Study Abroad

CUBA
SUMMER 2019

Program Guide
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CONGRATULATIONS on being accepted to the UW-Eau Claire program with USAC to Cuba. Living and studying in a foreign culture is both an exciting and a challenging experience. Past participants of study abroad report that the many advantages of international study include:

- Building upon foreign language skills
- Gaining new perspectives on a chosen academic field
- Increasing understanding of different cultures
- Developing different perspectives on U.S. culture
- Gaining self-confidence and independence
- Learning skills for the future international job market

It is up to you to determine how you can best benefit from these possible advantages. This is your adventure!

This program guide is to be used together with the general Study Abroad (SA) Handbook. The SA Handbook has information that is valid for all study abroad programs. This guide will provide you with specific information for the Cuba study abroad program. It is designed to complement the SA Handbook, study abroad orientation, and your individual pre-departure preparations.

Please realize that, although this guide contains all of the information available at the time of printing, it is impossible for any single resource to answer all of your questions. Your peer advisor will email additional information throughout the semester. Please contact the Center for International Education (CIE) staff, your peer advisor, and past program participants with your specific questions.

Basic questions only you can answer include:

1) What are YOUR goals for this experience? Common objectives of student travelers include advancement in future profession, desire to gain fluency in a second language, wish to expand personal and academic horizons, need for a change, wish to challenge oneself with immersion in a new culture.

2) Given the way the program is set up, how can you best prepare to meet your goals? For example, if one of your goals is truly being immersed in Cuban culture, yet you are going with a group of students, how can you ensure that you do not spend too much time with other U.S. Americans?

The information in this guide was current at the time of printing, though changes may occur at any time.
GENERAL INFORMATION

The Program
UW-Eau Claire has partnered with University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) to offer students the opportunity to study and learn about the many layers of Cuban history and culture. Students can also take courses that further their knowledge about other Latin American cultures. Some field trips will be included in the program costs. The program is in English with some opportunities to take Spanish courses, if you have the appropriate level. If you know Spanish, you will be able to practice it all throughout Cuba!

The Location
La Habana (Havana) is the capital city of Cuba and is full of culture, arts and entertainment. Old Habana is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is one of the best-preserved colonial Spanish complexes in the Americas. The “time-capsule” feel to the city can still be felt with many 1950’s era cars driving the streets. Along with the bustling city life, Cuba also offers remarkable natural beauty with miles of pristine shoreline and rich agriculture valleys.

Cuba itself is home to around 11.48 million people. Cuba’s population is very multiethnic.

The University
The program is located on the Instituto de Filosofía. The university has close connections with the University of Havana and other Cuban universities. It began in 1968 and is an agency of the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment. All USAC classes and the USAC office is located on campus.

Academic Calendar
Students on the USAC Cuba program can go abroad for session I, session II, or both sessions. Students should notify Jenna Krosch (kroschjm@uwec.edu) what they plan to do.

Since U.S. citizens are not allowed to be in Cuba as tourists, you can’t travel around Cuba before or after the USAC program dates. Arrange your travel accordingly.

ONLY Summer Session I, 2019*

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<td>Depart U.S.</td>
<td>June 2</td>
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<td>Arrival</td>
<td>June 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation &amp; city tour</td>
<td>June 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session I Courses Begin</td>
<td>June 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session I Courses End</td>
<td>June 21</td>
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<td>Final Exams</td>
<td>June 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move out of housing (except those on the tour)</td>
<td>June 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional Southern Cuba Tour</td>
<td>June 24-June 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move out of housing for those on the optional tour</td>
<td>June 30</td>
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### Both Summer Session I & II, 2019*

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<td>Orientation/city tour</td>
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<td>Session I Courses Begin</td>
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<td>Session I Final Exams</td>
<td>June 21</td>
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<td>Session I Program done</td>
<td>June 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional Southern Cuba tour</td>
<td>June 24-29</td>
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<td>Session II courses begin</td>
<td>July 1</td>
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<td>Session II final exams</td>
<td>July 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session II program ends</td>
<td>July 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move out of housing</td>
<td>July 20</td>
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*Dates are subject to change. To see more detailed program dates: [https://usac.edu/study-abroad-programs/cuba/la-habana/calendars](https://usac.edu/study-abroad-programs/cuba/la-habana/calendars)

### ACADEMICS

There is additional information on maintaining program eligibility, as well as topics such as registration, class attendance, credits and course load, grades, transcripts, and accessing the UW-Eau Claire library while abroad in your Study Abroad Handbook.

### Program Prerequisites

To participate in this study abroad program, you must be in good academic, conduct, and financial, standing, and have the minimum 2.5 GPA required. There is more information on maintaining program eligibility in the Study Abroad Handbook.

### Registration in Cuba

As part of the USAC admissions process, you are required to submit a preliminary course registration. You will find the Course and Tour Registration Form in your USAC Gateway account. You will complete this form indicating your course and tour selections along with two alternative courses in case any courses become unavailable. You will submit the completed form directly to USAC.

You will receive your final course schedule during the on-site orientation. Your Resident Director in Cuba will make every effort to avoid class conflicts; however, there may be scheduling conflicts and you may need to adjust your class selection. Please be flexible and prepared for course changes.

### Add/Drop Courses on Site

You will have 3 days after the class begins to add/drop courses on site. Written permission is required from both the Resident Director and instructors in order to add/drop/change a course once it has begun.

### Withdrawing from USAC Courses

Your Resident Director in Cuba will establish a course withdrawal deadline (typically this is about two-thirds of the way into the term). If you must drop a course after the
drop deadline, but before the withdrawal deadline, a grade of “W” will be reported on your USAC grade report. If you abandon a class without officially withdrawing from it, a grade will be reported as an “F.”

**Credits and Course load**
Students enroll in 3-4 credits per summer session. At least one, 3-credit course is required each session.

If you receive financial aid, you must be enrolled in 6 credits which would mean you would need to participate in both summer sessions.

The credits you earn abroad are considered UW-Eau Claire resident credits. The classes you take abroad will count towards the total credits needed for graduation, and **grades will be figured into your UW-Eau Claire GPA.**

**Class/Activity Attendance**
When studying abroad, you are required to follow the attendance policies of your program abroad. In general, you are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and field trips unless illness or other unavoidable circumstances make this impossible. Absences must be approved in advance by the instructor and may result in lower grades.

USAC generally allows students one excused absence. Each tardy is considered one half of an absence. If you fail to attend class, this will affect your grade in the course. All exams must be taken as scheduled.

**Grades**
Courses in the program are graded on the U.S. A-F grading scale. The grades reported on your USAC grade report are the same grades that will appear on your UW-Eau Claire transcript; **grades are included in your UW-Eau Claire GPA.** Pass/Fail grades are not allowed.

**Grade Reports**
At the end of the program, USAC prepares a grade report, which is sent to UW-Eau Claire. USAC will also update your grades on your Gateway account for you to review. Courses, credits, and grades are incorporated into your UW-Eau Claire transcript.

**Grade reports are not available until a few weeks after the summer program.**
Due to this delay, you will initially receive a grade report with “NR” (not reported) for all courses. The actual courses you took will be reflected on your record once the CIE receives your grade report from USAC.

**If you are a senior** and are studying abroad for your last term, please note that the different timelines in grade reporting **may require you to delay your graduation from summer to fall.** The UW-Eau Claire Registrar’s Office must receive grades within 42 days of the last day
of the UW-Eau Claire term in order to confirm your graduation that term. This is a UW-Eau Claire requirement, and our partners abroad cannot change their usual timelines to accommodate it.

**Foreign Language Immersion Requirement**
This program does NOT fulfill the language immersion requirement for Spanish or LAS majors/minors.

**The Academic Program**
USAC courses are taught by local and visiting faculty. Professors will provide a syllabus at the beginning of the term and coursework will generally follow a typical U.S. structure with a combination of exams, projects, essays, and/or homework. Your classmates will be other USAC or international students. Local students typically aren’t proficient enough in English to join you in courses taught in English. There will still be plenty of chances for you to interact with local students.

You should plan to be in courses Monday – Friday. You will have plenty of time to explore Cuba on weekends. It is not recommended to plan any weekend travel until after you arrive.

You can expect to do more independent learning than you typically do in the U.S. Group work is very rare, if at all. The courses will be structured around lectures with discussion afterwards. In the U.S., you may be used to PowerPoints and other visuals, but do not expect that in Cuba. You can expect lectures to be given and pen and paper resources. There may also be less structure in the classroom which will make you think critically. Faculty are friendly but remember to respect them and their authority.

Many of your courses will be in English but don’t forget that you are taking them in a Spanish-speaking country. **Ninety five percent of all library resources will, of course, be in Spanish.** Most of your "textbooks" may actually be photocopies of books, due to the high cost and lack of availability of actual books.

Syllabi may be different than those used in the U.S. They have much less detail and are far less explicit about exact dates things are due, what percentage each assignment counts toward your grade, etc. Some of your professors have taught or studied in the U.S. system and will use a U.S. style syllabus. Don’t expect that from everyone, part of your experience abroad is learning how to operate in a different academic system.

**Internships & Service Learning**
At this time, internships and service learning are not an option on the Cuba program.

**Money Matters**
*Information about how payments are made, when they are due, and the*
withdrawal/refund deadlines, financial aid, scholarships, budgeting and ways to bring money abroad is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Cost Estimate
You can find the most current cost estimate for your program, in easily printable format, on the CIE Cuba Webpage. Be sure you are looking at the correct term. Remember that the cost estimate includes what you pay to UW-Eau Claire, what you pay to USAC, and what you pay directly to other vendors.

Personal Travel:
The above estimate does not include additional personal travel. How much money you need for travel is always a difficult and personal decision. Keep in mind that you can spend as much money as you have, but you do not need to!

USAC Payments & Refund Policy
If you have any questions about paying your optional tour fees, please contact the USAC accounting person listed in your Gateway Account. You can pay with credit card, check, or money order.

In addition to the UW-Eau Claire refund policy outlined in the "Money Matters" section of the Study Abroad Handbook, USAC has its own financial policies related to payment, cancellations, and changes. You can learn more about the withdrawal deadlines and penalties by referring to your copies of the USAC Program Agreement and Program Fee & Options.

Cuban Money
There are now two types of currency in Cuba. One is the money used by foreigners – called the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). 1 CUC = 1USD. The second is the Cuban Peso (CUP) that locals use. 26.5 CUP = 1 CUC.

Money Tips
Bring around $750-$800 in U.S. dollars to Cuba for your meals and personal expenses. Do your research and make sure you know how much you plan to use. Personal expenses vary by student.

U.S. dollars are subject to an additional 10% surcharge when they're exchanged for convertible pesos (CUC). Try changing your U.S. dollars to Canadian dollars, Euros or Mexican pesos to avoid this surcharge (not guaranteed).

You will exchange your U.S. dollars (or Canadian or other currency) to Cuban currency (CUC) once you arrive in Cuba. You cannot do this in the U.S. because Cuba has a closed currency meaning that you cannot acquire CUCs before you arrive.

The U.S. State Department encourages you to only exchange currency with the state-run offices known as CADECAs.

The amount of cash you bring with you to Cuba must last you the entire program. When you depart Cuba, you should be able to convert any leftover CUCs into USDs in the airport.

Credit/Debit Cards
You will not be able to use your debit/credit cards anywhere. You may read that some hotels offer ATMs that
foreigners can use, but USAC does not recommend using them. Nearly all ATMs do not work with cards that are associated with an American bank. Do not rely on your debit card to obtain more cash when abroad.

**Traveler’s Checks**
You will not be able to use traveler’s checks.

**USAC Scholarships**
USAC offers a variety of scholarships for students. To see more information, visit [USAC’s Scholarship website](#). You will have optional scholarship applications applied to your USAC Gateway account when they are open. Students are able to apply for all scholarships they are eligible for and can be awarded more than one scholarship.

USAC also offers an alliance scholarship just for UWEC students on one of their specialty programs. This application will be applied to your BlugoldsAbroad account in September for spring/winterim students and in March for Summer/Fall/Academic Year students. Your UWEC Study Abroad Coordinator, Jenna, will email you when it is available. The number of awards will vary by term. Amounts will vary between $200 - $500.

**HEALTH & SAFETY**
*Additional information on these issues, as well as information on CISI insurance, is included in the Health Issues and Safety Abroad sections of your Study Abroad Handbook.*

**Before You Go**
In addition to the general health precautions listed in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should consult your physician to see if you should receive any other vaccinations, depending upon the type of travel you plan to do. While there are no required vaccinations for Cuba the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) does have several recommendations depending on your travel plans and your health history.

**Common Health Problems**
The most common health problem for U.S. Americans in Cuba is intestinal upset. This usually occurs as a result of the change in diet, the different meal schedule, and organisms unfamiliar to your system.

A very common ailment is traveler’s diarrhea. It can largely be avoided by being careful about where and what you eat as well as avoiding dairy products if they are not pasteurized. If you do come down with it, the following suggestions will help speed recovery and guide your decision to seek formal care:

1. It will usually run its course in three to five days. The worst symptoms usually occur the first day. Bed rest may help relieve cramps.

2. An over-the-counter medicine like Pepto Bismol may help relieve nausea and vomiting, so you may want to bring some with you.

If nausea and vomiting persist for more than 24 hours, if you develop a fever
over 101 degrees F, or if you develop severe abdominal pain, you should contact your resident director right away, so they can consult a physician.

**Water**
Water is not safe to drink in Cuba. You will want to drink only bottled water. If you consume soda or other beverages with ice in them, please ask for no ice, as ice is usually made from tap water.

Please see the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommendations on eating and drinking safely in Cuba:

**Insect Bites**
Insect borne diseases, particularly mosquito, such as Zika, are present in parts of Cuba.

Per the CDC, "Dengue fever is the most common cause of fever in travelers returning from the Caribbean, Central America, and South-Central Asia. This disease is spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes and cannot be spread person to person."

Severe dengue can be fatal, but with good treatment, less than 1% of patients die from dengue. **See a doctor immediately if you develop dengue symptoms during or after your time abroad:**

Symptoms of dengue include:
- Fever
- Headache
- Pain behind the eyes
- Joint and muscle pain
- Rash
- Nausea/vomiting
- Mild bleeding, such as nose or gum bleeding or easy bruising

As there is no cure for dengue fever, the best prevention in all cases for insect bites is using a good repellent (with DEET) and wearing appropriate clothing. Depending on activity, loose, long-sleeved shirts and pants are good choices. For more protection, clothing may be sprayed with a repellent containing permethrin. (Don't use permethrin on skin.)

**Zika Virus**
The CDC does warn that there is a risk for the Zika virus in Cuba. The Zika infection, in pregnant women, can cause serious birth defects so the CDC does not recommend travel to Cuba for women who are pregnant. All travelers should strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites. If you have concerns over this, please consult with your doctor.

**Health Facilities in Cuba**
The USAC staff in Cuba will accompany you to the appropriate health facility if you do get sick. They will also help translate, if needed. Be aware you’ll have to pay up front, and then CISI insurance will reimburse you. See the Study Abroad Handbook for more information about CISI.
Medical facilities will not be the same standard as the U.S. Many prescriptions may be hard to obtain so you are encouraged to bring everything you will need with you.

**Emergency Contacts**
General emergency procedures are described in the Study Abroad Handbook, and the USAC staff is available if difficulties arise. You will receive an emergency contact card with USAC staff information at the orientation 2 meeting; be sure to keep it in your wallet at all times. The information is also on the Contact Names & Addresses page of this guide.

**Safety in Cuba**
During orientation in Cuba, you will learn about different areas that you should avoid. Be sure to pay attention to that advice. While the security environment in Cuba is relatively stable, due to increases in tourist activity, there has been an increase in pickpocketing and purse snatching. Be sure to keep your valuables safe and out of sight. Wearing a passport carrier necklace or waist band can help to hide your belongings.

**NOTE:** Both men and women should be aware of their safety at all times. In the past, men have been just as susceptible as women to potential risks. As U.S. Americans, you may stick out as "foreigners". The best advice is to be aware of your surroundings, listen to your instincts, and use your common sense.

For specific information on crime and road safety in Cuba, see the U.S. State Department Information for Cuba. They have good information on other things to consider when it comes to health and safety.

If you are the victim of a crime or if you are arrested abroad, get in touch with the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. U.S. consular offices will do what they can to help U.S. citizens in serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties. They can often direct you to a reliable doctor or clinic, help you contact family, or re-issue your passport.

**Machismo Culture**
Machismo is defined as strong or aggressive masculine pride. Cuban women are expected to keep house and cook the meals and care for any children they have, even if they hold a full-time job, which many women do. Men on the other hand are able to relax and enjoy a beer or be with friends. You will most likely notice this while walking around. The machismo culture ensures that men receive the upper hand and are respected by all. Catcalls (piropos) are unavoidable for women. There is nothing you can do to avoid these, so it is best to ignore and keep walking.
Marijuana and other Illegal Drugs
Please note that the use of marijuana is illegal in Cuba. Even carrying it on your person can be considered drug trafficking. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cuba are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. U.S. citizenship offers no protection if you break a Cuban law. There is NOTHING the CIE, USAC, or the U.S. government can do if you are found in violation of Cuban laws.

In addition to legal penalties, you are putting yourself at risk any time you buy a drug from a stranger. You may be in danger of robbery or assault, or you may get a much more dangerous combination of drugs than you thought you were buying.

Other Cuban Penalties
The U.S. State Department notes the following crimes will result in strong penalties in Cuba:
- Possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs
- Suspicion of assisting Cubans to leave the country illegally
- Drivers involved in accidents that result in injury or death, regardless of fault
- Importing weapons or ammunition
- Photographing military or police installations or personnel, or harbor, rail or airport facilities

The government of Cuba does not recognize the U.S. nationality of Cuban born U.S. citizens and may not allow U.S. consular access to Cuban-American prisoners.

Criticism of the Cuban government is also punishable of up to 30 years in prison.

911 Equivalent in Cuba
Just like in the U.S., Cuba uses 106 for local police, fire, or ambulance services.

The U.S. State Department also provides a list of 911 numbers abroad. Please note that in some countries there are different numbers for fire, police, and ambulance. Plan ahead and research numbers before you go.

Required Documents

Passport information is included in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Visa
A visa is official permission to temporarily reside in another country and is granted by the government of that country. U.S. citizens studying in Cuba must acquire a student visa and a general license.

It is currently illegal for U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba for tourism, U.S. citizens are NOT allowed to be in Cuba before or after the USAC program dates. Arrange your travel accordingly.

If you are a U.S. citizen, your USAC program advisor will need a copy of your passport in
order to take care of the visa process on your behalf. Your USAC program advisor will email you a copy of your visa a few days before the program starts. Print this in color and bring it with you. When you arrive in Cuba, before you go through immigration, one of the USAC staff members will greet you and give you your actual visa. Then you will proceed through immigration and customs.

**General License:** U.S. citizens only. This is required by the United States of America for all U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba. This is your legal documentation of your sanctioned reason for being in Cuba (education in your case). You need to fill out the travel affidavit that will be attached to your USAC Gateway account in the Visa Guide. You will need to scan and email the Travel Affidavit to your USAC program advisor. Your program advisor will then complete the remainder of the steps to secure your General License.

*Keep your General License paperwork for a period of five years after you return from Cuba.* These documents may be requested by the U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), or other law enforcement officials (i.e. U.S. Customs and Border Protection) upon demand during that five-year period.

**Packing Tips**

*In addition to the general packing information in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should know the following about Cuba.*

**Weather**

Cuba has a tropical climate and enjoys year-round temperate weather. The winter/spring (December – mid April) is the drier season. Temperatures will range in the 70’s. The night time could be cooler during the winter months. The summer is hotter (80’s-90’s) and wet with the warmest months being July and August.

Hurricane season is from June – November so more rain can occur during these months. According to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association (NOAA), Cuba experiences the lowest frequency of hurricanes and tropical storms than other parts of the Caribbean. That being said, USAC and the CIE will always closely monitor if there are hurricanes projected to reach Cuba.

**Packing Less is More**

When packing your bags for Cuba, please keep in mind that it is vital that you pack light, less stuff is easier to carry and less costly.

Students in the past have found that they have brought with them too many unnecessary items and too much clothing. Bringing along too many pairs of shoes, clothes for evening events, formal attire, etc. is not a good idea. Most of the clothes
you will be wearing in Cuba will be casual: summer outfits, such as t-shirts and shorts, pants, skirts and informal blouses.

However, you should plan to pack about two weeks' worth of socks and underwear as laundry can take a while to get back to you.

**Clothing**
Dress can be casual but should be presentable. You will want to make sure you have some nicer outfits in case you go to a nice restaurant or out at night. Females should try and stay away from outfits that will draw attention to themselves – such as: low necklines, crop tops, short shorts/skirts/dresses, tight dresses. Longer, flowy sundresses and skirts are a good recommendation. Everyone should bring swimwear.

It is recommended to bring good walking shoes. Sandals are also a must!

**What to Pack**
You may want to consider bringing non-perishable snacks with you because they can be hard to find in Cuba. Cubans do not value quick/easy food. Some ideas include: granola bars, fruit snacks, crackers, ramen and hot sauce (Cuban food can be bland).

You will want to bring hand sanitizer and small toilet paper or Kleenex packs as most bathrooms won’t have sinks or toilet paper.

Since you will have to bring a lot of cash with you and you won’t have access to additional resources, you may want to look into bringing a lockable bag or money pouch and/or a lock to lock a suitcase or bag.

Your Peer Advisor will give you a suggested packing list at your second orientation meeting and USAC will also post a packing list on your Gateway account.

**Do Not Bring**
Do not bring expensive cell phones, jewelry, or other luxury items that can be lost or stolen. If you do decide to bring items that are expensive to replace, you may want to consider personal property insurance for your time in Cuba.

**Appliances**
Cuba uses the same electric plug as the United States. The electrical current in Cuba can be both 110v AC (the same in the U.S.) or 220v AC. Most electronic items are dual voltage, but you’ll still want to use caution.

**ARRIVING IN CUBA**

**Travel Arrangements**
It is your responsibility to make and pay for travel arrangements to Cuba. Airline tickets are not included in your USAC program fees. An optional group flight is available for this program through a travel agency
recommended by USAC. If you choose not to book the group flight, you will need to book your own flight and arrive prior to the mandatory orientation.

You may wish to purchase travel or trip cancellation insurance when you purchase your ticket. Discuss your options with your travel agent and be sure you know exactly what the policy covers. (For example, most policies specifically exclude travel disruption due to acts of war.)

**Important Regulations to Follow**
As a U.S. citizen, you are required to book a round-trip ticket as this is part of the visa requirements. Non-U.S. citizens will need to check with the Cuban consulate/embassy for travel requirements.

You cannot arrive early or stay longer. Due to visa reasons, you CANNOT be in Cuba before or after the USAC program dates. Do NOT plan to arrive early/stay late. USAC and the CIE cannot assist with any legal repercussion that is resulted in arriving early or staying late.

Make sure you book your arrival and departure flights from José Martí International Airport (HAV).

**USAC Group Flight**
Benefits to booking with the optional group flight:

- Flexible tickets that are refundable and changeable for a fee
- Select the group return date or select your own date for the same price
- Frosch Student Travel can help book connecting flights to merge with the group flight departure cities for a reasonable amount.
- Flexible payment plan (pay a deposit to hold your seat, then pay the balance 2 weeks prior to departure)
- Airport pick-up in USAC (there is no USAC staff to chaperone the flight, but group flight participants will be met at the airport by USAC staff, unless you arrive late).

USAC will be in contact with you and information will be on your USAC Gateway account on how to sign up for the group flight.

**Early Arrivals**
You cannot arrive early.

**Airport Pick-Up Service**
Please fill out the Flight Form in your Gateway account after you have booked your flight. Airport pick-up service is only available for students arriving on the official arrival day with the group flight. If you book an independent flight (non-group flight) you can still use the pick-up service if you arrive BEFORE the group flight.

USAC will arrange transportation to the airport at the end of the program since all students must leave on the last day.
Clearing Immigration & Customs

You should watch for people wearing USAC shirts and holding a USAC sign or flag.

Orientation
When you first arrive in Cuba, you will be taken to your accommodations. The next day will be the mandatory orientation where topics will include: cultural differences, appropriate behavior, Cuba in general, and safety & emergency procedures. There will also be a city tour. This is also a great chance to get to know the USAC staff. Orientation is mandatory and failure to attend will result in a $200 charge to your USAC account.

Level of Support
USAC provides a resident director and staff to assist students with the transition to Cuba. They will also be coordinating various excursions and activities throughout the program. If any questions or concerns arise, over anything, you are strongly encouraged to reach out to the onsite staff. It could be anything from how to say something in Spanish to needing to go to the doctor. The USAC staff is there to assist you so please use them as a resource.

If you will need any disability accommodations when abroad, it is important to complete your USAC Disability and Health Accommodation Request Form on your USAC Gateway account. While USAC cannot guarantee services, they will do their best to accommodate your needs. By completing that form, USAC will be in contact with you regarding services they can/cannot provide.

Getting Involved

Tours and Field Studies
USAC plans some excursions that are included in the program cost. The trips are carefully planned and budgeted for by the USAC Resident Director, and if you want to go back to visit an area, that is great, but you should plan to do so during a free weekend.

Optional Excursions
USAC also plans optional tours and field studies at an additional cost. You can select these options on the Course & Tour Registration Form you filled out as part of your USAC application.

Getting Involved
The USAC staff may arrange unofficial field trips or visits to local happenings. You may also get to participate in holiday meals or festivals that occur in the city. USAC staff may also invite you to play sports or attend music events with other locals. Wherever you go, you are bound to find live bands playing all types of music.

Housing

Casa Particulares
You will stay in a bed-and-breakfast style apartment called Casa Particulares, which are rented out by the landlord of that apartment complex. This style of
accommodation is newer to Cuba but has exploded in popularity. It is an inexpensive and more authentic experience.

Each apartment will house four USAC students, with two students per room. You will have shared living room, bathroom and kitchen. All apartments and rooms are air conditioned. Furniture will include a single bed (for each student), wardrobe, desk, lamp, and fan.

**Meals**
All apartments are overseen by a Cuban landlord who will provide you with a daily breakfast. Lunch, dinner and bottled water are not included in the program fees. Estimate that it will cost around $400-$500 for the entire program worth of lunch, dinner, and bottled water. Lunch, dinner and water will be paid directly to the landlord in cash.

**Distance to class**
USAC has housing locations within the Vedado neighborhood which is a 10-15 minute walk from campus. This neighborhood is less touristy and provides a more authentic experience.

**Water**
Water from the tap is not okay to drink in Cuba. Please only drink bottled water.

**Toilets**
In Cuba, as in many parts of Central and South America, you can’t flush toilet paper down the toilet. Plumbing pipes are typically only one inch in diameter, rather than the standard two inches used in the U.S. There will be a garbage can next to the toilet to be used for toilet paper. **Make sure to throw toilet paper in the garbage can, not in the toilet!** This takes some getting used to, but after a few weeks, it will become habit.

**Laundry**
Laundry will be done once a week and it is included in the shared room fee.

**Social Life**
Cubans are very family oriented and home is the place to be with family. They will do their socializing with friends in the streets, plazas, bars, etc. Since many people do not have social gatherings at home, neighbors and landlords are very sensitive to noise. Drinking and parties in the housing are not acceptable. Landlords have the right to evict students for noise or behavior issues.

**Communication**
*Information on accessing/forwarding your UW-Eau Claire email address, which you need to check while abroad, is in your Study Abroad Handbook.*

**Time Zone**
Cuba falls in the eastern time zone (like New York, Florida, etc.), so only one hour ahead of Minnesota/Wisconsin.
Internet/Access in Cuba

Internet in Cuba is controlled by the government and less that 5% of Cubans have access to the open internet. You will have EXTREMELY limited internet access when in Cuba. If you do obtain a connection, the speed is very slow.

Your cellphone won’t work as a phone or GPS in Cuba, but you can still bring it to use as a camera/play music.

If you need to make an emergency call, please contact the USAC staff onsite. Most students use the phones from a hotel if they need to make a call. WiFi spots are available close to the apartments, however, don’t expect a high-speed connection or reliability. In the few spots you can access internet, it will cost around $5/hour and is very slow.

Computers are mostly located in a few of the nicer hotels and ETECSA buildings around La Habana. You may need to wait in line to use these computers and only have access to select sites. Most likely you won’t be allowed to access some sites you are used to.

You will be able to use your laptop for academic reasons such as writing papers and completing homework.

Please give your family and friends a heads up that they may not hear from you for long periods at a time. The resident director, USAC staff and your professors in Cuba will notify USAC immediately if anything should happen to you and USAC will notify UWEC and your family.

Overall, contacting the outside world will be possible but it will require patience. You will not be able to post to Instagram every day and send Snapchats all day long – but maybe that will be okay as it will allow you to live in the moment. You should also not plan on keeping a blog or doing research in Cuba.

Make sure you research places you want to go BEFORE you leave since it will be almost impossible when abroad. It might be in your best interest to purchase a guide book to Cuba, so you have a physical resource.

Spanish

If you don’t speak Spanish, that is okay. For the most part, all of the courses and tours with USAC will be in English (exception is those that state they will be in Spanish). It is recommended that you download Google Translate and the Spanish package. You don’t need internet to use this app so you it can be super helpful when out and about. It is also recommended you practice learning some common phrases, so you can show the locals that you are trying.

Cultural Notes
"Developing World"
Cuba is a developing country. You may become frustrated when things take longer than expected or things keep changing. Keep in mind that this is all part of truly experiencing life in a different culture.

La Libreta
Since 1962, Cuba has used a food rationing system. Families have to bring their state-issued ration book, known as “la libreta” each time they go to the grocery store. The Cuban government limits the amount of food a family can have based on the ages, gender and health status of each member living in the house. When a person goes to the store, they need to bring their ration book and the store’s clerk records each purchase. The clerk also has to keep their own record and the two books must always match up.

While there has been talks about doing away with this system, it is still used. The cost of the rationed items are low, but so are salaries for the Cuban people. Many families supplement their supplies from higher-priced stores.

Talking Politics/Daily Life with Cuban People
You are going to study in a country that has a rich and complex relationship with the United States. You should take advantage of being in this country and learn from as many people as you can. Feel free to communicate with your land lady and ask questions. Keep in mind that many local Cubans won’t know any or very limited English. If you have a conversation, be polite, open-minded and courteous of their culture. Most Cubans will love talking with you, but respect boundaries and do not talk ill of the Cuban government.

Taxis in Cuba
Taxis for Tourists: You can only take taxis that charge in CUCs. These taxis usually have meters too. If the driver doesn’t turn on the meter, simply ask that they do so. If they aren’t able to, ask in advance what the rate will be. If you encounter one without a meter, ask for the quoted rate before going to your destination.

Taxis for Local Cubans: You will also notice there are some taxis that won’t pick you up. This is probably because they are only for Cubans who pay only in Cuban pesos. These taxis are not likely to pick up tourists.

Pedal and Yellow Coco Taxis: Yellow coco taxis are automated rickshaws. They can be a fun way to get from location to location. The cart kind of looks like a half coconut shell, which explains its name. These are usually cheaper than traditional taxis, but you should always negotiate your fare before accepting a ride.

Family
The family plays an important role Cuba. The extended family is often a very large,
close circle of relatives and friends. It is not unusual for children to live with parents until they marry, or to continue to live with parents if they never marry.

Traditional family roles, although not as pronounced as in the past, are still apparent to a U.S. observer. The man is still the authority figure and main provider, while the woman, even if she works outside the home, is usually responsible for running the household and caring for the children.

**Gender Issues**

Women in Cuba have made great gains toward equality. They are better represented in professional roles than in many other Latin American countries.

Despite the above paragraph, as you interact with Cubans your age, you may become aware that social rules and etiquette are stricter for women than for men.

U.S. females are stereotyped as being “easy,” so flirting openly with local men may send out the wrong signals to them – you could be seen as an easy sexual conquest. You would want to avoid this stereotype. Remember you are an ambassador of your country and of your university while studying abroad.

**Music**

Cuba is known for its rich music. Expect to hear all sorts of music as you travel around La Habana and all of Cuba. Music forms such as mambo, cha-cha-cha and salsa music is to be expected. Dancing usually goes hand in hand with the music. If possible, you are encouraged to take the dance course that USAC offers to further immerse yourself in the music scene.

"**Piropos**"

Piropos (catcalls) are a fact of life for women in Cuba. Although, they may be considered "harmless" at one level, they often do not feel that way to U.S. American women. The best way to deal with piropos is to just ignore them and continue on your way.

**Cuban Paladar**

You may see or hear about paladars. These are small, family-run restaurants and are a good way to enjoy the local cuisine. They are usually located in a converted part of a family home, but function as a normal restaurant. Some are going to be better than others, so you may want to ask the locals where the best ones are!

**Food Preferences**

Cuba is a relatively vegetarian friendly country. There won’t be as many options as you are used to, but there should be some.

If you have an allergy to certain foods, you may want to consider obtaining a translation of that allergy in Spanish, so you can show the waiter.
**Food Precautions**

Most foods are generally safe to consume in Cuba. If you are purchasing food from a street vendor, use common knowledge to determine if the food looks fresh, was it pulled from a cooler (if a meat or something that should be kept chilled), etc. When consuming fruits and vegetables, it is recommended to consume those that can be peeled. If your food doesn’t look or smell right, don’t chance it.

**Shopping**

Cuba isn’t really known as a shopping destination. You will encounter some tourist shops within hotels and in the touristy areas. These are usually run by the state and will contain similar items. They are usually set in price.

At times you may encounter an outdoor market. You may be able to barter at these markets, but you will want to check with USAC staff before you go so that you don’t offend anyone.

Please note that you won’t encounter many shops that sell common items like soap, toothpaste, etc. so you will want to make sure you bring enough to last you the entire time. In Cuba, it isn’t as easy to just run to the store and get everything you need.

**Guidebooks**

If you are like many students, you may want to travel around a bit on your own. To make the most of this, you’ll want to do some advanced planning, especially since access to the internet will be limited. Lonely Planet has books and a great website (to look at before you go). Any local bookstore should have travel guides for Cuba that could come in handy once you’re onsite.

**Travel While Abroad**
CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES

General UW-Eau Claire & CISI contact information is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

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## WEB RESOURCES: CUBA

### City

**Habana**: [https://www.britannica.com/place/Havana](https://www.britannica.com/place/Havana)

### Culture


**History/Culture**: [https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-culture-of-cuba.html](https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-culture-of-cuba.html)

### Country


**Cuba News**: [https://havana-live.com](https://havana-live.com)