In Cuba, an Abundance of Love but a Lack of Babies

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/28/world/americas/in-cuba-an-abundance-of-love-but-a-lack-of-babies.html?emc=edit_tnt_20151028&nid=25216586&tntemail0=y

***Antropología en Cuba: Orígenes y Desarrollo* (Anthropology in Cuba: Origins and Development); Review of book publishes by Armando Rangel Rivero, one of our two core course professors**

<http://muse.jhu.edu/article/588717>

Cuba in Film

Strawberry and Chocolate

Tomás Gutiérrez and Carlos Tabío (1993)

Buena Vista Social Club

Win Wenders (1999)

Tomorrow

Alejandro Moya (2006)

Una Noche

Lucy Mulloy (2012)

Cuba in Writing

Books by Cubans:

<http://www.lahabana.com/content/20-must-read-cuban-books-from-the-past-20-years/>

Books about Cuba:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/17/5-great-books-about-cuba.html>

Appendix 1
Evening Activities in Havana

Most cafes and restaurants in Habana Vieja have live Cuban music every night.

Music and Dancing	
Casa de La Amistad Cuban <i>Paseo 3/ 17 y 19</i> Vedado	La Zorra y El Cuervo Jazz <i>Avenida 23 y Calle O (Near Hotel Vedado)</i> Vedado
Casa de La Música Salsa <i>Calle Galiano, entre Neptuno y Concordia</i> Centro Habana	Cafe Cantante Mi Habana Salsa (25 CUC cover) <i>Avenida Paseo, below Teatro Nacional</i> Vedado
1830 Salsa (1-3 CUC cover) <i>Malecon</i> Centro Habana	El Gato Tuerto Karaoke, dance club <i>Calle O e/ 17 y 19</i> Vedado
Jazz Cafe Jazz (10 CUC cover) <i>Avenida de Paseo Esq. Calle 3</i> Vedado	Piano Bar Delirio Habanero Mixed <i>Teatro Nacional de Cuba, Paseo y Calle 39</i> Vedado
Other	
La Factoria Microbrewery <i>Plaza Vieja, esq. San Ignacio y Muralla</i> Habana Vieja	Cabaret Parisi�n Dance show <i>Hotel Nacional</i> Vedado
Museo de Chocolate Chocolate Caf�, open until 10 PM <i>Amargura esq. Mercaderes</i> Habana Vieja	

We listed the cover charges we are aware of, but prices and entrance requirements may change without notice. Check venue’s hours and entrance fees with your hotel before leaving.

Helpful pages for current events:

<http://www.cubarte.cult.cu/en>

<http://www.fac.cu/>

