

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ❑ Driving is on the right.
- ❑ Drivers are required to carry a valid national license, a 1968 version of an International Driving Permit (IDP), vehicle documents and proof of insurance; licenses from most countries are accepted for up to six months.
- ❑ All visiting drivers must carry travel and health insurance.
- ❑ The Peso Cubano (CUP) is the official currency.
- ❑ Road safety standards are poor. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death in Cuba. Pedestrians account for an estimated 33% of all traffic fatalities.
- ❑ Riders of two- and three-wheeled vehicles make up about 16% of all serious and fatal crashes.
- ❑ Women traveling alone may be subject to harassment.
- ❑ Traveling in groups is recommended. Visitors should consider traveling with a registered tour operator.
- ❑ Legal blood alcohol limit is zero for young and novice drivers, and below 0.01 g/dl for all other drivers. Despite legal limits, approximately one-third of all crashes involve the use of alcohol.
- ❑ There are 7.39 road deaths per 100,000 people in Cuba, compared to 2.2 in Sweden and 2.3 in the UK.



Source: CIA Factbook

## ROAD CULTURE

- **Speeding** and aggressive driving is common, particularly among young motorists.
- **Drivers may** swerve suddenly to avoid potholes.
- **Some motorists** engage in risky road behaviors including distracted driving and dangerous overtaking.
- **Many drivers** operate older vehicles that are in poor condition and lack standard safety features including seat belts, headlights, taillights, turn signals, safe tires, horns and working windshield wipers.
- **Drivers may** not use headlights. Some motorists may flash their headlights at oncoming drivers to warn of traffic police or traffic control checkpoints ahead.
- **Motorcyclists** and moped drivers are often reckless. Drivers weave in and out of traffic at high speeds, and often ignore the presence of pedestrians and cyclists.
- **There are** large numbers of hitchhikers and pedestrians along roads. Drivers may stop suddenly without signaling to pick up hitchhikers.
- **Some drivers** fail to provide adequate space for cyclists on shared roads.

## ROAD CONDITIONS

- **There are** 60,000 km (37,282 miles) of roads; 20,000 km (12,427 miles) are paved, and 40,000 km (24,854 miles) are unpaved.
- **The highway** network is extensive and connects all large towns.
- **Central Highway** is the main east-west highway, and is well-maintained. Drivers should note that this road covers only part of the route from Havana to the island's eastern end.
- **Surfaces** of other highways, secondary and rural roads are deteriorated and in poor condition.
- **There are many** damaged bridges; warning signs or emergency lights and signals are often absent.
- **Large potholes** and road obstacles, including tree branches, are common.
- **Abandoned** vehicles may block roads.
- **Avoid driving** after dark. Many roads are unlit or inadequately lit. Hazard and emergency signals frequently do not function.
- **There are** rolling blackouts throughout the country; traffic signals and street lights are affected, even in main cities.
- **There is** a lack of street signs. Where signs are present, they may be confusing.
- **Individuals may** deliberately puncture the tires of rental cars, which are easily identified by license plates with red backgrounds. Attacks may occur against drivers and passengers. If a tire is punctured, drive to the nearest populated area.
- **Pedestrian infrastructure** is better developed in cities than in small towns and rural areas.
- **Even where** crosswalks are present, drivers may disregard the presence of pedestrians.



## Road Conditions, continued

- **Cycling** is a popular form of transport. Bicycles may not have headlights or reflectors.
- **There is** a well-developed network of bike paths, even on some highways.
- **GPS** and satellite navigation maps for mobile devices are unreliable and are not technically legal. Rental cars do not carry GPS systems. Bring up-to-date paper maps, or buy maps once in Cuba.
- **Fuel shortages** are common. Supplies may be affected without notice. Drivers may have difficulty locating a source of gasoline or diesel.
- **Loose livestock**, animal-drawn carts and farm equipment on roadways are common, particularly outside of cities.
- **Farmers** may drive herds of cows across highways.
- **Avoid all** military zones and restricted areas; note that these areas may not be indicated by signs.
- **Demonstrations** have the potential to turn confrontational and incite violent responses from government authorities and military forces. Avoid all demonstrations and public gatherings.
- **The following roads** may present particular challenges to motorists:
  - » **The Cayo Coco Causeway/Pedraplén Cayo Coco** on the central coast connects Cayo Coco in the Jardines del Rey island chain to the main island of Cuba. The road is 27 km (17 miles) in length, and is 2.6 meters (8.5 feet) above the sea. Avoid this road during heavy winds or inclement weather, and during hurricane season.
  - » **National Road 20** runs along the coast in the southeastern part of the country. The road is 216 km (134 miles) long and runs through Turquino National Park. It connects Santiago de Cuba with Niquero. The narrow road's original asphalt surface has deteriorated into gravel and sand. Many sections are not wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another. Areas bordered by sea and cliffs lack guardrails. Avoid this road.
  - » **El Pedraplén/Cayo Santa Maria Road** links Cayo Santa Maria to mainland Cuba. The 57.3 km (35.6 mile) road begins in Caibarién in the Villa Clara province and connects to the smaller island. The surface is built on a long stone wall. Do not attempt this road during poor weather, or in hurricane season.

## REGIONAL AND SEASONAL CONDITIONS

- **Cuba is** subject to heavy rains, mudslides, landslides, flash floods, strong winds, tropical storms, hurricanes and earthquakes.
- **Rainy season** is usually from April to October. Roads and bridges may be washed out. Mudslides and landslides may follow rains.
- **Hurricane season** is generally from mid-May to late November, and is accompanied by heavy rains and strong winds. Even small storms may develop quickly into major hurricanes.
- **Flash floods** often follow torrential rains. Do not drive or step into floodwaters, which may obscure deep potholes or other road hazards.
- **The country** is located within an active earthquake zone. Seismic activity may include aftershocks.
- **Be familiar with emergency procedures.** The Red Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies>

Maximum Speed Limits

Type of road	Maximum speed
Urban areas	50 kph (31 mph)
Rural roads	90 kph (56 mph)
Motorways/autopistas	100 kph (62 mph)

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.

Stop	Horns prohibited	These vehicles not allowed	Example of street sign	Yield

## TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation options** include cars, taxis, moped taxis, three-wheeled tricycle taxis called “cocos,” public buses (“guaguas”), tourist buses, e-motorbikes (called scooters), bicycles, trains and boats.
- **If renting** a vehicle, verify that it is equipped with all standard safety features. Ensure that a spare tire is included.
- **Use only** official yellow taxis, which are generally regarded as reliable.
- **Avoid** private taxis and private cars (including vintage automobiles) being used for informal public transportation. These vehicles are not properly insured or licensed to carry passengers, and often lack standard safety features.
- **Do not** flag taxi on the street. Book through a reputable hotel.
- **Avoid taxis** carrying other passengers. Insist that driver not pick up additional fares.
- **Taxis are** unmetered. Agree on fare prior to travel.
- **Taxi drivers** may not speak English. Carry a copy of destination written in Spanish.
- **Small yellow** “cocos” are enclosed three-wheeled taxis, and are regarded as unsafe.
- **Moped taxis** are regarded as dangerous.
- **Many older** public buses/guaguas are in poor condition.
- **Some new** city buses have been added to the transportation system in Havana. These buses are modern vehicles.
- **All buses** are generally overcrowded.
- **Public bus** services are not regarded as reliable.
- **In general**, Víazul tourist buses and airport buses meet international standards. Víazul provides tourist routes throughout the country; the safety standards of drivers may vary.
- **Víazul** bus tickets can be purchased at the airport and at Infotur offices nationwide.
- **Rideshares** are available through La Nave. A Cuban mobile SIM card is necessary to use the dispatch app, which provides vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- **There are** bike paths in multiple areas nationwide, including along major roads.

- **E-bicycle** and e-motorbike/scooter drivers are often inexperienced and ignore traffic safety rules.
- **Trains** are operated by Ferrocuba.
- **Rail services** connect most parts of the island, but are unreliable. Schedules and services often change, or are canceled without notice.
- **Train tickets** may be unavailable to non-locals.
- **Ferry services** operate between Habana Vieja to Casablanca, and to Regla in Havana.
- **A catamaran** ferry provides routes linking Surgidero de Batabanó and Nueva Gerona in Isla de la Juventud. Boat services are often canceled during hurricane season or rough seas.
- **Boats** may not be equipped with adequate numbers of life boats or life vests. If traveling by boat, bring your own life preserver.

## TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

- **Drivers** from the US must be at least 21 years of age. Requirements vary for drivers from other countries. Individual rental car agencies may have additional restrictions.
- **Seat belt** use is compulsory for driver and passengers.
- **Children** under age 12 are not allowed in front seats.
- **Helmets are** mandatory for motorcycle and motorbike drivers and passengers. Helmets must be fastened.
- **E-bike** and e-motorbike/scooter drivers are not required to have a valid license or registration, and do not have to wear helmets. For safety, wear a fastened safety helmet.
- **Traffic** and road signs are in Spanish.
- **Stop signs** may not be present at intersections, or may be difficult to see.
- **There** are few speed limit signs.
- **Passenger cars** must be equipped with a warning triangle, fire extinguisher and first aid kit. Drivers are advised to carry a spare tire, jack and tire iron.
- **Drivers must** stop at crosswalks when pedestrians are present, and may not proceed until those on foot have finished crossing the road.
- **Traffic entering** a roundabout from a main road often fails to yield to vehicles already present.
- **Drivers must** come to a full stop at all railroad crossings.

**Havana (Capital)**

- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, shared “colectivo” taxis, moped taxis, three-wheeled “cocos” taxis, shared colectivos, public buses (“guaguas”), tourist buses, e-mopeds/motorbikes (called e-scooters), motorcycles, bicycles, trains and boats.
- » Driving is not recommended. Rental cars are often in poor condition and lack standard safety features.
- » There are many pedestrians, hitchhikers and animals on roads.
- » Signs are lacking, including speed limit, highway and street identification signs.
- » Many roads are deteriorated with broken surfaces and potholes.
- » Official yellow taxis are generally regarded as reliable.
- » Do not use private taxis or private cars, many of which are vintage automobiles used for informal public transportation. These vehicles often lack seat belts and other standard safety features, and are not insured or licensed to carry passengers.
- » Book taxis through a reputable hotel and do not flag taxis on the street.
- » Avoid taxis where other passengers are present, and insist that driver not pick up additional fares.
- » All taxis are unmetered. Negotiate fare with driver prior to travel.
- » Few taxi drivers speak English. Carry a copy of destination written in Spanish.
- » Shared colectivo taxis provide routes between towns, and are often overcrowded. Vehicles may be poorly maintained.
- » Moped taxis and yellow cocos are regarded as dangerous.
- » Many city buses are new. Drivers do not give change.
- » Older public guaguas buses are generally in poor condition.
- » Guaguas are frequently overcrowded. Services are not regarded as reliable.
- » Bus stops are not always clearly marked.
- » Tourist buses generally meet international standards. Modern bus service is provided by Viazul buses.
- » The Viazul tourist bus station is located at the main bus terminal near Plaza de la Revolución.
- » Rail services include multiple daily connections to Pinar del Río in the west, and Santiago de Cuba in the east.
- » Estación Central is the main train station.
- » Trains are generally in poor condition, with the exception of the night express train linking the city and Santiago de Cuba. Travel time is approximately 12 hours, with stops in Santa Clara and Camagüey.
- » Other trains experience frequent interruptions and schedule changes; connections between destinations may be delayed for several days.
- » Pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped. Motorists may disregard those on foot, even at zebra crossings.
- » Pedestrians are at risk after dark, particularly in the historic part of the city. Attacks regularly occur.
- » Pedestrian risks increase in areas with bars and nightclubs. Drivers may be under the influence of alcohol.
- » There are large numbers of motorcycles and electric mopeds (locally called e-scooters).
- » Many e-bike and e-moped drivers ignore traffic safety rules and ride among pedestrians. Vehicles do not emit much sound, making it difficult for pedestrians to be aware of their approach.
- » Cycling paths are available along many roads, including some main streets.
- » Drivers may not always respect the presence of bicyclists, or provide adequate road space in areas where bike paths are not available.
- » Rideshares are provided by La Nave. A Cuban mobile SIM card is necessary to use the dispatch app, which provides vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » There is a major seaport and cruise terminal. Pedestrian and road traffic increase when ships are in port.
- » Ferry routes are available. Boat services are often canceled during hurricane season.
- » Boats may not be equipped with adequate numbers of life boats or life vests. If traveling by boat, bring your own life preserver and do not travel during inclement weather.

## Havana, continued

- » José Martí International Airport is located approximately 17 km (10.5 miles) from the city.
- » Terminal 3 is located 2.3 km (1.4 miles) from the main airport. There is intermittent shuttle service providing connections; a taxi may be a better option.
- » Use only official yellow taxis. Many unlicensed drivers operate taxis at the airport.
- » Shared colectivo taxis are available. Vehicles are overcrowded and may not accommodate luggage.
- » Havana MetroBuses link the airport to the city, and are generally in good condition.
- » International car rental companies are unavailable. Multiple local companies are represented at the airport.
- » Airport rental cars often lack standard safety features including seat belts, headlights, taillights, turn signals, good tires, horns and windshield wipers.

## Santiago de Cuba

- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, moped taxis, three-wheeled bicycle taxis called “cocos,” colectivos, public buses (“guaguas”), tourist buses, e-Mopeds (called “scooters”), bicycles, trains and boats.
- » Driving is not recommended. The city is small and compact.
- » Parking is hard to find. A lack of street signs makes navigation difficult.
- » Official taxis are yellow, and are generally considered to be reliable.
- » Avoid traveling by private taxi or private hire car. Many colorful vintage automobiles are used for informal public transportation, but vehicles are not insured or licensed to carry passengers.
- » Vintage private cars available for hire often lack standard safety features.
- » Taxis should not be hailed on the street. Arrange for service through a respected hotel.
- » Do not enter a taxi occupied by others. Request that driver not stop to pick up additional passengers.
- » In general, taxi drivers do not speak English. Carry a copy of destination written in Spanish.
- » Taxis are not metered. Agree on fare before entering vehicle.
- » Colectivo taxis provide local service and routes between towns. Vehicles are generally overcrowded and poorly maintained.
- » Cocos taxis are enclosed yellow vehicles and are considered dangerous.
- » Moped taxis should be avoided. Drivers are often reckless.
- » Buses include guaguas public city buses, and privately owned tourist buses operated by Víazul.
- » Most guaguas are in poor condition. Overcrowding is common.
- » Modern Víazul buses meet international standards. There is daily service linking the city to Havana and to other towns nationwide.
- » Víazul tickets may be purchased at Infotur offices throughout the city.
- » Rideshares are available through La Nave. A Cuban mobile SIM card is necessary to use the dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » Bicycle transportation is common. Bike paths are fairly well-developed, though less so than in Havana.
- » Drivers of e-bicycles and e-motorbikes/scooters may be reckless and ignore traffic rules, including pedestrian safety laws and crosswalks.
- » Train routes include multiple daily connections to Havana, including overnight express service. Overnight travel time is approximately 12 hours, including two stops in other cities.
- » Train schedules are subject to delays and cancelations without notice.
- » On weekends, street markets create crowded conditions. Pedestrians may be forced to walk in roadways.
- » Boat tours are operated by multiple companies. Safety records vary.
- » Boats may not be equipped with adequate numbers of life boats or life vests. If traveling by boat, bring your own life preserver.



## ACCOMMODATIONS AND INCLUSIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGED

- **Accessibility** is generally limited for persons with mobility, sensory or other challenges.
- **There are few** facilities or services to accommodate those with mobility or other challenges. Most buses and taxis are not wheelchair accessible.
- **Roads** and sidewalks are frequently uneven and poorly maintained.
- **Curb ramps** in sidewalks are present in downtown Havana, but they are lacking in other areas.
- **There are no** parking areas for drivers with mobility challenges.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- **Responders** to emergency numbers may not speak English.
- **Pre-program emergency numbers** into your phone before departure. Note that telecommunication services are controlled by local authorities and are unreliable. Cell phone service may be unavailable.
- **Carrying** a mobile phone with Cuban cellular service is recommended in order to reach emergency services.
  - » Police: 106
  - » Ambulance: 104
  - » Fire: 105
  - » Local emergency phone: 26811
- **Ambulance services** are limited. Existing services are unreliable in most areas, and are not equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment. Ambulance staff are not trained paramedics, and may have little to no medical training.
- **It may be** more efficient for injured persons to take a taxi or private transportation to the nearest large hospital.
- **First responders** are generally unable to reach injured persons or to provide urgent medical care beyond major cities.
- **Even basic** medical care is generally available only in or near main urban areas.
- **There is** a serious shortage of medicines and medical supplies. Many medicines, including over-the-counter and prescription drugs, are generally unavailable.
- **Severe supply shortages** may mean that medical equipment, including needles, is reused or improperly sterilized. Medicines may be contaminated, counterfeit or given in the wrong dosage.
- **When bringing** medicines into Cuba, verify the legal status within the country through the General Customs Office of Cuba (this site is only available in Spanish).
- **International clinics** offer some visitor services. Check with hotels for local facilities. In Havana, the Cira Garcia Clinic at Calle 20 No 4101 y Avenida 41, Playa provides care to visitors: call 204 2811 (ext. 445) to request an ambulance.
- **All visitors must** have non-US medical insurance, which can be purchased at airport kiosks upon arrival, or which may be included in airline tickets. Insurance is valid for up to 30 days from arrival.
- **In the event of** a crash with injuries or fatalities, rental car agencies will automatically nullify insurance and demand payment for all claims. Cuban drivers are not required to carry car insurance.
- **Penalties are severe** for drivers involved in crashes that result in injury or death, regardless of fault. Drivers may be prohibited from leaving the country post-crash; crashes may take several months to resolve. Visiting drivers are frequently assigned fault and face long prison sentences.
- **If involved in a crash:**
  - » Call police and emergency services. Many police do not speak English.
  - » Notify your national embassy.
  - » Contact car rental agency.
  - » Remain at scene until police indicate you may leave, and do not move vehicle.
  - » Obtain a copy of police crash report from traffic officer or the nearest police station; drivers involved in any crash, including minor incidents, who do not have a signed report saying they are not responsible are automatically liable for damages.
  - » Collect contact information from other driver(s) and any witnesses.
  - » Take photographs if possible.



#### ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRAVEL (ASIRT)

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey.

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