

## PRELIMINARY ITINERARY

### Alumnae Association of Smith College Legacies and Landscapes of Cuba March 12 – 23, 2012

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#### Monday, March 12: Havana

Morning scheduled charter flight on Wilson Charters to Havana.

Drive to the historic Nacional Hotel for lunch. Located on the Malecón, the hotel was designed by the famous New York firm McKim, Mead and White, and features an eclectic mix of architectural styles. It opened in 1930 when Cuba was a prime travel destination for Americans, long before the embargo. In 1955 Meyer Lansky managed to persuade Batista to give him a piece of the Nacional. That same year Pan Am's Intercontinental Hotels Corporation took over management of the hotel. Lansky planned to take a wing of the 10-story hotel and create luxury suites for high stakes players. Batista endorsed Lansky's idea even though there were objections from American expatriates like Ernest Hemingway. Under Lansky's impetus, a wing of the grand entrance hall was refurbished to include a bar, a restaurant, a showroom and a luxurious casino. It was operated by Lansky and his brother Jake, with Wilbur Clark as the front man.

The new wing of the elegant hotel opened for business January 1956 with a show by Eartha Kitt. The casino and clubs were an immediate success. According to an unpublished article sent to Cuban Information Archives around 1956-57, "The bar was tended by local bartenders, and the casino managed by gentlemen from Las Vegas." By the spring of 1957 the casino, sublet by the hotel for a substantial rent to Lansky, was bringing in as much cash as the biggest casinos in Las Vegas.

The casino was closed by Fidel Castro in October 1960, nearly two years after the revolution. After years of neglect due to the disappearance of Cuba's tourism following the Cuban revolution, the hotel was mainly used to accommodate diplomats and foreign government officials. After the collapse of the USSR, the Cuban communist party soon reopened Cuba to tourists in search of monetary support. Despite its restoration during the 1990s, the hotel no longer carries the status and impact it once did. But its remaining splendor and history serves as tangible remainder to Cuba's past times.

Enjoy an orientation tour of the city before arriving at the *Parque Central* where rooms have been reserved for the group.

Prior to dinner enjoy an introductory tour briefing before proceeding to the hotel's roof-top for a rum-based cocktail – an ideal time to try a *mojito*.

Walk to dinner at the Hotel Sevilla's restaurant, La Torre del Oro, located in what was once the hotel's opulent ballroom for a welcome dinner. **L,D**

#### Tuesday, March 13: Havana

This morning begin exploring Havana by foot. Havana was declared the capital in 1519, and on December 17 of that year the first mass was celebrated under a ceiba tree which, according to legend, is an ancestor of the one standing at the east end of the Plaza de Armas. Around it rose the center of the original city – the plaza – and the first government buildings. With continued attacks by the French and English, colonial authorities decided to make Havana itself a fort, and in 1633 began constructing city walls that eventually ringed what is now Old Havana.

Of all the capital cities in the Caribbean, Havana has the reputation of being the most splendid and the finest example of a Spanish colonial city in the Americas. Restoration work in the old part of the city helps reveal the glories of the past. Many of its palaces were converted into museums after the Revolution and more work has been done since the old city was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. While much of Cuba's infrastructure has crumbled and its economy has limped along, more than 300 landmark buildings in Old Havana have been refurbished. From fortresses built in the colonial days to famous nightspots and hotels of the city's swinging era just before the Cuban revolution, the key to the renaissance of the old city has been a strategy of restoring old hotels, restaurants and historic sites to attract tourists, then using the revenue from tourism to finance more restoration. Restoration of the historic center is one of the city government's priorities and our time here will allow ample opportunity to evaluate the progress.

Begin by walking from the hotel to the center of old Havana to view a scale-model of Old Havana. The model serves as an excellent introduction to the lay-out of the city. It is color-coded by age with the historic buildings painted in crimson, pre-Revolution buildings in yellow and the post-revolutionary buildings in ivory. Close by is the Plaza de Armas which was built in 1584 for military exercises. Most mornings used books are sold here, mainly post-revolution editions on Cuban history. Havana's town hall is located on the square now the city museum and gives an overview of its history. Admire the Cathedral of Saint Christopher located on the cobbled Plaza de la Catedral. The cathedral has been described by one Cuban writer as "music set in stone". The square is surrounded by some of Havana's oldest buildings, the wealthiest families built their mansions here.

End the morning at the Plaza Vieja, a stunningly beautiful old square. Although the square was in a sad state of repair for many years, that decay is being reversed by the caring restoration of Habana Vieja.

Lunch in a superb restaurant with local music.

This afternoon enjoy a city orientation tour by bus which will be led by an architectural historian. The tour will include an inside visit to the wonderful Riviera Hotel which, when it opened in 1958, was considered a marvel of modern design. It was owned at the time by Meyer Lansky. The hotel has recently been restored to recapture its 1950s ambience. Drive along La Rampa which climbs past the offices of Cubana, the Hotel Havana Libre and Art-Deco apartment buildings to the Parque Copelia, an entire block of a large, lush park. In the middle of the park, visit a remarkable design icon, an ice-cream parlor designed in 1966, which serves an estimated 30,000 customers a day. Follow Calle L south from La Rampa and arrive at the wide steps which lead to the porticoed, columned façade beyond which lies the University of Havana. Walk through the Colon Cemetery before returning to the hotel stopping at the Callejon de Hamel, the site of a huge multi-dimensional Afro-Cuban mural.

Dinner at the Café Oriente. **B,LD**

### **Wednesday, March 14: Havana**

After breakfast this morning enjoy a lecture by **Rodrigo Torres** professor at the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy at the University of Havana on The Changing Faces of Cuba's Economic Structure. Late last year Fidel Castro was quoted as saying to an American journalist that the Cuban economic model, "doesn't even work for us anymore." Monumental changes since then have been announced including, but by no means limited to, the laying off of more than half a million state workers, the privatization of small businesses, a new credit law offering certain Cubans bank loans, and the devaluation of the peso to bring it on par with the dollar. As part of our round-table, we will discuss whether these moves signify genuine change or not?

Continue on to the new Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes: Arte Cubano (Cuban Collection). The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes is actually divided into two sections, occupying two buildings: the Cuban Collection which we will see this morning, and the International Collection. The museum's origins date back to 1842 when the San Alejandro Art Academy started its collection, forming the nucleus of the museum founded in 1913. It expanded greatly after Castro took over in 1959, notably with works from the private collections of Julio Lobo and Oscar Cintas. The tour this morning will be accompanied by a contemporary art curator.

After lunch at El Ajibe, drive to the home of artists Alicia Leal and Juan Moreira for a chance to meet the artists and to view their work. Their home is a spacious, high-ceilinged house with pale walls and typical Creole inner doors that partition off the rooms where wooden and wicker furniture are predominant. Alicia's Leal work is of a markedly narrative nature; her characters speak intensely, not only amongst themselves, but with the onlooker, who becomes an active participant and even protagonist of the painter's unsettling scenarios.

The surrealist paintings of Juan Moreira, Alicia's husband, reflect many of the historical, religious and cultural influences in Cuba. African myths and rituals brought to the island with the slave-trade in the 17th century are predominant as well as the social and political events of the 19th and 20th centuries that shaped Cuban traditions and folklore.

Enjoy an evening reception at the *Ludwig Foundation*, an organization committed to the promotion of art in Cuba, followed by dinner at a private restaurant. **B,L,D**

#### **Thursday, March 15: Havana**

After breakfast this morning enjoy a lecture by Carlos Alzugaray on "US/Cuban Relations".

After the lecture walk from the hotel to the Presidential Palace, a huge ornate building topped by a dome. The history of Cuban political development is illustrated here from the slave uprisings to joint missions with the ex-Soviet Union. A few minutes away by foot is the Granma Memorial which preserves the vessel that brought Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and other revolutionaries from Mexico to Cuba in 1956. The Granma, a surprisingly large launch, embodies the powerful, unstoppable spirit of the revolutionary movement.

After lunch drive to Ernest Hemingway's home, which has been lovingly preserved by the Cuban government. The house is just as Hemingway left it, with the books on the tables and many of his favorite photographs on display. Although one can only admire the home from the outside, it is a fascinating visit.

At leisure for dinner. **B,L**

#### **Friday, March 16: Havana**

Morning briefing at the US Interest Section.

Continue on to visit an "oganoponicos." Cuba's urban farming has been a stunning, and surprising, success. Today in Havana, 90% of the city's fresh produce came from local urban farms and gardens. The country's urban agriculture movement materialized out of the Special Period, an economic crisis from

1990-94 when the former Soviet Union ended its food subsidies, plunging Cuba into a severe food shortage. Without any other options, Cuban urbanites began growing their own foodstuffs on unutilized land. This wave of urban agriculture spread not only through Havana, but also other Cuban cities. Additionally, the trade embargo has meant the country's food producers cannot import the pesticides and herbicides used in other parts of the world; thus, the growers have turned to innovative integrated pest management techniques and all-natural bio-pesticides. These solutions make environmental sense, too, as the proximity of urban farms to densely populated communities makes pesticides a potential health hazard. There are currently over 450 organoponicos in Havana growing and selling vegetables, herbs, and spices directly to the public. The organoponicos use raised container beds and a high ratio of compost to soil to grow produce. These farms, many of them on tiny plots now supply much of Cuba's vegetables. They also provide 350,000 jobs nationwide with relatively high pay and have transformed eating habits in a nation accustomed to a less-than-ideal diet of rice and beans and canned goods from Eastern Europe. It's a fascinating model and shows that cities can not only produce their own food but also get all kinds of social and ecological benefits. Meet with manager Miguel Angelo Salcines and other staff at the garden.

Drive to the village of Cojimar where Hemingway docked his boat, Pilar. The Terrace Hemingway wrote about in *The Old Man and the Sea* was La Terraza where we will have a lunch of Paella today. It remains a fisherman's bar in this small village where Hemingway spent many an afternoon drinking with local fishermen. His table is still there – cordoned off out of respect that the locals still have for Hemingway.

Afternoon visit to the Museo de Bellas Artes International Collection.

Dinner at a local restaurant. **B,L,D**

### **Saturday, March 17: Trinidad/Sancti Spiritus Area**

Morning drive along the *autopista* to Cienfuegos. Make a stop en route to the Bay of Pigs where in 1962, about 1,300 heavily armed CIA-trained Cuban exiles came ashore fully equipped to provoke a counterrevolution to topple the Castro regime.

Visit the campus of the Beny More School of Art which trains students in the visual and musical arts. It is one of the top ten middle level art schools in Cuba. Students with a high aptitude in the areas of dance, music or fine arts are chosen to attend. The Cuban government has a clear vision of the importance of the arts and takes pride in its arts education programs. Enjoy a chance to talk with students and see they work with outdated instruments and tools but can produce wonderful music and art.

Enjoy lunch at the fabulous Palacio del Valle which originally belonged to Celestino Caceres, but was given as a wedding present to a member of the local Valle family who added to it by producing a magnificent building.

After lunch visit the Cienfuegos Botanical Garden, once known as the Atkins Institution and the site of the Harvard Biological Laboratory. Visit will be led Clarivel Guerrero Moreno, chief education officer at the gardens as well as Orlando Garcia, director of the Provincial Archive of Cienfuegos.

The garden was a center for tropical plant research in the early 1900s. It combined research on sugar and other commercial crops with a tropical garden that included thousands of species. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became the Harvard Botanic Station for Tropical Research and Sugar Cane Investigation. Mr. Atkins funded the services of Robert M. Grey, a noted horticulturist employed by Professor Ames. Grey focused on the hybridization of sugar cane as well as organizing the planting of trees and plants imported from tropical areas around the world. In 1924, the Harvard Biological Laboratory was constructed at the garden. The garden was used by professors, students and visiting fellows to study tropical botany, and

was tended to by local citizens who made up the grounds crew. With the Cuban revolution and the Trade Embargo, the garden reverted to the government and is now known as the Cienfuegos Botanical Garden. Recent meetings between staff and American academics have resulted in a revived garden and our visit will focus on re-establishing ties.

At Camilo Cienfuegos stop will be at the local hospital where the group will meet with hospital staff including doctor Joel Yanis, one of the two doctors that staff the hospital providing medical services to a community of 1,500

Arrive in Trinidad late afternoon and transfer to a hotel in Trinidad/Sancti Spiritus. Dinner at the hotel this evening.

Enjoy dinner this evening at the hotel. **B,L,D**

### **Sunday, March 18: Trinidad**

Spend the day exploring Trinidad, the fourth of the seven cities founded by Diego de Velasquez in 1514 as a base for expeditions into the “New World”. Today it is maintained as a living museum, just as the Spaniards left it in its period of greatest opulence. It is the crown jewel of Cuba’s colonial cities. The whole city with its fine palaces, cobbled streets and tiled roofs, is a national monument and, since 1988, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As a result of the wealth that the sugar industry brought, Trinidad’s cultural life flourished. Schools of languages, music and dance were opened and a wide variety of artisans set up businesses, including gold and silversmiths. In 1827 the Teatro Candamo opened its doors. The well-off patricians built huge mansions for themselves (now museums) and sent their children to European universities. However, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Industrial Revolution and increased sugar beet production in Europe led to the decline of Trinidad’s slavery-based economy. Construction ceased and the city remained frozen in time. The maze of cobbled streets is lined with terra-cotta tiled roofed houses in soft pastel colors. Much of the architecture is neo-classical and baroque, with a Moorish flavor reflecting the town’s heritage of conquistadores. The exquisite buildings are fronted by mahogany balustrades, fancy grills of wrought iron, turned wooden rods and massive wooden doors with postigos (small windows) that open to let the breezes flow through cool, tile floored rooms connected by double-swing half-doors.

Begin the day at the Plaza Mayor which is in the center of town and elegantly adorned with glazed earthenware urns. Around the plaza are the Museo Romantico, the Museo Arqueologia and the cathedral, Iglesia Parroquial de la Santisima Trinidad, which was built between 1817 and 1892. Explore the cathedral, which is the largest church in Cuba, and is renowned for its acoustics. On the left at the front of the church is a crucifix of the brown-skinned Christ of Veracruz who is the patron of Trinidad. The altars are made of precious woods such as cedar, acacia, caoba and grenadine. Continue to Museo de Arquitectura which is the former mansion of the Iznaga family. This museum tells the history of Trinidad’s development. Maps, model structures and sections of houses in miniature, demonstrate city planning, colonial construction techniques and the fine craftsmanship of the period.

At lunch meet with local entrepreneur **David Aloma** who recently opened a private restaurant in Trinidad called Davimart. Mr. Aloma has taken advantage of the relaxed regulations regarding private enterprise in Cuba and has opened a restaurant with seating capacity for 20 diners. He is employing and paying 3 Cubans who are not family members to assist him in running this restaurant.

After lunch, drive a short distance to explore the area known as the Valle de Los Ingenios. This is a living museum of the sugar industry, featuring 75 ruined sugar mills, summer mansions, barracks, and other

facilities related to the field. The famous Manaca-Iznaga Tower, built in 1816, is 45m high, and the tolling of its bells once marked the beginning and end of working hours on the sugar plantations. Ultimately, Trinidad's prosperity rested on the sugar industry, which was introduced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Return to Trinidad for dinner this evening. Trinidad in the evening is quite different from Trinidad during the day, and there is something very special about walking down its narrow cobbled streets by the light of the moon. **B,L,D**

### **Monday, March 19: Baracoa**

Depart Trinidad on a private charter flight for Baracoa

Upon arrival in Baracoa transfer to the *Hotel Castillo*, formerly one of Baracoa's three forts. Baracoa is an attractive town surrounded by rich, tropical vegetation. The name Baracoa is an Indian word meaning 'existence of the sea'. Christopher Columbus arrived in Baracoa on November 27, 1492. He planted a cross, now housed in the church, and described a mountain in the shape of an anvil which was thereafter used as a point of reference for sailors. Baracoa is full of references to Columbus' stay here. Porto Santo marks the place where he was married in 1514, the same year that the capital of Cuba was moved from Baracoa to Santiago de Cuba by Diego Velazquez. Baracoa was the first of the seven cities founded by Diego Velasquez, and as such, is considered to be the oldest colonial city in the Americas. Between 1639 and 1742, Baracoa's three forts – El Castillo, Fuerte de la Punta and Fuerte Matachin – were built by the Spanish to protect the city from invasion. After the revolution in Haiti, Baracoa became a refuge French exiles and they brought with them coffee and cacao farming techniques as well as their own style of architecture.

This afternoon meet with **Daniel Fernandez**, the director of the Baracoa Museum and the city historian. Enjoy a lecture called "Local History and Legends of Baracoa." **B,L,D**

### **Tuesday, March 20: Baracoa**

Morning sightseeing in Baracoa will include a visit to Baracoa's museum whose displays trace the history of the region since pre-Columbian days. Continue to the town's cathedral which is an ochre-colored edifice dating from 1805 and was built on the site of an earlier church which was destroyed by pirates in 1652. The cathedral contains the cross known as the "Cruz de la Parra" which is said to have been brought here by Columbus. Historians have confirmed that the cross dates back from the time of Columbus, it now seems unlikely that it was brought by Columbus from Europe. Explore the charming Plaza Marti which is surrounded by colonial houses and the small tobacco factory located inside a small blue house. Inside rows of men and women sit side by side, tenderly rolling and pressing cigars for local consumption. A blackboard shows production goals and achievements. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn how cigars are made. First, the filler is rolled and placed in a press so it keeps its form. Then the wrapper is trimmed to one side straight and the other curved and rolled around the filler. All-natural vegetable glue and water hold it in place. After trimming the loose pieces of leaf, the cigar is ready to smoke. The process does not end here. The cigars then go to quality control where a percentage are measured for size and opened to check the blend. Next they are sorted by color and packed in a scale with the darkest on the left and the lightest on the right. Finally, labels are wrapped around the cigars that are then packed in boxes and sealed with the necessary symbols to indicate their authenticity as real Havana cigars. On average, a roller makes about 90 cigars a day, depending on adeptness and the shape of the cigar – there are over 60 shapes and some are more difficult than others.

Drive a few miles outside of town to the Duaba River where a short boat ride has been arranged. Cruise through lush landscapes and forests where the air is filled with the chirps and sqawks of more than a hundred different bird species. Enjoy a delicious lunch at the Finca Duaba beneath the shade of palms and plantains. The final stop for the day will be at the village of Guirito where local famers will perform adaptations of Cuban son – dance – known as el nengen and el kiriba.

This evening after dinner attend a magnificent performance of Afro-Cuban dancers in the local Casa de la Cultural.. **B,L,D**

### **Wednesday, March 21: Santiago**

Enjoy a spectacular drive from Santiago to Baracoa. Stop in Guantanamo to pick up an escort who will accompany the group to the east side of Guantanamo Bay which overlooks the Guantanamo US Naval Base, one of the oldest US overseas military bases. It is the only one located in a communist country and is a constant thorn in the side of Cuban-US relations. Since 1903 the US has held an indefinite lease on the property which it claimed as a prize at the end of the Cuban-Spanish American War. The rent is \$4,085 a year. Since 1959 the US Treasury checks have not been cashed by Fidel Castro. Enjoy a cool drink at a cafe called Mirador de Malones. From here it is possible to use binoculars to look right down on the US base. It is not possible to visit the base itself. Today 7,000 US servicemen and their dependents live here amid all the comforts of a small mid-western town including a golf-course and a McDonald's. The base produces its own water (through a desalination plant) and has 400 miles of paved road.

Upon arrival transfer to the *Hotel Casa Granda*, splendidly situated on Parque Cespedes and the place where Wormold stayed in Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*.

After lunch at a local restaurant, enjoy an orientation tour of the area north of the hotel including the Moncada Barracks which is known for being the place where, on 26 July, 1953, Fidel Castro and 79 soldiers dressed in Cuban Army uniforms, stormed the barracks. Although no longer used as barracks, the building houses a superb museum that tells the tale of the attack, the Revolution and subsequent history. Drive by the Plaza de la Revolucion which is dominated by a massive monument to Antonio Maceo, the hero-general of the War of Independence.

Return to the hotel for drinks on the roof and dinner. For those who would like to enjoy an after-dinner stroll around the Parque Cespedes, which is ringed with gas lamps, metal grills and tall shade trees. The beautiful white colonial building on the north side is the town hall. It was from here that Fidel Castro gave the victory speech on January 2, 1959, after he entered town following Batista's flight from Cuba.

**L,D**

### **Thursday, March 22: Santiago**

Take a full day to explore the second largest city and former capital whose population has the highest percentage of African blood. Though the complexions of the locals are dark, they often have light eyes betraying hints of European blood. For many years the city of Santiago and the surrounding region were a clearinghouse for many different nationalities. Its east-facing position and proximity to Jamaica and Haiti fostered close links between the city and these two Caribbean islands. In addition, many of the French planters and merchants who fled Haiti following the revolution in 1791 chose to settle in and around Santiago. The rich racial mixture has produced some of the most exciting music, art and architecture in the Caribbean. This port city is also an industrial city and the distilleries of the original Bacardi rum are here.

Begin the day at the Museo de Arte Colonial which is said to be the oldest house in Cuba. It was built in 1516 as the home of Cuba's conqueror, Diego Velasquez. Along the second story runs a balcony built with a Moorish-style wooden grille to shield its delicate aristocratic occupants from prying eyes. Continue to the Jesuit Dolores College where Fidel Castro was educated as a youth. It was one of the most profound intellectual influences in his life.

Stop at the Tomás Romay Natural History Museum and the small but impressive Botanic Garden dedicated to ferns, many of which are endemic to Cuba

Drive south of the city to a restaurant called El Morro set atop the cliffs with fabulous views along the coast. After lunch visit the Morro Castle itself, which was originally built in 1640 to ward off pirate attacks. Unfortunately, this effort failed and in 1662 the pirate Henry Morgan stormed it and then blew it up. A more solid structure was begun in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and this is what one sees today. From the battlements of the Castle there is a spectacular view of the harbor and its bottleneck entrance. The interior of the castle houses the Museo de la Pirateria, an exhibition of pirates during the colonial and modern eras.

In the afternoon, drive to the Basilica del Cobre which takes its name from the large copper mine that the Spanish established in the mid-1500's. The church – Cuba's only basilica – is known for its offerings and as the shrine to of La Virgen de la Caridad (Virgin of Charity), patron saint of Cuba, to whom miraculous powers are ascribed. In 1952, Hemingway dedicated his Nobel Prize for Literature to the Virgin although the medal is now in the custody of the Archbishop of Santiago. The final stop for the day will be at the Caney Rum Factory which was built in 1868 by the Bacardi family and nationalized in 1959. The Cuban government continued to make rum under the Bacardi name but Bacardi sued and won the lawsuit. Ever since, the rum produced from this factory has been sold as "Havana Club." While it is not possible to tour the factory, it is possible to sample some of the rums.

Farewell dinner this evening. **B,L,D**

<b>Friday, March 23: Santiago</b>
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Return to Miami this morning. **B**

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**Duration:** 12 days

**Activity level:** Very active

**Cost:** \$5,190 per person, based on double occupancy

**Single supplement:** \$890 per person

**Deposit:** \$500 per person, payable by check to Distant Horizons

*Legacies and Landscapes of Cuba*

March 12-23, 2012

### **Smith College Faculty Speaker Biography**

Andrew Zimbalist earned a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He has been in the economics department at Smith College since 1974 and has been a visiting professor at Doshisha University, the University of Geneva and Hamburg University.

Zimbalist has consulted in Latin America for the United Nations Development Program, the U.S. Agency for International Development and numerous companies. He has consulted in the sports industry for players' associations, cities, companies, teams and leagues.

He has published several dozen articles and twenty-one books, including *Cuban Political Economy* (1988), *Comparing Economic Systems* (1989), *The Cuban Economy: Measurement and Analysis of Socialist Performance* (1989), *Panama at the Crossroads* (1991), *Baseball and Billions* (1992), *Sports, Jobs and Taxes* (1997), *Unpaid Professionals: Commercialism and Conflict in Big-time College Sports* (1999), *The Economics of Sport, I & II* (2001), *May the Best Team Win: Baseball Economics and Public Policy* (2003), *In the Best Interests of Baseball? The Revolutionary Reign of Bud Selig* (2006); *The Bottom Line: Observations and Arguments on the Sports Business* (2006); *Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change* (2007), *Circling the Bases: Essays on the Challenges and Prospects of the Sports Industry* (2010), *The International Handbook on the Economics of Mega-Sport Events* (2012).

DISTANT HORIZONS, INC  
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Or Call: 1-800-333-1240 or 1-562-983-8828

# Application Form

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**\*\*PLEASE INCLUDE A LEGIBLE PHOTOCOPY OF THE PHOTO & SIGNATURE  
PAGES OF YOUR PASSPORT WHEN YOU RETURN THIS APPLICATION\*\***

Trip Name: **Alumnae Association of Smith College - Legacies and Landscapes of Cuba**  
Departure Date: **March 12<sup>th</sup> from Miami**

Name: Mr. / Ms. / Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_  
*Exactly as listed in your passport (First) (Middle) (Last)*

Preferred first name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth place: \_\_\_\_\_ Citizenship: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Passport Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_ Authority: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's maiden name (required for charter flight reservation): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your health: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any allergies or physical limitations: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any diet restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you presently under a doctor's care or taking any medications? If yes, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact person, phone number, and relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Distant Horizons will do all possible to satisfy requests to share a room for single tour members. On occasions when it is not possible, the single supplement will apply.

I want a single room  I will share a room with: \_\_\_\_\_

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## AIRLINE ARRANGEMENTS

Unless otherwise specified, Distant Horizons will make all of the necessary airline arrangements from Miami. If you need assistance in getting to and from Miami, please contact us.

I have read the terms and conditions and agree to abide by them.

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*Signature*

*Date*

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

### Reservations and Payments:

Reservations for a tour require a deposit of \$500 per person and an application form signed by the participant. **Full balance of the trip cost is due upon receipt of final invoice no later than January 13, 2012.**

### Tour Price Includes:

**Hotel Accommodations:** In 4-star or best available based on two persons sharing a twin room. Distant Horizons reserves the right to substitute hotels for those named in the brochure when necessary. Distant Horizons will do all possible for single participants to satisfy requests to share rooms. On occasions when it is not possible, the single room supplement will apply. If Distant Horizons assigns you a roommate and your roommate cancels or changes their mind about sharing a room, you will be liable for the single room supplement.

**Meals:** American breakfast (B), lunches (L) and dinners (D) are included as specified in the itinerary.

**All Land Travel Listed:** Including one group airport transfer upon arrival in Havana and departure from Santiago, entrance fees to monuments, local guides and special activities as quoted in the itinerary. All gratuities and taxes are included.

**Baggage:** One average size suitcase and one carry-on bag is allowed, not exceeding 44 pounds or 20 kilos in total.

**Visas:** Visas are required for U.S. citizens visiting Cuba, and these are easily obtained through Distant Horizons.

### Tour Price Does Not Include:

Charges for domestic air into and from Miami, passport fees, visa fees, visa service fee, meals not listed, airport transfers if not arriving with the group, drinks with included meals other than water, excess luggage charges, insurance of any kind, laundry charges, individual tour transfers for individual arrival and departure at transfer points, and items of a purely personal nature.

**Tour cost** is based on rates of currency exchange at time of printing (December 2011) and is subject to change with or without previous notice. If there is a price increase prior to the day of departure in the basic costs, such increases may be passed on to the participant.

### Cancellations

Distant Horizons and Alumnae Association of Smith College (AASC) reserve the right to cancel any tour prior to departure for any reason, including insufficient number of participants, and to decline to accept or retain any person as a participant at any time. Should this happen, refunds will be made without obligation, although we cannot be held responsible for any additional costs already incurred by participants.

The tour price is based on a number of people traveling together. If bookings fall below the minimum required, passengers will be advised of additional costs for that departure date.

If a participant cancels, the following refunds will be available upon written notice of cancellation to Distant Horizons.

Notice more than **90 days** prior to departure: a refund less a \$250 cancellation charge.

Notice between **90 days and 60 days** prior to departure: a refund less 50% of trip price.

Notice between **60 days and 30 days** prior to departure: a refund less 75% of trip price.

No refund shall be issued if cancellation is received less than **30 days** prior to departure date.

No refunds shall be issued after the tour has commenced. No refunds shall be issued for occasional missed meals, sightseeing tours or any unused services.

### Areas of the World We Travel To

Some of the countries we offer trips to have State Department Warnings. Warnings and Public Announcements are frequently changed by the State Department and it is the responsibility of the traveler to keep themselves updated. We recommend that you check the State Department web-site at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for up-to-date information about the countries you are interested in.

### Air Carriers Contract

The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time tour members are on board their planes or conveyances. The passage contract in use by the airline concerned when the ticket is issued shall constitute the sole contract between the airline and the purchaser of these tickets and/or the passenger.

### Responsibility

Distant Horizons and the Alumnae Associate of Smith College (AASC) act only in the capacity of agents for the hotels, airlines, bus companies, railroads, ship lines or owners or contractors providing accommodations, transportation or other services. As a result, all coupons, receipts or tickets are issued subject to the terms and conditions specified by the supplier. By acceptance of tour membership, the participant agrees that neither Distant Horizons nor AASC nor any of their subsidiaries shall become liable or responsible for personal injury, damage to persons or property, loss, delay or irregularity caused by persons not controlled by it, such as (without limitation) airlines, bus and shipping companies, suppliers of accommodations or other services, or resulting from any acts of God, defects in vehicles, strikes, wars, whether declared or otherwise, civil disturbances, medical or customs regulations, acts of terrorism, epidemics or government restrictions. Distant Horizons and AASC cannot be held responsible for unfavorable weather or closure of access routes due to bad weather conditions. Distant Horizons and AASC are not responsible for any additional expenses or liability sustained or incurred by the participant as a result of the above mentioned causes.

Tour participant acknowledges receipt of a copy of these terms and conditions and signifies acceptance of, and consents to, all of the terms and conditions set forth herein, on behalf of any participants they may act for and for themselves when registering for, or making payments on, this tour.

## FLIGHT ITINERARY

**Alumnae Association of Smith College  
Legacies and Landscapes of Cuba  
March 12 – 23, 2012**

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March 12	Miami Havana	Wilson Charters #SG1301 <i>Operated by Sky King</i>	8.00am	9.00am
March 23	Santiago Miami	Wilson Charters #SG1402 <i>Operated by Sky King</i>	10.30am	12.00pm

Please be sure to leave at least a 3 hour layover on March 23 for your connecting flight.

**Please note that this schedule is current as of December 2011 and is subject to change!**

**On the return there is a 25 CUC departure tax which must be paid in  
local currency upon departure from Santiago on March 23**

# THIRTY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Alumnae Association of Smith College Legacies and Landscapes of Cuba March 12 – 23, 2012

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### **1. Q. Everyone says it is illegal to travel to Cuba. Is this trip legal?**

Yes, this trip is 100% legal. The Alumnae Association of Smith College has been granted a specific license for educational travel programs to Cuba. As someone affiliated with the Alumnae Association of Smith College, you are allowed to travel to Cuba on this license. In addition, Distant Horizons is a licensed TSP (Travel Service Provider), which is also granted specific permission to operate logistics for the Alumnae Association of Smith College's travel programs to Cuba

### **2. Q. Can I tell US customs or immigration that I am traveling to Cuba?**

Yes, because this trip is licensed and therefore legal, it is appropriate for you to say to customs or immigration that you are going, or have been, to Cuba.

### **3. Q. How will customs and immigration know that the trip is licensed?**

It is essential that you take with you on the trip a copy of the Alumnae Association of Smith College's license. Each person will receive this prior to the trip's departure and in addition to the license you will receive a copy of the complete list of travelers.

### **4. Q. What will my Cuban visa look like?**

Your Cuban visa is actually a tourist card which has been included with your final documents. It is a loose card (i.e. it is not stamped in your passport) which you will present on arrival to the immigration official in Havana. It is divided into two parts and it is **ESSENTIAL** that you retain the second part which will be returned to you by the Cuban immigration official. The second part is your exit card and you need to be sure to keep this in a safe place. You will need it to leave Cuba.

### **5. Q. Am I restricted in what I can bring back from Cuba to the US?**

As you are participating in a legal trip to Cuba, you are authorized to bring back with your luggage \$100 per traveler worth of Cuban merchandise. Anything over this will be confiscated. It is not a question of paying more duty. As a result of the Trade Embargo, it is simply illegal to bring back more than \$100 worth of Cuban goods.

HOWEVER, please note that original pieces of art, all books and CDs are EXCLUDED from the Trade Embargo. Although you can buy as much original artwork and books as you want and bring it back to the United States, you may still be subject to the duty that is generally levied on any books exceeding the value of \$400.

### **6. If I bring back art are there any export restrictions?**

A piece of art with a value of \$200 or more should always be accompanied by an export license. The artist who is selling you the piece will be aware of this and it is his/her responsibility to provide this document to you. Generally they cannot provide it at the point of purchase but will bring it to the hotel

that day or the next day. This makes buying a major piece of art on the last day of the trip problematic so take note!

**7. Q. Can I bring back cigars?**

No, it is illegal to bring back cigars and rum from Cuba.

**8. Q. What is the weight restriction on my luggage?**

Your weight allowance is governed by the flight from Miami to Havana. The weight restriction on this flight is 44lbs which includes your hand luggage. Your hand-luggage will be weighed with your check-in piece. The weight restriction is VERY strictly enforced. You can bring more than this but you will be charged excess baggage. The additional charge for each pound over 44lbs is \$1 per pound.

In short – in order to avoid any overweight charges – keep your personal luggage at 44 lbs which includes your hand luggage and your check-in piece.

**9. Q. What is the best form of money to bring to Cuba?**

Because of the Trade Embargo, it is totally impossible to use US issued credit cards in Cuba. (Credit cards issued from a country other than the US are possible to use but it should be noted that credit cards are not widely used in Cuba.) It is close to impossible to exchange traveler's checks.

The best form of money is CASH. It is now not possible to use dollars in Cuba, but you can change your dollars for CUCs, the local convertible peso.

**10. Q. Where can I exchange money and how does the exchange transaction work?**

While technically possible at the airport, in order to avoid long lines we recommend waiting until you arrive at the Parque Central to exchange your currency. The Parque Central Hotel can exchange money at the reception desk usually from 8.00am to 7.00pm. Be warned that occasionally they have been known to run out of CUCs. If that happens, Distant Horizons staff will direct you to the nearest exchange facility

You will need your passport to change cash.

Please note that while the dollar and CUC are on par with one dollar being equivalent to one CUC, the dollar is subject to a 10% surcharge above and beyond the normal transaction fees. When you give a \$100 you can expect to receive about 87 CUCs.

One way to avoid this is to bring Canadian dollars (or Euros), rather than dollars. By doing this, and taking into account exchange fees charged on acquiring Canadian dollars or Euros, you will probably be ahead by about 5% than if you had changed dollars. You will need to decide if the saving is worth the extra time required to achieve it!

**11. Q. How much money should I bring?**

This is always a hard question to answer since it depends on what you are planning to buy!

Here are some guidelines based on US dollar rates (remember you will be making these payments in CUCs, not dollars). Lunches and dinners average between \$25 and \$40 for a good meal, but take note

that most meals are included already. Taxis in Havana rarely cost more than \$10-\$15. The Tropicana show costs \$100.

You can buy original art in Cuba for amounts ranging from \$5 to \$25,000 for a large original piece by Jose Manuel Fors or Los Carpinteros. Most well-known artists in Cuba can arrange for you to wire payment into an account in Europe or Canada so it is not necessary for you to bring a large amount of cash to purchase works by most of the artists you will be seeing. However, we can't guarantee that all artists are able to facilitate such an arrangement.

Tipping is usually 10%-15%. Again, all regularly anticipated tipping is included in the program. Please see the tipping guidelines for more information.

### **12. Q. What about carrying around large amounts of cash?**

The hotel in Havana has safes available in your room or at the front desk. We highly recommend using these for extra cash and your passports. There is no additional charge to use them.

### **13. Q. Can I drink the water?**

We recommend drinking bottled water which is widely available. Bottled water may be taken from the bus each afternoon for use in your hotel room. You may purchase additional bottles at local markets or stands. You will find it at rather expensive prices in your hotel mini-bar.

Please note Cubans drink water from the tap and the water is considered safe. Drinking bottled water is advised, but not mandatory!

### **14. Q. What about the ice?**

In the hotels and the restaurants chosen on your program, all ice is made from bottled or treated water.

### **15. Q. Is it safe to eat salads and other foods that may have been rinsed with local water?**

Overall Cuba is a healthy country where a great deal of emphasis is placed on teaching about hygiene. Cubans drink the water directly from the tap. It is rare for travelers to get sick from eating food. Eating salads and fruit is generally safe. However, each person is different, and if you do have a sensitive stomach you are advised to exercise caution when choosing what to eat.

### **16. Q. Can I use my cell-phone in Havana?**

It is not possible to use a U.S. cell phone in Cuba. It is possible to buy a local cell phone and then rent a SIM card. The charge is \$23 for the phone and \$3 per day for the SIM card. The per-minute charge to make a call to the U.S. is about \$1.90 per minute. There is no charge to receive calls from the U.S., but it is not possible to send or receive text messages from the U.S. To **make or receive** a local call within Cuba, the cost is about \$0.60 per minute.

Alternatively, if you have an unlocked cell phone from the U.S., you can rent just a SIM card for \$3 a day with the same per-minute charges as above.

When you rent the phone or SIM card, you can put money on the phone then. It can be topped up by purchasing phone cards sold at most hotels and at special shops.

If you are interested in doing this we can tell you exactly where to go at the airport in Havana or in the city.

**17. Q. Is it easy to receive or send faxes or make telephone calls from Havana?**

Yes, as of January 2011 it is relatively easy to do this. However, please note that there are no AT&T, MCI or Sprint access numbers from Havana. You can only dial direct. The rate per minute to call the United States from the hotel is about \$3.00 a minute. It is also possible to buy telephone cards and use these in one of the many phone boxes in Havana and Trinidad. The per minute rate at phone boxes is about \$1.40. Sometimes it may take dialing a number two or three times before you make a connection.

Please remember that it is possible that telephone access and rates could change.

**18. Q. What about e-mail?**

E-mail does exist in Havana but it is slow and is constantly down. There are a few internet cafes. The hotel in Havana has a business center with a few computer terminals that can access the internet. The cost is about \$10 (8 CUCs) an hour. In the lobby area there is also wireless internet which costs \$10 an hour as well. The wireless is accessed by purchasing a card (with a code) from the hotel front desk.

Please be warned that the access can be very slow and frustrating. Internet access outside Havana is very limited.

**19. Q. Are taxi cabs easy to get and how do I recognize them?**

There are plenty of “official” taxis in Havana and Trinidad and they are easily identified by the taxi sign attached to the roof of each car. These taxis have meters, but please be sure that they turn them on when you enter the taxi. Charges are all in CUCs.

There are also plenty of “unofficial” taxis. These are often quite fabulous 1950s cars. It is quite safe to use these but we recommend setting a fare that you both agree on before you depart as they do not have meters. The fare will be in CUCs. You will see the “unofficial” taxis at the same taxi ranks as the official taxis.

**20. Q. Can we watch CNN in Cuba?**

Yes, it will be possible to watch CNN on the television in your hotel room. On some occasions you may experience interference.

**21. Q. What kind of dress code should we pack for?**

The dress code is casual during the day. Slacks and long shorts are fine for women. We recommend comfortable walking shoes.

We have planned a few special dinners and you may want to consider bringing something dressier for these events. A jacket for men is optional.

Most of the hotels have a swimming pool, so be sure to pack a bathing suit.

**22. Q. What will the weather be like?**

March is a lovely time to be in Cuba. You should plan on warm temperatures of between 75-80 degrees during the day and a little cooler at night. It is unlikely, but possible it will rain.

**23. Q. What are the hotels like?**

The Parque Central is considered to be the best hotel in Havana with a good location right near Old Havana. There is a business center, a very small gym with old equipment, two swimming pools and three restaurants. Although it is the best hotel in Havana, we recommend coming with low expectations of what it is like. It is a European 4-star hotel with some rooms offering interior views,

The Parque Central actually has two wings – one known as “La Torre” and the other just as the Parque Central. All meetings and events take place in the Parque Central wing of the hotel. When we refer to departing from the lobby – it is the lobby of the Parque Central wing.

Both wings offer a buffet breakfast on their first floors (marked as Planta Baja or PB on the elevator) and you are free to enjoy breakfast in either of the two restaurants.

The hotel does not provide complimentary bottled water so be sure to pick up a bottle from the bus. There is water available in the mini-bar for an inflated rate!

Villa Guajimico near Trinidad is very simple hotel which is used mainly by Canadian and European tourists. It is a basic 3-star property that is in need of some renovation work, and the rooms are spread out over a large area, so there may be a few minutes walk, including stairs, to the restaurant or the front desk. Its location is right on a private beach and there is a swimming pool. The surroundings are stunning!

The hotels in Santiago and Baracoa are the best available, but they are very simple hotels, so please be prepared.

**24. Q. What about elevators?**

Buildings in Cuba are often not equipped with elevators. On this itinerary there will be one visit to a three-story walk-up with no elevator, and several visits to buildings with smaller elevators where we may ask the more physically fit travelers to walk up three to five flights of stairs. The Parque Central has several elevators!

**25. Q. What is the electricity in Cuba and the plug size?**

As odd as this may seem – there are two voltages in Cuba – both 110W and 220W. The Parque Central has 220W and use a 2 point-European plug and the Villa Guajimico uses 110W and an American-style plug. You will need to bring an adaptor and a converter.

**26. Q. Do the rooms have hair-dryers and irons in them?**

Yes, the Parque Central and has hair-dryers in the bathrooms. However, they are the kind that are attached to the wall and are quite low in their heat and power output. Bring your own if you are particular about having a powerful hair-dryer.

Some rooms have irons in them but if not, you can request an iron from house-keeping

Outside Havana, the hotels do not typically have hair dryers, so if it's important to you to have one, please pack your own.

**27. Q. Should I bring gifts to people in Cuba?**

As you know, Cuba has been denied access to many world markets and as a consequence has a shortage of many things. People are very appreciative of any gifts which may include items such as pens, small samples of cosmetics, vitamins, aspirins, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, baseball hats and t-shirts (old and new).

**28. Q. Who would I give these too?**

You will see that the Cubans are very friendly and you may, for example, have a wonderful taxi-driver or waiter in a restaurant who you would like to thank discreetly by giving them a small gift. We recommend NOT giving out gifts to some of the people who are often outside of the hotel or handing out gifts in a group setting which may cause other Cubans nearby to crowd around you.

**29. Q. Should I be concerned about safety?**

Cuba is a safe country, but like any country we recommend that you exercise caution and take care in crowded situations. Do not leave wallets visible from pockets and always be aware of where your valuables are. Be sure to use the safe in the hotel room.

**30. Q. What is the service like in Cuba?**

Be prepared for slow BUT warm and pleasant service. Do not be surprised if your fax takes a few hours to send or if your coffee order takes 10 minutes to reach you. This is Cuba... enjoy it!

# TRAVEL IN CUBA

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## A Few Facts

Cuba is the Caribbean's largest island, approximately the same size as the state of Florida. At its nearest point to the US, Cuba is about one hundred miles south of the tip of the Florida Keys. Cuba's nearest neighbors to the East are Haiti, to the West, the Yucatan Peninsula, to the North, the Florida Peninsula and to the South, Jamaica. The island has a varied terrain, with mountains, lush jungles, rolling hills, and wonderful beaches. Havana is the largest city in the Caribbean, and one of the oldest cities in the Americas.

## History

### **Pre-Columbian Cuba**

The first human inhabitants of Cuba arrived from South America in about 3500 BC. About two centuries before the arrival of Columbus, the Guanahabatey and Ciboney tribes began to be displaced by the Taino, who had fled nearby islands under pressure from the fierce Carib tribe. By the time of Columbus, about three-quarters of Cuba's population were members of the Taino tribe. The Guanahabatey and Ciboney were hunters and gatherers, while the Taino were an agricultural society. The Taino grew a variety of crops, including sweet potatoes, manioc, pumpkins, peanuts, corn, and tobacco, and made pottery, baskets, and stone tools.

### **The Early Colonial Period**

Christopher Columbus discovered Cuba on his first trip to the Americas. Until a Spanish explorer circumnavigated the island in 1508, the Europeans believed that Cuba was part of the Asian coastline. The Spaniards established their initial New World base on the island of Hispaniola. In 1512, Diego Velazquez de Cuellar led an expedition from Hispaniola and conquered Cuba on behalf of the Spanish Crown. By the end of 1514, Velazquez had established seven settlements: Baracoa, Santiago de Cuba, Bayamo, Puerto Principe (now called Camaguey), Sancti Spiritus, Trinidad, and Havana. All of these settlements were laid out on a grid, with a church and a public square in the center. The Spaniards who inhabited these towns slaughtered thousands of Indians, and forced countless more to flee westward. Only a few years after these settlements had been established, Velazquez sponsored four expeditions to Mexico, which led to Hernan Cortes' brutal conquest in 1519-21.

In Cuba, the Spanish set up large estates, on which the Indians were forced to work. The Spanish brought smallpox to the island, which killed thousands of Indians. By 1550, only about 5,000 of the island's 100,000 or more original inhabitants remained. As the native tribes died off, the Spanish turned to African slaves as an alternate source of labor. The first African slaves arrived early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, cattle ranching was Cuba's main industry. Although tobacco had been grown by the Taino and by the Spanish as early as 1580, it wasn't until the early 1700's that tobacco became Cuba's most important cash crop. In 1717, the Spanish Crown granted itself a monopoly on the tobacco industry which remained in effect for the next century. Sugar cultivation was introduced in 1512, but production was limited by the lack of slave labor.

Cuba served as a major transit point for the Spanish fleet during and after the conquest of Mexico. Galleons from Cartagena and Veracruz assembled in Havana harbor for their annual trip carrying gold, silver, and tobacco back to Spain. The huge amount of wealth that these ships carried, attracted the attention of pirates, and in 1555, French pirate Jacques de Sores plundered Havana. After this, Havana and Santiago de Cuba were fortified with Spanish military garrisons, but pirates remained a constant threat, as did the other colonial powers' navies. The British took Jamaica in 1655, and the French conquered Haiti in 1697. During the Seven Years' War, the British captured Havana, which they occupied for most of

1762, when they traded Cuba for Florida, and Cuba was returned to Spanish control. But while they held Havana, the British took the liberty of importing some 4,000 African slaves, and opening Cuba's doors to trade with Britain's North American colonies.

### **The Plantation Era**

When the Seven Years' War ended, the Spanish rulers liberalized trade, allowing Cuba to trade freely with seven Spanish ports instead of only with Cadiz. North America and other Caribbean islands were now free to trade with Cuba also. After US independence, Cuba gradually replaced Jamaica as the main supplier of sugar to the US market. Sugar production increased dramatically, as new technology and an increased slave population allowed planters to cultivate larger and larger harvests. In the thirty years following the Seven Years' War, the amount of land devoted to sugar cane increased sixteen-fold, and production nearly doubled. While Cuban sugar production remained a fraction of that of other Caribbean islands, it did have a major impact on the island's society. Many Spanish planters took African mistresses, their offspring providing the base of the Afro-Cuban culture we know today. In addition, sugar provided a way for Cubans to generate their own wealth, in opposition to the Spanish-born aristocrats and government officials who had always occupied society's highest echelons. It was during this era that the island's inhabitants first began to identify as Cubans, rather than as Spanish subjects, and a few even considered the idea of seceding from Spain. The first distinctly Cuban arts and literature date from this period, and the first Cuban newspaper was founded in Havana.

The Haitian slave uprising of 1791, which rapidly developed into a bloody ten-year civil war, had a profound effect on Cuban society. It sent 300,000 French settlers fleeing, the majority of them to Cuba. The Cuban economy benefited from Haiti's suffering. The Haitian civil war eliminated the region's largest sugar producer, the French, who then brought their expertise and technology to Cuba. Soon their methods were in place in mills and plantations throughout the country, and sugar production increased again. In addition, many of the French were coffee farmers who set up new plantations in Cuba's verdant eastern interior. Coffee became one of Cuba's major exports for about a generation, when it was surpassed by Brazil and many coffee farmers turned instead to sugar production.

However, the Haitian revolution also sent a clear message to Cuba's wealthy classes. It convinced them of the necessity of keeping the African slaves strictly under control. This made life even harder for the island's slaves, and also dashed any hopes of Cuban independence. An independent Cuba would not be able to rely on Spain's military might to deter slave uprisings.

The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw great turmoil in Europe and great prosperity in Cuba. When the sea-lanes were passable, Cuba traded with the warring European powers. In 1808, Napoleon overthrew the Spanish king, leaving Cuba without a protector. It was at this time that the United States, under Thomas Jefferson, offered to purchase the island. Cuba declined, but the question of annexation remained an issue for over a century after Jefferson's offer. The Spanish Crown was restored in 1814, though it held only a shadow of its former power. Throughout the New World, Spanish colonies took advantage of the crown's weakness and declared independence. Cuba, afraid of becoming the next Haiti, stayed loyal to Spain, and Spanish loyalists from all of the New World colonies took refuge on the island. Spain also deployed thousands more soldiers to strengthen Cuba's military defense. Because Cuba was spared the upheavals that accompany a struggle for independence, her sugar industry remained strong as her competitors' faltered. This combination of sugar production and increased Spanish support made Cuba the world's wealthiest colony from 1820 to 1868.

Cuba's wealth was dependent on slave labor. Between 1763 and 1862, wealthy Cubans imported over 750,000 African slaves. The majority of these slaves worked on sugar plantations, under extremely harsh conditions. Many planters worked their slaves to death and purchased more every few years, rather than providing more humane living conditions. The few slaves who lived in the cities also lived difficult lives,

but, unlike the rural slaves, they were allowed to stay with their own ethnic groups, thereby retaining their African heritage. These urban slaves are responsible for the large-scale introduction of African culture to Cuba. As early as the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, planters knew that the end of the slave economy was in sight. Britain abolished the slave trade in 1808, and Spain followed suit in 1817. From then on, new slaves had to be smuggled in to Cuba. Because slavery was still legal in the United State, a group of planters approached the US government in 1822, proposing to join the Union. In 1848, President Polk offered Spain \$100 million for Cuba, but popular furor caused the Spanish to withdraw from the deal.

### **Wars for Independence**

Not surprisingly, when the American Civil War broke out, Cuba pinned its hopes on the pro-slavery South. When the Confederacy lost, it meant the end of Cuba's slave trade. The last slave in Cuba was sold in 1867. The planters tried to make up for this loss of labor in various ways, even importing some 130,000 Chinese laborers, but their profits and production continued to slip. The economic downturn made for domestic instability, as the smaller planters went bankrupt. When the Spanish monarchy was overthrown in an 1868 coup, smaller planters from eastern Cuba saw their chance. In October 1868, a sugar planter named Carlos Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves and declared the start of a rebellion against Spain. His actions were the start of the Ten Years' War, Cuba's first battle for independence. Céspedes and a small guerilla army captured Bayamo a week after his declaration, and sympathizers took up arms all over eastern Cuba. The rebels' tactics were extremely effective, but Spain felt Cuba was too valuable to lose, and sent over 100,000 troops. In 1875, the rebels had consolidated their power in Eastern Cuba and were ready to bring the battle to the more developed Western part of the island, but an internal dispute led to the resignation of one of their most brilliant generals. In 1878, the Cubans sued for peace. The war had decimated Cuba's eastern provinces, and thousands had been killed or exiled, but a clear Cuban national identity had emerged, and the struggle for independence continued.

The Ten Year's War resulted in the near-destruction of the powerful plantation owners. Taking advantage of this power vacuum, American entrepreneurs descended on Cuba, purchasing sugar plantations at rock-bottom prices. This era marked the beginning of American control over the Cuban economy. Despite the Americans' best efforts, Cuba's economy did not regain its prewar wealth. Competition from Brazil cut into profits, as did the European innovation of producing sugar from beets instead of sugar cane. Although Cuba's economy made a temporary recovery, it collapsed again following the US's 1894 institution of a 40% tariff on Cuban sugar imports. At the same time, tensions flared with Spain, as negotiations for independence broke down.

Exiled writer José Martí was one of the most ardent supporters of "Cuba Libre"—a free Cuba. Martí's vision of an independent Cuba called for a state that provided economic and social justice for all its citizens. He masterminded an uprising that began in early 1895, although the serious fighting did not start until later that year, when Martí and Ten Years' War veteran Generals Antonio Maceo and Maximo Gómez returned from exile. Though Martí sought to avoid the mistakes of the Ten Years' War, he was one of the first casualties of his rebellion, and Maceo and Gómez followed the same basic strategy they had employed twenty years earlier. In retaliation, the Spanish rounded up peasants suspected of sympathizing with the rebels and confined them in camps, where tens of thousands died from disease and starvation.

Such was the situation when the US got involved in 1898. Yellow journalist William Randolph Hearst had stirred up popular opinion against the Spanish, while many businessmen felt that continued Spanish control of Cuba was the best protection for American business interests. As a compromise, the *USS Maine* was sent to Havana harbor, primarily as a warning to both sides. However, the *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor, killing 260 men and leading the American public to blame the Spanish. "Remember the *Maine*!" became the American battle cry in the Spanish-American War. The American military invaded Cuba, enlisting the support of the rebels, but never recognizing them as a legitimate political entity.

When the Spanish surrendered Havana, not only did the American, not the Cuban, flag fly over the ceremony but also no Cubans were even allowed entrance.

An American military government ruled Cuba from 1899 to 1902. It rebuilt the island's infrastructure and, ostensibly, attempted to put Cuba on the path to true independence. In reality, the military government's actions were in large part dictated by American business interests. The Americans forced a constitutional amendment, called the Platt Amendment, on the Cubans which granted the United States the power to intervene in Cuba whenever they deemed necessary, and also allowed the Americans to lease the Guantanamo Bay naval base. At the end of the occupation, the American-backed candidate, Tomás Estrada Palma, was elected president.

### **Pre-Revolution Cuba**

While the new, American-installed government was initially honest and efficient, and the Cuban economy showed signs of improvement, within a few years the situation began to deteriorate. When Estrada was up for reelection in 1906, his opponent was murdered. Estrada won the election, but his opponent's supporters mounted an armed rebellion. Estrada requested assistance from the United States, but the US refused, so Estrada and his entire government resigned, forcing the US to step in to restore order. The United States resumed control of Cuba from 1906-1909, a humiliating period known as the Second Intervention.

When the Americans departed for the second time, Cuba's government returned to civilian control. The next twenty years followed more or less the same pattern, as various corrupt administrations held office. Cuba's economy benefited from World War I, as European sugar beet production halted and the demand for Cuban sugar increased. The Cuban economy remained tied to sugar production, and American companies continued to dominate the economic sphere. During World War I, thousands of workers were imported from Haiti and Jamaica to work the cane fields, and acres of forest were cut down to accommodate new plantations. In 1920, however, the price of sugar dropped dramatically, and, once again, the Cuban economy bottomed out.

In the 1920s Cuban university students rediscovered the writings of José Martí, laying the foundations of the radical political activism that would have such a profound effect on the island's future. They sought to free Cuba from American economic domination, and were influenced by the Marxist and anarchist ideas then gaining currency throughout Latin America. These students also began to recognize the depth and significance of Afro-Cuban culture, as the population began to see black Cubans as "real" Cubans.

In 1924, Gerardo Machado came to power. Machado's first career was as a cattle thief, and he modeled himself after his political idol, Mussolini. By 1928, his dictatorial ambitions manifested themselves, as he named himself the only legal presidential candidate and had himself reelected. Opposition groups protested this action, and were beaten and murdered by Machado's thugs. Over the next few years, countless anti-Machado terrorist groups sprang up all over the country, and many activists were martyred for their cause. An attempted rebellion in 1930 was rapidly quashed by Machado's military, and by the time Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, Machado's goons were executing people in the street, as general strikes paralyzed all commerce on the island. Roosevelt sent an envoy to Cuba to help resolve the situation.

This time, the United States sided with the opposition forces, and Machado fled Cuba. Roosevelt's envoy appointed Machado's successor, who unfortunately lacked political savvy and popular support. The new government, headed by politician Ramón Grau San Martín, was toppled by revolutionary students and low-ranking military officers, who made radical changes during their 100-day regime. The Platt Amendment was nullified, although the US maintained their lease of Guantanamo Bay, and women were given the right to vote. However, higher-ranking military officers were dissatisfied with the revolutionary

government, and started their own armed insurrection. Roosevelt's envoy watched helplessly as the two sides skirmished, and then shifted his attentions to an up-and-coming young officer named Fulgencio Batista.

By 1935, Batista had succeeded in undermining military support for the revolutionary government, and had helped install a new, more conservative regime in its place. He went on to be the most powerful man in Cuba for the next twenty-five years. During the 1930s, Batista ruled from behind the scenes, controlling a series of puppet presidents. In 1940, Batista himself ran for president. During his first term, World War II sent sugar prices skyrocketing, and the Cuban economy once again experienced a boom. In 1944, he felt confident enough to run for reelection in a free election against Ramón Grau San Martín. Grau won the election, but his administration did not see a return to the idealism of the 1933 revolution. Instead, his government, as well as his successor's was incredibly corrupt. Student activist groups had deteriorated into armed bands of thugs, who drove around in American cars loaded with machine guns. Increased tourism had resulted in an economic boom in the cities, but it also brought crime and prostitution, and widened the income gap between rural and urban Cubans.

### **Revolution**

In 1952, Batista staged a military coup, regaining power from the corrupt government. In the minds of many Cubans, this new state of affairs was not much of an improvement, and on July 26, 1953, a group of 150 radicals led by Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada barracks in Santiago. The attack was a resounding failure, resulting in the death or capture of nearly all the participants. Batista's government tortured and killed 68 of the radicals, an act that shocked and appalled the Cuban public. Those who escaped death were tortured and imprisoned. Despite the Moncada attack's military failure, Batista's brutality won the rebels many sympathizers among the Cuban people, and Castro's speech at his trial established him as the heir to José Martí.

Batista declared an amnesty for all political prisoners in 1955. Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl, and other supporters went into exile in Mexico, where they prepared for revolution. They were joined by other Latin American revolutionaries, including Ernesto "Che" Guevara. By this time, numerous other opposition groups had formed, and terrorist activities and strikes plagued the island. Although news of their plans had been broadcast by the press, the 82 Cuban revolutionaries set off to wage war on Batista in November, 1956. Batista's troops met them on Cuba's southeastern shore, and barely a dozen of the rebels escaped death or capture, fleeing into the mountains.

In the Sierra Maestra, the surviving rebels allied with the local peasants. And, as word reached Havana that Fidel Castro was among the survivors, his supporters made the journey to the remote mountains of Oriente Province. By early 1957, the rebels had won some strategic victories over Batista's Rural Guard, forcing the government to send troops to Oriente Province. The next year, Batista's regime was under fire from both Castro's forces and a variety of other rebel groups, and even the US government was losing patience with his inability to maintain domestic stability. Batista's military support was flagging, and the price of sugar began to plummet. In another blow to the economy, the unrest also led to a decrease in tourism. In July, a conference of anti-Batista organizations united under the leadership of Fidel Castro and Batista launched a full-scale attack on Castro's mountain stronghold. Batista's attack failed within just a few weeks, as his inexperienced troops refused to fight, many of them deserting the army and joining Castro's forces.

By the end of 1958, the tiny rebel force had grown into an army of nearly 50,000 troops. And on New Year's Eve 1958, Batista and his cabinet fled the country. Che Guevara led troops into Havana, and Castro received a hero's welcome later that evening.

## **Fidel Castro's Cuba**

The new government enjoyed widespread popular support. Some conservatives launched terrorist campaigns aimed at dislodging Castro's regime, but these actions only increased Castro's popularity. By the end of 1959, the new government had consolidated its power and set some goals: American business out of Cuba, strengthened relations with the Soviet Union, and nationalized agriculture and industry. These plans led to the departure of many of Cuba's wealthy, white, urban elites. Between 1960 and 1962, over 200,000 left the country. When the Cuban government expropriated the American businesses that remained on the island, the US government severed diplomatic relations with the country and imposed the trade embargo that remains in effect today. At the same time, Cuba signed trade agreements with the Soviet Union, and Krushchev pledged to fight any US intervention in Cuban domestic affairs.

Washington was not willing to give up so easily, however. As Castro's government drifted gradually to the left, the CIA began training and equipping Cuban exiles in preparation for an invasion. In April 1961, the US bombed a number of Cuban airfields in hopes of destroying the revolutionary government's air force. Their attempt was not successful, and it also warned Castro of the impending attack. Two days later, a group of 1,300 Cuban exile soldiers landed at Playa Girón on the Bay of Pigs, the US Navy waiting for them just over the horizon. Castro met them with 20,000 troops, using the remains of his air force to knock out their air support. The insurgents radioed for help from the US Navy, but Kennedy was unwilling to get involved in a direct conflict, and the Navy did not step in, leaving the exiles to be captured. The exiles were later ransomed, but this confrontation gave Castro a symbolically important defeat of the United States.

The Bay of Pigs invasion radicalized the revolutionary government. For the first time, Castro called himself a Marxist-Leninist, and declared that the Revolution was a socialist one. "Enemies of the revolution" were arrested, and the Cuban people were shepherded into a variety of mass organizations, such as the Union of Young Communists. The military was expanded with the latest equipment from the Soviet Union, including the long-range missiles with nuclear warheads that sparked the Cuban Missile Crisis. The missiles arrived in Cuba in September 1962, and brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. In October, US spy planes confirmed the missiles' presence. President Kennedy demanded that they be returned to the Soviet Union, and warned that the island would be blockaded to prevent the delivery of any more, which were already en route. After a few tense days, Krushchev agreed to dismantle and remove the missiles. In return, the US agreed not to intervene in Cuban affairs. Castro was furious that these decisions had been made without consulting him. Although Soviet-Cuban relations remained close, they were never the same.

With US intervention no longer a major threat, the revolutionary government set about reforming Cuba, socially and economically. Education became a major component in Castro's plan; not only did it improve the people's quality of life, but it also was an important conduit for transmitting the ideals of the Revolution. Thousands of literacy volunteers traveled the countryside, teaching the peasants to read. Clinics and hospitals were established in remote areas, some of whom had never seen a doctor. Universal primary-school education finally became a reality.

The government was less successful in meeting its economic goals. They experimented with a number of different approaches. In the first few years, the official policies seemed to be agricultural diversity and Soviet-style reliance on heavy industry. When this proved unsuccessful, in 1963 Castro announced a return to the sugar-based economy. He signed a trade agreement with Moscow, under which Cuba would sell sugar to the USSR and would import everything from food to machinery from the Soviet Bloc. Virtually every inch of arable land was dedicated to sugar cane, but a massive production shortfall in 1970 led to yet another reorganization of the Cuban economy, this time along more balanced, rational lines.

In terms of foreign relations, Cuba followed a policy that was sometimes at odds with the Soviet Union's attempts at détente. Cuba's revolutionary leaders were the idols of many in the socialist world, and Castro's government saw no reason not to export their ideals. Cuba began subsidizing left-wing groups worldwide. Cuban soldiers fought alongside the communists in Angola and Ethiopia, and the Cuban-trained Sandinistas established their own socialist government in Nicaragua.

By the beginning of the 1980s, things were looking up for Cuba. The island continued to receive heavily subsidized Soviet goods, and the standard of living had improved dramatically since the Batista years. However, in 1980 a group of dissidents broke into the Peruvian embassy in Havana, demanding asylum. The embassy staff refused to turn them over to Cuban authorities, and, as punishment, Castro removed the guards who had allowed the dissidents entry in the first place. Taking advantage of the unguarded embassy, thousands more flooded the building, hoping to gain asylum in the United States. Castro decided to allow them to leave the country, permitting small boats from Florida to pick them up at the port of Mariel. Castro did manage to turn this public-relations nightmare to his advantage, however, as he encouraged dissidents, homosexuals, prostitutes, and criminals to leave. In the end, nearly 100,000 had departed, and Castro had disposed of some of his most vocal critics.

The mid-1980s were a relatively uneventful time domestically. However, the United States managed to topple the Cuban-backed socialist government of Grenada, handing Castro his first defeat. When Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, it became clear that major change was in the air. By the time Gorbachev visited Cuba in 1989, he was received quite coolly, and brought only promises of reduced Soviet aid. By the end of 1989, the Berlin Wall had fallen, and the Soviet Union was on the brink of disintegration. It became apparent to Castro that Cuba was on its own.

### **Fidel Castro in the Post-Soviet Era**

Cuba was dealt a serious blow in the late 1980s with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which meant a cutoff of economic and military aid on which Cuba had come to rely heavily over the years. The USSR had been Cuba's most important trading partner and provided the major market for Cuban sugar. The few consumer goods the USSR had supplied in the past were no longer available.

Just as the Cuban economy began to show signs of a rebound from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States tightened its embargo with the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. This led to another wave of emigration in 1994, as thousands of Cubans left the island on rafts and other small vessels bound for Florida. To stem this tide of illegal immigration, the United States in 1995 reached an agreement with Cuba under which the United States would admit 20,000 Cuban immigrants per year. Cuba, in turn, was to take steps to prevent future "boat lifts."

US-Cuba relations deteriorated further, and Cuba's weakened economy was hampered anew in 1996 when the US Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act, another embargo-strengthening measure. The act met with harsh international criticism, and Canada and the World Trade Organization moved to fortify trade ties with the Castro government as a rebuff to the United States. Prior to the passage of Helms-Burton, Cuba had renewed its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. In February 1996, Cuban air force planes shot down two civilian aircraft over international waters, killing the four persons aboard. The planes had left the United States carrying computer and medical supplies.

In late 1999 and early 2000, tensions between Cuba and the United States returned to the international spotlight with the highly publicized custody dispute surrounding Elian Gonzalez, a six-year-old Cuban boy who was the sole survivor of an attempted boat crossing to the United States in which his mother and 10 other Cuban refugees drowned. The dispute between the boy's father in Cuba and his expatriate relatives in Florida, who wanted him to stay in the United States, became a rallying point for both the Castro regime in Cuba and the anti-Castro Cuban community in southern Florida.

Despite its acquiescence to some economic reforms—dollar transactions and limited self-employment in the agricultural sector—the Castro regime retained its commitment to socialism. Its economy, still recovering from the collapse of the Soviet Union, had been buoyed by increased tourism, mining, and cigar and fish exports. However, economic growth had not translated into an improved quality of life for most Cubans, and Castro continued to blame poverty and harsh living conditions on the US embargo.

In January 2003 Cuba held its third direct election for the National Assembly. Participation was limited to a “yes” or “no” vote for a list of candidates approved by the Communist Party. A month later, the Assembly appointed Fidel Castro chairman of the Council of State for five more years.

### **Transition from Fidel to Raul Castro**

Fidel Castro, a devotee of Marxist-Leninist theory, brought revolution to Cuba and created the western hemisphere's first communist state. His bearded figure, long speeches, army fatigues and defiance of the United States earned him iconic status across the globe. Castro, hospitalized by an illness, transferred power provisionally to his brother, General Raúl Castro Ruz, first vice president of the Council of State and Council of Ministers and minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces on July 31, 2006. Fidel Castro's unprecedented transfer of power and his prolonged recovery appeared to augur the end of the Castro era.

Raul Castro, the world's longest-serving defense minister, took over as president in February 2008 after Fidel announced his retirement. Raul succeeded his ailing brother Fidel, who had been in power for five decades. Raul, 76 at the time of this appointment, has been his brother's trusted right-hand man and was once known as an iron-fisted ideologue who executed Fidel Castro's orders - and enemies - ruthlessly. Under his leadership, Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces became one of the most formidable fighting forces in the Third World with combat experience in Africa, where they defeated South Africa's army in Angola in 1987.

### **Raul Castro's Economic Reforms**

In his February 24, 2008 inaugural address, Raul Castro said the Cuban Government would “advance in an articulate, sound and well-thought out manner” in a series of measures that would raise the Cuban standard of living and tie individual prosperity to individual initiative and work performance. Castro also referred to excess “prohibitions and regulations,” the simplest of which the Cuban Government would start removing “in the next few weeks.” More complex “reforms,” he said, could only be introduced after changes to certain legal regulations.

Since February 2008, Raul Castro's government has announced it would pursue the following initiatives: expanding access to public land for private farmers, eliminating or reducing excessive subsidies, including food rations and subsidized lunches in workplace cafeterias; reducing inflated employment rolls, permitting some Cubans to own their homes, increasing wages and retirement pensions, raising the retirement age, upgrading public transportation systems and infrastructure, new licenses for private taxis to operate, limited deregulation of the construction industry, and expanding access to certain previously restricted consumer goods (like cell phones, computers, microwaves, toasters, DVD players, motorcycles, air conditioners, electric ovens, and agricultural supplies and tools).

In addition, Raul Castro's new policies allow business owners to practice several activities at a time, including in spaces they rent. A business can be practiced throughout Cuba, beyond the city of residence. Now for the first time, in-home restaurants, known as paladares, can now have up to 20 seats, hire non-relatives, and be operated by people that are not retired. The previous limit was 12 seats. In a first-ever assertion that housing can be used commercially, business owners are allowed to rent homes or vehicles from Cubans that live or work abroad. These properties can be leased for convertible pesos (CUC).

In April 2010, President Raul Castro announced that there are more than 1 million “excess” workers in Cuba. In September 2010, the Cuban Government announced that more than 500,000 state workers, 10% of the workforce, would be laid off by the first quarter of 2011. To absorb these workers, the government said it would reduce regulations on private sector employment and expand the cooperative sector. In October 2010, the Cuban Government published new rules regulating the self-employment sector, opening the door for self-employed workers to hire labor, and introducing a new tax scheme to include taxes on sales, profit, payroll, and social security. By the end of 2010, the Cuban Government announced it had granted 75,000 new licenses for self-employment activities, which represents more than a 50% increase from the number authorized in 2009.

In April 2011, the Communist Party Congress (CPC) held a party congress for the first time in 14 years, and endorsed reforms previously introduced by President Raul Castro. Most notably, these reforms include allowing the purchase/sale of private property and possible credit mechanisms for small businesses and cooperatives. Following in May 2011, the Cuban government agreed to expand the types of private businesses allowed to hire non-family members as employees, in an apparent attempt to speed up the push to create new jobs for the 1.3 million public employees it plans to lay off. This expansion applies to all the 178 types of private micro-enterprises now permitted in Cuba — known in Cuba as “self-employment” — such as restaurants, school tutors and party clowns. The 171 categories could only hire relatives when they were first allowed in the early 1990s, as the Cuban economy plunged into chaos after the Soviet Union collapsed and stopped its massive subsidies to the island. Last year, the government expanded them to 178 categories and allowed 83 of them to hire non-family members.

Facing another economic crisis, the Raúl Castro government is now pushing for massive cuts in state spending — including the lay offs of more than 1.3 million public employees — and an expansion of the private business sector in hopes it will create jobs and increase tax revenues. Government figures had 295,000 Cubans holding licenses for self-employment as of April 2011— far short of the level needed to cushion the state employees to be laid off. Taxes and contributions paid by the self-employed, plus the sale at unsubsidized prices of food items such as rice, sugar, bread and eggs have all contributed to an increase in Cuban government revenues and reveal Raul Castro’s strivings toward a brighter economic future for Cuban’s citizens.

### **Religion**

Cuba is officially an atheist state. However, the two most important religions are Catholicism and Santeria. Santeria is a product of the forced conversion of African slaves to Catholicism; Catholic saints and images are endowed with the characteristics of various African deities. Interest in Catholicism has increased in the last ten years, with the Pope’s visits in 1990 and 1998, and Castro’s Vatican trip in 1996. In addition, Cuba has one of Latin America’s largest Protestant populations. About 15% of Cubans are Protestant.

### **Language**

Cubans speak Spanish but English is widely taught and many Cubans speak a little English. The more urban the area is, the more likely the locals are to speak English.

### **Government**

Cuba is a totalitarian communist state headed by General Raul Castro and a cadre of party loyalists. Castro replaced his brother Fidel Castro as chief of state, president of Cuba, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces on February 24, 2008. The first Communist Party Congress (CPC) since 1997 was held in April 2011. On April 19, the final day of the CPC, Raul Castro was officially named first secretary of the Communist Party. He announced that 80-year-old Jose Ramon Machado Ventura would remain second-in-charge and 78-year-old Vice President Ramiro Valdes would remain as number three. The CPC also marked Fidel Castro’s formal resignation from official responsibilities within the party, although he

will likely remain an important symbolic figure. Also proposed at the congress were two 5-year term limits for top party and government positions, but the party will not take up the issues of succession and its role in government again until January 2012, when it will hold the next party conference. The Cuban Government seeks to control most aspects of Cuban life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy, and the state security apparatus. The Ministry of Interior is the principal organ of state security and control.

According to the Soviet-style Cuban constitution of 1976, the National Assembly of People's Power, and its Council of State when the body is not in session, has supreme authority in the Cuban system. Since the National Assembly meets only twice a year for a few days each time, the 31-member Council of State wields power. The Council of Ministers, through its nine-member executive committee, handles the administration of the economy, which is state-controlled except for a small private market sector. Raul Castro is President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, and Jose Ramon Machado Ventura serves as First Vice President of both bodies. In total, there are five Vice Presidents in the Council of State and seven in the Council of Ministers.

Although the constitution theoretically provides for independent courts, it explicitly subordinates them to the National Assembly and to the Council of State. The People's Supreme Court is the highest judicial body. Due process is routinely denied to Cuban citizens, particularly in cases involving political offenses. The constitution states that all legally recognized civil liberties can be denied to anyone who opposes the "decision of the Cuban people to build socialism."

The Communist Party is constitutionally recognized as Cuba's only legal political party. The party monopolizes all government positions, including the Council of State and judicial offices. Though not a formal requirement, party membership is a de facto prerequisite for high-level official positions and professional advancement in most areas. A small number of non-party members have been permitted by the controlling Communist authorities to serve in the National Assembly. The Communist Party through its front organizations approves candidates for all elected offices. Citizens do not have the right to change the government.

### **Economy**

Cuba's economy is gradually recovering from the loss of its major trading partners. The early 1990s were an extremely difficult time known as the "Special Period." The country suffered major shortages—everything from food to paper, fuel, and other basic necessities became scarce. Cubans, accustomed to a relatively comfortable lifestyle and three square meals a day, suddenly found themselves scrambling to provide enough food for their families. Electric service was cut back to just four hours a day. Today, these shortages are no longer as drastic, although the economy has not yet made a full recovery. Often it is easier for tourists to purchase scarce items than it is for Cubans.

Cuba's main industries are sugar cane, tobacco, tourism, nickel, rum, coffee and pharmaceuticals.

### **Population**

Cuba has a population of just over eleven million. About 70% of Cubans live in cities, the majority in Havana, with a population of about two million. Although Cuba is, by many standards, a developing country, its low birth rate and aging population are comparable that of many industrialized nations, including the United States. Cuba has a racially mixed population, with the 1993 census indicating that 66% of the population is white, mostly of Spanish ancestry, 12% are black, and 22% are of mixed race. In reality, however, the percentage of Cubans of mixed ancestry is probably much higher.

### **Passports and Visas**

American citizens must hold a **valid passport to travel to Cuba which is valid for 6 months past the return date of your trip**. All trips that Distant Horizons operated to Cuba are licensed trips, and as such, are legal trips. Because they are licensed trips, we will obtain visa cards for you prior to the trips departure. These visa cards are issued on a separate piece of paper and we will send them to you along with your final documents. It is not necessary for us to actually have your passports to issue the visa cards.

Please note that IF YOU WERE BORN IN CUBA, you must go through a different process and must directly contact the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, DC who will issue a different kind of visa than the kind issued for regular tourists. These visas can take up to 60 days to process and so it is essential that you address this question immediately if you were born in Cuba. **PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WERE BORN IN CUBA IMMEDIATELY so we can advise you of the correct procedure to follow.**

### **Inoculations**

There are no required inoculations for travel to Cuba. Please consult with your local physician or the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta for more up to date information on shots that you may need to have. The Center for Disease Control can be reached at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or on the web at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (please select Travelers' Health).

### **Climate and Clothing**

Despite the fact that Cuba is located in the Tropics, its climate is cooler than one might expect. This is because of the northerly trade winds that blow across the island year-round. There are two seasons—wet and dry.

The dry season is November to May and the temperatures range from 65° to 85F° in this period with the cooler months being December and January and the warmer months are March through May. Rain can occur during this dry season.

The wet season begins late May and lasts until the end of October. Temperatures are warmer, averaging 75° to 95F° during the day.

We recommend you check the weather conditions prior to your trip on a site like [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

Most Cubans dress casually. Women can wear whatever they want, and Cuban women often dress quite provocatively! Bring lightweight, comfortable clothing, and a light sweater or long-sleeved shirt for indoors, where the air-conditioning can be arctic. Long shorts and T-shirts are fine for men and women. Both men and women should pack a few nicer outfits for dinners but nothing formal is required.

### **Suggested Packing List**

Comfortable walking shoes

Light cotton clothes for heat during the day

Sun hat

Sunglasses

Sun block

Swimming suit

Lightweight rain jacket and or umbrella for sudden showers

A small flashlight

**Small bottles of shampoo and conditioner – not all hotels supply them**

**Wash cloths**

Any medication you might need.

### **Mosquito repellent**

A small first aid kit

Pepto-Bismol if you have a sensitive stomach

An inflatable cushion for air and bus travel

Hand wipes

A money pouch

Film or batteries for your camera

Ziploc bags

Addresses of family and friends (postcards can be sent from Cuba to the US)

### **Traveling Conditions**

The hotels in Cuba range from very good to basic. The hotels in Havana we use are good properties with good locations. The hotels have all the modern facilities you would expect in a hotel. Although these are good properties, we recommend coming with low expectations so that you will be pleasantly surprised. They are not the Plaza Hotel in New York! Service can be slow, elevators are very small and slow, fixtures are not necessarily maintained, and many hotels have rooms with views of an interior courtyard rather than facing outside.

The hotels we use outside of Havana are the best available but again, we recommend setting your expectations low! In Trinidad all hotels are located outside of town and range from 20-30 minutes by bus from Trinidad. They are 3-star properties catering to tour groups. Do not have high expectations. Rooms are acceptable but are in need of renovation. They offer air-conditioners, mini-bars (usually empty) and some hotels have safes but NOT all of them. Often the hotels are spread out and rooms might be located a several minute walk away from the reception and restaurant areas, and there may be numerous sets of stairs to climb. All meals are served buffet style, but offer a good selection of cuisines. The coffee served at breakfast tends to be weak OR very strong. If having a good cup of coffee in the morning is important to you, we recommend purchasing coffee bags in the US and bringing them to Cuba.

In Havana all rooms have hair-dryers but often they are the kind that attaches to the wall and are quite weak in their heat and power output. Outside of Havana only some hotels provide hair-dryers.

All rooms in all hotels we use offer air-conditioning and hot and cold water! However, NOT all hotels supply shampoo and conditioner or any toiletries beyond a bar of soap.

Most importantly, the level of service is **not high** in ANY of the hotels. Please do not travel to Cuba expecting things to work efficiently – **they do not**. However, the people are warm, friendly and wanting to help; they just have a different concept of time. In Cuba, a meal is to be savored and enjoyed. It is difficult for the Cubans to understand that we may want to eat our meal in one hour. So be patient and enter the spirit of the country!

Restaurants are good but service is slow!

Almost all of the roads in Cuba are excellent. The buses are also very good and are air-conditioned and comfortable.

### **Currency and Money**

Because of the trade embargo, it is not possible to use American credit or debit cards in Cuba. **Therefore bring your money in cash – this is the only convenient travel method.** Always bring crisp bank notes, with no rips, tears or markings. Your passport is required for all currency exchanges.

Please note that although American dollars are not a legal currency in Cuba, you can bring dollars into the country to exchange them into CUCs (Cuban Convertible Peso), the local currency used by tourists. Please note that when changing dollars in Cuba, you are subject to an exchange fee, and the penalty that the Cuban government imposes on US dollars is an extra 10%. So although the official exchange rate of dollars and CUCs is 1 to 1, if you give \$100 to be exchanged, you will receive about 87 CUCs in return. Thus, after these charges, the exchange rate typically ends up being \$1 USD to 0.87 CUC rather than a one-to-one rate.

In order to avoid this 10% penalty imposed only on USD exchange transactions, it is possible to bring in Canadian dollars which are not subject to the 10% penalty. While clearly you lose something on the exchange here in US dollars to Canadian dollars, the net gain will be saving of about 5%. Taking into account the loss on the exchange into Canadian dollars, you will end up with about 91 CUCs if you exchange 100 US dollars into Canadian dollars first.

### **Making Purchases in Cuba**

It is essential to know that because of the Trade Embargo that exists between the US and Cuba, it is only possible to purchase \$100 (or less) of souvenirs in Cuba. **Within this \$100 limit, it is NOT possible to bring back either cigars or rum.** Any purchases over \$100 are subject to confiscation by US customs. It is not a question of paying more duty. As a result of the Trade Embargo, it is simply illegal to bring back more than \$100 worth of Cuban goods.

HOWEVER, please note that **original pieces of art, recorded music and all books** are EXCLUDED from the Trade Embargo. Although you can buy as much original artwork and books as you want and bring it back to the United States, you may still be subject to the duty that is generally levied on any books exceeding the value of \$400.

The amount of dollars you bring into Cuba is up to you and depends on what you are planning to buy! Almost everything is included on your trip. For an independent dinner, not included in your trip, plan on about \$40 a person and for lunch about \$20. If you were planning on a moderate amount of gift buying, \$500 per person would be ample.

Many artists now in Cuba have bank accounts in other countries and it is often possible to purchase a piece of art by making arrangements with the artist to wire payment on your return to the US. You are generally allowed to bring the piece of art home with the understanding that immediate payment will be made upon your return. However, not all artists have overseas bank accounts, so if you are planning on purchasing art, you may want to bring sufficient cash to make that purchase.

Do remember that it is not possible to use credit or debit cards in Cuba.

### **Communications in Cuba**

It is not possible to use American cell phones in Cuba. It is possible to rent a cell phone at the airport in Havana. The daily rental is about \$8 and the per-minute charge to make a call is approximately \$2.00. There is no charge to receive calls from the US. Local calls made in Cuba are billed at approximately \$0.60 per minute. You will also be billed to receive calls and the charge amounts to about \$0.60 per minute. If you are interested in doing this, we can tell you exactly where to go at the airport in Havana. If you do rent a cell phone in Havana, please note that cell phone service outside of Havana is very limited.

Alternatively, if you have an unlocked cell phone from the US, you can rent just a SIM card at Havana airport for about \$3 a day with the identical per minute charges as listed above. Please note that texting is significantly less expensive than making calls but there is NO texting from Cuba to a US telephone number.

## **Food**

Cuban food is simple fare. The most common items are chicken or pork with beans and rice. Sometimes travelers find that the food can become monotonous, but remember that Distant Horizons is doing all they can to vary your food and find interesting restaurants. However, we ask for your patience in understanding that providing gourmet meals every meal is not easy!

*Pollo asado*, grilled chicken, is available at most restaurants, each with their own special marinade. Succulent roast pork, or *cerdo asado*, is another popular Cuban dish, as are black beans and rice, called *moros y cristianos*—“Moors and Christians.” Snack foods include meat empanadas and tamales steamed in banana leaves. Despite the fact that Cuba is an island, fish has never figured prominently in the Cuban diet, although in response to the shortages of the Special Period, the government has been urging Cubans to eat more fish. Fresh vegetables can be hard to come by, but the island also produces delicious fruits.

## **Drinks**

Rum is Cuba’s national drink, and a wide variety of high-quality rums are available on the island. Cubans usually drink their rum straight, but there are several popular rum cocktails as well. The *mojito* is a rum, lime, sugar, soda water, and mint drink. Daiquiris are also popular, and were a favorite of Ernest Hemingway. Beer is also widely available and extremely popular with Cubans.

American and Mexican soft drinks are widely available, as are their Cuban equivalents. Diet soda is NOT readily available. Bottled mineral water is also widely available, and many regions of Cuba are well-known for the quality of their water. Coffee is also extremely popular in Cuba. Cuban coffee is thick, sweet, and strong, and served in small cups like espresso.

**We recommend that you drink only bottled water.** It is not always easy to find non-carbonated mineral water.

## **Tipping**

All tips for planned events are included. It is customary to tip Cubans about 10% of the total bill at restaurants. Taxi drivers expect a small tip. Please see our tipping guide which will come with your final documents for suggested tipping amounts for your guide and drivers.

## **Calendar and Time**

Cuba adheres to the Western calendar, and is located in the Eastern Standard Time Zone, just like the East Coast of the United States.

## **Business Hours**

Hours are flexible in Cuba. Most museums are closed on Mondays, open from about 10am to 5pm on Tuesday through Saturday, and from 9am to noon on Sundays. Tourist oriented stores typically are open from about 9am to 5 or 6pm. Other shops are open from noon to 7pm, and government offices are open from 8am to 5pm, with a two-hour lunch break. Cubans do not take a siesta.

## **Electricity**

As odd as this may seem – there are two voltages in Cuba – 110W and 220W. Most hotels now use 220W and use a 2 point-European plug however some hotels outside of Havana use 110W and a two-point American plug. You will need to bring an adaptor and a converter.

## **Shopping**

Cuba's most famous products are, of course, cigars and rum, and although there will be opportunities to purchase these items, you **CANNOT** bring them back to the US. Cuba has an excellent number of local artists and original art is widely available. Cuban markets often sell baskets and t-shirts.

**A few last words...**

Cuba is a fascinating and exciting country, and we are sure you will enjoy your trip. Remember, however, that although Distant Horizons has done everything possible to ensure a perfect trip sometimes the unavoidable happens. Be warned that cultural tourism is an emerging industry in Cuba and that you are amongst the first American travelers to visit this country on a licensed trip in many years. What this means is that tour guides are being trained and that their English is perhaps not as good as one would like in an ideal world. We are fairly certain that there will be some changes, and we ask that you be patient and understanding and that you appreciate how fortunate we are to be visiting this country at such an interesting time in its history.

It is important to be patient, to keep an open mind, to be flexible, and to keep your sense of humor! If you have any questions do feel free to call us at 1-800-333-1240.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CUBA

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Great overall current events and articles: [www.cubaabsolutely.com](http://www.cubaabsolutely.com)

