

CUBA

Open Trip 2017
#1470 June 23-30



CUBA AT A GLANCE

The recent “normalizing” of relations with the U.S. has provided a historic opportunity to support the work of the Church in Cuba. For more than 50 years, Cuba was officially closed to U.S. travelers. The change in relations has now allowed us to be a part of what God is doing there!

To a remarkable degree, Cuba is a country frozen in time. While some new cars can be seen on Cuba’s roadways, most cars, trucks and motorcycles date back to the 1950s. Most people in fact can’t afford a car, or even a bicycle, which means horses and horse-drawn carriages are prominent in major cities. With a median income of just \$20 a *month*, the vast majority of Cubans are struggling to get by.

For most of the past half-century Cuba was officially an atheist state. In 1962, Cuba’s government seized and shut down 400 Catholic schools, with many church leaders including pastors and priests sent to labor farms for “re-education”. While both Protestant and Catholic churches remain restricted in their activities, they were never outlawed altogether, and in 1984, they were allowed to conduct mass and worship services. Since then, the growth of the Church inside Cuba has been phenomenal. By 2004 almost 20% of all Cubans were attending weekend religious services, compared to less than 1% in 1984; a growth of 1,960 percent!

Because many churches have grown in the last decade, most existing church buildings are now too small to accommodate all their members. The construction of a new church, as well as enlarging or renovating the existing churches requires government authorization, which is often given arbitrarily- if at all. The logical alternative has been to establish house churches or *Casas Culto*. It is estimated that between 20,000 to 30,000 house churches currently operate across the country.

What has been occurring in Cuba over the past eight years can only be described as a spiritual awakening. For decades, the Cuban government discouraged its citizens from participating in religious activity and it

continues to stigmatizes those who follow Christ. But there is hope for the future as the government is beginning to relax some of the stronger restrictions of the past.

MAKING A LONG-TERM IMPACT

In keeping with its primary mission, Forward Edge is sending teams to Cuba that focus primarily on supporting church-run children’s programs. Additional ministry opportunities include construction or renovation of church buildings, reconstruction of homes that were destroyed by Hurricane Sandy, relational evangelism and training of Cuban church leaders.

It is vitally important that Forward Edge’s involvement in Cuba be conducted with the utmost respect and sensitivity. We are humbled by the tremendous hardships and extraordinary devotion to Christ found among our Cuban brothers and sisters. Our hope is for team members to partner and support the work God is already doing in Cuba and in the lives of fellow believers.



IMPORTANT DATES

Total Trip Fees:

\$1,195 per person

April 5, 2017

\$350 Non-Refundable Deposit DUE

(applied towards trip fees)

Registration &

Medical Release Forms DUE

April 26, 2017

\$422.50 Payment #2 DUE

May 23, 2017

\$422.50 Payment #3 DUE

Live Your Mission ➤

For More Information:

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YOUR CUBAN HOSTS:

Your hosts in Cuba are dedicated church leaders in Santiago, Cuba's second largest city. You and your team will be received with a humbling warmth and gratitude.

TRAVEL DETAILS:

TRIP FEES INCLUDE:

- Food, cooking, lodging, translators, team packs, ground transportation, religious visa fee, International Medical Coverage, and an on-site Facilitator for seven days.

TRIP FEES DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Airfare and baggage fees
- Hotel stay in Miami the night before the team enters into Cuba.



PAYMENTS:

A \$350 non-refundable deposit is due upon submitting registration. This non-refundable deposit will be applied towards your trip fee. Payments can be paid by check or by credit card at www.forwardedge.org (Donate, Pay Trip Fee).

Please make checks payable to: Forward Edge International. All payments will need to include the team member name and team number on the memo line.

PASSPORT:

A passport is required to enter Cuba. No other identification is needed. If you already have a passport, please be sure that the expiration dates is at least six months past the date of your departure from Cuba.

PREPARATION:

IMMUNIZATIONS: The government of Cuba does not require any shots or immunizations to enter the country. However, Forward Edge highly recommends that team members are current on routine vaccinations and that they consult a personal physician for any recommendations.

TEAM PACKS: Once registration is complete, Forward Edge will send the team packs. Each will include a t-shirt, a Cuba Team Member Manual, a devotional, and other Forward Edge items.

SCHEDULE: Each day your team will experience a morning devotional, an evening debrief, and relationship building opportunities through serving the local people. It is the hope and prayer of all Forward Edge staff that God challenges you in your experience as you answer His call to serve.



TEAM EXPECTATIONS

With the recent “opening” of Cuba, Forward Edge is excited about the opportunity to serve with our new partner in Santiago de Cuba. As we move forward, there are some specific expectations for teams choosing to work with Forward Edge in Cuba. We have identified the expectations as follows:

RELIGIOUS VISAS: *(Please note that this team will be entering on a different visa, the following information is for typical teams. Thank you.)*

All team members are required to have a religious visa for this trip. Our partners have a relationship with the Cuban government and have successfully obtained visas for teams entering Cuba. Team members' registration must be completed by the specified due date so our partners are able to submit team information to the Cuban government on time. Please review Important Dates on the first page of this document.

Religious Visa Facts:

- Religious visas usually take about a minimum of 3 months to be approved; these visas are good for 3 months from the day of notification.
- Religious visa applications cannot be submitted to the Cuban Government earlier or later than 3 months before departure.
- It's not guaranteed that a team member will be approved and therefore receive a visa. FEI will be notified regarding the approval of the visas prior to a teams' departure; team members will receive a copy of the visa via email. We recommend team consider travel insurance in the case that a trip is cancelled.

FLIGHTS:

Flights between North America and Cuba must be purchased through Forward Edge's preferred Travel Agent,

- Flights between North America and Cuba must be secured and the itinerary sent to Forward Edge before applying for travel visas so please have reservations made by the specified due date.
- Depending on where you are located and when you book the flights, airfare for the trip can be as much as \$1,169 per person.
- Teams are typically scheduled to be in Cuba Friday to Friday. We recommend teams stay overnight in Miami the night before entering Cuba as flights into Santiago de Cuba are usually in the early morning.
- Baggage fees for Cuba:
 - \$20 fee for check luggage + 1 carry on bag weighing up to 44 lbs. combined.
 - \$2 per pound over 44 lbs. will be charged for the check + carry-on luggage combined weight.
 - Bags over 70 lbs. will not be accepted.

TEAM MEMBER CONDUCT:

While team conduct is of the utmost importance for any trip to any location, it is especially vital to our partnership in Cuba that team members commit to following these specific requests:

- Never use or mention the word, “donation”; only use the word “gift” or phrase “as a gift”.
- Refrain from discussing any politics.
- Due to the Cuban government's tight control over the internet, we ask that team members do not bring any laptops, tablets and/or smartphones with the expectation of communicating back home. We do not want to put our Cuban partners at risk by decisions made by teams which violate this expectation.