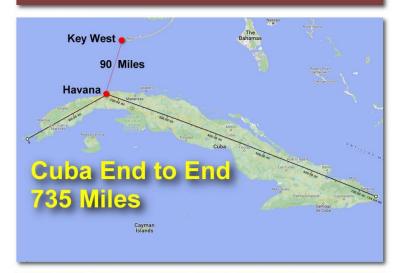


Cuba land area: 41,097 sq. miles. Slightly smaller than Pennsylvania.

Coastline: 2,321 miles.

Cuba Background and History



Capital Havana La Habana Havana pop: 2.4 million. Havana Metro: 3.9 million.



Land Use in Cuba

Agriculture: 60%.

Forest: 27%.

Built-up Areas,

Roadways, Other: 13%.

Climate: Tropical moderated by trade winds. Average temps:
January: High 80. Low 62.
July: High 90. Low 73.

Dry season: November to April. Rainy season: May to October.

Time: UTC-5 (same US East

Coast).

Daylight savings time: Yes.

Legislature

Unicameral: National Assembly

of People's Power.

Seats: 474 (effective 2023).

Communist Party is the only party. Nominates candidates, who run unopposed.

Assembly elects President and Prime Minister. No public vote.

Cubans in USA

Est. 2 million. 60% in Florida.

Cuban-born: Around 57%.

Politics: Heavily Republican.

Strongly anti-Communist.

Successful: In establishing businesses and developing political influence in US.

Cuba Flag
Designed: 1849.
Adopted 1902.



Blue bands: Old divisions of island: Central, East, West.

White bands: Purity of

independence.

Government: One-party

communist state.

Head of State:

President Miguel

Diaz-Canel.

Head of Gov't:

Prime Minister

Manuel Marrero Cruz.



Citizenship

Citizenship by birth only:

Birth in Cuba or to Cuban parents living abroad.

Naturalization: Highly

restricted.

Dual citizenship: No.

States with largest Cuban-American populations US Census Estimate 2021

United States Total	2,400,152
Florida	1,589,455
Texas	123,565
California	103,500
New Jersey	94,260
New York	83,771
Georgia	37,768
Nevada	36,041
North Carolina	33,258
Pennsylvania	26,316
Illinois	22,518
	1.000



Don't confuse the Cuba flag (adopted 1902)

with the Puerto Rico flag (adopted 1895).





Ethnic Groups (2012 selfidentification in census)

White: 64.1%.

Mulatto or mixed: 26.6%.

Black: 9.3%.

Voting: 16 years of age.

Official Language: Spanish.

Cuban Money Cuban Peso: CUP. Symbol \$. **Units:** \$1, \$3, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50,



Official Rate: Pegged with US dollar at 25 CUP = US\$1. BUT...

Cuba's Economy State-run enterprises dominate. 72% of workers state employed. Most others are self-employed. Private property and foreign direct investment are allowed. But economic activity is tightly controlled by the government.

Exports: \$2.6 bn (2017 est). China 38%, Spain 11%, **Netherlands 5%, Germany 5%. Imports:** \$11.1 bn (2017 est). **Spain 19%, China 15%,** Italy 6%, Canada 5%, USA 5%, Russia 5%, Brazil 5%.

Cuba Religions (2020 est.)

Christian: 59%.

Folk religion: 18%.

No Religion: 23%.

Christianity is mainly Roman Catholic modified by African

folk customs.

But market rate is very different!

Over 400 to US\$1 August 2025. If you pay in US dollars cash in restaurants, hotels, stores, you will get close to this market rate.

US dollars cash accepted preferred – by most merchants.

But NO credit cards. NO ATMs.

Cuba Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Per capita nominal (NOT PPP):

\$7,156 (2020 est).

Per capita (PPP):

\$12,300 (2016 est).

Based on limited World Bank data.

Food rationing system since 1962. Family ration books. Must buy certain low-price items at Bodegas.

Typical monthly rations per person:

5 eggs 6 lbs white rice

1 liter cooking oil 20 oz beans

1 lb spaghetti 2 bags coffee 3 lb white sugar Dinner rolls

3 lb dark sugar 2 lbs chicken

Problems: Availability. Long lines.

Power Blackouts

Starting 2022 rolling blackouts (mainly 6 hours, up to 12 hours) throughout Cuba, including Havana.

Electric grid collapsed totally Oct 18, 2024. Entire island blackout. But Cuba has had electric shortages long before.

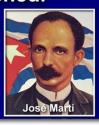


Cuba History – 2

1868-1878 Ten-Years War of Independence. Spain won. Promised reforms and autonomy – never happened.

1886 Slavery abolished. 1895-98 José Martí

leads a second war of independence.



Cuba History – 4

1933 Government overthrown in coup led by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista. Batista led Cuba by dictatorship until overthrown by Fidel Castro in 1959.

1953 Fidel Castro leads an unsuccessful revolt against the Batista regime.

Why?

- Insufficient capacity.
- Poor maintenance.
- Lack of fuel.



 Poor quality fuel (high sulfur) which damages electric plants.

After lan, unprecedented antigovernment protests throughout Cuba about electricity.

Cuba History – 1

1492 Navigator Christopher Columbus arrives. Claims Cuba for Spain.

1511 Spanish settlements.

1526 Importing slaves from Africa.

1762 British capture Cuba.

1763 Cuba returned to Spain.

Cuba History – 3

1898 US Battleship Maine explodes in Havana harbor. US declares war on Spain.



1898 US defeats Spain. Spain cedes Cuba to the US.

1902 Cuba becomes independent. US ends military occupation.

Cuba History - 5

1956 Castro lands in Cuba. Leads guerilla war against government.



1958 US aid to Batista ends.

1959 Castro army takes Havana. Batista flees. Castro becomes prime minister; brother, Raul, becomes his deputy.

Cuba History – 6

1960 All US businesses in Cuba nationalised. No compensation. 1960 US trade embargo (except medicine and food). All business with Cuba prohibited. Continues to today.

1961 US breaks off all diplomatic relations with Havana.

Cuba History – 8 2008 Fidel retires. Raul takes over as president.



2008 Bans end on people owning mobile phones and computers.

2009 US President Barack Obama says he wants a new beginning with Cuba. Relaxes travel restrictions.

Cuba History - 10
2017-2020 President Trump
overturns many Obama reforms.
Declares Cuba a state sponsor
of terrorism.

2021 Anti-government demonstrations protest lack of food, fuel, medicine and freedom.

Legal Travel to Cuba by Americans

Cuba History – 7

1961 US sponsors failed Bay of Pigs invasion by Cuban exiles.

1962 Cuban missile crisis.

1991 USSR collapses. Their aid to Cuba ends.

1993 Cuba introduces some market reforms to stem the deterioration of its economy.

Cuba History - 9

2014-2016 Some US-Cuba trade and banking restrictions eased. Embassies reopened. Travel resumes. President Obama visits Cuba. Cuba allows small private businesses.

2016 Fidel Castro dies, age 90.

Cuba History – 11



October 2022 US Customs and Border Protection reports that 224,607 unauthorized citizens of Cuba had been apprehended and/or expelled trying to enter the United States during fiscal year 2022 ending Sept 30, 2022.

Old "People to People" program ended 2019. Had required using government-owned tour companies, hotels, restaurants.

New "Support for Cuban People" program requires support for <u>Cuban microentrepreneurs</u> rather than government-run entities.

This means:

- Stay in casas particulares (private homes).
- Eat in paladares (small, private restaurants).
- Use private guides.
- Participate full-time (8h/day) in small cultural activities that directly benefit people.

Best to use tour company. I used discovercorps.com.

Need Cuban visa. Buy online. \$85+ship.

REPUBLICADE CUBA

VANA-TRACET DEL TIMENTA

APPORTA

PROPER

PR

Book flight with visa number and state purpose of visit is "Support for Cuban People".

Complete Traveler Info Form online.

Proof of medical insurance.



Where to Go and What to Do in Havana Has Pres Trump tightened rules for Travel to Cuba? Yes, but...

- June 2025 presidential memorandum explicitly prohibits US citizens from traveling to Cuba for tourism (leisure).
- But limited humanitarian exceptions from before are still allowed.
- Need careful documentation that you are going on a humanitarian project.
- Use US tour company. Not on your own.

Non-stop flights to Havana from US:

- From Miami - AA and DL. About
- From Tampa - Southwest. One Hour
Vaccinations required? None.
US mobile phones: Won't work maybe just text messages only.
Cannot use: ATMs or credit cards.
Can use: US\$ cash or Cuban Pesos.
Tips for guide/driver: US\$ cash best.











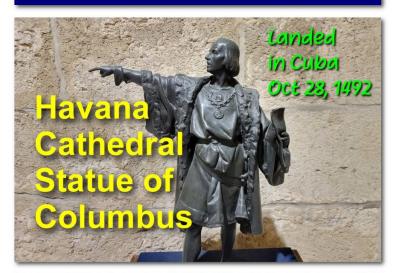


Catedral de San Cristóbal.

1777. Baroque style. Coral stone.

1 of 11 Catholic cathedrals in Cuba.
Built by Jesuits.

Christopher Columbus' remains were here 1796-1898. Moved to Seville after Cuban independence. Part of Old Havana UNESCO site.





Capitol - Capitolio. 1929.
Exact center of Havana.
Similar to US Capitol: 1 meter higher, 1 meter wider.
1959: Congress abolished.
Building fell into disrepair.
2019: Renovated. Now again home of National Assembly.



Plaza de Armas Statue of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes



Castillo de la Real Fuerza - 1577.
Part of UNESCO Old Havana Site.
Built by slaves and prisoners.
Was residence of Spanish
governor of Cuba.
Inside: Maritime history

museum.

Closed Mondays.

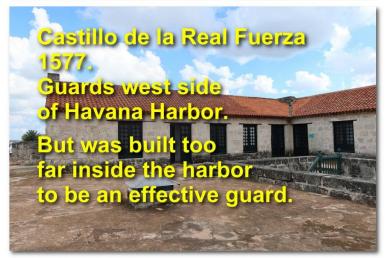
José Julián Martí Pérez 1853-1895.

Cuban writer, philosopher, political theorist, martyr.

National hero - inspired independence movement. Died fighting Spain 1895.

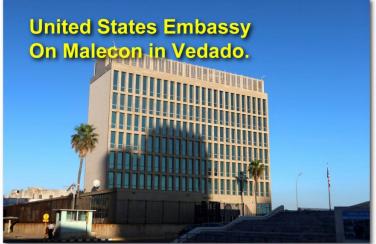
Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Cuban revolutionary hero.

Plantation owner who freed his slaves and declared Cuba independent in 1868. Started Ten Years' War (1868-1878). Killed by Spanish in 1874.









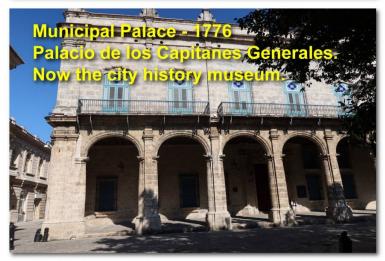


Municipal Palace - Palacio de los Capitanes Generales - 1776 Captains General were the Spanish governors of Cuba. Palacio was their residence. Cuban Baroque style. Today it is home to the Museum of the City of Havana (Museo de la Ciudad).



US Embassy 1959-1977 Relations severed. 1977-2015 US office, not embassy. 2015 Embassy resumed.

2017 Havana Syndrome. Pain, ears ringing, cognitive difficulties.
2018 Only 10 American diplomats remained. Cause still unknown.
2022 Slowly reopening.











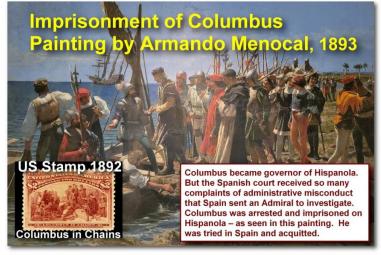


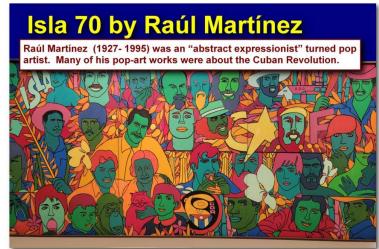


National Museum of Fine Arts Founded 1913. Two buildings:

- Museo National de Bella Arte
 Universal foreign art, classical building.
- Museo National de Bella Arte
 Cubano Cuban art from the
 Colonial Period to the present.

I visited only the second one.











Sloppy Joes Bar
Zulueta & Animas Sts.
Opened in 1920s.
90% customers American.
Magnet for American celebs and tourists wanting to mingle with them.
LA Times called it "almost a shrine".
Business nosedived after Revolution.
Closed in 1965. Reopened in 2013.

National Theatre - 1915 Gran Teatro de La Habana

Home to the Cuban National Ballet.

Theatres, concert hall, rehearsal

rooms, art gallery. Renovated 2015.

Main hall seats 1500.





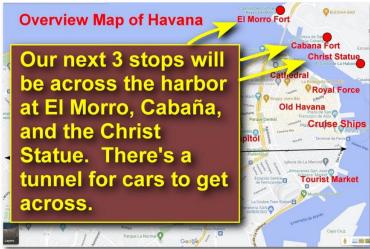




Museum of the Revolution
Museo de la Revolucion
Story of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.
Vivid exhibits like blood-stained and bullet-riddled uniforms.

Building was Presidential Palace of all Cuban presidents from Mario García Menocal (Pres 1913-1921) to Fulgencio Batista (until 1959).





Morro Castle - "El Morro" 1589

Not to be confused with San Felipe del Morro Fort (aka El Morro) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Bay.

Built by Spain.

Main defense in Havana harbor until La Cabaña was built next door 1774. Part of Old Havana UNESCO Heritage site.



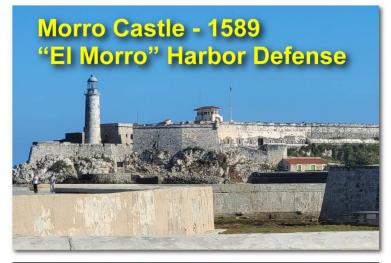
Two Havana Club Rums!

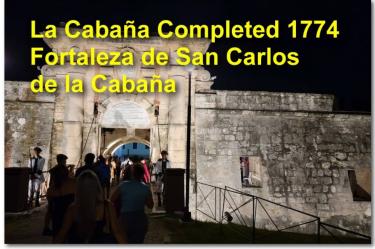
Original. Moved to Puerto Rico after Castro.

Therealhavanaclub com

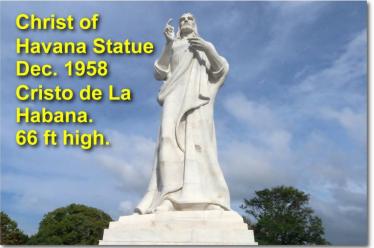
Havana Club Rum now made in Cuba. havana-club.com















In 1959, Castro seized La Cabaña. Cuban Army surrendered. Che Guevara used the fortress as headquarters and



military prison. 176 documented executions there of people who opposed the communist revolution.

Jesus Christ Statue - Dec. 1958
Cristo de La Habana. 66 ft high.
On a hill overlooking Havana Harbor.
Commissioned by Batista's wife to celebrate survival of 1957 coup attempt.
15 days after the statue was unveiled,
Castro entered Havana. Batista fled.

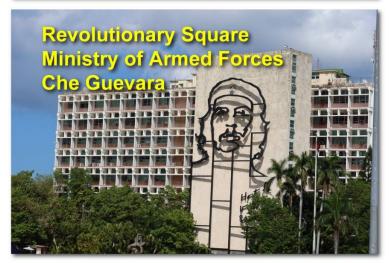
15 days after the statue was unveiled, Castro entered Havana. Batista fled. Castro made religion illegal. Statue abandoned to vegetation until mid-1990s, when cleaned and reopened.

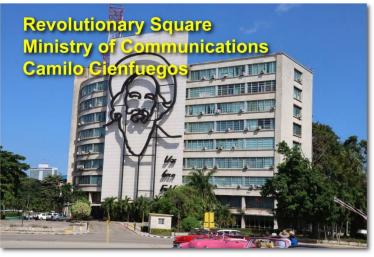


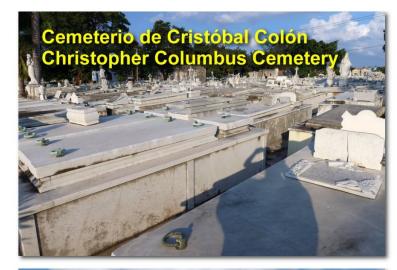


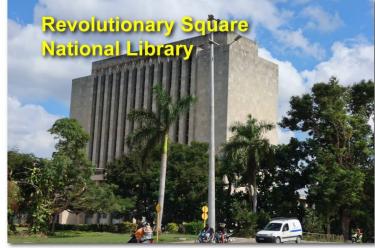












Che Guevara 1928-1967 Argentine physician. Became radicalized by poverty and hunger in Latin America.



Fought against Batista with Castro. Countercultural symbol of rebellion.

Camilo Cienfuegos
1932-1959
Cuban revolutionary.
Part of Castro's 1956
armed insurgency against
Cuban dictator Batista.
One of Castro's top guerrilla
commanders.
Revered as hero of the Revolution.

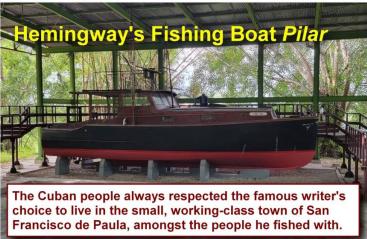




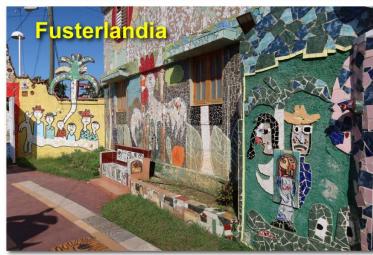


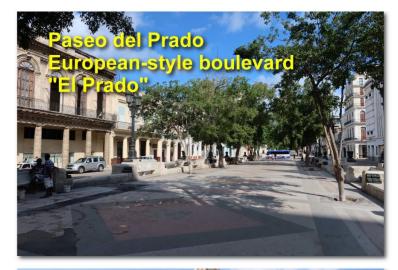




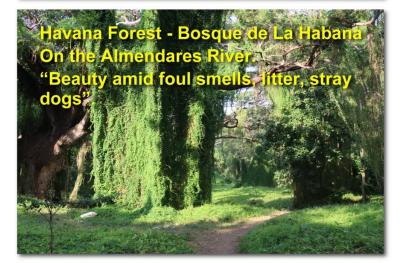












Santería

African diasporic religion.
Widely practiced in Cuba.
Developed by slaves late 19th century.
Mix of traditional Yoruba religion of
West Africa and Roman Catholic.

No strict orthodoxy. No key sacred text. No central authority in control. Practice animal sacrifices, for example, chickens in Hayana Forest.









Bello Vedado Casa Particular Very clean.

One bedroom has 2 beds, the other one double bed. Both private bath with good hot water.

Both have built in air conditioners, safe, fridge.







Bello Vedado
Owner Jorge lives
nearby. Cooks hot
breakfast each
morning.



Jorge makes internet hotspot. Can arrange taxi. Free land line phone. Front porch. Sit and watch neighbors. 2 miles walk to Old Havana. \$5 taxi.





Battle of Hotel Nacional Oct 2-3,1933 Two Cuban army groups – one supporting Batista overthrowing the Cuban government and one opposed – fought a bloody battle. 40 dead. Extensive damage to hotel. More fighting in streets outside.

Hotel Nacional's former casino was the setting for the Havana Conference – meeting of the US and Sicilian Mafias in 1946.



This meeting is depicted in the film *The Godfather Part II*, though the actual scenes were filmed in the Dominican Republic.

Fidel Castro nationalized the hotel in 1960.





Cuban Missile Crisis Museum

1962: Castro allowed USSR secretly to station nuclear missiles on the island.

In retaliation for US stationing missiles in Turkey and Italy.

35-day confrontation.

US U-2 spy plane clearly photographed the missiles.

People Who Stayed at the National Hotel

Winston Churchill, Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Jimmy Carter, Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Mickey Mantle, Johnny Weissmuller, Buster Keaton, Walt Disney, Fred Astaire, Rocky Marciano, Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Marlon Brando, Ernest Hemingway, Yuri Gagarin, Jesse Ventura, many Heads of State and monarchs, Jean-Paul Sartre, Steven Spielberg, Leonardo DiCaprio, Danny Glover, Francis Ford Coppola, Michael Keaton, Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Chinese President Xi Jinping, John Kerry, Stan Musial, Tennessee Williams, etc etc.





Pres Kennedy was advised by National Security Council to air strike and then invade Cuba.

He declined. Instead imposed a naval blockade. Russia withdrew missiles and planes from Cuba. US withdrew missiles from Turkey.

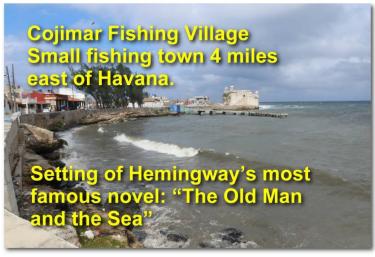
Considered the closest the Cold War came to escalating into a full-scale nuclear war.



Public and private buses are
Havana's main public transport
system.
No subway
train system.

5433





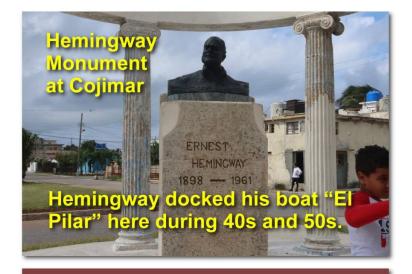
Habana Compas Dance Troupe. Merges Cuban music, Spanish dance, and African percussion. Classes for 400 children and young people between 5 and 18 years old.

Example: The US "Support for Cuban People" visa requires participation with private sector entrepreneurial groups like this.





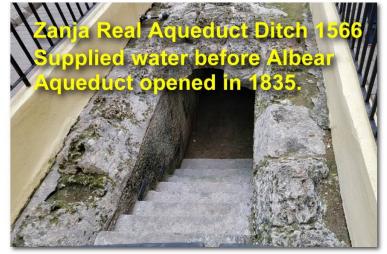




Classic American Cars in Cuba







Classic Cars

1959 US trade embargo halted export of American vehicles and parts to Cuba.

Cubans rejected Russian cars.

Scrounged or made parts to keep their American cars running.

60,000 pre-revolution cars now on roads.

Total number of cars in:

Cuba 500.000.

A few of my photos

- USA 295,000,000.



Cuban Food

Cuban Cuisine

Based on Spanish cuisine with influence from African and other Caribbean cuisines.

An island – much seafood.

Tropical climate – many fruits and root vegetables.

Meals often include rice and beans. Next few slides are examples of what I tried.















Another good Netflix series: The Cuba Libre Story (2015)

8 One-hour episodes on the history of Cuba.



From Colonialism and Sugar to Revolution, Soviets, and today's issues.

I highly recommend this Netflix documentary Cuba and the Cameraman

For 45 years, Director Jon
Alpert followed Fidel Castro
and three Cuban families
affected by his policies.
"Because of Alpert's unique
access to the island, and the
trust and friendships earned
over decades, this film is a
candid and revealing neverbefore-seen portrait of
Cuba."

