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Your U.S. Passport Before You Go Country Information While Abroad Emergencies

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Print Email



Cuba

Official Name: Republic of Cuba

LAST UPDATED: JANUARY 27, 2015

Embassy Messages

Havana

Quick Facts

PASSPORT VALIDITY: Must be valid at time of entry.

VACCINATIONS: None

BLANK PASSPORT PAGES: Two pages are required for entry/exit stamps

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY: Authorized travelers to Cuba are subject to daily spending limits. See the Office of Foreign Assets Control page of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

TOURIST VISA REQUIRED: Tourist travel to Cuba is prohibited under U.S. law for U.S. citizens and others under U.S. jurisdiction.

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT: The export of Cuban convertible pesos (CUC) is strictly prohibited, regardless of the amount. Travelers may only export the equivalent of \$5000 in any currency other than the Cuban convertible peso (CUC). Anyone wishing to export more than this amount must demonstrate evidence that the currency was acquired legitimately from a Cuban bank.

Expand All

Embassies and Consulates

U.S. Interest Section Havana Calzada between L and M Streets,

Assistance for U.S. Citizens

U.S. Interest Section Havana Calzada between L and M Streets, Vedado, Havana, Cuba

Telephone + (53)(7) 839-4100

Emergency After Hours-Telephone + (53)(7) 831-4100 and dial 1 to speak with the emergency operator

Email the U.S. Interests Section by clicking here.



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ENROLL

**Vedado,
Havana, Cuba**

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

Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +(53)(7) 831-4100 and dial 1 to speak with the emergency operator

Email the U.S. Interests Section by clicking [here](#).

Destination Description

Cuba is an authoritarian state that routinely employs repressive methods against internal dissent and monitors and responds to perceived threats to authority. These methods may include physical and electronic surveillance, as well as detention and interrogation of both Cuban citizens and foreign visitors. Human rights conditions in Cuba remain poor, as the Cuban government limits fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. U.S. citizens visiting Cuba should be aware that any on-island activities may be subject to surveillance, and their contact with Cuban citizens monitored closely. The United States does not have diplomatic relations with Cuba, but Cuba generally welcomes U.S. citizen travelers. U.S. credit or debit cards, personal checks, and travelers' checks cannot be used in Cuba, and the Government of Cuba does not permit the use of the U.S. dollar. The United States government provides consular and other services through the U.S. Interests Section in Havana (USINT) that is staffed by U.S. diplomats and locally-employed Cuban nationals in addition to eligible family members and third country nationals, but U.S. diplomats are not allowed to travel freely outside the capital and may be prevented from providing assistance outside Havana. The USINT operates under the protection of the Swiss Embassy in Havana but is not co-located with the Swiss Embassy. Read the [Department of State Fact Sheet](#) on U.S. - Cuba relations.

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

The Cuban Assets Control Regulations are enforced by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury and affect all U.S. citizens and permanent residents wherever they are located, all people and organizations physically located in the United States, and all branches and subsidiaries of U.S. organizations throughout the world. The regulations require that persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction be licensed in order to engage in any travel-related transactions pursuant to travel to, from, and within Cuba, or that the transactions in question be exempt from licensing requirements. Transactions related to travel for tourist activities are not licensable. This restriction includes travel to Cuba for tourist activities from or through a third country, such as Mexico or Canada. U.S. law enforcement authorities enforce these regulations at U.S. airports and pre-clearance facilities in third countries. Travelers who fail to comply with Department of the Treasury regulations may face civil penalties and criminal prosecution upon return to the United States.

All travelers to Cuba, including religious workers, should contact the [Cuban Interests Section](#) in Washington to determine the appropriate

type of visa required for their purpose of travel. Cuba requires visitors to have non-U.S. medical insurance, and sells a temporary policy to those who do not have it. Questions about this insurance requirement should be directed to the [Cuban Interests Section](#). Cuban authorities do not demand HIV tests of travelers to Cuba, with the exception of foreign students on scholarships. The Cuban authorities accept the results of HIV tests conducted by labs in the United States. Please verify this information with the [Cuban Interests Section](#) before traveling.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the [prevention of international child abduction](#) can be found elsewhere on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information page](#).

For the latest information on U.S. regulations governing travel to Cuba and to view the most accurate and updated travel restrictions information, please see the Department of the Treasury's [OFAC website](#).

General & Specific Licenses for Travel: The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has issued general licenses within the 12 categories of authorized travel for many travel-related transactions to, from, or within Cuba that previously required a specific license (i.e., an application and a case-by-case determination). Travel-related transactions are permitted by general license for certain travel related to the following activities, subject to criteria and conditions in each general license: family visits; official business of the U.S. government, foreign governments, and certain intergovernmental organizations; journalistic activity; professional research and professional meetings; educational activities; religious activities; public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions; support for the Cuban people; humanitarian projects; activities of private foundations or research or educational institutes; exportation, importation, or transmission of information or information materials; and certain authorized export transactions. No further permission from OFAC is required to engage in transactions covered by a general license.

OFAC will consider requests for specific licenses on a case-by-case basis for travel that relates to one of these categories but does not fall within the scope of a general license. However, it is OFAC's policy not to grant specific licenses authorizing transactions for which the provisions of an outstanding general license are applicable. See 31 C.F.R. § 501.801(a). For further information on travel to Cuba under a general or a specific license, consult OFAC's [Cuba Sanctions](#) website.

Persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction are prohibited from doing business or investing in Cuba unless licensed by OFAC. An OFAC general license authorizes the exportation from the United States, and the re-exportation of 100 percent U.S.-origin items from third countries, to Cuba only in those cases where the exportation or reexportation is licensed or otherwise authorized by the Commerce

Department. The Commerce Department currently authorizes limited categories of items to be exported or reexported to Cuba.

Persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction authorized to travel to Cuba may import into the United States as accompanied baggage merchandise acquired in Cuba with a value not to exceed \$400 per person, including no more than \$100 in alcohol and tobacco products.

Additional information may be obtained by visiting [OFAC's website](#) or by contacting:

Licensing Division
Office of Foreign Assets Control
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Treasury Annex
Washington, DC 20220
Telephone (202) 622-2480; 1-800-540-6322
Fax (202) 622-1657

Cuban Requirements for Authorized Travelers: Should a traveler receive a license to travel or qualify under an existing general license, a valid passport is required for entry into Cuba. The Cuban government may also require that the traveler obtain a visa. The Cuban Interests Section in Washington issues visas. Attempts to enter or exit Cuba illegally, or to aid the irregular exit of Cuban nationals or other persons, are prohibited and punishable by stiff jail terms. Entering Cuban territory, territorial waters or airspace (generally within 12 nautical miles of the Cuban coast) without prior authorization from the Cuban government may result in arrest or other enforcement action by Cuban authorities. Immigration violators are subject to prison terms ranging from four years for illegal entry or exit to as many as 30 years for aggravated cases of alien smuggling. Visit the [Cuban Interests Section](#) website for the most current visa information.

Civilian Aircraft Travel: The Cuban Air Force shot down two U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace in 1996. As a result of this action, the President of the United States and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued an "Emergency Cease and Desist Order and Statement of Policy," which allows for vigorous enforcement action against U.S.-registered aircraft that violate Cuban airspace. For additional information on restrictions on aircraft flying between the United States and Cuba, see the [FAA's website](#).

Temporary Sojourn License: The U.S. Department of Commerce considers exports of aircraft or vessels on temporary sojourn to Cuba on a case-by-case basis. Temporary sojourn licenses are not available for pleasure boaters. Additional information is available at the [Bureau of Industry and Security website](#). Vessels of the United States, as defined in 33 CFR §107.200, may not enter Cuban territorial waters without advance permission from the U.S. Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard provides permission information at (305) 415-6920.

Safety and Security

The security environment in Cuba is relatively stable and characterized by a strong military and police presence throughout the country. Demonstrations against the United States are less frequent and smaller than in past years. They are always approved and monitored by the Cuban government and have been peaceful in nature. The same cannot be said about state-organized demonstrations against domestic opposition groups, which can be violent. U.S. citizens should avoid all demonstrations.

Hijackings of vessels by those seeking to go to or depart from Cuba are no longer common. The United States government has publicly and repeatedly announced that any person who hijacks (or attempts to hijack) an aircraft or vessel (whether common carrier or other) will face the maximum penalties pursuant to U.S. law, regardless of nationality.

In recent years, the Cuban government has detained U.S. citizens it suspects of engaging in activities perceived to undermine state security. In 2011, it sentenced one such U.S. citizen to a lengthy prison sentence on arbitrary charges after a two-day trial that did not comport with due process. U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba should be aware that the Cuban government may detain anyone at any time for any purpose, and should not expect that Cuba's state security or judicial systems will carry out their responsibilities according to international norms.

Cuban territorial waters are extremely dangerous and difficult to navigate, even for experienced mariners. The potential for running aground is very high. Search-and-rescue capability in Cuba is limited and running aground will often lead to the complete destruction and loss of the vessel. U.S. boaters who enter Cuban waters have encountered problems that required repairs and/or salvage; costs for both are significantly higher than comparable services in the United States or elsewhere in the Caribbean. Cuban authorities typically hold boats as collateral payment. U.S.-registered or flagged vessels belonging to U.S. citizens have been permanently seized by Cuban authorities. Repairs take significantly longer in Cuba than they would in the United States due to lack of the most basic materials and to bureaucratic impediments. Boaters are often confined to their boats while repairs are made. Boaters can be detained while Cuban authorities investigate the circumstances of their entry to Cuba, especially if their travel documents are not in order or if they are suspected of illegal activities. Mariners and their passengers should not navigate close to Cuban territorial waters unless seeking a safe port due to emergencies. The ability of the U.S. Interests Section to assist mariners in distress is extremely limited due to Cuban restrictions on travel by U.S. personnel outside of Havana. Nevertheless, notifying the U.S. Interests Section is the most reliable way to obtain assistance.

The transfer of funds from the United States to Cuba to pay for boat

repair and salvage is subject to restrictions relating to commercial transactions with the Government of Cuba. A Department of the Treasury license is required for such payments and applicants should be prepared to provide documentary evidence demonstrating the emergency nature of the repairs. U.S. credit or debit cards, personal checks, and travelers' checks cannot be used in Cuba so boaters should be prepared to pay for all transactions in cash, keeping in mind that the Government of Cuba also does not allow the use of the U.S. dollar.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for other callers, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas.

To stay connected:

- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) so we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements.
- Follow the Bureau of Consular Affairs on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
- Bookmark the [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), which contains the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#).
- [Follow](#) the U.S. Interests Section (USINT) on Twitter and visit [USINT's website](#).
- In the event of an emergency, contact us at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the United States and Canada, or via a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries.
- Take some time before traveling to consider your personal security and check for useful tips for [traveling safely abroad](#).

CRIME: 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., pickpocketing, purse snatching, or the taking of unattended or 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 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.

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

VICTIMS OF CRIME: The loss or theft in Cuba of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. If you are the victim of a crime while in Cuba, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Interests Section for assistance. The Interests Section staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Cuba is "106" for police and "105" for fire.

Please see our [information for victims of crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While you are traveling in Cuba, you are subject to its laws. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. 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 some cases, the Cuban government has not permitted U.S. consular access to Cuban-American prisoners.

Criminal penalties are also harsh for persons, including foreigners and dual nationals, suspected of assisting Cuban migrants who attempt to leave Cuba illegally. Typical jail sentences for individuals charged with migrant smuggling range from 10 to 25 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. 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 any quantity of ammunition, even accidentally, are subject to fines or possible imprisonment. We strongly advise travelers to thoroughly inspect all belongings prior to travel to Cuba to avoid the accidental import of ammunition or firearms.

There are also some activities that may be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States. For example, you can be [prosecuted in the United States](#) for engaging in sexual conduct with children or for using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country regardless of the legality of these activities under that country's laws. Bringing counterfeit and pirated goods into the United States may be illegal, and if you purchase them in a foreign country, you may be breaking local law as well.

While some countries will notify the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate if a U.S. citizen is detained or arrested in that country, the Cuban government may not, especially in the case of dual nationals. If you are arrested or detained in Cuba, you should promptly ask the authorities to notify the U.S. Interests Section so that it is aware of your circumstances and may offer appropriate assistance.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Cuba forbids photographing military or police installations or personnel, or harbor, rail, and airport facilities.

Dual Nationality: The Government of Cuba treats U.S. citizens born in Cuba, or those born in the United States to Cuban parents, as Cuban citizens and may subject them to a range of restrictions and obligations, including military service. The Cuban government requires U.S.-Cuban dual citizens ([see the State Department's page on dual nationals](#)) to enter and depart Cuba using a Cuban passport. Using a Cuban passport for this purpose does not jeopardize one's U.S. citizenship; however, such persons must use their U.S. passports to enter and depart the United States. Although the Cuban government lifted its exit permission requirement for most Cubans in January 2013, in some instances, dual nationals may be required to obtain exit permission from the Cuban government in order to return to the United States. There have been cases of dual nationals being forced by the Cuban government to surrender their U.S. passports. Despite these restrictions, dual

nationals who fall ill may only be treated at hospitals for foreigners (except in emergencies). See the Consular Access section below for information on Cuba's denial of consular services to dual nationals who have been arrested, as well as the State Department's [Office of Children's Issues](#) website for information on how dual nationality may affect welfare inquiries and custody disputes.

Dual nationals should be especially wary of any attempt by Cuban authorities to compel them to sign "repatriation" documents. The Government of Cuba views a declaration of repatriation as a legal statement on the part of the dual national that he or she intends to resettle permanently in Cuba.

Consular Access to Dual Nationals: U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passport with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. The original should be kept in a secure location, preferably in a safe or locked suitcase.

Cuba does not consider itself obligated to allow U.S. consular officials to have access to detained Cuban-born U.S. citizens, whom the Cuban government views as Cuban citizens only. As such, Cuban authorities do not always notify the U.S. Interests Section of the arrest of dual nationals and may deny U.S. consular officers access to them. They may also withhold from U.S. authorities information concerning the welfare and treatment of dual nationals.

Currency Regulations: Since November 2004, the U.S. dollar has not been accepted for commercial transactions. U.S.-issued debit and credit cards also are not accepted in Cuba. The Cuban government requires the use of convertible Cuban pesos or non-convertible Cuban pesos ("moneda nacional") for all transactions. The official exchange rate for convertible Cuban pesos (CUC) is 1 USD = 1 CUC; however, a minimum 10 percent fee for exchanging U.S. dollars and other transaction fees make the effective exchange rate at hotels, airports, and currency exchange houses lower. The current exchange rate for CUC to non-convertible Cuban pesos (CUP) is 1 CUC = 24 CUP. In 2013, the Cuban government announced plans to consolidate its dual-currency system into a single system, but to date has not provided a timeline for when this change will occur.

Cuba-related Travel Transactions: Only persons whose travel falls into the categories mentioned above (under "Entry Requirements/Travel Transaction Limitations") may be authorized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to spend money related to travel to, from, or within Cuba. For more information, refer to OFAC's [Cuba Sanctions](#) website.

Licenses for Remittances: U.S. persons aged 18 or older may send remittances to a close relative in Cuba or to a Cuban national in a third country under certain circumstances. U.S. persons are also authorized to send emigration-related remittances to enable the payee to emigrate from Cuba to the United States, and remittances to religious organizations in Cuba in support of religious

activities, under certain circumstances. For more information on the requirements relating to these and other remittance authorizations, see OFAC's [Cuba Sanctions](#) website.

U.S. citizens and permanent residents are prohibited from using credit cards in Cuba. U.S. credit card companies do not accept vouchers from Cuba, and Cuban shops, hotels and other places of business do not accept U.S. credit cards. Neither personal checks nor travelers' checks drawn on U.S. banks are accepted in Cuba. Please see our website on [Customs Information](#).

What May Be Brought Back From Cuba: If U.S. travelers return from Cuba with goods of Cuban origin, such goods, with the exception of informational materials, may be seized at U.S. Customs' discretion (see 31 CFR section 515.204). Cuban cigars and rum are routinely confiscated at U.S. ports of entry. Purchasing Cuban cigars and rum in a "duty-free" shop at the Havana Airport does not exempt them from seizure by U.S. Customs. There are no limits on the import or export of informational materials as set forth in 31 C.F.R. section 515.206. Blank tapes and CDs are not considered informational materials and may be seized. To be considered informational material, artwork must be classified under Chapter subheading 9701, 9702, or 9703 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (for example, original paintings, drawings, pastels, engravings, prints, and sculptures are exempt from import and export restrictions).

Fair Business Practices: Anyone authorized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to provide travel services to, from, or within Cuba or services in connection with sending money to Cuba is prohibited from participating in the discriminatory practices of the Cuban government against individuals or particular classes of travelers. The assessment of consular fees by the Cuban government, which are applicable worldwide, is not considered to be a discriminatory practice; however, requiring the purchase of services not desired by the traveler is prohibited. Information provided to the U.S. Department of the Treasury regarding arbitrary fees, payments for unauthorized purposes, or other possible violations will be handled with confidentiality. Please see our [Customs Information](#).

WOMEN TRAVELER INFORMATION: If you are a woman traveling abroad, please review our travel tips for [Women Travelers](#).

LGBT RIGHTS: There are no legal restrictions on same-sex sexual relations or the organization of LGBT events in Cuba, but same-sex marriage is not legally recognized. For more detailed information about LGBT rights in Cuba you may review the State Department's annual [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#). For further information on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) travel, please read our [LGBT Travel Information](#) page.

ACCESSIBILITY: While in Cuba, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from in the United States. There are laws recommending that buildings,

communications facilities, air travel, and other transportation services accommodate persons with disabilities, but these facilities and services are rarely accessible to persons with disabilities in practice, and information for persons with disabilities is limited. Most roads and sidewalks throughout the country are poorly maintained.

Health

Medical care in Cuba typically 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 seeking medical care are generally referred to the "tourist" Cira Garcia Hospital located in the Miramar neighborhood of Havana. Medical consultations and treatment at Cira Garcia require payment in cash in Cuban convertible pesos (CUC) or by credit card issued by a non-U.S. bank (see section on Medical Insurance below).

Diarrhea: Diarrheal illness is common among travelers, even in those staying in luxury accommodations. Travelers can diminish diarrhea risk through scrupulous washing of hands and use of hand sanitizers, especially before food preparation and eating. The greatest risk of traveler's diarrhea is from contaminated food. Choose foods and beverages carefully to lower your risk (see the [CDC Food & Water Safety website](#)). Eat only food that is cooked and served hot; avoid food that has been sitting out on a buffet. Eat raw fruits and vegetables only if you have washed them in clean water or peeled them. Drink only beverages from factory-sealed containers, and avoid ice because it may have been made from unclean water.

Dengue: Dengue is mosquito-borne illnesses that is becoming more frequent in tropical and equatorial climates around the world. Symptoms can include fever, rash, severe headache, joint pain, and muscle or bone pain. There are no specific treatments for Dengue and vaccines are still in the developmental phase. Preventing mosquito bites is the most important way to prevent these illnesses. Avoidance and prevention techniques include: reducing mosquito exposure by using repellents, covering exposed skin, treating clothing and tents with permethrin and sleeping in screened or air conditioned rooms. You can also reduce

exposure through mosquito control measures, including emptying water from outdoor containers and spraying to reduce mosquito populations. The *Aedes* mosquitoes that carry this illness are primarily day biting and often live in homes and hotel rooms especially under beds, in bathrooms and closets. Travelers should carry and use [CDC recommended insect repellents](#) containing either 20% DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535, which will help diminish bites from mosquitoes as well as ticks, fleas, chiggers, etc., some of which may also carry infectious diseases. For further information, please consult the [Dengue Virus Website](#).

Cholera: In 2013, the Panamerican Health Organization (PAHO) issued an epidemiological alert noting the presence of cholera in Cuba and confirming that foreign travelers have contracted cholera during recent trips to Cuba. Eating or drinking fecally-contaminated food or water is the main risk factor. Unsterilized water, food from street vendors, raw fish dishes (e.g. ceviche) and inadequately-cooked shellfish are common sources of infection. Travellers are advised to follow public health recommendations, such as safe food and water precautions and frequent hand washing, to help prevent cholera infection. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization](#) both provide information about cholera to the travelling public.

Rabies: Risk exists in most parts of the country including urban areas of Havana. Rabies immunization is recommended for prolonged stays especially for young children and all travelers to rural areas where risk exists. Immunization is recommended for short-term travelers who may have occupational exposure or are adventure travelers, hikers, cave explorers, and backpackers, especially at locations more than 24 hours' travel from a reliable source of post exposure treatment. Dog, mongoose, and bat bites or scratches should be taken seriously and postexposure prophylaxis sought even in those already immunized.

You can find detailed information on vaccinations and other health precautions on the [CDC website](#). For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) website](#), which contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#).

Travel & Transportation

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in Cuba, U.S. citizens may encounter very poor and dangerous road conditions. The information below concerning Cuba is provided for general reference only, and may not be necessarily accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving is done on the right-hand side of the road, as in the United States; speed limits are sometimes posted and generally respected in urban areas. Passengers in automobiles are generally required to wear seatbelts, and all motorcyclists are required to wear helmets.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that accidents involving motor vehicles

are now the leading cause of death in Cuba. Many accidents involve motorists striking pedestrians or bicyclists. Drivers found responsible for accidents resulting in serious injury or death are subject to prison terms of up to ten years, and Cuban authorities may prohibit drivers of rental cars who are involved in accidents from leaving the country until all claims associated with an accident are settled. Witnesses to vehicular accidents may not be permitted to leave Cuba until an investigation into the accident has been completed.

Taxis are available in busy commercial and tourist areas; radio-dispatched taxis are generally clean and reliable. Travelers should be cautious in sharing information with taxi drivers or other strangers. In addition, travelers should not accept rides in unlicensed taxis, as they may be used by thieves to rob passengers. Buses designated for tourist travel, both between and within cities, generally meet international standards for both cleanliness and safety. Public buses used by Cubans, known as "guaguas," are crowded, unreliable, and havens for pickpockets. These public buses usually will not offer rides to foreign visitors.

Although popular with tourists, the three-wheeled, yellow-hooded "Co-Co" taxis are considered unsafe and should be avoided. "Co-Co" taxis are modified motorcycles that reach speeds of up to 40 mph, but have no seat belts or other safety features.

Drivers should exercise extreme care. Although the main arteries of Havana are generally well-maintained, secondary streets often are not. Many roads and city streets are unlit, making night driving dangerous, especially as some cars and most bicycles lack running lights or reflectors. Street signage tends to be insufficient and confusing. Many Cuban cars are old, in poor condition, and lack turn signals, reliable brakes, and other standard safety equipment.

The principal Cuban east-west highway is in good condition but lacks lighting and extends only part of the way from Havana to the eastern tip of the island. Road signage on highways may be lacking or confusing. Night driving should be strictly avoided outside urban areas. Secondary rural roads are narrow, and some are in such bad condition as to be impassable by cars. Due to the rarity of cars on rural roads, pedestrians, bicycles, horse-drawn carts, and farm equipment operators wander onto the roads without any regard to possible automobile traffic. Unfenced livestock constitute another serious road hazard.

Rental car agencies provide roadside assistance to their clients as a condition of the rental contract. Automobile renters are provided telephone numbers to call in case of emergency; agencies generally respond as needed with tow trucks and/or mechanics. A similar service is available to foreign residents of Cuba who insure cars with the National Insurance Company.

Anecdotal reports indicate the maintenance that rental car agencies provide to their fleets is inadequate and may cause an accident. Cuban authorities may prohibit drivers of rental cars who are

involved in accidents from leaving the country, even if they are injured and require medical attention, until all claims associated with an accident are settled.

Travelers should not permit unauthorized persons to drive their rental vehicles. Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Cuba, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the government of Cuba's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety assessment page](#).

The U.S. Interests Section permits travel by its employees and official visitors on Cuban air carriers, including the Cuban national airline, Cubana de Aviacion (CUBANA), on a case by case basis.

Please see [Fact Sheet for this country](#).

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