

What Items should I pack for my Trip to Cuba?

Seasons in Cuba correspond to the seasons in the United States. Weather is similar to Florida. During the summer months (May through September), pack light clothes, as it will be very hot. During the rest of the year, it's advisable to bring a long-sleeved shirt or light sweater for the evenings.

Casual walking shoes or sneakers are recommended, as you'll be walking from place to place throughout your stay. Dress can be casual, but should be presentable. You may also want to pack a nicer outfit for evening dining if you choose.

Reasonable laundry and dry-cleaning services are often available at hotels. Bringing a bathing suit is wise if you want to go swimming, as some hotels feature pools.

Sundries

In Cuba, goods aren't as readily available as most travelers are accustomed to. As a result, it can be challenging to find specific items in a pinch. When traveling to Cuba, you should bring what you need in daily life. That way, the comforts you regularly enjoy and require will be at hand.

Some items to consider bringing are:

- Walking shoes
- Hat for sun
- Sunblock
- Shaving cream
- Razor
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Contact lens solution
- Toothpaste
- Cigarette lighters
- Light rain jacket
- Dental floss

- Bandages, creams & ointments
- Toothbrush
- Reading materials
- Toilet paper or tissues for public restrooms
- Compact umbrella
- Feminine hygiene products
- Over-the-counter drugs
- Hair dryer

As is the case with most international destinations, we advise bringing prescription drugs in their individual, original, pharmacy-issued bottles.

Can I bring goods to donate?

If you would like to bring small amounts of goods to donate while in Cuba, you may do so. Donations are a thoughtful gesture when visiting the island; however, we advise you to bring only limited quantities of small items which can fit into your suitcase. Too many of one particular item may cause Cuban custom agents to question your transportation of the goods, cause you and your group delays at the airport, and they may levy a tariff.

What goods can I bring back to the U.S.?

As of October 2016, the monetary value limitations on what authorized travelers may bring back to the United States as accompanied baggage has been removed. In other words, authorized American travelers may now bring back as much rum, cigars, artwork, etc. for personal use as they can fit in their luggage. Artwork, Cuban coffee, cigars, music and rum are the most common items guests bring back to the U.S.

Can I purchase artwork in Cuba and bring back to the U.S.?

You can buy “tourist art” on the streets of Havana. These pieces don’t require exportation procedures. However, when purchasing local art from a gallery, remember to have the gallery authenticate the painting or sculpture. You should receive a receipt or export permit to show Cuban customs, provided the artwork was purchased at an official sales outlet. If the gallery can’t provide an export permit or you didn’t receive an official receipt, you can obtain documentation for the art from the Registro Nacional de Bienes Culturales (National Registry of Cultural Goods) and Centro de Patrimonio Cultural (Center of Cultural Heritage) in Havana.

Permits are also available at regional offices in provincial capitals, when traveling outside of Havana. It generally takes two days to process art licenses, and artwork must be brought to the office directly. If the piece of art is too large to bring into the office, a photo will suffice. Either way, it's important to plan ahead.

How much money should I bring to Cuba?

This is a great question. It's important to note that ATM, debit, and credit cards from the U.S. do not work in Cuba due to the U.S. embargo against Cuba. Therefore, any spending money you may want or need for incidentals has to be brought with you in cash. How much an individual spends when traveling varies a great deal, depending on personal preference. We do recommend bringing a minimum of \$100 per day. If you think you might want to purchase artwork, music, cigars, rum, enjoy evening entertainment, or buy gifts for friends and relatives, you may want to plan on bringing more than \$100 per day. It's always easier to bring your excess money home with you rather than to run out of money while in Cuba.

It's also worth noting that Cuba isn't a commercial culture, meaning there aren't a lot of items to buy. However, items that are available are generally expensive. Most prices for goods are comparable with costs in the United States.

Due to President Obama's December 17, 2014 announcement to normalize relations with Cuba, Americans are now allowed to bring back up to \$400 worth of Cuban goods of any kind, with a maximum of \$100 of cigar or alcohol purchases. The \$400 limitation does not include artwork, music, or informational materials, which are allowed in unlimited quantities.

How much should I tip?

Tipping in Cuba is a uniquely rewarding endeavor. The customary tip is very important in supplementing the average Cuban's income, so we encourage our travelers to embrace the joy of giving, and feel good about leaving gratuities for the Cuban people who work to make your experience so memorable.

Gratuities for luggage handling, restaurant service, and programmed activities throughout the tour are up to your discretion. Customary end-of-tour gratuities for the Cuban guide and driver, are left to the guest's discretion as well, and should be based on the guest's satisfaction with the level of service received.

One reality of Cuba's dual-currency system is that only some items are subsidized by the government and can be purchased with the Cuban peso (CUP). Many things — particularly higher-quality goods such as foodstuffs, clothing, and household items — are sold in the Cuban convertible peso (CUC\$).

Accessing CUC\$, whether in tips, remittances from abroad, or even dealings in the black market, is part of most people's daily struggle. Cuban staff will share their tips with their families, friends, and coworkers who don't have access to CUC\$.

To assist you in tipping your Cuban guide and driver, we've created a simple guideline below based on your satisfaction of the services received. Tipping is a highly personal matter and the guideline below is only suggested rates for tipping. You may tip more or less depending on your preference:

- Cuban Guide: CUC\$5-8 per person per day
- Cuban Bus Driver: CUC\$3-5 per person per day
- Bartenders: CUC\$1 per drink
- Housekeeping*: CUC\$1 per day
- Taxi Drivers: 10 percent of the fare
- Musicians: CUC\$1
- Bathroom Attendants: Use your small coins — 10 cents, 25 cents, etc.

**We suggest tipping housekeepers on a daily basis, rather than at the end of your stay.*

Where can I exchange currency in Cuba?

You can safely and legally exchange your U.S. dollars, Canadian Dollars, Euros, and many other currencies at a CADECA (Casa de Cambios), your hotel lobby, or at international Cuban banks including Banco Central de Cuba. We recommend exchanging currency at the CADECA at the airport after going through customs. There are two kiosks available for this service before you exit the airport arrival hall. If these kiosks are not open upon your arrival, often the CADECA kiosk in the departures hall, right next door, is open and can provide the same service. If you don't have time to exchange your currency at the CADECA at the airport, you may do so at your hotel.

Generally, the exchange rates that you will receive at a CADECA and your hotel are similar, and better than those at the international banks which charge a larger commission.

There is a 13% tariff on the exchange of U.S. dollars, which is not levied on Canadian dollars, Euros, or other currencies.

How do I reach Summitour in case of an emergency?

In case of an emergency, please use the contact number listed below. A 24-hour emergency line is provided for travelers to Cuba. Call this number for assistance with any emergency that may arise. Please keep in mind, the call is not free. Prevailing per-minute rates do apply. Always rely in your driver and tour guide, if needed they will communicate with our in-country contact. We also recommend that you leave this information with someone at home.

24-hour Emergency Hotline:

786-930-4479