

Alexis Danielle Travels

Created by: Alexis Pam

Destination: Havana, Cuba March 2018

Before you go:

- Get your passport
- Make copies of important documents such as your passport, birth certificate, flight itinerary, hotel/airbnb bookings and excursions.
- Notify debit/credit card companies of your travels.
- Download the **free** apps Maps.Me app and Google translate

What to Bring:

- Money: obviously
- Sunscreen: its hot and bit humid
- Small Umbrella: even if the forecast says its not going to rain, bring one.
- Thin clothes:** I repeat – it is hot and humid. Don't pass out overdoing it.
- A fleece blanket + your own towel and washcloth: planes and airports are cold. I also don't like to sleep under blankets in airbnb's; therefore the blanket is a necessity.

Quick Tips:

- o Join your copied documents together into a PDF file and add it to Dropbox. Download the mobile app as well to make the PDF available offline. It's easier than carrying papers.
- o Within the Maps.Me app, download Cuba's map. It works perfectly offline. Save your lodging location, as well as meeting point locations for excursions to figure out distances. Download the Spanish translator for google translate.
- o Debit/Credit cards don't work. Don't think twice to depend of them.

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The Process

Getting there:

- **Flight** – I went through American Air
 - 12 categories selection: **Support for the Cuban People**
 - Passport numbers are usually required to fully purchase ticket. I had to renew mine and was able to make the purchase without adding passport information. I called American Air after completing the online purchase and they fully processed the transaction. Simply had to add the info as soon as I got my new passport.
- **Visas** – You can order online through your airline or wait till you get to the airport.
 - I ordered online to go ahead and get the cost out of the way. Simply had the lady stamp my visa before boarding from Miami to Havana.
- **Information Papers** – You are required to fill out a white form and a blue form. You will get these if you purchase your visa at the airport before your departing flight to Havana. If you ordered online, simply go to the visa purchase counter at the gate, have her stamp your visa, and ask for the two forms. Fill them out before you land.

Money:

- **How much to bring** – Cuba cheap. Very cheap. But I still brought about 120 per day for meals and shopping.
- **Exchange Process** – USD → Euros → CUC
 - For my 3 full day trip, I started with 359 USD. When I got to Miami, I exchanged my USD to Euros. Base exchange fee is \$8.95. I got 260-something euros back.
 - You can then exchange your euros in Cuba at the airport, but I arrived at 8am on a Sunday and it was closed. So I had to pay my taxi driver 25 euros (approximately 30 CUC), instead of the 25 CUC rate to the Capitolio area where my AirBNB was located. No biggie.
 - That Sunday afternoon, my car tour (link below) took me to Hotel Nacional as a stop and I was able to exchange the euros.

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Where to stay:

- Use AirBNB – I stayed here and it was absolutely outstanding:
<https://www.airbnb.com/rooms/15656870>
 - **Stay near El Capitolio.** Perfect Location. Center your location there on AirBNB.
- **ATTENTION: IF YOU HAVE NEVER USED AIRBNB BEFORE, SIGN UP USING THIS LINK TO GET \$40 OFF YOUR FIRST BOOKING:**
www.airbnb.com/c/alexisp1157

What to do:

- **Day 1:** Car Tour: <https://www.airbnb.com/experiences/104227>
 - **DO THIS!!!!!!** Words cannot describe how grateful I am to have done this on the first day.
- **Day 2:** Cooking Class: <https://www.airbnb.com/experiences/98628>
 - Orialis and Tía are wonderful.
- **Day 3:** Playa del Este: Catch the bus in front of Hotel Inglaterra
 - 5 CUC round-trip ride to the beach that comes every 30 min.
 - It's 2 CUC for a cot to lie on. Beaches everywhere in the world typically charge for this, but **do not let anyone order your drinks and bring them to you.** I made this mistake and received to delicious piña coladas. If you get them from the bar itself, they're 1 CUC each, but if someone gets them for you, they charge you 5 CUC for each drink PLUS a 5 CUC service fee. Don't do it. Get it yourself.
- **Other options:**
 - Get lost in the streets. Walk around. Don't be afraid. You'll run into wonderful photo opportunities and true local food that's way cheaper than the already cheap tourist areas. I ran into Plaza Vieja and it was sensational.
 - Take a day trip to Varadero. I didn't go since my stay was short, but it's a hit beach spot. It's about 2 hours from Havana.
 - Go through AirBNB and book other excursions.

Note:

- I suggest staying 4-6 days. My three days was not enough at all. Utilize this time for a day or 2 in Varadero.

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First World "Survival"

Internet Access:

- Internet is 1 CUC for an hour of high-speed WiFi at Hotel Inglaterra.
- You can also go next door to Hotel Telegrafo and get WiFi for 5 CUC an hour. This cost also includes 1 drink from the bar.
- When it is busy, you will get kicked off the WiFi and have to log back in. It's just because its too much traffic online at that time.

Social Media:

- Facebook and Instagram work perfectly.
- Snapchat and emails do not work at all.

Communication back home:

- Social media will be your key means of communication unless you pay to make phone calls. Use it to your advantage.
- Facebook has moved on up to where you can make phone calls and video chat through the app. Turn off your cellular data, connect to WiFi, and make your calls.
- If you have an iPhone, you can Facetime without a charge since it is online based. Just make sure to turn off your cellular data to be safe. The same goes for iMessage.

Other Amenities:

- Cuba uses the same plug outlets as the USA. But I do not encourage you to bring your clippers, flat irons, and blow dryers unless you research the voltage max. You don't want to blow the fuse or it catch fire.

If you have any further questions, don't be afraid to reach out and ask!

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