



**SUNWING VACATIONS**  
**MEMORIES RESORTS**  
**CUBA**





<p><b>SUNWING VACATIONS</b></p>	<p>Sunwing Vacations has become a leading, integrated leisure tour operator in Canada beginning operations in 2002. They are a family-managed and operated business, and one of Canada's fastest growing and most successful companies.</p> <p>Sunwing Airlines, is one of Canada's premier leisure airlines and is a full service airline providing "high frills" leisure class service at a low cost. Sunwing prides itself in having innovative, creative, and forward thinking management, which allows us to be pioneers in creating new products, new concepts, and new ideas.</p> <p>Sunwing Vacations offers value-added holiday packages from Canada to the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, Europe, and USA, with a variety of Sunwing Collections to suit vacation needs: Family, Couples, and Luxury Collections, as well as Sunwing Smile Resorts. These are a hand-picked selection of all inclusive family resorts, which offer great value and family-friendly features that ensure fun for all ages.</p> <p>Sunwing Vacations has also partnered with some of the top hotels and resorts to help you enjoy the vacation of a lifetime. Leading resorts include Memories Resorts, Royalton Luxury Resorts, Princess Hotels &amp; Resorts, Barceló Hotels &amp; Resorts, and Dreams Resorts &amp; Spas, all of which provide outstanding vacations in some of the world's best vacation spots. Sunwing also offers total flexibility with vacation options ranging from 2 - 15 days for several destinations, allowing you to custom tailor your vacation.</p> <p>Sunwing and Sunwing Airlines operate from more gateways in Canada than any other tourism provider. With departures from 33 Canadian gateways to 48 destinations in 21 countries, Sunwing opens up "sun" vacations beyond Canada's major urban centres allowing Sunwing to lead the way with convenient departures from cities closest to you, to some of the most popular vacation destinations.</p>
<p><b>New Brochures</b></p>	<p>The Ontario, Quebec, Western and Atlantic editions of the new Sunwing <b>Winter 2012/2013</b> brochure are now available from your local travel agent.</p> <p>Packed with useful information, the new Sunwing brochure contains over 380 hotels with many featured in the unique Sunwing Collections. These "Collections" showcase the prime properties that appeal to various customer groups, all of which offer six key ingredients for a perfect vacation and are highly rated by past vacationers. "Collections" showcase Family, Couples, Luxury, and Small and Friendly resorts,</p>

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	<p>along with Villas and Condos.</p> <p>Sunwing is again offering its exclusive <b>Smile resorts</b>. At each of these resorts, kids stay, play and eat free on all dates, as well as there being teen and single parent special rates and other perks only for Sunwing guests. In addition, if you have a flexible travelling date, save even more with the popular “Kids Fly, Stay, Play and Eat Free” program applicable to first child sharing a room with two adults on select departures.</p> <p>New this year is the exclusive “<b>Relax Collection</b>” offering more for couples and adults. Receive an array of added value touches to enhance your vacation experience. Exclusive inclusions such as express check-in, a complimentary bottle of sparkling wine, rum or tequila in room, unlimited a la carte dining , late check-out, and spa discounts (just to list a few) are sure to transform a great vacation into an unforgettable one.</p> <p>This winter the operator will offer a record 169 routes across its 30 gateways and 34 destinations. Complementing the daily, daytime flights from each of Montreal and Toronto to Cancun and Punta Cana are new Toronto to Montego Bay “dayliner” flights. Many other destinations show increased frequency, including the best selling Toronto to Varadero route, which will now feature two flights each day during Winter.</p> <p>Cuba continues to be a favourite with Canadians and with the addition of five new <b>Memories Beach Resorts</b> offering incomparable quality of service and locations, destinations such as Cayo Santa Maria and Cayo Coco as well as Varadero are sure to be best sellers.</p>
<p><b>Diamond Club</b></p>	<p>Sunwing guests can upgrade to exclusive “Diamond Club” for a host of additional privileges at selected resorts - all for a nominal fee.</p> <p>Diamond Club inclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusive access to Diamond Club à la carte restaurant</li> <li>Personalized check-in/ check-out</li> <li>Distinctive wrist bracelet</li> <li>Early check-in (subject to availability)</li> <li>Late check-out</li> <li>Exclusive beach area</li> <li>Butler service on beach</li> <li>Concierge service</li> <li>Guaranteed 4 à la carte reservations</li> <li>Private access to Diamond VIP Lounge</li> <li>Luxury amenities in room</li> <li>Beach towels in room</li> </ul>

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	<p>Luxury turndown service          Bathrobes in room          Special daily food &amp; beverage amenities (available in lounge)          Selected premium drinks menu (available in lounge/some restrictions apply)          10% Discount on spa treatments</p>
<b>Sunwing Collections</b>	<p>As Sunwing offer hundreds of hotels in their mega-brochure, they have tried to make it easier to select the right resort for you by developing the Sunwing Collections concept which designates selected hotels into five different groups. Each resort in each collection has six or more essential attributes that it qualify it for inclusion in its respective Collection. The five Collections are:          Luxury Collection          Couples Collection          Family Collection          Villas &amp; Condos Collection          Small &amp; Friendly Collection</p>
<b>Weddings</b>	<p>Sunwing has lots of experience in dealing with weddings and honeymoons in exotic destinations. They have even produced a separate “Destination weddings Guide” that you can find at your travel agent’s or view online at <a href="http://www.sunwing.ca">www.sunwing.ca</a> . They feature three levels of wedding packages:          Silver – from \$749          Gold – from \$1999          Platinum – from \$2999</p>
<b>Sunwing.ca</b>	<p>Sunwing’s website has many useful features:          - an Agent Locator to help you find the nearest travel agent          - contests and promotions          - customer satisfaction survey          - gift certificates          - up to the minute pricing on all vacations          - seat selection          - special packages          - last minute deals</p>
<b>Other Destinations</b>	<p>Sunwing also offer destinations besides the Caribbean and Mexico. Ask your travel agent for the following brochures:          Florida and Las Vegas          European Vacations          Cruises</p>
<b>Deals</b>	<p>Sunwing is offering a \$400 per couple in savings on all their sun product if booked by October 24<sup>th</sup> 2012 for travel anytime between November 1st 2012 and April 30th 2013.</p>

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<b>AIRLINE PARTNER</b>	<b>Sunwing Airlines</b> Sunwing Airlines, is one of Canada's premier leisure airlines and is a full service airline providing "high frills" leisure class service at a low cost. Their modern fleet of Boeing 737-800 aircrafts provides comfortable and reliable air transportation to over 900,000 passengers a year. 24 aircraft also allow Sunwing to offer Fly Better Performance with the best record for on time departures and arrivals. They use fuel efficient aircraft, reducing fuel consumption by 3 - 5% and also reducing carbon emissions by up to 5%, which results in savings and more competitive pricing. This leads to their Fly Better Price with many extra amenities included on flights. Sunwing's Champagne Service includes many perks and extras such as a complimentary welcome glass of champagne, upgraded meal service, a choice of hot meals with wine, hot towel service, free headsets for in-flight entertainment, comfortable leather seating, and more.
<b>Flight details 2012/2013</b>	Toronto to Cayo Santa Maria: daily except Mondays Toronto to Varadero: daily Toronto to Cayo Coco: five days per week  Montreal to Cayo Santa Maria: Mon, Thurs, Fri, Sat flights Montreal to Varadero: daily Montreal to Cayo Coco: Tues, Sat, Sun flights
<b>Sunwing Elite Service</b>	From the moment you get on the plane till you touch the tarmac on landing, everything is first class on Sunwing Airlines. "Elite" in-flight service is at no extra charge and includes: Welcome glass of champagne Choice of hot meal or hot snacks Wine with hot meals (except to US) - Soft drinks - Snacks Hot towel service - Pillows – Headset (yours to keep) In-flight, first run movies - Kids backpack with games and toys Courteous and friendly service Advance seat selection is available for \$15 per seat each way.
<b>Elite Plus</b>	For \$40 each way (as at Sept 2012) you can upgrade to Elite Plus service and receive these additional benefits: Extra leg room seat (35 inches) Advance seat selection Priority check- in at Canadian airports Increased baggage allowance to 30 kg Priority boarding

<b>MEMORIES</b>	Sunwing exclusively offers five exceptional Memories Beach Resorts as
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<p><b>RESORTS</b></p>	<p>part of their all inclusive packages including flights direct to Cuba from Toronto and Montreal. Discover Memories Beach Resorts in breathtaking locations in the fabulous Cuban destinations of Cayo Santa Maria, Cayo Coco and Varadero.</p> <p>Memories Beach Resorts are all 4- or 5-star quality, and feature an emphasis on attention to detail and top class food, entertainment, and ambiance - offering all the ingredients of a memorable vacation. Memories Beach Resorts are also featured in the Sunwing Family Collection - which means beachfront locations and facilities from age specific Children’s Clubs and playgrounds to special children’s buffets. There are a variety of choices of room types and locations to suit the needs of different sized families - and great value for families with Kids “Stay, Play and Eat Free”* deals. (*Available at select hotels for select dates - check out <a href="http://www.sunwing.ca">www.sunwing.ca</a>).</p>
<p><b>The Resorts</b></p>	<p>Varadero - Memories Varadero Beach Resort  Caya Coco - Memories Caribe Beach Resort  Caya Coco - Memories Flamenco Beach Resort  Cayo Santa Maria - Memories Azul Beach Resort  Cayo Santa Maria - Memories Paraiso Beach Resort</p>
<p><b>The Destinations</b></p>	<p><b>Varadero</b>  Varadero is the largest resort area in the Caribbean and boasts more than 20 kms of white sandy beaches with swaying palm trees. With a beach that ranks amongst some of the best in the world, Varadero is perfect for sun-lovers, water-babies and golfers. At night Varadero has a lively nightlife with cabarets, nightclubs and outdoor amphitheatres.</p> <p><b>Cayo Coco</b>  Cayo Coco is an island off the coast of Central Cuba, part of a chain of islands called the Jardines del Rey (King’s Gardens). The name Cayo Coco comes from the white Ibis bird – locally called Coco, or the coconut bird. The island of Cayo Coco is connected to the mainland by a 27 km causeway and offers mangroves, everglades and 22 kms of spectacular sandy beach. The cays are an ecological paradise with over 400 kms of healthy coral reefs that are perfect for diving and snorkeling.</p> <p><b>Cayo Santa Maria</b>  Cayo Santa Maria is a small island just off the north coast of Cuba. It is the last and largest of the cays in the Jardines del Rey (King’s Gardens) archipelago and it is called “White Rose” after the flagship of Christopher Columbus’ fleet. A UNESCO Biosphere, it is linked to the mainland by a 48km ecological stone causeway.</p>

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	Biological preservation and exploration are very important to the area. The region also has links to Cuban history as this is where Cuban dictator Batista surrendered to Ché Guevara in 1958.
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.memoriesresorts.com">www.memoriesresorts.com</a>

<b>Memories Azul Beach Resort</b>	The Memories Azul Beach Resort is a five star hotel. Beautiful scenery surrounds the Resort and the hotel itself is inspired by the culture of Santiago de Cuba, infused with hints of Spanish colonial architecture and design.
<b>Location</b>	Located 90 mins from Santa Clara International Airport in the heart of Cayo Santa Maria, an area renowned for its smooth stretch of velvety sands and naturally clear blue waters. It is 5 mins from the shops and amenities of Pueblo Estrella.
<b>Accommodation</b>	There are 1308 rooms of many different types
<b>Services</b>	Daily activities Nightly entertainment Swimming Pool for Adults Gym
<b>Dining</b>	One buffet and 3 à la carte restaurants (Seafood, Italian and Asian) Exclusive à la carte Diamond Club Steakhouse
<b>Kids</b>	Pool for Children Pool for Babies Baby Club for 0 - 4 year olds Mini Club for kids 5 to 12 years - Hours 09:00-17:00
<b>Activities</b>	Board Games 2 Lit Tennis Courts Dart Board Intro to Diving Beach Volleyball Tennis Bocce Soccer Basketball Kayaks Catamaran Windsurfing Pedal Boats Snorkeling Ping Pong

<b>Memories Paraiso Beach Resort</b>	From its stained glass windows to its classic thatched roofs, the Memories Paraiso Beach Resort blends the flair and feel of old Cuba
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	with the vibrancy of a flourishing tourist attraction and destination hotspot. An all suite resort, rooms feature classic designs, beautiful furnishings, and stunning views from the private terrace or balcony.
<b>Location</b>	Memories Paraiso Beach Resort is located 90 mins from Santa Clara International Airport in the heart of Cayo Santa Maria and 5 mins from the shops and amenities of Pueblo Estrella.
<b>Accommodation</b>	666 junior suites in low rise buildings
<b>Services</b>	3 pools - 1 adult, 1 childrens and one baby pool 2 tennis courts Fitness facilities
<b>Dining</b>	One buffet and 4 à la carte restaurants (Caribbean, Gourmet, Tex-Mex and Mediterranean) Access to exclusive à la carte Diamond Club Steakhouse at the Memories Azul Beach Resort.
<b>Kids</b>	Children enjoy the kid's and baby pools and there is a Baby Club (0 - 4 yrs) and a Kid's Club (5 - 12 yrs).
<b>Activities</b>	There are daily activities and nightly entertainment and you can chose to visit the disco for an extra fee

<b>Memories Flamenco Beach Resort</b>	Memories Flamenco Beach Resort offers an array of exciting activities with an assortment of land and water sports, dazzling pools, a gorgeous beach and organized group games and activities. At night experience the culture and charm of Cuba with live entertainment and shows, or hideaway in romantic and intimate settings. It's in the family Collection.
<b>Location</b>	Located just 20 mins from Cayo Coco International Airport, this luxury all suites hotel sits on a stunning white sand beach that is gently lapped by crystal clear, warm waters.
<b>Accommodation</b>	Well-appointed and spacious rooms feature bright and vibrant colours, contemporary design, and traditional touches.
<b>Services</b>	2 pools Tennis court Fitness facilities
<b>Dining</b>	One buffet and 4 à la carte restaurants (Creole, Asian, Grill and Steakhouse) Exclusive Diamond Club area at the à la carte Steakhouse
<b>Kids</b>	Children enjoy a kid's pool and there is a Baby Club (0 - 4 yrs) and a Kid's Club (5 -12 yrs).
<b>Activities</b>	There are daily activities and nightly entertainment and you can chose to visit the disco for an extra fee

<b>Memories Caribe</b>	Memories Caribe Beach Resort is a great value family hotel with a
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<b>Beach Resort</b>	separate adults area. Rooms with charming, traditional Cuban décor open up to balconies and terraces that offer beautiful views of the gardens, pool, and lake.
<b>Location</b>	Located just 20 mins from Cayo Coco International Airport on a beautiful stretch of beach
<b>Accommodation</b>	328 rooms including 48 junior suites
<b>Services</b>	2 pools Tennis court Fitness facilities
<b>Dining</b>	One buffet and 2 à la carte restaurants (Italian, International/Seafood) Exclusive à la carte Diamond Club Steakhouse
<b>Kids</b>	Children enjoy a kids pool and a Kids Club (4- 12 yrs).
<b>Activities</b>	There are daily activities and nightly entertainment including a Piano Bar and a disco

<b>Memories Varadero Beach Resort</b>	This stunning beach resort fuses charming colonial architecture and Caribbean flair. Sparkling pools reflect the clear blue skies and turquoise Caribbean waters, and lush gardens and tropical foliage surround the resort. The spacious guestrooms and suites feature deluxe amenities, rich wood furnishings, and warm and tropical colours.
<b>Location</b>	Located just 30 mins from Varadero International Airport and situated on one of the most beautiful beaches in Varadero, Memories Varadero Beach Resort is an ideal destination for a romantic getaway or a fun family vacation. The Resort is just 10 mins away from the centre of Varadero.
<b>Accommodation</b>	1035 rooms in a range of low rise buildings
<b>Services</b>	4 pools 3 tennis courts Fitness facilities
<b>Dining</b>	One buffet and 7 à la carte restaurants (Seafood, Steakhouse, Mexican, Mediterranean, Italian, Japanese, Creole) Exclusive à la carte Diamond Club Gourmet French Restaurant
<b>Kids</b>	Children enjoy a kid's pool, Baby Club (0 - 4 yrs) and a Kid's Club (5 - 12 yrs).
<b>Activities</b>	There are daily activities and nightly entertainment

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<b>CUBA</b>	<p>Fly away to the largest and most colourful island in the Caribbean. Cuba has endless tropical white sand beaches, first class all-inclusive resorts, a vibrant culture, natural treasures ...and a warm and friendly people. It's welcoming for families and perfect for weddings and honeymoons.</p> <p>You can do as much or as little as you want in Cuba. But beyond the beach there is so much to do for all ages and interests! Take to the water for a snorkelling or catamaran tour – or enjoy an unforgettable swim with the dolphins. Get out and about by boat or go on an adventure through the countryside on a Jeep safari - or travel in one of Cuba's famous vintage cars, or on a steam train from the last century! Visit fascinating cities that are Unesco World Heritage Sites like historic Havana or the old colonial city of Trinidad. Meet the Cuban people as you tour a cigar factory - or visit a nightclub for a show and to enjoy the ever present Cuban music.</p> <p>Discover resort destinations like the nature lover's paradise of Cayo Santa Maria; popular and lively Varadero; the soft white sands of Cayo Coco and beautiful Holguin.</p> <p><b>Varadero</b></p> <p>Varadero is Cuba's most popular beach destination for fun in the sun, thanks to its warm waters and superb resorts. Varadero is part of a narrow peninsula that stretches far out into the calm waters of the Atlantic, and this location ensures that it is constantly cooled by tropical breezes. The 21-kilometre strip of fine white sand is an ideal vacation spot for sun-lovers, water babies and golfers. Plus lively Varadero is one of the best cities in Cuba for nightclubs. Well used to catering to tourists, Varadero's nightlife offers a wide variety of music and atmospheres.</p> <p>Of all the destinations on Cuba's northern coast, Varadero is closest to the unique and fascinating city of Havana – so choose this resort if you want to visit Cuba's capital city.</p> <p><b>Havana</b></p> <p>Romantic, resilient and revolutionary – Havana is a unique city brimming with life, music and nightlife, such as the famous "Tropicana" show. Founded in 1514 and dubbed "the jewel of the Spanish colonies", Havana is a UNESCO world Heritage Site thanks to its fabulous architecture, rich history, fascinating culture and energetic people. You can retrace the steps of author Ernest Hemmingway as you explore all</p>
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	<p>that Havana has to offer.</p> <p><b>Cayo Santa Maria</b></p> <p>The white sand beaches of Cayo Santa Maria are known for great snorkelling and diving and the exotic flora and fauna of the area. Cayo Santa Maria is close to the city of Santa Clara Remedios - best known as the place where the Cuban president Fulgencio Batista surrendered to Che Guevara in 1958. The Che Guevara Museum and Memorial Centre provides a good historical background, and displays a number of Che Guevara's personal items, including his uniforms, hand-written letters as well as many photos.</p> <p><b>Cayo Coco</b></p> <p>The powdery beaches of Cayo Coco are found on the cays that lie off the mainland of the North East coast and which jut out into the Atlantic Ocean. A spectacular 17-km stretch of road runs on a causeway through the marshes to reach Cayo Coco, contributing to its more isolated and natural feel. Along the way, visitors can take in the region's abundant flora and fauna. Cayo Coya boasts beautiful coral reefs, lagoons and marshes with abundant bird life - including the largest native colony of Pink Flamingos in the Americas. If you like to fish – there is great fishing off the cays and also in the deeper waters off the coast.</p> <p><b>Holguin</b></p> <p>When Christopher Columbus discovered Cuba in 1492 he described the rugged mountainous region of Holguin as “the most beautiful land that man has laid eyes upon.” Hologuin offers snowy white beaches and many excellent dive sites. If you exhaust the entertainment available at the excellent all inclusive resorts in nearby Guardalavaca you'll find at least two good night spots: lively La Dulce Vida, which is a hotel nightclub, and La Roca, an outdoor nightclub on Playa Esmeralda where you can dance under the stars!</p>
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>Cuba is the largest Caribbean island, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. It lies 145 km south of Key West, Florida, between the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas, to the west of Haiti, and northwest of Jamaica.</p> <p>Formed by over 4,000 keys, islets and islands, Cuba covers 110,922 square kilometers of terrain, encompassing luxuriant vegetation with a huge variety of flora and fauna, virgin islands, grottoes, caves, mountains, forests and over 280 beaches.</p>

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<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>Cuba is an archipelago of islands located in the northern Caribbean Sea where the Gulf of Mexico meets the Atlantic Ocean. It lies between latitudes 19° and 24°N, and longitudes 74° and 85°W. The United States lies less than 150kms across the Straits of Florida to the north and northwest (to the closest tip of Key West, Florida), the Bahamas to the north, Haiti to the east, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to the south, and Mexico to the west. Cuba is the principal island, surrounded by four smaller groups of islands: the Colorados Archipelago on the northwestern coast, the Sabana-Camagüey Archipelago on the north-central Atlantic coast, the Jardines de la Reina on the south-central coast and the Canarreos Archipelago on the southwestern coast.</p> <p>The main island is 1,200 km long, constituting most of the nation's land area (105,006 km<sup>2</sup>) and is the largest island in the Caribbean and 16th-largest island in the world by land area. The main island consists mostly of flat to rolling plains apart from the Sierra Maestra mountains in the southeast, whose highest point is Pico Turquino (1,975 m or 6,480 ft).</p> <p>There are 4,200 coral cays and isles and 7,000 km of coastline. It's the largest country in the Caribbean and larger than Portugal or Ireland or Costa Rica.</p>
<p><b>Name</b></p>	<p>Columbus named it Juana, the first of several names he successively applied to the island. It eventually became known as Cuba, from its aboriginal name, Cubanascnan.</p>
<p><b>Population</b></p>	<p>Nationally 11.2 million, with Havana having more than 2 million</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<p>Spanish; English is widely spoken in the resorts and in Varadero</p>
<p><b>Currency</b></p>	<p>One Canadian Dollar = 27 CUP or Cuban Pesos (September 22nd 2012)          One Canadian Dollar = 1.03 CUC or Cuban Convertible Pesos (Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012) i.e. there is better than parity at present.</p> <p>There are two currencies circulating in Cuba, Cuban Pesos (CUP) and Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC). Prior to 2004 US dollars were in wide circulation on par with the CUC, but the government discontinued that and they are no longer used.</p> <p><b>CUC is the currency most tourists will use in Cuba.</b> It is how you will pay for hotels, official taxis, entry into museums, meals at restaurants, cigars, rum, etc. Conversion into CUC can be done at exchange houses (casa de cambio, or cadeca). These are located in many hotels and in other places throughout the cities. CUC are valued at 24 times the value of CUP. Tourists are permitted to import or export a maximum of CUP 100 or CUC 200 at any one time.</p>

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	<p>CUP are also known as local Pesos and Moneda Nacional (National money). There is a limited range of goods that can be bought for local pesos, and these are transactions carried out in agricultural markets or from street vendors. Fruits, vegetables, fresh juices and snacks from street vendors are among the things CUP can buy. Because the products that can be purchased with CUP are limited, it is not a good idea to change more than CUC 5-10 into CUP at a time, as the CUP will last for a good while.</p> <p><b>Note that Amex, MasterCard MBNA and Visa Citibank credit cards are not accepted in Cuba and US dollars are not accepted for exchange in official outlets.</b></p>
<b>Tipping</b>	American dollar notes are always appreciated if you receive good service
<b>Government</b>	Socialist republic, but Fidel Castro has created his own brand of more pragmatic Socialism
<b>Documentation</b>	Passport and tourist card (included in package tours) Departure tax is 25 CUCs in 2012, payable in cash on departure.
<b>Time zone</b>	Eastern Standard Time
<b>Health</b>	<p>Cuba's health and education facilities are more accessible to the average citizen than those of many richer countries, including the U.S. Life expectancy is 76 years and literacy is 96%.</p> <p>Since 2010, travellers must present proof of health insurance in order to enter the country. Upon arrival, travellers may be required to present an insurance policy, insurance certificate, or medical assistance card valid for the period of their stay in Cuba. Those who do not have proof of insurance coverage may be required to obtain health insurance from a Cuban insurance company when they arrive.</p>
<b>Safety tips</b>	<p>Cuba is generally a very safe country; strict and prominent policing, combined with neighborhood watch style-programs keep the streets safe from violent crime. Nonetheless, a certain degree of common-sense and caution is advisable, especially in major cities.</p> <p><b>In my personal opinion and experience, Cuba is the safest destination in the Caribbean today.</b></p>

<b>CLIMATE</b>	
<b>General climate</b>	Wet season is May to Oct; temp averages 26 degrees in Jan and temperatures are sub-tropical year-round. There are occasional cooler periods in the heart of the northern hemisphere winter.
<b>Today's weather</b>	32 degrees Centigrade and sunny with showers in Cayo Santa Maria and Santa Clara (22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept 2012)
<b>Best time to visit</b>	November to April

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<b>GETTING THERE</b>	
<b>Flying time</b>	3.5 to 4 hours from Montreal and Toronto depending upon which of the several different regions of Cuba you are flying into.
<b>Cities</b>	<p><b>Havana:</b> A city of 2.5 million people and gently faded glory, 1950's cars, swinging nightlife; "a rhythm all of its own: halfway between the easy tempo of a sleepy tropical resort and the feverish pace of a metropolis". Founded 1514, it was "the jewel of the Spanish colonies"; UNESCO world Heritage Site.</p> <p>Here are the highlights of <b>Old Havana:</b>  <b>The Malecón</b> is the avenue that runs along the seawall at the northern shore of Havana, from Habana Vieja to the Almendares River.  <b>Castillo del Morro</b>, picturesque fortress guarding the entrance to Havana bay. The construction of the castle Los Tres Reyes del Morro owed to the step along in Havana of the English pirate Sir Francis Drake. The king of Spain arranged its construction on a big stone which was known by the name of El Morro. He sent the field master Juan de Texeda, accompanied of the military engineer Battista Antonelli, who came to Havana in 1587 and began the task at once.  <b>La Cabaña fortress</b>, located on the east side of the Havana Bay. The most impressive fortress of the Spanish colony was La Cabaña. Its impressive 18th century walls were constructed at the same time as El Morro. Every night at 9 p.m., some soldiers dressed in suits of the epoch shoot from her the "el cañonazo de las nueve", (gunshot of the nine). It went off every day to warn of the closing of the doors of the wall that surrounded the city.  <b>San Salvador de la Punta Fortress</b>, In the shore opposite to the Castle of El Morro, at the beginning of the curve of El Malecon, there rises the fortress of San Salvador de la Punta, of minor architectural dimensions. It was constructed in 1590, and in 1629 the Chapter of Havana decided, to defend better the port, to join her in the night with the El Morro by using a thick chain that prevented the entry of enemy ships.  <b>Castillo de la Real Fuerza</b>, The fortress or 'Castle of the Royal Army' is another big monument that closes the Plaza de las Armas. It was the first big fortification of the city, initiated in 1558 on the ruins of an ancient fortress. In the same year, the Crown sent to Cuba the engineer Bartolomé Sanchez, supervised by 14 official and main stonemasons in order to reconstruct the castle, which had been set fire and destroyed by the French corsair Jacques de Sores.  <b>Catedral de San Cristóbal</b>, the most prominent building on the Plaza de la Catedral. The Cathedral was raised on the chapel after 1748 by order of the bishop from Salamanca, Jose Felipe de Trespacios. It is</p>

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one of the most beautiful and sober churches of the American baroque. **National Capitol**, styled after the Panthéon (Paris), looking similar to the U.S. Capitol.

**Galician Centre**, Central Park, The Galician Centre, of neobarroque style was established as a social club of the Galician emigrants between 1907 and 1914. Built on the Theater Tacon (nowadays Great Theatre of Havana), it was open during the Carnival of 1838 with five masked dances.

**Plaza de Armas** – the main square. The origin of its name is military, since from the end of the 16th century the ceremonies and the military events took place here.

**Gran Teatro de la Habana**, the Great Theatre of Havana is famous, particularly for the acclaimed National Ballet of Cuba and its founder Alicia Alonso. It sometimes performs the National Opera. The theatre is also known as concert hall, Garcia Lorca, the biggest in Cuba.

**The Museum of the Revolution**, located in the former Presidential Palace, with the boat Granma on display in front of the museum.

**San Francisco de la Habana Basilica**, Habana Vieja, The set of church and convent of San Francisco de Asis, byline of the year 1608, and it was reconstructed in 1737.

#### **Varadero:**

Varadero is a privileged enclave on the west coast of Cuba, with over 20 kilometers of superlative beaches sheltering caves and virgin keys whose crystalline waters conceal more than 40 different kinds of coral, fish, lobsters, shrimp, crabs and turtles. This beautiful destination has excellent connections and a vast range of leisure and entertainment options, making it the ideal spot for a relaxing and enjoyable vacation in the heart of the Caribbean.

Here are the main sights:

**Parque Josone** — A park in the middle of Varadero filled with birds, vendors, music and camel rides for the kids.

**Tropicana Matanzas** — Visit the newest Tropicana, the most famous cabaret of Cuba. An artistic production featuring Cuban dance, music and history. Wed-Sun, 5 hours duration, 49CUC.

**Seafari Cayo Blanco** — Excursion by Catamaran, snorkeling in a coral barrier reef, entertainment, music, lunch and open bar with Cuban cocktails in Cayo Blanco. There is the option to either swim with the dolphins or visit the dolphin show at Delfinario and enjoy a sunset party. Mon-Sun (7 hours duration). 75CUC for the sunset party and dolphin show trip. 85CUC for the chance to swim with dolphins instead.

**Delfinario** — A dolphin show with the option to actually swim with the dolphins, 15CUC for the show and 85CUC for the show + swim.

**Bellamar Caves** — Visit the oldest tourist attraction in Cuba, open to

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visitors since the 1860s. The caves are extensive and impressive. There are quite a few steps down into the cave and it is slightly damp and rough underfoot, and also very warm.

**Villa Du Pont** Once the residence of Irénée Du Pont, the green-roofed hacienda style building built in 1928 is today the headquarters of the Varadero Golf Club. The golf course, just a few steps away, features 18 holes, the largest in Cuba. The visitor has the opportunity to admire the splendor of its mahogany furniture, floors made out the finest Italian marble, bronze candelabra and oil paintings. The basement offers Varadero's most luxurious and expensive restaurant, "Las Américas". On the first floor there are 5 finely decorated and equipped guest rooms, plus a presidential suite. A few steps higher on the second floor, an attractive bar "Mirador" (open 24 hours), product of a mixture between art deco and Moorish style, will surely keep you there sipping tasty Cuban cocktails at sunset.

**History:** Siboney Indians, Cubanacan nation, Cueva de San Ambrosio: 50 drawings at tip of peninsula, discovered in 1961; 1928: Mansion Xanadu – Cary Grant, Ava Gardner; 1900-1920: wooden houses

### **Santa Clara:**

Santa Clara is a pretty city set amid green hills. The capital of the province of Villa Clara; it was founded in 1689 as San Juan de los Remedios.

Overlooking the Parque Leoncio Vidal, the Museo de Artes Decorativas occupies a magnificent colonial house built around 1740. Transformed over the centuries, it was restored in 1820 and again in 1980. The museum has some extraordinary items, including an armoire built entirely without nails and a washbasin from the days when there was no running water.

The memory of Che Guevara permeates the town of Santa Clara. Located a little over 2 kilometres west of Parque Leoncio Vidal, the Plaza de la Revolución is dedicated to the famous Argentine guerrilla who fought fiercely alongside Fidel Castro to overthrow Batista in the late 1950s. A gigantic statue of Che Guevara dominates this plaza, the site of major political and cultural rallies in Santa Clara. Built in 1988 to commemorate the Guevara-led Battle of Santa Clara, this 7-metre high bronze sculpture is the work of Cuban artist Delana; the gigantic stone pedestal upon which it rests is more than 10 metres high.

Below this monument, anyone interested in this almost mythical Argentine revolutionary will not want to miss the Museo Memorial Nacional Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara. Inaugurated on December 28, 1988, it traces Che's life from his childhood up to his death, including his trips through Latin America, his stay in Mexico

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	<p>during which he met an exiled Fidel Castro, the landing of the Granma on the coast of Cuba, and his revolutionary experience in the Sierra Maestra. The museum is well documented, and displays a number of Che's personal items, including his uniforms, hand-written letters as well as many photos.</p> <p>The door that faces the entrance to the museum leads to the <b>Mausoleo del Che</b>, where lie the remains of Che and the 13 Cubans who were killed with him in Bolivia. An eternal flame shines in this solemn and touching shrine.</p> <p>Following Che Guevara's footsteps in Santa Clara also requires a visit to the <b>Monumento del Descarrilamiento</b>, Acción y Toma del Tren Blindado, which recounts the decisive battle led by Che Guevara against an armoured train carrying Batista's forces on December 28, 1958. Four of the train's 22 cars can be viewed at the monument.</p> <p><b>The Museo de Artes Decorativas</b> also offers classical music concerts. The museum is recognized as Santa Clara's most important centre for classical music.</p> <p><b>The Casa de la Cultura Juan Marinero</b> is Santa Clara's community cultural centre. At the entrance, a small art gallery exhibits works by contemporary artists from the region. This beautiful house, built in 1927, is the site of many cultural activities. Shows and concerts are held here regularly.</p> <p><b>Shopping</b> is a rare diversion in this region of the country, but you can still head to Calle Independencia, open only to pedestrians starting at Calle Maceo. Most of the shops are intended for local residents, including Santa Clara's biggest bookshop.</p> <p><b>Santiago de Cuba:</b> Set on the seaside, near the island's eastern tip, Santiago de Cuba is the country's second-largest city. Vibrant, tropical, and often sweltering, Santiago is the country's liveliest cultural showpiece, outside of Havana. With a population just under a half-million people, Santiago is a world apart, with a unique history and rhythms all its own.</p>
<b>Distances</b>	<p>Varadero to Havana: 144 km          Santa Clara to Havana: 270 km          Cayo Coco to Havana: 500 km</p>
<b>Buses</b>	<p>There are 30,000km of paved road. Probably the nicest way to get around Cuba is on the Víazul buses. These are well-staffed and luxurious air-conditioned buses with toilets, big comfy seats, and lots of leg room. Refreshments are provided. Víazul buses are mostly used by foreigners and rich locals. You'll need to book your ticket a day before departure to secure your seat; you may not get a ticket if you just show up right before departure.</p>
<b>Trains</b>	<p>Standard gauge: 4,226 km of which 140 km is electrified</p>

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<p><b>Car Rental, Taxis</b></p>	<p>Car rental starts from CUC 65 per day (including insurance) plus the cost of a full tank of gasoline. The refundable deposits start around CUC 200. Rental cars are for the most part fairly new, imported European or Asian models. Collective taxis often use pre-1959 US cars.</p>
<p><b>Regions</b></p>	<p><b>Central Cuba</b> is an area rich in both historical and natural attractions. It is home to several wonderful colonial-era cities, as well as isolated and pristine beaches. Heading east from Matanzas into Cuba's central heartland you first hit Villa Clara province, which is devoted largely to sugar cane, citrus, and tobacco farming and cattle ranching. The provincial capital, Santa Clara, a lively university town, is often called "Che Guevara's City" and features an impressive monument and plaza dedicated to the fallen revolutionary. To the north of Santa Clara lie the tiny and well-preserved colonial-era city of Remedios, and the jaw-droppingly beautiful beach resort destination of la Cayería del Norte.</p> <p>Abutting Villa Clara to the south is <b>Cienfuegos</b> province. The city of Cienfuegos is affectionately known as La Perla del Sur (The Southern Pearl). Cienfuegos is a busy port city with a pretty, colonial-era center and the country's second-longest seaside promenade, or Malecón. Cienfuegos is connected to Trinidad by a pretty coastal highway, and is definitely worth a visit on a loop trip around the region.</p> <p>The province of <b>Sancti Spíritus</b> is the only one in Cuba to count two of the original seven villas (towns) in Cuba among its offerings. The colonial gem Trinidad, tucked in the southwest corner of the province, is the highlight of a visit to the central section of the country, or all of Cuba for that matter. The provincial capital, Sancti Spíritus, isn't a great deal larger than Trinidad, and though it is more ramshackle and rough around the edges, lacking Trinidad's remarkable collection of perfectly preserved architecture, it is still worth a visit to see its couple of colonial highlights.</p> <p><b>Cuba's Northeast Coast:</b> The extraordinary, powdery beaches of Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo, the cays that lie off the mainland and jut into the deep blue of the Atlantic Ocean, are the primary attractions of Ciego de Avila province. It is a remote area, but one with the infrastructure and natural gifts that make it perfect for idyllic sun, sand, and sea holidays. The namesake provincial capital Ciego de Avila and other towns and cities in this province hold few attractions for visitors. A little farther east, predominantly flat low-lying Camagüey province, southeast of Ciego de Avila, is the largest in the country, though it is also the least densely populated. It occupies the widest swath on the island, 120km from the Atlantic coast to the Caribbean coast. Camagüey, the provincial capital, is Cuba's third-largest city, after</p>

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	<p>Havana and Santiago de Cuba, and is a relatively undiscovered colonial gem of a city that is worth exploring.</p> <p><b>El Oriente:</b> Prior to the 1959 Revolution, the eastern half of Cuba was a single province, straightforwardly called "El Oriente," or the East. Most Cubans still refer to everything east of Camagüey - a region much more scenically and historically interesting than most of central Cuba - as El Oriente, even though it is now composed of the distinct provinces of Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, and Guantánamo. The region is less known and visited than the west, but every bit as rewarding for travelers (and perhaps more so). The farther east you go, the more emphatically Caribbean it feels. The region's remarkable landscapes include the north coast's exuberant banana and coconut groves, densely wooded peaks of the Sierra Maestra, and tropical rainforest on the east coast.</p>
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<p><b>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</b></p>	<p>Everything from five star international resorts to the B&amp;B equivalent in Cuba called <b>casas particulares</b>. In general, the rooms and homes are kept very clean, while the furnishings and amenities are quite simple. The rates average between \$8 and \$20 per person, and meals are often available at very reasonable prices.</p>
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<p><b>TARGET GROUPS</b></p>	
<p><b>Kids</b></p>	<p><b>Varadero:</b> If you've got kids in Varadero, you might want to head to the <b>Parque de Diversiones</b>, a small amusement park in Varadero that has the types of rides and booths you might find at a county fair. Near the Marina Chapelín, on the ocean side of the road, you'll find the <b>Delfinario</b>. Open daily from 8am to 5pm, this attraction offers a 40-minute show by trained dolphins about four times daily. Admission is \$10 per person; it's \$5 extra to take photos, and 55 CUC for a 15-minute swimming session with the dolphins.</p>
<p><b>Teens</b></p>	<p><b>Varadero:</b> If all the activities at the resorts are not enough, there is a large swath of the eastern end of the Varadero peninsula is protected as the <b>Parque Ecológico Varahicacos</b>. There are some gentle paths through the scrub forests here, and you can visit a series of small caves, some of which contain ancient indigenous pictographs. If your family is adventurous, try the <b>Jungle Tour</b>, which is a fast and furious trip through the mangroves aboard sit-on-top motorized watercraft. Sign up for a day-cruise on one of the many <b>sailboats</b> operating out of Varadero. These cruises head out to nearby cays, and include some snorkeling time, as well as lunch either on the boat or on some private</p>

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	little island beach.
<b>Romance</b>	<b>Old Havana</b> has to be one of the most romantic cities on earth...
<b>Honeymoons &amp; Weddings</b>	The major resorts are all able to create magical wedding events – involve your travel agent at the early planning stage.
<b>Seniors</b>	The nicest spot to visit in "downtown" Varadero is the <b>Parque Josone</b> , a beautifully maintained little city park with cool shady grounds and gardens. There are paths winding around and over little lakes with fountains, several restaurants and food stands, and the park is dotted with gazebos and park benches. The old colonial city of <b>Trinidad</b> is a perfect day excursion from many of the island resorts.

<b>UNIQUES</b>	<p><b>Fábrica de Tabaco Partagas</b>, Havana: Founded in 1845, this is Cuba's largest and perhaps most renowned <b>cigar factory</b>, producing around 5 million cigars a year.</p> <p>If you want a bird's-eye view of things, the Centro Internacional de Deportes Aéreos, in Varadero, offers <b>parachute jumps and ultralight flights</b>. Tandem parachuting costs \$150 per person. Ultralight flights run \$30 to \$300, depending on the length of time.</p>
<b>Surprising</b>	<p><b>Santeria</b> is a folk religion of African deities combined with Catholic saints; Cubans are open about it and happy to tell you more.</p> <p><b>Guantanamo Bay</b>: the US forced Cuba to accept a US lease in 1903 which can be ended only by abandonment or mutual agreement.</p> <p>In 2006, Cuba was the only nation in the world which met the WWF's definition of <b>sustainable development</b>; having an ecological footprint of less than 1.8 hectares per capita.</p>
<b>History</b>	<p>History is important in Cuba, so I have expanded this section for a fuller account of Cuba's intriguing past...</p> <p>It's thought that humans first cruised from South America to Cuba around 3500 BC. Primarily fishers and hunter-gatherers, these original inhabitants were later joined by the agriculturalist <b>Taino</b>, a branch of the <b>Arawak Indians</b>. Christopher Columbus sighted Cuba on 27 October 1492. Columbus said of Cuba "<b>I have never seen a more beautiful country...</b>" and by 1514, Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar had conquered the island for the Spanish crown and founded seven settlements. When captured Taino chief and resistance fighter <b>Hatuey</b> was condemned to die at the stake, he refused baptism, saying that he never wanted to see another Spaniard again, not even in heaven. Cattle ranching quickly became the mainstay of the Cuban economy. Large estates were established on the island under the encomienda</p>

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system, enslaving the Indians under the pretext of offering instruction in Christianity. By 1542, when the system was abolished, only around 5000 Indians (of an estimated 100,000 half a century before) survived. Undaunted, the Spanish imported African slaves as replacements. British troops invaded Cuba in June 1762 and occupied Havana for 11 months, importing more slaves and vastly expanding Cuba's trade links. In 1817, Spain's long-standing monopoly on tobacco ended, which raised prices, encouraging the crop's expansion. Tobacco quickly became one of the islands most important products. Sugar had also become a major industry, as American independence in 1783 created new markets, and the 1791 slave uprising in Haiti eliminated Cuba's biggest sugar-producing competitor. By 1820 Cuba was the world's largest sugar producer.

After the great liberator, **Simón Bolívar**, led Mexico and South America to independence, Cuba and Puerto Rico were the only remaining Spanish holdings in the Western Hemisphere. Spanish loyalists fled the former colonies and arrived in Cuba in droves. Even they, however, began demanding home rule for the island, albeit under the Spanish flag.

In October 1868, planter **Carlos Manuel de Céspedes** launched Cuba's First War of Independence. After 10 years and 200,000 deaths, the rebels were spent and a pact was signed granting them amnesty. Meanwhile, a group of Cuban rebels exiled to the USA began plotting the overthrow of the Spanish colonial government. Among their ranks was **José Martí**, a respected journalist and critic of US policy, as well as an important poet and the author of the best-known Cuban song of all time, Guajira guantanamera. Martí and his military commander, General Máximo Gómez, landed on eastern Cuba in 1895; within days Martí, conspicuous on his white horse, was shot and killed in a skirmish with Spanish soldiers. His martyrdom earned him the permanent position of Cuba's national hero.

Gómez and rebel leader Antonio Maceo pushed westward, burning everything in their path. Spain came down hard, forcing civilians into reconcentración camps and publicly executing rebel sympathizers. These methods effectively reestablished Spanish control, but Cuba's agriculture-based economy was in ruins. The Spaniards adopted a more conciliatory approach, offering Cuba home rule, but the embittered populace would agree to nothing short of full independence. José Martí had long warned of US interest in Cuba, and in 1898 he was proved right. After years of reading lurid (and often inaccurate) tabloids tales about Cuba's Second War for Independence, the American public was fascinated with the island. Although everything was quiet, newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst told his illustrator not to come home just yet: 'You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war.' In

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January 1898 the US warship Maine, anchored outside Havana harbor, exploded mysteriously. All but two of its officers were off the ship at the time. The **Spanish-American war** had begun.

Spain, weakened by conflict elsewhere, limped to battle, trying to preserve some dignity in the Caribbean. They nearly beat future US president Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders (though they'd had to leave their horses on the mainland) in the Battle of San Juan Hill. The USA's vastly superior forces eventually prevailed, however, and on December 12, 1898, a peace treaty ending the war was signed. The Cubans, including General Calixto García, whose largely black army had inflicted dozens of defeats on the Spanish, were not invited.

The USA, hobbled by a law requiring its own government to respect Cuban self-determination, could not annex Cuba outright, as it did Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. In 1903, the USA built a naval base at Guantánamo Bay that is still in operation today.

By the 1920s US companies owned two-thirds of Cuba's farmland, imposing tariffs that crippled Cuba's own manufacturing industries.

Discrimination against blacks was institutionalised. Tourism based on drinking, gambling and prostitution flourished. In 1933 Morales was overthrown in a coup, and army sergeant **Fulgencio Batista** seized power. Over the next 20 years Cuba crumbled, and its assets were increasingly placed into foreign hands. On January 1, 1959, Batista's dictatorship was overthrown after a three-year guerilla campaign led by young lawyer **Fidel Castro**. Batista fled Cuba for the Dominican Republic, taking with him US\$40 million of government funds.

Castro was named prime minister and began reforming the nation's economy, cutting rents and nationalizing landholdings larger than 400 hectares. Relations with the USA, already shaky, deteriorated when he nationalized US-owned petroleum refineries that had refused to process Venezuelan oil. The Americans retaliated by cutting Cuban sugar imports, crippling the Cuban economy, and the CIA began plotting devious ways to overthrow the revolutionary government.

In 1961, 1400 CIA-trained Cuban expats, mainly upper-middle-class Batista supporters who had fled to Miami after the revolution, attacked the island at the **Bay of Pigs**. They were promptly captured and ransomed back to the US for medical supplies. The following week, Castro announced the 'socialist nature' of the revolutionary government, and its relationship with the Soviet Union flourished, who provided food, technical support and, of course, nuclear weapons. The October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis is said to be the closest the world has ever come to nuclear conflict.

The missiles were shipped back to the USSR, and the USA declared an embargo on Cuba. Castro and his Minister of Economics, **Che Guevara**, began actively supporting guerilla groups in South America

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	<p>and Africa, sending troops and advisers to assist socialist insurgencies in Zaire, Angola, Mozambique, Bolivia (where Guevara was killed) and Ethiopia. The US response was to support dictators in many of those countries.</p> <p>In December 1991, the Cuban Constitution was amended to remove all references to Marxism-Leninism, and economic reforms began. In 1993, laws passed allowing Cubans to own and use US dollars, be self-employed and open farmers' markets. Taxes on dollar incomes and profits were levied in 1994, and in September 1996 foreign companies were allowed to wholly own and operate businesses and purchase real estate. These measures gradually brought the economy out of its post-Soviet tailspin. The US responded by stiffening its embargo with the Helms-Burton Act, ironically solidifying Castro's position.</p> <p>In 2006, Fidel Castro handed off the reins of government for the first time in 47 years. The reins were not passed far. In fact, Fidel turned over the day-to-day chores of governing to his younger brother <b>Raúl Castro</b>, who was already the head of the Cuban armed forces and the head of Cuba's Communist party.</p>
<b>Books</b>	<b>Frommer's Cuba</b> – a comprehensive guide to the country.
<b>1000 Places to see before you die</b>	<p><b>Cuba's Jazz Festival</b> – 9-17 Dec 2012 in Havana  <a href="http://www.jazzcuba.com">http://www.jazzcuba.com</a></p> <p><b>La Habana Vieja</b> – Havana's Old Quarter</p> <p><b>Hemingway's Hangouts</b> – La Floridita and La Bodeguita del Medio</p>
<b>Must Sees</b>	<p><b>There are nine UNESCO World Heritage sites in Cuba:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alejandro de Humboldt National Park</li> <li>Archaeological Landscape of the First Coffee Plantations in SE Cuba</li> <li>Desembarco del Granma National park</li> <li>Historic Centre of Camaguay</li> <li>Old Havana and its Fortifications</li> <li>San Pedro de la Roca Castle, Santiago de Cuba</li> <li>Trinidad and the Valley de los Ingenios</li> <li>Historic Centre of Cienfuegos</li> <li>Vinales Valley</li> </ul>

<b>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</b>	<p><b>Baseball</b> is the national sport. Cuba's amateur players are considered some of the best in the world, and the premier players are aggressively scouted and courted by Major League Baseball. The regular season runs <b>November through March</b>, and playoffs and the final championship usually carry the season on into May. Most major towns and cities have a local team. Some of the consistently better teams include Pinar del Río, Sancti Spiritus, Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara, and of course Havana's Industriales. It's usually easy to buy tickets at the box office for less than 5 Cuban pesos, or ask at your hotel and perhaps they can get you tickets in advance.</p>
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	If you want to bring presents for the locals, you can't go wrong with any baseball equipment!
<b>Golf</b>	The country's only regulation 18-hole golf course is <b>the Varadero Golf Club</b> ( <a href="http://www.varaderogolfclub.com">www.varaderogolfclub.com</a> ). The course is a relatively flat resort course, with lots of water, plenty of sand, great views, and almost no rough. Greens fees are \$95 for 18 holes in 2012.
<b>Fishing</b>	There's fabulous deep-sea sport-fishing for marlin, sailfish, tuna, dorado, and more off of most of Cuba's extensive coastline, while the Zapata Peninsula and Cayo Largo del Sur may just be some of the best and least exploited bone-fishing spots left in the hemisphere. The mountain lake and resort of Hanabanilla is getting good grades as a freshwater ground for widemouth and black bass. A half-day of fishing should cost between CUC\$150 and CUC\$400, while a full day can run between CUC\$300 and CUC\$1,400, including gear and lunch, depending on the size of the boat and number of fishermen. There's a broad network of state-run marinas all around Cuba; the greatest number are run by Cubanacán (tel. 7/208-6044; <a href="http://www.cubanacan.cu">www.cubanacan.cu</a> ) and Gaviota (tel. 7/66-9668; <a href="http://www.gaviota-grupo.com">www.gaviota-grupo.com</a> ). All offer sport fishing charters
<b>Hiking</b>	Walking along <b>Havana's Malecón</b> : your best bet is to start in Habana Vieja and work your way toward the Hotel Nacional in Vedado. Take your time to stop and sit on the sea wall for a spell, and be sure to talk to some of the locals on your way. If you time it right, you will reach the Hotel Nacional in the late afternoon - a good time to grab a cool drink and enjoy the setting sun from their "Compass Card" outdoor terrace.  Hiking <b>Pico Turquino</b> : Pico Turquino, tucked within the celebrated Sierra Maestra National Park, is the highest peak in Cuba at just under 2,000m. The trail to the summit is swathed in cloud forest and tropical flora. Hikers in good physical condition can do the 15km round-trip journey in a day, but most camp overnight below the summit. The panoramic views of the coast and Caribbean Sea are breathtaking.
<b>Cycling</b>	With a local reliance on bicycles for everyday transportation and a relatively well-maintained road network serving a small motor vehicular fleet, Cuba is a great country to tour by bicycle. There are very few operations renting decent bikes in Cuba, so it may be best to bring your own. There are also specialist tour companies who organize biking holidays in Cuba: try <b>Holiday-n-Adventure</b> (1877-415-4329)  Jeff Reid operates a small humanitarian program sending donated bicycles to Cuba – see <a href="http://bikesforcuba.wordpress.com">http://bikesforcuba.wordpress.com</a> or <a href="http://www.bikesforcuba.com">www.bikesforcuba.com</a> for full details. He sends bikes every month and depends on tourists from Ontario to take them.

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<b>Diving</b>	There are fabulous scuba diving and snorkeling opportunities on the coral reefs, ocean walls, and ancient wrecks that lie just off Cuba's coasts. María la Gorda, Isla de la Juventud, Playa Larga, Playa Girón, and Los Jardines de la Reina are widely considered the absolute top scuba-diving destinations. You will also find perfectly acceptable dive opportunities and operations in Varadero, Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, Cayo Santa Maria, Guardalavaca, and Cayo Largo del Sur
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<b>CULTURE</b>	
<b>Music</b>	<p>You will hear music virtually everywhere in Cuba; it is an essential part of the fabric of Cuban life. Many of the Latin-influenced musical styles that have spread around the world can trace their origins to Cuba. While no means complete, here is a list of some of Cuba's most important musical genres:</p> <p><b>Son:</b> Developed in the 19th century as a combination of Spanish guitar and lyrical traditions with African vocals and percussion, son is the progenitor of most other Cuban musical genres, and the most important; son is to Cuba what the tango is to Argentina.</p> <p><b>Salsa:</b> Descended from Cuban son and now practiced throughout the world, this popular dance style has also been greatly influenced by American jazz and many forms of Afro-Cuban music, including rumba.</p> <p><b>Trova:</b> The traveling singer/songwriters of Eastern Cuba developed this genre as they went from house to house, singing ballads about love, women and their beloved country.</p> <p><b>Bolero:</b> The ballads of this romantic, heartfelt, slow-tempo genre originated in Santiago de Cuba during the late 19th century, and are often performed by soloists or a duo.</p> <p><b>Jazz:</b> Originally imported from America in the 1920s and 30s, jazz took on its own Cuban identity to become highly popular throughout the island, and many Cuban-born jazz musicians have become famous throughout the world.</p> <p><b>Rumba:</b> Cuban in origin but largely African in style, this genre employs only vocals and percussion, and refers to many various forms of Afro-Cuban song and dance.</p> <p><b>Timba:</b> A dominant genre in today's Cuba, this contemporary version of son-derived salsa draws heavily on African folk dances, rumba, rap and reggae.</p>

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	<p><b>Buena Vista Social Club;</b> rumba; jazz; salsa; son Cuba has a strong tradition in the performing arts. Cuban musicians, playing in a range of styles, are world-renowned. The Cuban National Ballet (tel. 7/855-3084; <a href="http://www.balletcuba.cu">www.balletcuba.cu</a> ) has been garnering international accolades for decades, under the seemingly eternal direction of Alicia Alonso.</p> <p>The <b>Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba</b> (Cuban National Folklore Group) hosts the weekly <b>Sábado de la Rumba</b>, a mesmerizing show of Afro-Cuban religious and secular dance and drumming. The 2-hour shows are presented every Saturday at 3pm, at El Gran Palenque, Calle 4, between Calzada and Avenida 5 in Vedado.</p>
<p><b>Museums</b></p>	<p><b>Havana</b></p> <p><b>Museo de la Ciudad, Havana:</b> Old Havana's preeminent museum displays colonial-era art and artifacts. It's worth the price of admission alone to stroll the rooms, outdoor courtyards, and interior veranda of the former Palacio de los Capitanes Generales (Palace of the Captain Generals), which houses the museum.</p> <p><b>The National Fine Arts Museum</b> fills three floors of this square-city-block building, and the design - with a central courtyard and zigzagging ramped stairwell - can make navigating the upper floors confusing, so allow yourself plenty of time, and be prepared to get mildly lost inside. An extensive collection of Cuban art and sculpture is on display at the newly renovated main building here. Modern masters like Wifredo Lam, Raúl Martínez, Amelia Peláez, and Rene Portocarrero are well represented. The international collection is now housed in a recently restored early-20th-century gem of a building.</p> <p><b>Santa Clara</b></p> <p><b>Che Guevara Museum:</b> anyone interested in this almost mythical Argentine revolutionary will not want to miss the Museo Memorial Nacional Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara. Inaugurated on December 28, 1988, it traces Che's life from his childhood up to his death, including his trips through Latin America, his stay in Mexico during which he met an exiled Fidel Castro, the landing of the Granma on the coast of Cuba, and his revolutionary experience in the Sierra Maestra. The museum is well documented, and displays a number of Che's personal items, including his uniforms, hand-written letters as well as many photos.</p>
<p><b>Festivals</b></p>	<p><b>Cuba's Jazz Festival</b> – 9-17 Dec 2012 in Havana <a href="http://www.jazzcuba.com">http://www.jazzcuba.com</a></p> <p>This is an internationally renowned event that consistently attracts an excellent line-up, with performances at venues around the city. Cuban music enjoyed a worldwide boost in popularity due to the success of the Buena Vista Social Club, and rightly so. Cuban son was</p>

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	<p>a precursor to salsa and much excellent Latin jazz emanates from this sunny Caribbean island.</p> <p>What better place for a jazz festival than Havana, with its rich musical heritage and unique atmosphere? The Hotel Rivera acts as the festival headquarters, while the Casa de la Cultura Plaza, Teatro Nacional de Cuba, Teatro Amadeo Roldán, Teatro Mella and Teatro Karl Marx also host performances</p> <p><b>Carnival Santiago de Cuba</b> July/Aug: in the intense heat of summer, Santiago de Cuba explodes with the island's best carnival, an evocative celebration of the city's Afro-Caribbean roots. Ripe with rumba music, conga processions, booming percussion, fanciful floats, and wild costumes, it's a participatory party.</p>
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<p><b>ATTRACTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Trinidad</b> - The best-preserved colonial city in Cuba, in the shadow of the Escambray mountains, Trinidad was not even linked by road to the rest of the country until the 1950s. Declared a national monument by the Cuban government this city is very much as it was four centuries ago, the beauty of its baroque architecture and cobblestones squares harking back to a bygone era when Trinidad was a key player in the Caribbean slave trade. There are many interesting things to see (e.g Guamuhaya Archaeological Museum, Plaza Mayor, Church of Santa Ana, Calle Simon Bolivar....) but the most impressive of all Trinidad's many museums is Trinidad Municipal Museum and a visit to the Taller Alfarero, a large ceramics workshop where traditional techniques are still used is also worthwhile.</p>
<p><b>Beaches</b></p>	<p><b>Cuba has some of the best beaches anywhere in the world.</b></p> <p><b>Varadero</b> is Cuba's premier beach resort destination, and it ranks right up there with the best in the Caribbean. If you're looking for a well-run all-inclusive resort loaded with amenities and activity options, Varadero is a good choice, with a 21km stretch of nearly uninterrupted beach. If you prefer less commercialized beach destinations, consider the various Cayo destinations along the north coast.</p> <p><b>Cayo Santa Maria</b> The white sand beaches of Cayo Santa Maria are known for great snorkeling and diving. They are part of the 'Gardens of the King'.</p> <p><b>Cayo Coco</b> The powdery beaches of Cayo Coco are found on the cays that lie off the mainland. It has beautiful coral reefs, lagoons and marshes with abundant bird life - including Pink Flamingos. There is great fishing off the cays and also in the deeper waters off the coast.</p>

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	<p><b>Holguin</b> Hoguin offers snowy white beaches and many excellent dive sites.</p>
<b>Wildlife</b>	<p><b>Bird-Watching in the Zapata Peninsula:</b> A dedicated (and lucky) bird-watcher might be able to spot 18 of Cuba's 22 endemic species in the swamps, mangroves, and wetlands of the Zapata Peninsula. In addition to the endemics, ornithologists and lay bird-watchers can spot over 100 other varieties of shore birds, transients, and waterfowl in this rich, wild region. Other top bird-watching destinations include La Güira National Park, as well as the areas around Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo and Baracoa.</p> <p><b>Cayo Largo:</b> An island in the Archipelago de los Canarreos, off the south coast, 177 km southeast of Havana; it is 38 sq km, 26 km long, 2 km wide with glittering white sands faced by turquoise waters. There are 200 shipwrecks in the area and shallow coral reefs. Wildlife includes turtles, iguanas, cranes, flamingos, bee hummingbirds; Playa Paraiso has a nude beach. Cayo Iguana is home to 100's of friendly iguanas.</p>
<b>Parks</b>	<p><b>Gran Parque Natural Montemar:</b> 4500 sq km, Peninsula de Zapata, vast wetland of mangroves, 160 birds species, 31 reptiles, 12 mammals, manatee sea-cows, hummingbirds, flamingos, parrots, Apr/May red land crabs swarm in their 10,000's</p> <p><b>The Viñales Valley:</b> This broad, flat valley is punctuated by a series of limestone karst hill formations, or mogotes. The views from the small mountains surrounding the valley are spectacular. The area offers great opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, bird-watching, and rock climbing, as well as caves to explore. It's a UNESCO World Heritage site.</p> <p><b>Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve:</b> (100 km west of Havana) The mountainous region between Havana and Pinar del Río is another prime destination in the country's budding eco-tourism industry. With both the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve and La Güira National Park, as well as eco-tourism projects in Soroa and at Las Terrazas, the area offers a wealth of opportunities to explore the flora and fauna of Cuba's inland mountain forests. Add the sulfurous mineral springs of San Diego de los Baños into the mix, and you've got the perfect recipe for some nature-based rest and relaxation. Declared a UNESCO biosphere reserve in 1985, the 25,000-hectare (nearly 62,000-acre) Sierra del Rosario encompasses a mountainous area of rapidly recovering secondary tropical deciduous forests, cut with numerous rivers and waterfalls. Nearly 100 species of birds can be spotted here, including over half of Cuba's 22 endemic species.</p>
<b>Gardens</b>	<p><b>Parque Josone</b> in Varadero is a beautifully maintained little city park with cool shady grounds and gardens.</p>
<b>Castles/Forts</b>	<p><b>Castillo de la Real Fuerza, Havana:</b> a well-preserved 16th-century fort sits within a broad cloverleaf moat. This is the oldest fort in Havana, and</p>

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	the oldest surviving fort in the hemisphere. It was a failure, built too small and too far from the harbor entrance to be of much use, but crossing over the old drawbridge and walking around the ancient stone battlements gives a great sense of history.
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<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Shopping</b>	<p>Highlights of Cuban craftsmanship include articles made from leather, vegetable fibers, wood, stone, metal and coal as well as traditional clothing such as Cuban hats and "guayaberas", beautifully cool, comfortable shirts made from pure linen, and select Cuban tobacco products such as Havana cigars.</p> <p>There are nine shopping centres in Varadero where beautiful examples of Cuban craftsmanship can be found as well as delicious local produce. They are generally open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m</p>
<b>Markets</b>	<p><b>Havana:</b> The biggest and best street market in Havana features three narrow rows of stalls stretching over a full city block. It's open daily from 10am to 6pm in Habana Vieja on Calle Tacón, between Calles Empedrado and Chacón. In addition to the typical arts and crafts and souvenir T-shirts, you'll find scores of local painters selling their wares.</p> <p><b>Varadero:</b> There are several outdoor arts and craft markets around Varadero; the best, <b>Artesanía</b>, is at Avenida 1 and Calle 12. The Plaza de los Artesanos is also good. ARTex has stores at each of these sites, as well as at Avenida 1 and Calle 35. At each you will find a broad collection of trinkets, T-shirts, musical instruments, posters, and CDs.</p>
<b>Nightlife</b>	<p><b>Tropicana, Havana:</b> This is the original and still reigning cabaret show in Cuba. The Tropicana has been at it for over 60 years and it shows no signs of slowing down. The sea of lithe dancers, the exuberance of their costumes, and the sheer excess of it all is worth the trip. It all occurs under the stars in the shadow of tall overhanging trees. There's a second Tropicana in Matanzas for visitors to Varadero, and another in Santiago.</p> <p><b>El Gato Tuerto, Havana:</b> The mood is dark and bohemian, although the decor mixes Art Deco and kitsch in equal measure. The nightly show usually features three or four distinct acts, which can range from sultry boleros to up-tempo jazz. A storyteller, poet, or comedian might perform between sets.</p> <p><b>La Zorra y El Cuervo, Havana:</b> This is Havana's best jazz club, and that's saying a lot. The vibe is mellow and unpretentious in this compact basement club, but the music and acts are usually culled from the best Cuba has to offer.</p> <p><b>Habana Café, Havana and Varadero:</b> Mix the Tropicana with a Hard Rock Cafe, and Habana Café is more or less what you'd get. The floor show is a mix of cabaret-style dance numbers and slightly burlesque</p>

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	comedic bits, all anchored by a top-notch big band. After the show, the dance floor swings and writhes for hours
<b>Casinos</b>	Casinos are one thing that you will not find in Cuba – unlike in the Batista days before Castro when it was like a dry run for Las Vegas!

<b>CUISINE</b>	
<b>Food</b>	Cuban cuisine is influenced by Spanish, African, indigenous and other cultures. The national dish is <b>ajiaco</b> , a stew of assorted root vegetables cooked with pork, poultry or beef. Other typical dishes are <b>lechón</b> (roast pork), <b>fried green plantains</b> (tachinos, chatinos or tostones), black beans, <b>congrí</b> (rice with red beans), <b>moros y cristianos</b> (rice with black beans), <b>picadillo a la habanera</b> (ground beef in tomato sauce), roast chicken and tamales among others. The Cuban sweet tooth ensures that each meal includes dessert.
<b>Wine</b>	Cuban national cocktails include the <b>Cuba Libre</b> (rum and cola) and the <b>Mojito</b> (rum, lime, sugar, mint leaves, club soda and ice). If you request a rum in a small country restaurant do not be surprised if it is only available by the bottle. Havana Club is the national brand and the most popular. Expect to pay \$4 for three year old white rum or \$8 for seven year old dark rum. <b>Cristal</b> is a light beer and is available in "dollar" stores where Cubans with CUCs and visitors may shop. Cubans prefer the Bucanero Fuerte, which at 5.5% alcohol is a strong (hence the "fuerte") darker beer. Both Cristal and Bucanero are brewed by a joint venture with Labatts of Canada, whose beer is the only Cuban beer sold in CUC. In nearby Cardenas is the <b>Arrechabala Rum Factory</b> , where the brand Havana Club was born and where present-day Varadero and Buccanero rums are made. Tours of the factory are given daily between 9am and 4pm; admission is \$3.
<b>Restaurants</b>	The best restaurants are within the major resorts, but good food will also be found in <b>paladares</b> (locally owned restaurants in private homes). Restaurants in Varadero include Mi Casita – Cuban style seafood; El Bodegon – Creole cooking; La Casa de Antiguiedades – best in town; Nightlife: La Cueva de Pirata – Latin music; Casa du Pont – quiet piano bar and gorgeous views.

<b>MORE INFO</b>	
<b>Brochures</b>	Sunwing 2012/2013 brochures are available at your local travel agent.
<b>Websites</b>	<a href="http://www.sunwing.ca">www.sunwing.ca</a> <a href="http://www.gocuba.ca">www.gocuba.ca</a>

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