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## **Travel to Cuba**

The United States has a comprehensive set of trade and travel restrictions in place with Cuba, commonly referred to as the Cuban Embargo. Only specific categories of travel to Cuba are authorized, one of which is referred to as the people-to-people program. Under this exception, entities are granted permission from the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to organize short term educational and cultural exchange trips to the island.

Your trip to the island will take place within this framework, meaning you will participate in a full-time schedule of educational and cultural activities with Cubans on the island. Cuba Educational Travel (CET) is a leader in providing authorized travel services, and uses its expertise to facilitate specialized, customized trips to the island. All CET programs fully comply U.S. and Cuban government regulations.



# **Program in Cuba**

Cuba Educational Travel has wide-ranging contacts with a cross section of Cuban society, including academics, artists, athletes, chefs, diplomats, economists, musicians, politicians, religious officials, students and ordinary Cubans from all walks of life. Your customized schedule will allow you to meet with many different Cubans and take part in a number of site visits, activities and discussions. It is our hop that you will make a number of Cuban friends along the way.

Our guests will often be the top experts in their field and we'll be able to hear a diversity of opinions about 21st century Cuba, U.S. policy and world politics. No question or topic is off limits, but we ask travelers to be respectful and gracious in all interactions.

All groups will be accompanied by a bilingual Cuban guide, and Cuba Educational Travel ground coordinators will be present off and on throughout the trip. Please keep in mind that Cuba Educational Travel will always do its best to maintain the scheduled itinerary, but all activities and events are subject to change. When alterations are made we'll do everything possible to find suitable alternatives. Please convey your interests and desires to CET prior to and during your visit. CET runs general trips, as well as those with a specific focus and we look forward to incorporating your desired content in the program.

Translation will be readily available to facilitate interaction and maximize your experience. For Spanish speakers, there will be plenty of opportunities to communicate in group settings and one-on-one conversations.







## Getting to and from Cuba

Travel to and from Cuba will be on charter flights direct from the United States to Cuba. At this time commercial flights are not authorized, only specialized charters. There are daily flights from Miami and less frequent departures from Baltimore, Ft. Lauderdale, Los Angeles, New York and Orlando. The check-in process, baggage policies and punctuality differ greatly from commercial airliners and extra steps are required.

Check-in begins 3 hours prior to the scheduled departure time and the flight officially closes 1.5 hours prior to scheduled departure; no exceptions. Cuba Educational Travel recommends leaving at least 4 hours between connections upon departing for and returning to Cuba. Pre and post trip overnight stays in Miami/Tampa are optimal when possible. There are not always daily departures and a missed flight can result in significant complications.

Travelers are permitted to bring 44 lbs. of total luggage, including checked and carry-on. Fees of \$1-2 per pound over the allotted 44 lbs. will be applied. Each piece of checked luggage costs between \$20 and \$30. When possible, travelers should opt for carry-on only. These fees are paid directly to the charter company and do not involve CET.

The flight from Miami is approximately 45 minutes in duration, and Tampa is just over 1 hour. Cuba Educational Travel uses charter companies that partner with American Airlines, Jet Blue and other major carriers when possible. First class upgrades are sometimes available upon request. Since these are charters, they do not appear in the commercial airline reservation system, and you are not able to use frequent flier miles or any other benefits.



# **Arriving in Cuba**

The Cuban government and people open their arms to U.S. visitors. However, at times you may receive questioning about the motivation for and content of your trip upon arrival to Cuba. On some occasions an immigration official might ask you questions about your stay on the island (e.g. what electronic equipment you are bringing, how much cash you are carrying and who you will meet with). This is standard and you should not be concerned – it's part of the experience. Please be transparent and feel free to show them a copy of your program. system, and you are not able to use frequent flier miles or any other benefits.

## What you can (can't) bring back

U.S. regulations permit travelers to return to the U.S. with up to \$400 in merchandise from Cuba. Travelers are now permitted to bring back up to \$100 in rum and cigars. This can be \$100 in rum, \$100 in cigars, or a combination of the two up to \$100 in value. There is no limit on the amount of money you spend on art and information materials and you can bring back as much art work, music, books, posters, postcards, photographs, crafts and other art and artisan goods as you'd like.

## Returning to the U.S.

When you return to the United States you will fill out the immigration and customs paperwork as if you were returning from any other country in the world. Among your travel documents you will have a letter on CET letterhead authorizing your travel to Cuba. If requested, please share a copy with immigration officials.

Please note that once you exit customs, you will need to check-in for your connection to your final destination.









# Lodging

Demand for accommodations in Cuba has skyrocketed and largely outnumbers the supply. Due to CET's numerous connections to hotels and other types of lodging on the island, we are able to offer our travelers a wide range that meets our standards of comfort, convenience and ambiance. That being said, we encourage travelers to be as open-minded as possible when comparing U.S. standards to Cuban ones. While hotels in Havana may provide access to typical amenities you'd find in the States such as television, toiletries and internet, the capabilities are much more limited and are even more so outside the capital.

## Cellphones/Internet

Telecommunications in Cuba have vastly improved recently, but remain slow and unreliable. Internet is limited to hotels and a few public Wi-Fi hotspots scattered throughout the major cities.

Most U.S. cell phones do not work in Cuba. Verizon and Sprint recently began roaming agreements and now function for calls and data on the island at a very high rate. Please check with your provider about availability and pricing.

Prior to the trip CET will provide travelers with contact information for hotels/residencies as well as emergency contacts in the U.S. and Cuba. If you're interested in having a local cell phone we can arrange a rental for \$10 per day. It allows for free incoming calls, calls to the U.S. at roughly \$1.5 per minute and inexpensive local calling and texting. It does not offer a data plan.

Note: the internet in Cuba is slow and unreliable. Please head into your stay with the understanding that communication will be difficult.



# Money

U.S. credit cards and ATM cards still do not work in Cuba. There are very few places that accept traveler's checks. Credit and ATM cards from Europe, Canada and countries other than the U.S. will work, but ATM machines and establishments that accept credit cards are not always accessible. Plan on bringing enough cash for your whole stay. If you can bring newer \$50 and \$100 bills that is preferable, as sometimes it can be harder to change small bills, and worn and torn bank notes will not be accepted.

There are two currencies: CUC and CUP. The exchange rate is complicated and all you really need to worry about is the CUC. You can get the other Cuban pesos (CUP, commonly referred to as moneda nacional) as a collector's item but most things you will want to spend money on require CUC. The official exchange rate for dollars is .873. For \$100 USD you will receive 87.30 CUC. There is an extra 10 percent tax on USD that Euros, CAD and other currencies do not receive. However, by the time you pay an exchange fee and receive the poor rate that most banks and exchange houses offer, you won't save any significant amount of money by converting your U.S. dollars into another currency prior to the trip. It's usually not worth the hassle.

You are only able to change foreign money to CUC and vice versa in Cuba. We typically recommend exchanging money at one of the many hotels in Havana that house exchange booths. The likelihood of receiving a more favorable rate of exchange is much higher at these hotels than at the airport.







# Money

Many expenses incurred on the trip are covered as part of your Cuba Educational Travel package. See your sales agreement for specifics. You will want to bring cash for the following things:

- 1. Nighttime entertainment
- 2. Purchasing art and souvenirs
- 3. Internet and phone calls
- 4. Taxis
- 5. Meals on your own between \$10-\$30 per person, per meal
- 6. Extra beverages at meals
- 7. Tips for servers, maids, bellman, etc.
- 8. Tip for Cuban guide(s) and driver(s) see recommendations

## General tipping

Tipping in the service/tourist industry is expected and appreciated. Government salaries are low and many people survive on the tips they earn. It is true that the average salary in the state sector is \$20 per month. However, most people cannot and do not survive on \$20 per month. Average income in Havana, which is the result of tips, work on the side, remittances, black market activity and other ways of "getting by," as Cubans say, is closer to \$100-150 per month.

You should tip well if you are treated well. Leaving a few dollars a day for maids, 10 percent on meals and a dollar or two for bellman goes a long way. CET does include a standard tip for the wait staff at meals but asks that travelers also leave 1-2 pesos per meal. The tip should be based on the service and come directly from those receiving the service.



# **Tipping the Guides and Drivers**

Tour guides are highly specialized in what they do. They work long, hard hours and have achieved academic and professional success in order to work in this coveted sector. In many cases they are the highest earning individuals in their family and support a network of friends and families through the money they earn. Moreover, there is a chain of workers under them that don't have access to tourists and tips and they share what they earn with support staff. CET is not permitted to pay the guides and drivers. The salary they receive from the government ranges from 20-25 USD per month. Please take this into consideration and be generous if you receive good service. CET recommends the following amounts for guides and drivers:

Group Size	Guide	Driver
5-10 travelers	15 per person per day	8 per person per day
11-20 travelers	12 per person per day	7 per person per day
21 + travelers	10 per person per day	5 per person per day

<sup>\*\*</sup> Tips can be paid in dollars or pesos. A mix between the two is usually the preference.







# **Outlets**

Cuba generally has electric outlets that are 110 V or 220 V. Many of the places you will stay will have access to both. Some bed and breakfasts and hotels do not have outlets for three-prong cords, common for computers. It's recommended that you bring a converter to deal with 220 V electricity and Cuban plugs.



#### Weather

Cuba is a tropical island with a climate typical to the Caribbean region. It can be extremely warm at times and the sun is strong. Rain showers are common throughout the year, although more common during the Spring, late Summer and early Fall. Please be sure to check the weather prior to your trip departure and also see the section with suggestions on clothes and accessories for your packing list. Temperatures below are listed in Fahrenheit and are estimates only.

Fall and Spring: October, November, March, April and May

The temperature varies greatly in the Spring and Fall, with showers and heat waves common. It's likely to be in the high 80s or low 90s during the day and in the mid to high 70s in the evening. Please pack clothes and accessories that take into account the strong sun, heavy heat and the possibility of rain.

Winter: December, January and February

During the winter months it usually reaches the low-80s during the day and can drop as low as the mid-50s in the evening. Rain is not uncommon and most evenings are breezy. Please pack at least one sweatshirt or light jacket for cold evenings and bring an umbrella, as well as clothes and accessories for the sun and heat.

Summer: June, July, August, September

The summer months in Cuba tend to be extremely warm, with strong sun and occasional showers. Temperatures during the day often reach the mid to high 90s and the average temperature in the evenings is in the high 70s or low 80s. Please pack clothes and accessories that take into account the strong sun, heavy heat and the possibility of rain.







# Clothing and accessories

Despite low salaries and difficult living conditions, Cubans take pride in dressing well when they can. Shorts, skirts, short-sleeved shirts, and open toed shoes and flip flops are appropriate almost anywhere during the day and at many places at night. Some restaurants and nightclubs prefer or require more formal attire, and depending on your final program, you may want to bring clothes for formal meetings and/or a night on the town. Formal meetings at embassies and/or with experts and academics require business casual clothing.

There may be time for nature walks and hiking, but no part of the official schedule will require intense physical activity. When in the countryside it is advisable to use bug spray and wear long pants during outdoor excursions. Taking into account the diverse weather in Cuba, we recommend packing:

- Comfortable clothing
- Dress clothes for several fancy dinners and meetings
- Sneakers or comfortable Shoes
- Sunglasses
- Cap for the sun
- Sunscreen
- Light raincoat, slicker or poncho
- Umbrella
- Light backpack
- Bug Spray



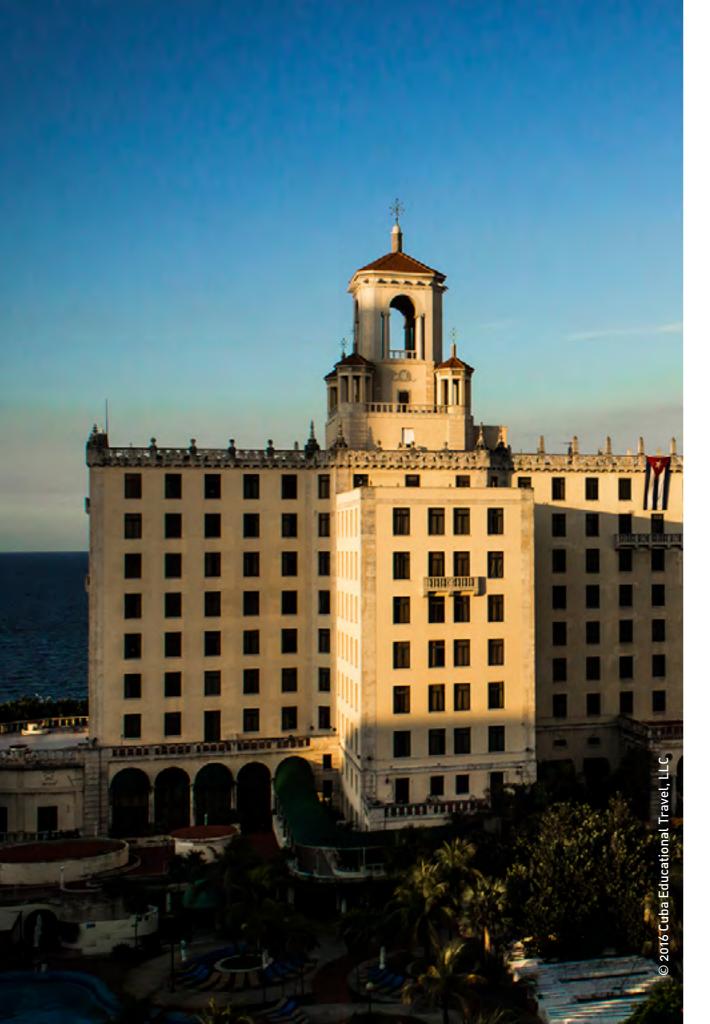
# **Crime and Safety**

Cuba is one of the safest countries in Latin America. Part of the beauty of visiting the island nation is being able to walk freely without worrying about violent crime. However, petty theft does occur and precaution should be taken - especially in Havana and at night. Try to avoid dark streets and never leave purses, bags and other valuables unattended.

Many Cubans, especially in Old Havana, will approach you to try and sell you black market cigars, ask you to buy milk for their children or try to bring you to a paladar (restaurant), for which they will earn a percentage of any money you spend there. Most of them are harmless, but keep in mind they're often trying to make a few dollars off interacting with you and will have all kinds of creative tales and "special offers" for doing so.

The streets of Havana and sidewalks are very poorly lit and, in many cases, crumbling and littered with pot holes. Take extra precaution at night keeping a close eye on the ground below to avoid tripping in the frequent ditches and uncovered drains. Waste from stray dogs in also commonplace.







#### Health issues

All travelers are covered with full medical insurance, which is included in your charter ticket from Miami to Cuba. You will receive this information at check-in in Miami and it will be part of your briefing with CET and HavanaTur staff upon arrival in Cuba. The most common ailments for travelers in Cuba are indigestion, diarrhea and other stomach problems. Dengue Fever, spread through mosquito bites, is also a problem and precautions should be taken. No pre-trip shots are needed.

- Pack Imodium, Pepto-Bismol and other stomach medicine
- Pack cold medicine and medication for other common health issues
- Do not drink water from the tap
- Do not drink unsealed juices/refreshments from street vendors
- Use bug spray

All major hotels have doctors on call and each city has a hospital designated for foreigners. Please advise your CET escort and/or local guide in the event that someone is not feeling well. Please make sure to notify CET of any allergies, medical conditions and other health issues prior to the trip.



#### Food

Cuban cuisine heavily features rice, beans, chicken and pork. Ample sea food is available as well. The 1990s were plagued by shortages, which affected the accessibility and quality of food, both at home and in restaurants. However, an economic recovery and recent reforms have led to an increase in quantity and quality of foodstuffs. Private restaurants, referred to as "paladars," have opened up across the country.

Meals will be at state restaurants and private paladars, often times with a fixed menu with various choices. Please notify CET and the local guide of any allergies or food requirements prior and during the trip. On free evening and afternoons CET and local guides are happy to assist in reservations at restaurants of your choice.

#### Water

Cuba has an outdated water system and tap water is not okay to drink. Even many locals boil and bottle water prior to consuming. Hotels and fine restaurants will use purified water to make ice. Please drink bottled water only and do not drink juices and other drinks if you're not sure if purified water has been used.







#### **Donations**

Cuba is a poor country. Economic difficulties and U.S. restrictions make some products difficult to acquire and many citizens, institutions and community programs are in dire need of certain materials. Donations of clothes, medicine, vitamins, sports equipment and school supplies are much appreciated and there will be amble opportunity throughout the visit to turn them over to those in need.

Cuba Educational Travel is involved in several specific projects with artists, musicians, community centers, skate parks, religious entities and sporting teams. Please let us know if you would like information about specific initiatives and desired donation items.

## **Trip Insurance**

Please be sure to read the terms and conditions in your sales agreement regarding cancellation and refund policies. CET is required to finalize all reservations 60 days in advance, meaning that refunds are often not available. We recommend purchasing trip cancellation insurance if you think there's a possibility your plans may change. Options and pricing vary; please contact the companies directly.

- Travel Guard www.travelguard.com (800) 826-4919
- TravelEx www.travelexinsurance.com (800) 228-9792
- Travel Insurance Services www.travelinsure.com (800) 937-1387



# **Recommended Reading**

Cuba Educational Travel recommends several books about Cuban history, politics and economics to familiarize travelers with the island:

- Cuba's New Resolve: Economic Reform and its Implications for U.S. Policy, Collin Laverty
- Cuban Revelations: Behind the Scenes in Havana, Marc Frank
- Cuba: What Everyone Needs to Know, Julia Sweig
- Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana. William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh
- The Cuba Wars: Fidel Castro, the United States, and the Next Revolution, Daniel Erickson
- Havana Nocturne: How the Mob Owned Cuba and Then Lost It to the Revolution, TJ English
- Moon Cuba Travel Guide, Christopher Baker









# **Helpful APPs**

Cuba is increasingly becoming "connected," internally and with the outside world. There are a number of new Cuba Applications that are helpful in navigating the island during your visit. Here are a few:



**Ke Hay Pa' Hoy**, slang for "what's going on tonight," is a wonderful resource for finding out where live music, dance and theatre is taking place each night. You can customize it to your likings and the fact it works offline makes it all the more useful during your stay on the island.

http://www.kehaypahoy.com/



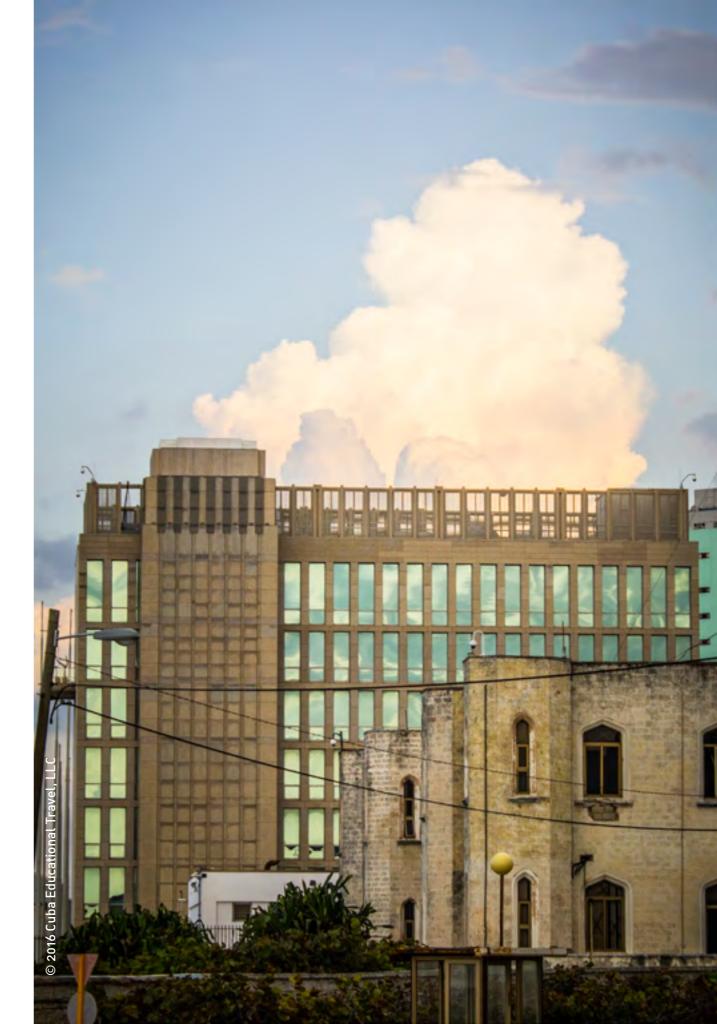
A la Mesa, often referred to as the "Cuban Yelp," is a great resource for finding the best offers for food and drinks in Cuba. The creators have focused primarily on the internal market, identifying places that are accessible to Cubans, while also including many of the more famous places frequented by tourists.

http://www.alamesacuba.com/en/



# **CET**

Cuba Educational Travel is licensed by the U.S. Treasury's Department of Foreign Assets Control to organize educational exchange programs to Cuba. CET is highly specialized in connecting students, academics, artists, athletes, musicians, retirees, private sector employees and others with their peers in Cuba, organizing exchange programs for Americans to Cuba and Cubans to the U.S. CET has prepared and executed programs for American University, Buckley School, Center for Democracy in the Americas, Chamber of the Americas, Citadel, Columbia University, Harvard Business School, Harvard Graduate Leadership Institute, Institute of the Americas, Kellogg School of Business, Nation Magazine, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Pacific Council on International Relations, Ross School of Business, University of California – San Diego, Wharton School of Business, World Security Institute and the World Bank's 1818 Society, among others.





## **Collin Laverty**

Collin Laverty is the President of Cuba Educational Travel and coordinates all programs in Cuba. Author of Cuba's New Resolve: Economic Reform and its implications for U.S. policy, he is considered a leading expert on U.S.—Cuba relations. Mr. Laverty has lived in Havana, Cuba for several years of his life and is widely published on U.S.—Cuba relations and the Cuban economy. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the College of Charleston and a master's degree in international relations from the University of California, San Diego. He sits on the board of the Center for Democracy in the Americas, remaining active in the policy world, and is also co-founder of Havana Culinary and Culture. Laverty also serves as a consultant on Cuba trade and licensing issues to U.S. businesses.



#### **Adam Linderman**

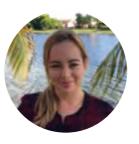
Adam Linderman, is vice president and the director of sales at Cuba Educational Travel. Mr. Linderman has over a decade of experience in the hospitality sector, including a long history of organizing exchanges between cultural and culinary figures from the United States and Cuba. Mr. Linderman, who manages CET's U.S. operations, has traveled extensively to the island, working frequently with top chefs and musicians on various projects. Prior to joining CET in 2012, he held positions at the Kimpton Hotel Group and Aramark Food Services, where he worked alongside celebrity chefs Guillermo Tellez and Manuel Turcios. Mr. Linderman's passion for the island and vast experience in the hospitality arena made him the perfect fit for CET.

Mr. Linderman is a North Carolina native and holds a bachelor's degree in communications, with a specialization in Hospitality/Tourism management from the College of Charleston. When he's not working with clients to get them to Cuba, he enjoys cooking, surfing, playing music, and traveling the world.



#### **Vivian Ramos**

Vivian Ramos, is Group Sales Manager for Cuba Educational Travel. A native Washingtonian, Vivian's passion to learn more about Latin America was born during her first visit to Guatemala when she was 15. Of Guatemalan and Salvadoran descent, she focused her undergraduate and graduate studies at James Madison University and George Mason University respectively on the civil conflicts that dominated Central America in the 80s, receiving her B.A in International Affairs in 2011 and Master's in Global Affairs in 2013. Thereafter, she began working at the Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA), a non-profit promoting mutual respect and dialogue between the U.S. and Latin America reflective of the 21st century world. Now at CET, Vivian works stateside in managing logistics for group travel, and assisting communications with present and future clients. Vivian is bilingual, enjoys venturing out to Virginia's wine country, loves to travel, and lives with her fiancé.



## **Ana Jeidy Gómez**

Ana Jeidy Gómez is a US-based group coordinator for Cuba Educational Travel. She acts as the liaison between the U.S. team and CET's ground team in Cuba. A Cuban native, she was born in the province of Villa Clara in 1990. Ana Jeidy spent her youth excelling in English and French, and ultimately graduated at the top of her class from the University of Havana. During her scholastic career she worked as an English teacher, translator, and interpreter. She was selected to attend the School of High Studies of Hospitality and Tourism in Havana, where she received her diploma in Tour guidance. Her experience landed her a position at Havanatur, one of the oldest and most prestigious state-run travel agencies in Cuba. Working at Havanatur allowed Ana Jeidy to travel to every corner of her country, and she quickly became one of the country's finest tour guides. In 2015 she decided to bring her talents to Cuba Educational Travel, where she uses her extensive knowledge and experience to enhance programming. Her passion has always been her homeland, and in her free time she thoroughly enjoys spending time with family and friends.



## **Layner Priede**

Layner Priede is a ground coordinator for Cuba Educational Travel. He is responsible for overseeing groups while on the ground in Cuba, ensuring customer satisfaction and identifying new opportunities for CET and clients. He was born and raised in Havana, Cuba, then moved to Montreal, Canada, at the age of 19. He lived in Canada for over 9 years, obtaining a bachelor's degree in Administration at HEC Montreal University, and becoming fluent in French and English. His strong ties to the island and interest in contributing to the development of the country were drivers for his return to Cuba, where he now spends most of his time.

Mr. Priede has a long history of customer service experience. Prior to joining CET he was a business banker for Wells Fargo in Miami, Florida, and also worked for several years as a financial advisor for National Bank of Canada. His extensive background in customer service, along with the passion and expertise about Cuba and Cuban make him a valuable asset for the development and continuous growth of CET.

As a huge fan of soccer, or "futbol" for all of Latin Americans, Mr. Priede tries to not miss any important match. He looks forward to evenings and long weekends that he can spend with his family.



## Rocio Lopez

Rocio Lopez is a Ground Coordinator and Customer Service Specialist at Cuba Educational Travel. She works on the planning and execution of all groups in Cuba. Moreover, Rocio serves as the face of CET on the ground, guaranteeing customer satisfaction and working with guests and CET partners – hotels, restaurants, speakers, performers, guides and drivers – to maximize everyone's experience. When not charming CET clients, Rocio is often found at local theatres, dance studios, concert halls, restaurants and bars, where she's scoping out the newest and most exciting cultural and culinary offerings.

Fluent in English, French, Italian and Spanish, Rocio is multicultural and has traveled extensively, including to Asia, Europe, Latin American and the United States. Most recently she spent a semester in New Delhi, India, where she passed a course on Project Management. She has a degree in Languages from the University of Havana, and extensive experience in the tourism sector. Rocio is a native of the beautiful Cuban colonial city of Trinidad, but lives between Havana and Cancun, Mexico.



#### Orlando Ochoa

Orlando Ochoa Méndez is a ground coordinator for Cuba Educational Traveler. Orlando and his family are natives of Holguín, a town in eastern Cuba. Before moving to Havana, he was educated as a contemporary dancer, taught at a local high school, and even joined the army for a short period. Orlando followed his passion for the music industry to Havana, where he worked an editor as a magazine and performing his own original works as a rapper, in addition to organizing festivals and exhibitions with Cuban and foreign artists alike. Through this exposure to rap music, he has helped other young Cubans discuss issues of gender, race, and other social issues through informal workshops.

Orlando speaks Spanish, English, and French and he is also an expert scuba diver and instructor. He has traveled to the United States and Europe to share his Cuban culture and wants to continue to explore the world as much as possible, but he feels most connected to his home in Cuba.



## **Carey Powers**

Carey Powers is the Program Assistant at Cuba Educational Travel. Ms. Powers has had a life-long interest in Cuba since she first visited the island when she was 9 years old. While in college, she spent a semester at Casa de las Américas in Havana in 2012. During undergrad, she studied Spanish, Cuban history, and Cuban-American literature. She graduated with a BA in Global Studies with a concentration in Latin America from Colby College in 2014.

Prior to joining the team at CET, Ms. Powers worked at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts and the Colby College Museum of Art in Waterville, Maine. Her knowledge of the island and passion for cultural exchange led her to CET, whose mission to engage and educate travelers to Cuba resonated with her. A native of central Virginia, Ms. Powers enjoys horseback riding, going to museums, and doing yoga in her free time.



# Roy Eduardo Recio

Roy Eduardo Recio Pimentel is an accountant and event planner at Cuba Educational Travel. Mr. Recio is a native of Camagüey, one of the eastern provinces of Cuba., where he obtained certificate in accounting at the Commerce School of Camagüey and a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Camagüey. He's traveled extensively to Mexico, Spain and Italy for career programs and courses to master his skills as an accountant and economist. He many years of experience in the tourism sector as director of several hotels, the manager of Marlin Marina of Santa Lucia Beach, one of the busiest on the island, and with Cubanacan tourism agency. Roy loves spending as much time as possible with his family and friends and there is no place like the beach for him to enjoy himself.



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