

# The Need-To-Know-Before-You-Go on Cuba

## Things to Know:

Talk to people! The Cubans are very friendly and helpful. Just ask people in the streets.

Internet cards are cheap – about \$1-2 CUC per hour – however, finding one of these can be a nightmare.

Finding WiFi spots can be a challenge too, but just look for a place with about 30 people standing around on their phones. WiFi spots are usually outside near parks.

Cubans generally are pretty fair with the prices, but there is often a premium charge to tourists. If you feel the price is too high you can usually negotiate lower. Taxi drivers are an exception and the State run yellow cabs are the worst deal going. Go with the old American colectivo cars for \$1-2 CUC. Also you will be able to SMS/text the Cubans, but they will not be able to text you.

## Pre-Planning:

All my friends know how little planning I do for my trips. However, Cuba is a little different as there are some things you may find challenging if not properly prepared.

- Downloaded offline Google Maps - It's worth the space. No place, even with my VPNs, could I find a connection to download these. Not sure if it's a block, or what, but it's just better to get them before you go. If you don't you can connect and use regular maps there, but Internet connections are few and far apart.
- Download offline Spanish language pack in Google translate app (Even if you speak Spanish this is a good idea as I found a number of very Cuban words I wasn't familiar with)

## Things To Bring:

- Cash – Canadian dollars, Euro, Pounds would be best. Credit cards **will not work**. Before we went, we asked and the banks told us they would, but they didn't. There is a 10% charge on USD conversions.
- Hand Sanitizer / wipes
- Budget for about 100 a day in cash plus room expenses. (Remember dollars get a lower rate)
- Toilet paper....this is a form of currency in Cuba...to save space, remove from the roll and place them in a zip lock bag to make it easier to pack
- A towel (you don't actually need this, but some people will get the reference)
- Two razor blades if using a changeable razor. There are some places in Cuba that will not allow you to carry detachable razor blades. Hide these deep in your bag to avoid customs taking them.
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Toothpaste
- Shampoo
- Cheap sunglasses

## Things to NOT Bring:

- Adapters for electricity – almost everywhere I saw had American style, or universal plugs
- Lonely Planet...during peak season, with the load of Americans traveling and using it....don't bother.
- Clothes for each day. Laundry is available at the casa particulares for about \$5-10 per load
- Travel light and avoid checking a bag if you can.

## **Places and People:**

### ***Havana***

Getting around: For a cab ride/tour contact Martin Batista. Martin is crazy and fun and will look out for you. +53 5869 6859 [martinbatista@nauta.cu](mailto:martinbatista@nauta.cu)

Lodging: Casa Heidi street 27 No. 912 (Between 4 and 6 street) – Run by Heidi Lazcano Font Contact her at: (53) 78308812 (Home) or at (53) 5336515 (Cell) [hlazcano@nauta.cu](mailto:hlazcano@nauta.cu)

Food: Wendy Betancourt – Wendy is one of the coolest people I met while there. She has a nice restaurant (cafe Laurent) and is a genuinely wonderful person. (53) 52533125 Cell.

### **Cienfuegos**

Hostal Pink House: Henry & Lalita – Ave 42 #4913 (between 49&51) Cell +53 54570896 & +53 52710347

Hostal Idania: Ave 44 #4905 (Between 49&51) Cell +53 52406276 & +53 52276216