

Cuba

By Tom Kirvan

A COUNTRY OF RESILIENCE, RHYTHM, AND COLOR

Floating like a jewel in the Caribbean Sea, Cuba is a country of contrasts and captivating charm. Known for its colorful colonial cities, classic cars, Afro-Caribbean rhythms, and revolutionary spirit, Cuba is a destination that invites travelers to step back in time, yet remains undeniably alive with culture and vibrancy.

With a population of approximately 11 million people, Cuba offers a rich mosaic of history, music, natural beauty, and warm hospitality. It is the largest island in the Caribbean, stretching more than 750 miles from east to west. It is located where the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and Atlantic Ocean converge, and is surrounded by smaller islands and cays that are part of its archipelago. Cuba's geography includes mountain ranges, rolling plains, beaches, and tropical forests, offering a surprisingly diverse landscape.

At the heart of the country is Havana (La Habana), the capital city and Cuba's cultural soul. Founded in 1519 by the Spanish, Havana sits on the northwest coast and is filled with crumbling mansions, lively plazas, oceanfront promenades, and endless music. Its Old Town (Habana Vieja), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an open-air museum of colonial architecture and revolutionary history. Despite decades of economic hardship, Havana pulses with resilience and artistic expression at every corner.

In the far southeast of the island, within the Sierra Maestra Mountain range, lies Pico Turquino, Cuba's highest point. Standing at 6,476 feet above sea level, it is part of Turquino National Park and offers stunning views of lush forests and the Caribbean Sea. The mountain is not only a draw for hikers and nature lovers, but also holds historical significance, as Fidel Castro and his rebels used the Sierra Maestra as a base during the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba's history is as dynamic as its culture. Originally inhabited by the Taíno people, the island was colonized by the Spanish in the 1500s and became a key port in the transatlantic trade. In 1898, after the Spanish-American War, Cuba gained nominal independence from Spain but remained heavily influenced by the United States.

In 1959, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara led the Cuban Revolution, overthrowing dictator Fulgencio Batista and ushering in decades of socialist governance. The revolution dramatically reshaped Cuba's identity, leading to a U.S. trade embargo, alignment with the Soviet Union, and a turbulent Cold War history, including the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis that set the world on edge in the fall of 1962.



Fast Facts

Capital: Havana

Population: 11 million

Highest Point: Pico Turquino (6,476 feet)

Languages: Spanish and English

Primerus Member: Dr. Frühbeck Abogados S.L.P.

Dr. Frühbeck Abogados S.L.P., a full-service law firm located in Havana.

Chile

Despite economic struggles, Cuba has made notable achievements in education, health care, and culture. Today, the country is slowly opening to more private enterprise and tourism while retaining its revolutionary legacy. Music is everywhere – from Afro-Cuban jazz to salsa, son, and reggaetón. Classic American cars roll down the streets like a rolling history, while murals of Martí and Che stare down from alley walls.

Five Must-See Destinations

- **Havana (La Habana):** Havana is a city where time stands still and culture flows like rum. Walk along El Malecón, the seaside boulevard, or explore the cobblestone streets of Habana Vieja, where colonial buildings are splashed in pastels. Visit the Museum of the Revolution, listen to live salsa in Plaza Vieja, or sip a mojito at La Bodeguita del Medio, a favorite of author Ernest Hemingway.
- **Viñales Valley:** Located in western Cuba, the Viñales Valley is a lush, green landscape of dramatic limestone mogotes (karst hills), tobacco farms, and traditional villages. It's one of the most picturesque parts of the country and perfect for horseback riding, hiking, or touring cigar plantations. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Viñales showcases Cuba's rural side and offers a peaceful retreat from city life.
- **Trinidad:** A jewel of colonial architecture, Trinidad feels frozen in the 18th century. Its cobble streets, colorful houses, and charming plazas make it one of Cuba's most photogenic cities. Visit Plaza Mayor, the Romantic Museum, and the Iznaga Tower for panoramic views. At night, music spills from every bar and corner, especially at the famous Casa de la Musica, where locals and travelers dance under the stars.
- **Varadero:** For classic Caribbean relaxation, Varadero delivers with its white-sand beaches and turquoise waters. Located on the Hicacos Peninsula, just two hours east of Havana, Varadero is Cuba's premier beach resort area. It offers a mix of luxury hotels, water sports, golf, and nearby natural attractions like the Cueva de Ambrosio and Josone Park.
- **Cienfuegos:** Known as La Perla del Sur (The Pearl of the South), Cienfuegos offers a unique blend of French and Spanish influence. The city's elegant architecture and wide boulevards give it a different feel from other Cuban cities. Visit the Terry Theater, Parque Martí, and stroll along the Paseo del Prado to enjoy the city's relaxed coastal vibe. The nearby Bay of Pigs and Zapata Peninsula offer excursions rich in history and natural wonder.