



Cuba 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Fraud; Hotels; Burglary; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hurricanes; Floods; Earthquakes; Counterfeiting; Surveillance; Disease Outbreak; Other Government Agencies

Western Hemisphere > Cuba; Western Hemisphere > Cuba > Havana

2/29/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

While there are no reliable crime statistics from the government, the U.S. Embassy continues to receive several reports per month of non-violent crimes against tourists. These numbers are increasing slightly and are consistent with reporting from other diplomatic missions in Cuba. Most crime can be associated with pickpocketing, purse snatching, fraud schemes, and thefts from unoccupied cars, hotel rooms, and/or dwellings. American travelers are generally perceived to be wealthy and can be the target of these types of crimes. Most offenses take place in areas frequented by foreigners (beaches, hotels, restaurants, shops).

Although most tourist hotels are relatively safe in Havana, pickpockets, prostitutes, and other

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criminals may congregate around these hotels.

Violent crime is not common. However, there were a small number of violent crimes involving American citizens reported in 2015. Those crimes typically occur outside of tourist areas.

Cuba has an active commercial sex trade. Although the age of consent is 16, sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 could be a violation of U.S. law and subject to prosecution in the U.S.

Areas of Concern

Due to travel restrictions placed on U.S. government officials by the Cuban government, consular services outside of Havana can be delayed.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Available data suggests that accidents involving motor vehicles are the leading cause of accidental deaths in Cuba. The roads are often dangerous due to the lack of road

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maintenance. Potholes and a lack of proper lighting on roads/highways make driving at night particularly dangerous. Drivers tend to place large sticks or rocks in the road to indicate a hazard or broken down vehicle ahead. It is often difficult to see these “accident markers” until one has hit them. Although traffic is relatively light, the combination of old vehicles, motorcycles, horse carts, buses, and pedestrians on narrow two-lane roads can create traffic bottlenecks and potential hazards.

Drivers should be aware that the law can have severe implications for drivers involved in accidents, and, regardless of fault, accidents can result in the detention of foreign drivers involved, particularly when someone is injured.

Cuba requires a driver’s license and has a system in place for issuing and insuring drivers (all tourists should check with their travel provider if they intend to drive).

Police posted on street corners of all major cities enforce traffic laws and inspect vehicles. Generally, the police hand out small fines to individuals who are stopped.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

As there is no direct commercial air service to the U.S. by carriers registered in Cuba, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the government’s Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. Further information may be found on the FAA’s safety assessment page. The U.S.

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Embassy permits travel by its employees and official visitors on Cuban air carriers, including the Cuban national airline Cubana de Aviacion (CUBANA), on a case by case basis.

Terrorism Threat

On May 29, 2015, after extensive review and congressional notification, the U.S. government rescinded Cuba's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism.

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Government-organized actions ("actos de repudio") against domestic civil society and opposition groups can turn violent, and tourists should avoid any/all demonstrations. There have been sporadic citizen protests; however, these have been generally short-lived and

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elicited a rapid government clamp-down.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Cuba is prone to hurricanes and resultant flooding.

In addition to the threat of hurricanes, heavy summer rainstorms and poor drainage can cause localized flooding in minutes in many areas.

Cuba is also located along several active fault systems. While the majority of seismic activity goes unnoticed, the potential for larger earthquakes exists, mostly in eastern Cuba. This potential, combined with the deteriorated infrastructure, is cause for concern. For general guidance on how to prepare for and protect yourself during an earthquake, visit [Ready.gov/earthquakes](https://www.ready.gov/earthquakes).

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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The government's civil defense system is well organized in the face of hurricanes and usually imposes a mandatory evacuation order to potentially affected areas. The ability of the government to respond to large-scale damage will be limited due to a lack of resources.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

While intellectual property crimes are not reported in state-run media, there is a significant market that deals in fraudulent movies and software.

Privacy Concerns

Americans should be aware that any on-island activities, including contacts with Cuban citizens, may be monitored closely by the government. Visitors should understand that their private activity could be used to compromise them.

The government maintains tight control of information through ownership of the communications networks and laws prohibiting independent media. This means that there is very little privacy for companies or individuals. The limited access to the Internet, the government's tight control of media, and its particular sensitivity to any news that reflects poorly on Cuba results in a lack of reliable information.

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Drug-related Crimes

Violence from drugs is not common, as the market for drugs is small. Although Cuba's location is ideal for the transshipment of drugs, it is not used often due to the heavy police/military presence. The government is strict in its enforcement of laws against the illegal use, sale, and smuggling of narcotics.

Police Response

Cuba's government relies on a robust internal security apparatus. Most police officers are in uniform, though some investigators or officials may be dressed in plain clothes. Police do carry identification.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If you are apprehended by the police, be cooperative with all orders. As soon as possible advise the police of your nationality and show them your passport or copy of it. Also, ask the police if you may contact your diplomatic mission as soon as possible. Americans needing assistance should contact the U.S. Embassy at (53)7-839-4100. For after-hours requests you may also call (53)5-280-5713.

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Crime Victim Assistance

The emergency number for the police is 106. The emergency number for the fire department is 105.

Although police are present on most street corners in major cities, the overall police response to crimes involving foreigners is not adequate. Police do take reports of crimes and generally respond promptly to emergency calls.

Police/Security Agencies

The Ministry of Interior, commonly known as MININT, is in charge of police.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care is below U.S. standards. Most hospitals and clinics do not possess equipment for proper diagnoses or medication for treatment. Ambulances do operate in many cities, but response times vary, and not all ambulances carry medical personnel.

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Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Although there are numerous hospitals in Havana, Americans generally use the Cira Garcia Hospital, which is operated specifically for foreigners and provides better quality care, although still below U.S. standards.

Cira Garcia Hospital

41st Ave & 18th Street

Miramar

(53)7-204-2811

Ambulance Service - (53)7-204-4300

CIMEQ Hospital (Military Hospital) *Only used in extreme emergency with special permission of the Cuban government.

216 & 11B

Siboney

(53)7-858-1000

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Available Air Ambulance Services

National Air Ambulance

Fort Lauderdale Airport

3495 SW 9th Ave.

Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33315

(954) 327-3710 (24 hours) or (954)359-9900

inquiry@nationaljets.com

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Dengue and cholera are increasingly common, with cases believed to be significantly underreported by the government. Chikungunya is also present. Information on recommended vaccinations for Cuba can be found at the following CDC website:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/cuba.htm>.

OSAC Country Council Information

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The U.S. Embassy does not have an OSAC Country Council. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy is located in Havana at Calzada between L and M Streets, Vedado.

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., and Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m..

U.S. Embassy Contact Numbers

Tel: (53)7-839-4100

For emergency assistance after hours and on weekends, individuals should call (53)7-839-4100 and press 0 or (53)5-280-5791 and request to speak with the duty officer.

Website: <http://havana.usembassy.gov/>

U.S. Embassy Guidance

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Although regulations published January 16, 2015, -- and subsequent amendments in September 2015 and January 2016 -- by the Departments of Treasury and Commerce significantly loosened restrictions on certain types of travel and trade involving Cuba, the Cuba embargo remains in place. The Cuban Assets Control Regulations (31 CFR Part 515) apply to all persons (individuals and entities) subject to U.S. jurisdiction, including all U.S. citizens and permanent residents wherever located, all persons in the U.S., all branches and subsidiaries of U.S. organizations throughout the world, and all persons engaging in transactions that involve property in or otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. The Regulations are administered by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The Regulations require those dealing with Cuba (including traveling to Cuba) to maintain records for five years and, upon request from OFAC, furnish information regarding such dealings. Please visit <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/cuba.aspx> for additional information. Violations can result in civil or criminal penalties.

The Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security administers the Export Administration Regulations (15 CFR Parts 730-774), which regulate exports to Cuba. More information can be found at: <http://www.bis.doc.gov/index.php/policy-guidance/country-guidance/sanctioned-destinations/cuba>.

Cuba welcomes American travelers, and Americans are generally well received by Cubans. This has not changed since the two countries established formal diplomatic relations and converted their respective Interests Sections into Embassies. The changes to U.S. regulations governing travel and trade with Cuba, announced on January 16, 2015, has resulted in a significant increase of travel by Americans to Cuba.

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The U.S. Embassy asks all American travelers to sign up for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to receive updated information on travel and security in the country.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Americans should take basic precautions to avoid being a target. Travelers are reminded to stay vigilant to their surroundings and ensure proper care for valuables (use of money belts, safes in hotels).

Travelers should ensure that someone other than those traveling with them has a schedule of their proposed events and local contact information for them.

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