

TIPS FOR TRAVEL TO CUBA
MEDICC people-to-people exchange for APHA Members
Group A: Havana-Matanzas-Havana
Health & Health Equity in Cuba – April 19-26, 2015

****Meeting time and location, Miami International Airport, Sunday 4/19/15**

Concourse D, 2nd floor by Nathan's Hot Dogs, no later than 2:20 pm

You will check in as a group with Marazul Charters, assisted by MEDICC & Marazul staff.
Each traveler checking a bag with Marazul will be charged \$20 per bag; weight limit is 44 lbs.

****Flight Itinerary to and from Havana**

Sunday April 19	MZ AA 9436 MIA/HAV	5:20pm-6:35pm	(check in by 2:20 pm)
Sunday April 26	MZ AA 9429 HAV/MIA	2:45pm-3:45pm	(check in by 11:45 am)

****Emergency contact numbers**

Elizabeth Sayre, MEDICC Gateways Program Manager, traveling with group

US cell phone: For contact in USA before travel to Cuba:
267.975.6398 (till 5:20 pm, Sun 4/19/15)

Alli O'Brien, MEDICC Executive Assistant, traveling with group

US cell phone: For contact in USA before travel to Cuba:
973.525.6825 (till 5:20 pm, Sun 4/19/15)

Cuban cell phones: For emergency contact while in Cuba (Sun 3/22/15 to Sun 3/29/15)

Group A Dialed from USA: **(011) +535 448-9071**
(Feel free to give this number to family and friends for emergencies)

Group B Dialed from USA: **(011) +535 284-9545**
(Feel free to give this number to family and friends for emergencies)

Dialed locally in Cuba from land line: **05 448-9071**
05 284-9545

Dialed locally in Cuba from another mobile phone: **5 448-9071**
5 284-9545

MEDICC Offices in Oakland (questions about logistics or general questions)

Elizabeth Sayre, Gateways Program Manager, esayre@mediccglob.org, 510.350.3564 (**pre-travel ONLY**)

Camila Curtis-Contreras, Academic Program Manager, ccurtiscontreras@mediccglob.org, 510.350.3054

****HOTEL in Havana, Cuba (April 19, 20, 21, 25)**

Hotel Nacional de Cuba

Address: Calle 21 y O

Vedado, La Habana, Cuba

Phone: (011-53-7) 836 3564 / 3565 / 3566 / 3567 (use prefixes when dialing from US)

Website: <http://www.hotelnacionaldecuba.com/en/home.asp>

****HOTEL in Matanzas/Varadero, Cuba (April 22, 23, 24)**

Hotel Paradisus Varadero

Address: Punta Francés

Varadero, Matanzas, Cuba

Phone: (011-53-45) 66 8700 (use prefixes when dialing from US)

Website: <http://www.meliacuba.com/cuba-hotels/hotel-paradisus-varadero>

Marazul Charters in US: For pre-travel questions about Cuba flights or accommodations
201-319-1054 or (800) 223-5334 // Dialed from Cuba: 119 1 201 319 1054

Clínica Central Cira García (in case of medical emergency):

204-2811 (Dialed from Havana) // 011-53-7-204-2811 (Dialed from USA)
Calle 20 No. 4101, esquina Ave 41, Playa, La Habana

US Interests Section in Havana (if you lose your passport):

834-4400 (Dialed from Havana) // 011-53-7-834-4400 (Dialed from USA)

Banking/Cash/Travelers' Checks

All transactions in Cuba are in Cuban Convertible pesos (CUCs), 1 CUC = .87 US dollars.

Because of the ongoing U.S. embargo, U.S. credit cards and checks cannot yet be used in Cuba. You will need cash for any transactions that you handle personally. The financial changes announced by President Obama have not come into effect yet. Due to the current regulations, there have even been problems using credit cards and travelers' checks from other countries besides the U.S. You may want to bring at least one credit card, however, in case you need it *en route*.

Purchases and Gifts for export to USA: You may take back to the United States an unlimited amount of informational materials (books, music CDs and tapes, magazines, posters, works of art). As of 1.16.2015, you may bring back up to \$400 worth of Cuban merchandise, \$100 of which may be tobacco or alcohol for personal use. If you purchase an original artwork in Cuba, **we recommend that you ask the seller for a certificate**, as Cuban customs is likely to ask you for it on the way out of the country.

Cameras

By all means, bring one. Follow the usual courtesy of asking the subject before you photograph.

Cell Phones and Tablet Computers

Your U.S. cell phone/tablet **will not work** in Cuba for calling or texting. Other functions (such as the camera, offline applications, etc.) will work. For a fee, you should be able to connect to any hotel's wireless network from your phone or tablet (be prepared for a slow connection). To connect to friends, family or colleagues, we suggest that you have them call you, or that you communicate with them via your laptop or mobile device using any hotel's internet services (see **Internet** below). **If you need to make outgoing calls to the U.S., and your hotel's services are not adequate, other hotels nearby will have a call center and operator services.**

Climate

The climate usually is quite nice this time of year, in the upper 80s Fahrenheit during the day, and the mid-60s at night. Some meeting rooms can be very cold, so a light jacket or sweater is a good idea. We suggest that you check the internet for the latest forecast before you travel. We also suggest that you **bring a compact umbrella, just in case.**

Dress

Cuba tends toward the casual: slacks and tieless shirts for men, skirts or pants for women are fine for your daily schedule (i.e., **business casual is fine**). Cotton or cotton-blends are cool, and good for almost every occasion, though nights can be cool and breezy. Remember to bring bathing suit, flip-flops, and sunscreen, in case a pool is available to you at the hotel.

Electricity

Electric current in your hotel is 220V/60 kHz (round/European plugs). You may want to bring a converter if you use another type of outlet (flat/North American plugs), **as hotels do not often have these available.**

Gifts for Cuban hosts

Gifts are greatly appreciated by Cuban colleagues and hosts, but are entirely optional and up to each traveler. MEDICC recommends that each person on the exchange bring small quantities of the following types of items as courtesy gifts for the Cuban health leaders and workers you'll meet. Your MEDICC representative and interpreter will assist the group in splitting the items into packets for each site visited. We will ask for a volunteer from your group for help organizing the gifts.

- Flash drives
- Office supplies (pens, post-its, staplers, extra staples, notebooks, datebooks, planners, calendars, scotch tape, white-out)
- Disposable gloves, anti-bacterial gel (hand sanitizer)
- Band-Aids, clear adhesive plaster or tape
- Institutional souvenirs (pens, caps, T-shirts, tote bags)
- First response stuff: flashlights / batteries, key chains with flashlight, etc.
- School supplies
- Professional literature (books, journals)

Health/Medical Care/Emergencies

All travelers are required to have health insurance for travel to Cuba: this is included in the price of your ticket. **You should bring with you any prescription drugs, other medications or hygiene items you use regularly, since these will not be the same as in Cuba, and may not be available at all. Drink only bottled water.**

Immunizations

No immunizations are currently required to travel to Cuba. MEDICC recommends that travelers use common sense in consuming water (drink bottled only) and fresh vegetables/fruit or uncooked foods. Travelers may follow current CDC guidelines if they wish: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/cuba/>

Internet

Hotels charge CUC\$4.50-\$10 per hour for internet access cards that allow guests to use their WiFi network or one of the PCs in the lobby. Be prepared for a slow internet connection, and occasionally there will be a line to use a PC.

Safety

Cuba is generally a very safe place, while petty theft is always a possibility. Thus, you should store your valuables, passport, documents and cash in the lock boxes available in your hotel. We recommend you carry with you a photocopy of your passport, not the passport itself, and use common sense in keeping an eye and a hand on your belongings.

Tipping

Tipping is expected (assuming good service) at 10%.

US Travel Restrictions: Applicable to US Citizens and Residents

See the website of the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control for details. <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/cuba.aspx>

WHAT TO TAKE TO CUBA...REMINDERS

- Passport, ticket, Cuban visa, copy of General License certification (in packet mailed to you by Marazul Charters—bring entire packet).
- Be sure to check your domestic flight's baggage allowance (**Marazul's baggage allowance is 44 lbs.**).
- Cash for Cuba and debit/credit cards for Miami (a money belt can be handy).
- Medications and toiletries.
- Sunscreen, bathing suit, sandals/flip-flops
- "Business casual" clothing for weekdays; sweater or jacket; cool, comfortable clothing for off times.
- Compact umbrella (for rain or sun).
- Writing materials (or laptop/tablet), camera.

Suggested Restaurants

In Old Havana:

El Paladar Doña Eutimia: This paladar is noted for its “well-prepared Cuban food: frozen mojitos and picadillo.” Recently selected as one of the “World’s 101 Best Places to Eat” by Newsweek Magazine. Located in Old Havana, *Callejón del Chorro, near Cathedral Square.*

El Jardín del Oriente: Traditional Cuban menu - meat, rice, beans, etc. *112 Amargura, between Mercaderes & Oficios off the Plaza De San Francisco.*

Ivan Chefs Justo: located on the second and third floors of a building. Menu includes: salmon salad, gazpacho and lamb soup, rack of baby lamb ribs, risotto, fish. *Aguacate 9, Esquina A Chacon. Tel: 537-863-9697*

Dominical: *Close to the Plaza de Armas, good Italian food, \$15 - \$20.*

El Templete: *Close to the Plaza de Armas. Spanish owners, nice atmosphere near water, good food. \$\$\$*

El Mercurio Café: *Plaza de San Francisco. Nice outdoor space. Lunches and dinners reasonably priced.*

La Marina: *Calle Teniente Rey and Oficios. Near the Plaza Vieja. Nice patio atmosphere. Service a bit slow (chicken, rice, soup, salad, coffee).*

Neptune y Prado: *Across from Hotel Telégrafo, near the Parque Central. Good pizza and Italian food.*

Other

La Guarida (will need taxi). If you are only going to splurge once, do this! It is in **Centro Habana**, on *Calle Concordia #418 between Gervasio and Escobar tel. 762 4940.* It is on the 3rd floor of an old mansion, the setting of the movie “Strawberry and Chocolate.” The chocolate dessert is a must. About \$20-\$25, with wine and dessert. Take a taxi.

El Aljibe (will need taxi): *Calle 7ma. el 24 y 26, Miramar. Tel: (53 7) 204-1583/204-1584.* Excellent chicken with comida criolla accompaniments (beans, rice, plantains, etc.).

In Vedado

Porto Habana (Casas y Tal): is on the 11th floor of a large apartment building in Vedado, just around the corner from **Hotel Presidente** (Find the building and push the blue buttons). The food is light, fresh and healthy. Croquettes, tapas and Spanish omelettes, *casto* (boned lamb cooked with masala spices); *pollo y tal* (boned chicken with vegetables in pineapple juice and ginger). *Calle E No 158 B, between Calles 9a and Calzada, Vedado +537 833 1425*

Le Chansonier: Used to be a French-themed private restaurant, now serves quality nouvelle cuisine. *Calle J No 257, between Calles 13 and 15, Vedado, +537 832 1576*

Café Laurent: Around the corner from the famous Hotel Nacional, you have to be guided into the apartment building, where a small antique elevator takes you up to the penthouse. Menu includes Red snapper with clams and shrimp in green sauce, shrimps steak, meatballs and salads. *Calle M No 257, between Calles 19 and 21, Vedado, +537 831 2090*

Atelier: A contemporary space in a Havana mansion. The menu changes every day. Dishes, include falafels, *pato confitado* (duck confit), *lomito de res con camarones y espuma de apio al olivo* (sirloin steak with shrimp and celery mousse), *conejo al vino* (rabbit in wine) to *cerdo asado* (roast pork). *Calle 5, between Paseo y Calle 2, Vedado, +537 836 2025*

La Galería: it has an outdoor terrace as well as a nice indoor, air-conditioned space. Menu is varied and well-presented and includes garlic prawns, for filet mignon or fresh fish. *Calle 19 No 1010, Esquina 12, Vedado, +537 836 3603*

El Idilio Within walking distance of the Hotel Presidente. A semi-outdoor restaurant with good Cuban food, reasonably priced. *Calle G 351, Esquina 15, Vedado, Havana, Cuba*

In Nuevo Vedado

El Balcón: good and cheap comida criolla (approx. 7-10 CUC), specials with multiple courses, elegant and quiet garden seating, best for small groups. Open noon to 11 pm every day. Behind the Chinese Cemetery off 26th. *Calle 28 No. 590, el 31 y 33, Nuevo Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución, Phone: 831 2959*

La Pachanga: specializes in hamburgers and tacos (served with real hot sauce), and also has *batidos* (fruit shakes). Appropriate for smaller groups and open late. *Calle 28 No. 254, between Calles 21 and 23, Nuevo Vedado, +537 830 2507*

Favorite Things To Do, (Mostly) Near Old Havana:

Gran Teatro (Teatro Garcia Lorca): Across from the Capitolio, and usually has ballet or classical music on weekends. From \$5 to \$10 entrance fee.

The Feria: daily, near the docks, at the end of Calle Cuba. This is the main arts and crafts market in Old Havana. Prices are reasonable, although you can bargain as well. *There is a good restaurant next door.*

The Prado: Has a special, juried art market on Sundays. (sometimes) Excellent art.

The **Museum of the Revolution** and the **Museum of Contemporary Cuban Art**. At the end of Tejadillo street, near the Prado. Musts.

Nightly, La Cabana: 9:00 cannon fire and ceremony. Read about it in the guide books. Go early and wander through the area, then stay for music and dancing. \$5 entrance, and \$5 for the cab to get there.

Teatro Roldan: Near the Hotel Presidente, has music on weekends, both classical and jazz.

Jazz Café: In the building with the Galeria shopping mall facing the Hotel Meliá Cohiba on Paseo, fairly near the Presidente. Starts late at night, and usually there is a \$5 cover.

La Zorra y el Cuervo: In Vedado on 23rd street between N and O, has nightly jazz, often with top name bands.

Cuba Libro bookstore, Conner Gorry's bookstore and community project. *Calle 24 esquina Calle 19, Vedado, Tel. 830-5205.* Open Mon-Sat 10 am-8 pm, according to Facebook.

Coppelia, the classic Cuban ice cream experience, *Calle 23 y L, Vedado.*

Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), *Calle 23 #1155, el 10 y 12, Vedado, Tel. 838-2859.* National film institute with store across the street.