**Cuba Facts and Culture**

* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/family.htm) Very little new homes have been built in Cuba since the early sixties, therefore it is not unusual for three... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/fashion.htm) Casual dress and lightweight slacks are the norm during the day with more formal wear in the evenings. Shorts are... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/visiting.htm) It is customary to bring either wine or a small gift for the hosts. [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/visiting.htm)

**Cuba Facts**

Cuba stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital  | Havana  |
| Government Type  | Communist state  |
| Population  | 11,061,886  |
| Total Area  | 42,803 Square Miles110,860 Square Kilometers  |
| Location  | Caribbean, island between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, 150 km south of Key West, Florida  |
| Language  | Spanish (official)  |

Map of Cuba



**Cuba Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

With an area of more than 44,000 square miles (114,447 sq. km.), Cuba is the largest island in the West Indies, accounting for more than one-half of the total Caribbean land mass. The island is more than 745 miles (1,200 km.) long, and ranges from 20 to 125 miles (35-200 km.) in width. Cuba's coastline is highly uneven and is broken into hundreds of bays, inlets, and narrow, shallow rivers. The Isle of Youth (known as the Isle of Pines in pre-Revolution days), and some 1,600 keys and islets lie offshore. The deep-water harbors of Havana, Guantánamo, and Bahía Honda rank among the world's finest.

Topographically, three-fifths of Cuba displays flat or gently rolling fields and wide, fertile valleys--ideal for sugar cane and tobacco that have been the agricultural staples of the Cuban economy. The northern coast is low and somewhat rocky; the southern coast more marshy. Most of what remains, particularly at the southeastern end of the island, forms steep and at times formidable mountains. Three mountain ranges dominate the Cuban terrain, but by far the best known and most rugged is the eastern Sierra Maestra, where peaks rise to almost 6,000 feet (1,829 m.) above sea level.

**Geography - note**

largest country in Caribbean and westernmost island of the Greater Antilles

**Cuba Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location  | The Caribbean  |
| Total Area  | 42,803 Square Miles110,860 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Area  | 42,402 Square Miles109,820 Square Kilometers  |
| Water Area  | 402 Square Miles1,040 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Boundaries  | 18 Miles29 Kilometers  |
| Irrigated Land  | 3,360 Square Miles8,703 Square Kilometers  |
| Border Countries  | US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay 29 kmnote: Guantanamo Naval Base is leased by the US and remains part of Cuba  |
| Coastline  | 2,321 Miles3,735 Kilometers  |
| Geographic Coordinates  | 21 30 N, 80 00 W  |
| Terrain  | mostly flat to rolling plains, with rugged hills and mountains in the southeast  |
| Highest Point  | 2,005 Meters  |
| Highest Point Location  | Pico Turquino 2,005 m  |
| Lowest Point Location  | Caribbean Sea 0 m  |
| Natural Resources  | cobalt, nickel, iron ore, chromium, copper, salt, timber, silica, petroleum, arable land  |
| Time Zone  | UTC-5 (same time as Washington, DC during Standard Time)  |
| Daylight saving time  | +1hr, begins second Sunday in March; ends first Sunday in November; note - Cuba has been known to alter the schedule of DST on short notice in an attempt to conserve electricity for lighting  |

**Cuba Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Cuba is bordered on the south by the Caribbean Sea and on the north by the Gulf of Mexico and the Straits of Florida. Prevailing trade winds combine with warm waters of the Gulf Stream to produce a mild and semitropical climate. Cuba's mean temperature is about 77°F (25°C) in winter and only slightly more, perhaps 80°F to 85°F (26°C), in summer. Averages range only between 70°F (21°C) and 82°F (27°C) for the coldest and warmest months. Summer readings as high as 100°F (37°C) have been recorded. Occasional near-freezing temperatures occur only in mountain areas.

Relative humidity varies from 60% to 70% in the daytime and from 80% to 90% during the night, regardless of the season, of which there are only two. The dry season lasts from November to April. During the May through October rainy season, Cuba receives up to 75% of its yearly rainfall, which averages 54 inches (137 cm).

**Cuba Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate  | Cuba is bordered on the south by the Caribbean Sea and on the north by the Gulf of Mexico and the Straits of Florida. Prevailing trade winds combine with warm waters of the Gulf Stream to produce a mild and semitropical climate. Cuba's mean temperature is about 77°F (25°C) in winter and only slightly more, perhaps 80°F to 85°F (26°C), in summer. Averages range only between 70°F (21°C) and 82°F (27°C) for the coldest and warmest months. Summer readings as high as 100°F (37°C) have been recorded. Occasional near-freezing temperatures occur only in mountain areas.Relative humidity varies from 60% to 70% in the daytime and from 80% to 90% during the night, regardless of the season, of which there are only two. The dry season lasts from November to April. During the May through October rainy season, Cuba receives up to 75% of its yearly rainfall, which averages 54 inches (137 cm). |
| Terrain  | mostly flat to rolling plains, with rugged hills and mountains in the southeast  |
| Natural Resources  | cobalt, nickel, iron ore, chromium, copper, salt, timber, silica, petroleum, arable land  |
| Natural Hazards  | the east coast is subject to hurricanes from August to November (in general, the country averages about one hurricane every other year); droughts are common  |
| Irrigated Land  | 3,360 Square Miles8,703 Square Kilometers  |
| Environmental Issues  | air and water pollution; biodiversity loss; deforestation  |
| Environment - International Agreements  | party to: Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlandssigned, but not ratified: Marine Life Conservation  |

**Cuba Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population  | 11,061,886  |
| Population Growth Rate  | -0.13%  |
| Urban Population  | 75.2%  |
| Population in Major Urban Areas  | HAVANA (capital) 2.116 million  |
| Nationality Noun  | Cuban(s)  |
| Nationality Adjective  | Cuban  |
| Ethnic Groups  | white 65.1%, mulatto and mestizo 24.8%, black 10.1%  |
| Languages  | Spanish (official)  |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change  | -0.0 |

**Cuba Medical Information**

Medical care in Cuba does not meet U.S. standards. While medical professionals are generally competent, many health facilities face shortages of medical supplies and bed space. Many medications are unavailable, so travelers to Cuba should bring with them any prescribed medicine in its original container and in amounts commensurate with personal use. Travelers may also wish to consider bringing small additional amounts of prescribed medicines and over-the-counter remedies in the event that a return to the United States is delayed for unforeseen reasons. A copy of the prescription and a letter from the prescribing physician explaining the need for prescription drugs may facilitate their entry into the country.

Travelers to the Havana area should be aware that U.S. and other foreign visitors are generally referred to the “tourist” Cira Garcia Hospital located in the Miramar neighborhood of Havana. Treatment at Cira Garcia and any other medical consultation requires payment in cash (see section on Medical Insurance below), and the Cuban Government disallows the use of U.S. dollars.

**Cuba Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP)  | 10%  |
| Death Rate/1,000 population  | 7.58  |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate  | 21.5%  |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population  | 5.1  |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population  | 6.72  |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population  | 4.76  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population  | 4.39  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population  | 5.12  |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years  | 3.4%  |
| Total Fertility Rate  | 1.46  |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49)  | 74.3%  |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births  | 73  |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate  | 0.1%  |
| HIV Aids Deaths  | 90  |
| HIV Aids People Living With  | 7,100  |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved  | 6%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved  | 87.3%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved  | 96.3%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved  | 7.4%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved  | 94%  |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved  | 88.2%  |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk  | intermediate  |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s)  | bacterial diarrhea and hepatitis A  |
| Vectorborne Disease (s)  | dengue fever  |

**Cuba Crime**

**Crime Information**

Official crime statistics are not published by the Cuban government, but reporting by U.S. citizens and other foreign travelers indicates that the majority of incidents are non-violent and theft-related – e.g., pick-pocketing, purse snatching, or the taking of unattended / valuable items. There is anecdotal evidence that violent crime has increased in Cuba and is generally associated with assaults committed during a burglary or robbery. The U.S. Government cannot confirm this information but rates the threat of crime in Cuba as medium. In the event of a confrontation, travelers should not resist as perpetrators may be armed. Thefts generally occur in crowded areas such as markets, beaches, and other gathering points, including Old Town Havana and the Prado neighborhood. Travelers should exercise basic situational awareness at all times and are advised not to leave belongings unattended, nor to carry purses and bags loosely over one shoulder.

Visitors should avoid wearing flashy jewelry or displaying large amounts of cash. When possible, visitors should carry a copy of their passport with them and leave the original at a secure location. U.S. 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, many are in fact professional criminals who may resort to violence in their efforts to acquire tourists' money and other valuables. When exchanging currency, use state-run offices to convert dollars and avoid independent/street vendors as we have seen a slight increase in the number of persons trying to pass counterfeit bills at the Interests Section.

All travelers should ensure that valuables remain under their personal control at all times and are never put into checked baggage.

**Cuba Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Cuba’s laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cuba are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Those accused of drug-related and other crimes face long legal proceedings and delayed due process. In one 2009 drug conviction, a U.S. citizen was sentenced to 18 years in prison. In some cases, the Cuban government has not permitted U.S. consular access to Cuban-American prisoners with dual nationality.

Criminal penalties are also harsh for foreigners or dual nationals suspected of assisting Cuban migrants who attempt to leave Cuba illegally. Average jail sentences for individuals charged with migrant smuggling range from 10 to 25 years. In a 2007 case, a U.S. citizen was arrested for attempting to facilitate the illegal departure of his Cuban family members via raft. He was charged with migrant smuggling and received a jail sentence of 16 years.

Traffic laws in Cuba differ greatly from those in the United States. U.S. citizen drivers involved in traffic accidents that result in the death or injury of any party may be held criminally liable, regardless of fault. Six U.S. citizens are currently serving prison terms in Cuba for vehicular homicide, including one for a single-car accident that resulted in the death of the driver’s family-member passenger. The U.S. Interests Section recommends extreme caution when driving in Cuba as hazardous road conditions, poor signage, and jaywalking pedestrians may result in accidents. See TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS for more information.

The Cuban government has strict laws prohibiting the importation of weapons. The Department of State warns all U.S. citizens against taking any type of firearm or ammunition into Cuba. Entering Cuba with a firearm or even a single round of ammunition is illegal, even if the weapon or ammunition is taken into Cuba unintentionally. The Cuban government strictly enforces laws restricting the entry of firearms and ammunition at airports and seaports, and routinely x-rays all incoming luggage. U.S. citizens entering Cuba with a weapon or ammunition (including even a small number of bullets), even accidentally, are subject to fines or possible imprisonment. Travelers are strongly advised to thoroughly inspect all belongings prior to travel to Cuba to avoid the accidental import of ammunition or firearms.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

**Cuba Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth  | 78 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female  | 80 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male  | 75 Years  |
| Median Age (female)  | 40 Years  |
| Median Age (male)  | 38 Years  |
| Median Age  | 39 Years  |

**Cuba Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language  | Spanish (official)  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over can read and write  |
| Literacy Female  | 99.8%  |
| Literacy Male  | 99.8%  |
| Literacy Total  | 99.8%  |

**Cuba Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP  | 12.8%  |
| Literacy - female  | 99.8%  |
| Literacy - male  | 99.8%  |
| Literacy - total population  | 99.8%  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over can read and write  |
| School Life Expectancy - female  | 15 Years  |
| School Life Expectancy - male  | 14 Years  |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary)  | 15 Years  |

**Cuba Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name  | Havana  |
| Country Name  | Cuba  |
| Local - Long  | Republica de Cuba  |
| Full Country Name  | Republic of Cuba  |
| Local - Short  | Cuba  |
| Government Type  | Communist state  |
| Capital - geographic coordinate  | 23 07 N, 82 21 W  |
| Daylight Savings Time  | +1hr, begins second Sunday in March; ends first Sunday in November; note - Cuba has been known to alter the schedule of DST on short notice in an attempt to conserve electricity for lighting  |
| Capital Time Difference  | UTC-5 (same time as Washington, DC during Standard Time)  |
| National Holiday  | Triumph of the Revolution, 1 January (1959)  |
| Constitution  | 24 February 1976, amended July 1992 and June 2002  |
| Legal System  | civil law system based on Spanish civil code  |
| Suffrage  | 16 years of age; universal  |

**Cuba Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch  | chief of state: President of the Council of State and President of the Council of Ministers Gen. Raul CASTRO Ruz (president since 24 February 2008); First Vice President of the Council of State and First Vice President of the Council of Ministers Miguel DIAZ-CANEL Bermudez (since 24 February 2013); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government head of government: President of the Council of State and President of the Council of Ministers Gen. Raul CASTRO Ruz (president since 24 February 2008); First Vice President of the Council of State and First Vice President of the Council of Ministers Miguel DIAZ-CANEL Bermudez (since 24 February 2013) cabinet: Council of Ministers proposed by the president of the Council of State, appointed by the National Assembly or the 28-member Council of State, and elected by the assembly to act on its behalf when it is not in session elections: president and vice presidents elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term; election last held on 24 February 2013 (next to be held in 2018) election results: Gen. Raul CASTRO Ruz reelected president; percent of legislative vote - 100%; Miguel DIAZ-CANEL Bermudez elected vice president; percent of legislative vote - 100%  |
| Legislative Branch  | unicameral National Assembly of People's Power or Asemblea Nacional del Poder Popular (number of seats in the National Assembly is based on population; 614 seats; members elected directly from slates approved by special candidacy commissions to serve five-year terms)elections: last held on 3 February 2013 (next to be held in 2018)election results: Cuba's Communist Party is the only legal party, and officially sanctioned candidates run unopposed  |
| Judicial Branch  | People's Supreme Court or Tribunal Supremo Popular (president, vice presidents, and other judges are elected by the National Assembly)  |
| Regions or States  | 15 provinces (provincias, singular - provincia) and 1 special municipality\* (municipio especial); Artemisa, Camaguey, Ciego de Avila, Cienfuegos, Granma, Guantanamo, Holguin, Isla de la Juventud\*, La Habana, Las Tunas, Matanzas, Mayabeque, Pinar del Rio, Sancti Spiritus, Santiago de Cuba, Villa Clara  |
| Political Parties and Leaders  | Cuban Communist Party or PCC [Raul CASTRO Ruz, first secretary]  |
| International Law Organization Participation  | has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt  |
| International Organization Participation  | ACP, ALBA, AOSIS, CELAC, FAO, G-77, IAEA, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICRM, IFAD, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM (observer), IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, LAES, LAIA, NAM, OAS (excluded from formal participation since 1962), OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, Petrocaribe, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO  |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders  | Human Rights Watch; National Association of Small Farmers  |

**Cuba Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product  | $121,000,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - official exchange rate  | $72,300,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - real growth rate  | 3.1%  |
| GDP Per Capita  | $10,200.00 (USD)  |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture  | 3.8%  |
| GDP by Sector- Industry  | 22.3%  |
| GDP by Sector- services  | 73.9%  |
| Inflation Rate  | 5.5%  |
| Labor Force  | 5,050,000  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture  | 19.7%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry  | 17.1%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services  | 63.2%  |
| Unemployment Rate  | 3.8%  |
| Unemployment - note  | these are official rates; unofficial estimates are about double the official figures  |
| Fiscal Year  | calendar year  |
| Annual Budget  | $47,000,000,000 (USD)  |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP  | -3.7%  |
| Public Debt (% of GDP)  | 35.1%  |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP  | 65.9%  |
| Major Industries  | petroleum, nickel/cobalt, pharmaceuticals, tobacco, construction, steel, cement, agricultural machinery, sugar  |
| Industrial Growth Rate  | 0.8%  |
| Agriculture Products  | sugar, tobacco, citrus, coffee, rice, potatoes, beans; livestock  |
| Currency Code  | Cuban peso (CUP)  |

**Cuba Economy**

**Economic Overview**

The government continues to balance the need for loosening its socialist economic system against a desire for firm political control. The government in April 2011 held the first Cuban Communist Party Congress in almost 13 years, during which leaders approved a plan for wide-ranging economic changes. President Raul CASTRO said such changes were needed to update the economic model to ensure the survival of socialism. The government has expanded opportunities for self-employment and has introduced limited reforms, some initially implemented in the 1990s, to increase enterprise efficiency and alleviate serious shortages of food, consumer goods, services, and housing. The average Cuban's standard of living remains at a lower level than before the downturn of the 1990s, which was caused by the loss of Soviet aid and domestic inefficiencies. Since late 2000, Venezuela has been providing oil on preferential terms, and it currently supplies over 100,000 barrels per day of petroleum products. Cuba has been paying for the oil, in part, with the services of Cuban personnel in Venezuela including some 30,000 medical professionals.

**Cuba Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports  | $5,600,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Exports  | petroleum, nickel, medical products, sugar, tobacco, fish, citrus, coffee  |
| Top Export Partners  | China 24.8%, Canada 21.5%, Venezuela 7.1%, Netherlands 7.1%, Spain 6.5%  |

**Cuba Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports  | $13,680,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Imports  | petroleum, food, machinery and equipment, chemicals  |
| Top Import Partners  | Venezuela 37.4%, China 9.8%, Spain 8.4%, Brazil 5.2%, Canada 4.4%  |

**Cuba Flag**

The flag was designed by Cuban poet Teurbe Tolon in 1849. The star symbolizes a light which provides the way towards freedom and was taken from the flag of Texas. The triangle is a Masonic symbol of liberty, equality and fraternity. The three blue stripes stand for the three sectors into which Cuba was divided by the Spaniards. The white is for the pure intentions of the revolutionaries and for justice. Red is for the blood that was shed in the struggle for independence.

**Cuba Flag Description**

five equal horizontal bands of blue (top and bottom) alternating with white; a red equilateral triangle based on the hoist side bears a white, five-pointed star in the center; design influenced by the United States and Texas flags.

TRANSLATE



Cuba flag



**Cuba Interesting Facts**

* Food, music, pinatas and lots of people are all part of the birthday celebration. The celebrations are very similar to the United States; food, decorations, gifts, pinatas, cake, candles, “happy birthday” song and games. But a lot of people are invited including neighbors, friends, co-workers and family even if they don't have kids around the birthday child's age.
* Every May since 1962, Ernest Hemingway is remembered in a Cuban competition called the Ernest Hemingway International Marlin Fishing Tournament. Fidel Castro once participated in this event.
* About 150 million years ago, Cuba was part of a submerged North American mountain range. Movements of the earth's crust below the sea made the mountain tops appear above the surface of the water. These peaks became the Caribbean islands that we know today.
* Ballet is very popular in Cuba. Prima ballerina Alicia Alonso founded the Ballet Nacional de Cuba in 1948. Later, her husband, Fernando Alonso, founded the Camagüey Ballet.
* Cuba's best-known painter is the surrealist Wilfredo Lam (1902-82). He lived most of his life abroad.
* Cuba has two national television stations, Cubavision and Tele Rebelde. They broadcast between 6 p.m. and midnight daily, except on weekends, when children's programs are aired during the day.
* Cuban families may celebrate a daughter's fifteenth birthday by throwing a big party. Traditionally, this celebration announced her readiness for marriage.
* During the 17th century, pirates buried stolen treasure on an island off Cuba called the Isle of Youth. According to legend, this was the famous Treasure Island described in Robert Louis Stevenson's novel.
* Every morning, Cuban school children begin their day by singing the patriotic slogan, “ Pioneers for communism, we shall be like Che.” Ernesto (Che) Guevara was an Argentine-born revolutionary who influenced Castro and supported the revolution in Cuba. Guevara died in 1967 but is still considered a role model by socialists.
* In the 1960s the largest government campaign in Cuba was a literacy campaign. More than 250,000 young volunteers, both teachers and students, went to rural areas to teach Cuban farmers and peasants to read and write.
* In the Santería religion, each saint has a festival day. Followers come together to dance, sing, listen to the beat of the drums, and make offerings to the saint or orisha.
* José Martí (1858-95) was a leading figure in Cuba's struggle for independence. He spent many years in exile, and wrote poems and essays about the need for Cubans to break free of Spanish and American domination. In 1895, he helped lead an army against the Spanish at Dos Rios. He was killed when he rode headlong into the enemy lines. Today, Cubans revere Martí as a hero.
* José Martí (1858-95) was a leading figure in Cuba's struggle for independence. He spent many years in exile, and wrote poems and essays about the need for Cubans to break free of Spanish and American domination. In 1895, he helped lead an army against the Spanish at Dos Rios. He was killed when he rode headlong into the enemy lines. Today, Cubans revere Martí as a hero.
* Many mountains, rivers and towns in Cuba retain the names given to them by the indigenous peoples. The name "Cuba" comes from a Taino word meaning a center or central place.
* Men usually do two years of compulsory military service between the ages of 16 and 30. Recently, they have been given the option of doing agricultural service instead.
* Small, family-run restaurants called paladares were legalized in 1993, although they were a tradition before that time. Most of these restaurants accept payment only in American dollars.
* The number of people infected with AIDS and HIV in Cuba is low compared to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1996, Cuba began testing an anti-AIDS vaccine. Cuba is one of only six countries in the world to perform clinical tests on humans. Cuba also has sanatoriums where anyone infected with the virus is isolated from the community.
* The royal palm is the symbol of Cuba. It occupies the central position in Cuba's national coat of arms and symbolizes strength.
* A Cuban called Kid Chocolate was the world boxing champion in the 1920s.
* Sugar is harvested between November and June. Before mechanization, Cuba brought in temporary workers from Haiti and Jamaica to cut the stalks by hand with machetes. In the 1980s, huge harvesters that could cut a truckload of cane in 10 minutes worked around the clock, using floodlights during the night. Recent fuel shortages, however, have forced workers to return to more labor-intensive methods.

**History of Cuba**

Spanish settlers established the raising of cattle, sugarcane, and tobacco as Cuba’s primary economic pursuits. As the native Indian population died out, African slaves were imported to work the ranches and plantations. Slavery was abolished in 1886.

Cuba was the last major Spanish colony to gain independence, following a lengthy struggle begun in 1868. Jose Marti, Cuba’s national hero, helped initiate the final push for independence in 1895. In 1898, the United States entered the conflict after an explosion of undetermined origin caused the USS Maine to sink in Havana Harbor on February 15. In December of that year, under the Treaty of Paris, Spain relinquished control of Cuba to the United States. On May 20, 1902, the United States granted Cuba its independence but retained the right to intervene to preserve Cuban independence and stability in accordance with the Platt Amendment. In 1934, the Platt Amendment was repealed. The United States and Cuba concluded a Treaty of Relations in 1934 which, among other things, continued the 1903 agreements that leased the Guantanamo Bay naval base to the United States.

Independent Cuba was often ruled by authoritarian political and military figures who either obtained or remained in power by force. Fulgencio Batista, an army sergeant, organized a non-commissioned officer revolt in September 1933 and wielded significant power behind the scenes until he was elected president in 1940. Batista was voted out of office in 1944 and did not run in 1948. Both those elections were won by civilian political figures with the support of party organizations. Running for president again in 1952, Batista seized power in a bloodless coup 3 months before the election was to take place, suspended the balloting, and began ruling by decree. Many political figures and movements that wanted a return to the government according to the Constitution of 1940 disputed Batista’s undemocratic rule.

On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro, who had been involved in increasingly violent political activity before Batista’s coup, led a failed attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba in which more than 100 died. After defending himself in a trial open to national and international media, he was convicted and jailed, and subsequently was freed in an act of clemency, then went into exile in Mexico. There he organized the “26th of July Movement” with the goal of overthrowing Batista, and the group sailed to Cuba on board the yacht Granma, landing in the eastern part of the island in December 1956.

Batista’s dictatorial rule fueled increasing popular discontent and the rise of many active urban and rural resistance groups, a fertile political environment for Castro’s 26th of July Movement. Faced with a corrupt and ineffective military, itself dispirited by a U.S. Government embargo on weapons sales to Cuba, and public indignation and revulsion at his brutality toward opponents, Batista fled on January 1, 1959. Although Castro had promised a return to constitutional rule and democratic elections along with social reforms, Castro used his control of the military to consolidate power by repressing all dissent from his decisions, marginalizing other resistance figures, and imprisoning or executing thousands of opponents. An estimated 3,200 people were executed by the Castro regime between 1959-62 alone. As the revolution became more radical, hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled the island.

Castro declared Cuba a socialist state on April 16, 1961. For the next 30 years, Castro pursued close relations with the Soviet Union and worked in concert with the geopolitical goals of Soviet communism, funding and fomenting violent subversive and insurrectional activities, as well as military adventurism, until the demise of the U.S.S.R. in 1991.

Relations between the United States and Cuba deteriorated rapidly as the Cuban regime expropriated U.S. properties and moved toward adoption of a one-party communist system. In response, the United States imposed an embargo on Cuba in October 1960, and, in response to Castro’s provocations, broke diplomatic relations on January 3, 1961. Tensions between the two governments peaked during the October 1962 missile crisis.

**Cuba History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cuba Year in History | Cuba Timeline |
| 1250  | **Taino Indians arrive from the east.**  |
| 1492  | **Christopher Columbus claims Cuba for Spain.**  |
| 1511  | **Spanish colonization of the island begins.**  |
| 1514  | **The city of Havana is established.**It iss established by Pánfilode Narváez. The city is named after San Cristóbal de Habana, a local chief.  |
| 1526  | **Importing of slaves from Africa begins.**  |
| 1602  | **Cuba's population is estimated at about 20,000.**About 13,000 of which live in and around Havana.  |
| 1603  | **Sale of tobacco to foreigners is declared punishable by death.**In order to end smuggling activities.  |
| 1607  | **Havana is named the capital of Cuba.**  |
| 1697  | **The Treaty of Ryswick.**Buccaneering is outlined, endingmany pirate raids on the island.  |
| 1762  | **Havana captured by the British.**Admiral George Pocock and Lord Albemarle lead the force.  |
| 1763  | **The Treaty of Paris.**Havana is returned to Spain.  |
| 1868  | **War of independence.**Lasting ten years, the war waged by Cuban colonials wantingindependence from what they see as unjust rule from Spain. The War endsin a treaty and promise of greater autonomy for Cuba.  |
| 1895  | **Jose Marti leads a second war of independence.**At the same time, the United States declares war on Spain.  |
| 1898  | **Cuba becomes independent.**Tomas Estrada Palma becomes president. Jowever, the Platt Amendment keeps the island under US protection andgives the US the right to intervene in Cuban affairs.  |
| 1898  | **United States defeats Spain.**Spain gives up all claims to Cuba and cedes it to the United States.  |
| 1906  | **President Tomas Estrada resigns.**The United States invades andoccupies Cuba after a rebellion led by Jose Miguel Gomez.  |
| 1925  | **Socialist Party is founded.**The Party would eventually form the basis of the Communist Party.  |
| 1959  | **Fidel Castro leads a Communist revolution.**The rebel army overthrows President Fulgencio Batista.  |
| 1960  | **United States breaks diplomatic relations with Havana.**All US businesses in Cuba are nationalized without compensation.  |
| 1961  | **The Bay of Pigs.**United States sponsors an abortive invasion by Cuban exiles.Castro proclaims Cuba a communist state and allies the country with theUSSR.  |
| 1962  | **Cuban Missile Crisis.**Castro allows the USSR to deploynuclear missiles in Cuba. The crisis is solved when the USSR agrees to take back the missiles in exchange for the US withdrawing theirmissiles from Turkey.  |
| 1965  | **Cuba’s sole political party renamed the Cuban Communist Party.**Cuba’s sole political party renamed the Cuban Communist Party.  |
| 1976  | **Fedel Castro elected president.**Cuban Communist Party approves a new socialist constitution.  |
| 1980  | **More than 100,000 Cubans flee to the United States.**  |
| 1994  | **The United States agrees to admit 20,000 Cubans a year.**Cuba signs an agreement with the United States, Cuba agrees to halt the exodus ofrefugees.  |
| 1999  | **Elian Gonzalez is picked up off the coast of Florida..**The boat in which he and his mother hadtried to escape to the US capsized. Cuban exiles in Miami begin acampaign to prevent Elian from returning to his father in Cuba. Hugeprotests occur in Havana calling for the return of Elian. In June 2000, Elian is allowed to rejoin his father in Cuba after prolonged court battles.  |
| 2008  | **Raul Castro takes over as president.**Fidel Castro announces his retirement.  |
| 2011  | **Travel restrictions relaxed**United States President Barack Obama relaxes restrictions on travel to Cuba. Havana says the measures do not go far enough.  |
| 2013  | **Raul Castro elected**The National Assembly re-elects Raul Castro as president. He says he will stand down at the end of his second term in 2018, by which time he will be 86.  |

**Cuba Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| January 3rd  | **Birth date - Alma Flor Ada**Birth date - Alma Flor Ada, Cuban author, was born Jan. 3, 1938. |
| December 10th  | **Independence Day**10 December 1898 is the date of independence from Spain, 20 May 1902 is the date of independence from US administration; Rebellion Day, 26 July (1953)  |

**Cuba Meals and Food**

Recipes from Cuba

* [Moros (black beans and rice) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/recipe/moros-black-beans-and-rice.htm)
* [Platanos Dulces Fritos (Fried Sweet Plantains) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/recipe/platanos-dulces-fritos-fried-sweet-plantains.htm)
* [Puerco Asado (Cuban Pork Roast) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/recipe/puerco-asado-cuban-pork-roast.htm)
* [Ropa Vieja (Shredded Beef) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/recipe/ropa-vieja-shredded-beef.htm)
* [Yuca (Cassava) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Cuba/recipe/yuca-cassava.htm)

**Cuba Recipes and Diet**

Cuba food and meal customs

**Diet**

Traditional Cuban cuisine is called criollo. Traditional Cuban cooking uses hints and blends of Spanish, Afro-Caribbean, Portuguese, French, Arabic and even Chinese culinary influences and techniques. The basic ingredients are rice, beans, eggs, tomatoes, lettuce, chicken, beef and pork. Yucca (also known as cassava) and malanga are root vegetables that can be boiled or baked. The most common seasonings are onion and “ajo” or garlic.

“Ajiaco” is a stew made with meat, garlic and vegetables. Pork may be served with a garlic sauce called mojo criollo. Congrí is rice cooked with red kidney beans. Rice with black beans is called moros y cristianos, which means “Moors and Christians.” Fufú is made from green bananas that have been boiled and mashed. It is sometimes served with crumbled pork rinds. Fritúra de maíz (corn fritters) are often served at street stalls. Plátanos maduros fritos (fried sweet bananas) may be served as a dessert.

Rationing was introduced in 1962 to ensure that all Cubans have equal access to food. The ration book “libreta” is supposed to guarantee a regular supply of foods such as sugar, rice, beans and cooking oil to all Cubans.

Coffee is usually served strong and sweet. Another favorite drink is guarapo, a clear juice made from sugar cane. Cuba's national drink is rum, and Cuba is famous for its rum cocktails. The mojito is made with white rum, ice, fresh lime juice, sugar, soda water and fresh mint leaves. The daiquiri consists of white rum, sugar, fresh lime juice and crushed ice.

A typical Cuban breakfast consists of toast (tostadas) dipped in white coffee (café con leche), a combination of strong coffee and warm milk. Lunch and dinner, usually consist of a hearty spread, usually with dishes combining white rice, black beans and other legumes, meats and salads. Cuban sandwiches and empanadas (meat or chicken pasties) are popular for lunch, as are mariquitas, which are thinly sliced plantain chips. There are many tasty Cuban desserts to enjoy, such as the Cuban flan and bread pudding .

Food in Cuba



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**Cuba Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish (official)

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Cuba Clothing and Fashion**

Casual dress and lightweight slacks are the norm during the day with more formal wear in the evenings. Shorts are popular at the beach but no shorts are allowed at night in public places.



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**Dating, Family and Children Cuba**

**Family and Children**

Very little new homes have been built in Cuba since the early sixties, therefore it is not unusual for three generations to live in one apartment. In the countryside, some people still live in traditional Cuban “bohíos”. These are palm wood huts with roofs made of palm leaves.

With the help of child-care centers, as well as maternity benefits, many women have entered the work force. In 1974, the Family Code was passed, which set out the responsibilities of married couples. The Code gave men and women equal rights and responsibilities for housework, child rearing and education.

**Cuba Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

Cubans speak rapidly and may not pronounce the final consonants of certain words. This makes it difficult for people who are learning Spanish to understand them easily. When meeting someone for the first time, or when speaking to elderly people, Cubans speak in a more formal way as a sign of respect.

In Cuba, women may be addressed as “compañera” and men as “compañero“ which means “comrade.” It is common to shake hands when meeting someone and when saying goodbye. Men commonly exchange a hug “un abrazo” as a sign of affection. It is also common for men and women to greet friends and family with a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

**Gestures**

Maintaining eye contact while talking is important. When making a point p may stand close together and touch or tap each other. It is not considered rude to interrupt a friend or acquaintance during conversation.

**Visiting**

It is customary to bring either wine or a small gift for the hosts.

**Cultural Attributes**

Cubans are a generous, resourceful and cheerful people. Daily life is challenged by economic and political problems. Nevertheless, Cubans are happy people, always wanting to help and enjoy having fun. Cubans have a straightforward approach to life

**Cuba Church and Religion**

The Communist regime has not always been tolerant of religious beliefs. For many years, people were persecuted and denied access to jobs and education if they practiced their religion. In 1992, religious freedom was granted to all and an amendment was made to the constitution. Cubans now have the right to practice or preach the religion of their choice. Recently there has been a new spiritual awakening in Cuba. More and more young Cubans are turning to religion.

One faith that has always been practiced in Cuba is called Santería (the way of the saints). It is a mixture of Catholic and African Yoruba traditions. The Yoruba religion originated in Nigeria and Benin. When Africans arrived in Cuba, they were taught a few basic prayers and were baptized by the Catholic Church. They found similarities between Catholicism and their traditional religion.

Babalaos (priests) help santeros (Santería believers) find solutions to problems relating to health, money, love or the legal system. The practice of Santería may involve dancing, wearing a special charm or beads or sacrificing a pigeon or a chicken. Santería festivals are celebrated with dances, drumming, songs and offerings that are specific to each ceremony. During these festivals, the santeros dance. A believer who goes into a trance represents the orisha for the group and delivers messages, advice and wisdom to other believers.

There has been a Jewish community in Cuba since the 16th century. The first Jews to arrive in Cuba were Sephardic Jews from Spain who were fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. In the early 20th century, they were joined by Ashkenazic Jews from Eastern Europe.

Approximately 40 to 45 percent of the population were believed to identify themselves, at least nominally, with the Catholic Church. Some sources estimated that as much as 70 percent of the population practiced Santeria, which has its roots in West African traditional religions.

The Baptists, represented in four different conventions, were possibly the largest Protestant denomination, followed closely by the Pentecostal churches, particularly the Assemblies of God. Membership in the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC) increased to twenty-three when World Wide Missions, a Pentecostal church, joined in March 2006. Other members included Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Methodist groups, but not the Catholic Church. The CCC was structured into five "zones" across the island and, according to the CCC's leadership, represented approximately 100,000 Christians. Most CCC members were officially recognized by the state, although several, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church, lacked legal status and were recognized through their membership in the CCC. Other officially recognized groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the small Jewish and Muslim communities, did not belong to the CCC.

Foreign missionary groups operated in the country through registered churches.

The constitution recognizes the right of citizens to profess and practice any religious belief within the framework of respect for the law; however, in law and in practice, the Government places restrictions on freedom of religion. The constitution has provided for the separation of church and state since the early twentieth century. In 1992 the constitution was changed, and references to scientific materialism or atheism were removed. The Government does not officially favor any particular religion or church, but it appeared to be most tolerant of those churches that maintained close relations with the state through the CCC.

The Government requires churches and other religious groups to register with the provincial Registry of Associations within the Ministry of Justice to obtain official recognition. Registration procedures require groups to identify where they will carry out their activities, demonstrate that they have the funding for these activities, and obtain certification from the Registry of Associations that they are not duplicating the activities of a previously registered organization. Registration allows church officials to obtain official permission to travel abroad and receive foreign visitors, receive imported religious literature through the CCC, and meet in officially recognized places of worship. Conversely, members of unregistered religious groups must request exit permits on an individual basis, obtain religious materials through extralegal means, and risk closure of their technically illegal meeting places.

The Government tolerated some religions, such as the Baha'i Faith and a small group of Mormons, that were relatively new in the country. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses were allowed to proselytize quietly door-to-door and generally were not subject to overt government harassment; however, there continued to be reports of discrimination in schools.

Religious literature and materials must be imported through a registered religious group and can be distributed only to officially recognized religious groups. The CCC controls distribution of Bibles to its members and to other officially recognized denominations. On some occasions, churches or church groups distributed Bibles without government permission. In early 2006 a Presbyterian youth group in Santa Clara passed out copies of the New Testament at a public park without being arrested or detained. Similarly, a small number of fundamentalist Christians were reported to have occasionally given impromptu testimonials at certain parks in Havana; no one was arrested.

Since 1992 the Communist Party has admitted as members persons who openly declare their religious faith.

The Government does not permit religious education in public schools and does not permit the operation of private schools of any kind, including religious schools, although several international schools in Havana are given considerable leeway in setting their curricula. The Government has allowed the Catholic Church and the Havana Jewish community center to administer small charities and to offer religious education classes and self-improvement courses on subjects such as computers and foreign languages.

The Government's main interaction with religious denominations is through the Office of Religious Affairs of the Cuban Communist Party. The office is intended to encourage dialog between churches and the Government, but many religious figures believed that its real role is to assert the Government's power. The Ministry of Interior, through its state security apparatus, continued to engage in efforts to control and monitor the country's religious institutions, including surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of religious professionals and laypersons. In 2004 an independent journalist interviewed a former Ministry of Interior official who reported widespread government infiltration of civil and religious organizations. The former official reported that Afro-Caribbean religious groups were even more heavily targeted for infiltration than political opposition organizations. Some estimates stated that 70 percent of the population practiced these religions in some form, and therefore these groups were seen as a more grassroots threat to the power and authority of the Government.

Most registered religious groups were able to hold services in private homes. Such facilities have grown in number in recent years, and many religious leaders attributed this to the Government's refusal to authorize the construction of new churches. The vast majority of house churches were unregistered with the Government and thus technically illegal. Directive 43 and Resolution 46 require house-church operators to register their house churches with the Government, thus "legalizing" their existence. House churches were difficult to quantify, but Christian Solidarity Worldwide estimated their number at no less than 10,000 nationwide. According to a leading Baptist Church official, of the 1,500 Baptist house churches in the western region, no more than 20 had been "legalized" by the time the directive was issued in April 2005. To register one's house church, an operator must meet a number of requirements, some of which infringe on religious freedom: The house church must host no more than three meetings per week; it must not be located within two kilometers of another house church; and it may be open only between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. on workdays, and between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. on other days. The new regulations also state, among other things, that the use of a sound system requires permission from neighbors and that no house church can operate in a multifamily residence.

The Government continued to allow foreign priests and religious workers into the country to replace foreign priests and nuns who had died or whose residence permits had expired. Previously, the Government adhered to a policy of approving new applicants only to the extent that they replaced clergy who had stopped working in the country.

Government officials criticized the Catholic Church for refusing to register church and lay group publications with the Ministry of Culture, as required by law of all publications. The Cuban Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) indicated that the Church has declined to register because registration would force it to concede control to the state regarding the content and format of church publications. Several Catholic dioceses and lay groups published magazines, including Palabra Nueva of the Havana archdiocese and Vitral of the Pinar del Rio diocese.

The Government generally did not allow the Catholic Church access to public media, but church officials revealed in February 2006 that the Government had offered it the opportunity to broadcast a radio program on the FM band, via a small, low-power radio station. The Church rejected the offer because the transmitter

**Cuba Sport and Recreation**

Baseball “pelota” is Cuba's favorite sport. Baseball was brought to Cuba in the 19th century by North Americans. Cubans also enjoy dancing, watching television, listening to the radio, playing music or dominoes, and going to baseball and boxing matches.