

**Subject: CubaPalooza January 2018**

CubaPalooza People,

On behalf of David Isais (an American Bible Society staff member, our host, and an awesome man of God), I'm forwarding the following:

**Please review and confirm that you have done so via email.**

First and foremost, if you are a planner – **PLAN NOT TO PLAN!** Cuba is different than any place you've ever visited. We will have a schedule, but, in Cuba, things that are supposed to be open will be closed, things that are supposed to be closed will be open and you never know what God may be up to. I've been in countries that are much, much poorer than Cuba, but none that are as "informationally impoverished."

**Trip "Mission Costs" to Be Raised by the Team for Bible support**

\$54,000, representing 10,000 Bibles. We will send a "form" letter for you to mail/email in about 2 weeks.

**Dates – 1/11/2018 through 1/16/2018**

Arrival - You will need to arrive in Florida, on Thursday, January 11, in time for a 7:30 PM group dinner at the hotel listed below. MIA and PBI airports are approximately 30 minutes (depending on traffic) from Ft. Lauderdale and a \$35-\$60 cost cab/Uber ride to the hotel. Departure – You will be taken to the airport in Cuba around noon on Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>. It is an approximate 60 to 90 minute trip back to the US, plus a minimum of one (1) hour to pass through immigration and customs. Plan your airline reservations accordingly.

9/25/2017 - Firm commitment needed.

10/6/2017 – Scanned info from passport and personal information for your visa needs to be emailed to David Isais – [disais@americanBible.org](mailto:disais@americanBible.org), cc'ing me at [scotts@baysideonline.com](mailto:scotts@baysideonline.com). You need to send a **non-refundable** check for \$100 made payable to the American Bible Society (please leave the memo line blank – failure to do so may mean that David will not be able to make arrangements for you to join the trip).

**CHECK MUST BE MAILED TO:**

American Bible Society  
Attention: David Isais  
2569 Eustace Ave.  
Deltona, FL 32725

**INFORMATION/PASSPORT PAGES NEEDED:**

A scanned copy of your passport's:

- 1). photo page
- 2). signature page

The following info (in EXACTLY this format):

Full Name:  
Passport #:  
Date of Birth:  
Place of birth:  
Current address:  
Country of citizenship:  
Mother's full maiden name:  
Father's full name:

11/6/2017 – mail a non-refundable check to cover basic trip expenses (this does not include the \$100 visa cost or \$5,400/person mission costs noted elsewhere) in the amount of \$1,110 to:

American Bible Society  
Attention: Rudy Doyle  
101 North Independence Mall East FL8  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2155

This figure assumes a minimum of 10 travelers and, thus, may change. Costs break down like this:

Guest House - \$65/night, 4 nights = \$260  
Food – \$110/day, 5 days = \$550  
Transportation - \$30/day, 5 days = \$150  
Misc. - \$30/day, 5 days = \$150  
**Total - \$1,110**

**The \$1,110 does NOT include your personal expenses (adult beverages, cigars, souvenirs, etc.) while in Cuba.**

**Other costs, as guesstimated today (delays in booking air/hotel may result in increased costs):**

Air (roundtrip to Florida - \$400 (this is the cheapest point for air travel to Cuba)  
Air (roundtrip to Cuba) - \$400  
Hotel Ft. Lauderdale - \$250 (as some of you may now, the cost was \$115 in August, but January is high season)  
Food in transit and dinner 1/11 - \$120  
**Total - \$1,170**

**Estimated Trip Total Costs - \$2,280 plus personal expenses and Bible support costs**

12/3/2017 – Sunday Mandatory Conference Call with David Isais

12/6/2017 - \$54,000 donation to ABS (via your personal donation and/or support raised and donated to Bayside Church) due

#### **SAMPLE AIR ITINERARY**

1/11/2018 – Delta 2345/1615 SMF to FLL

Cab/Uber/Shuttle to hotel

1/12 - jetBlue 1499 FLL to HAV

1/16 – Southwest 3921 HAV to FLL

1/16 – Delta 2026/2076 FLL to SMF

**TRANSIT HOTEL (We will *attempt* to secure a group rate 45 days prior to arrival but you will be required to make your own reservation)**

#### **Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina**

1881 SE 17th Street Causeway

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316

Reservations Phone: 1 (954) 463-4000

**ARRIVE** – 1/11/2018

**DEPART** – 1/12/2018

#### **HIGH-LEVEL AGENDA ITEMS**

**Trip Goal** – To understand Cuba, the church there and its leaders. God is already in Cuba and at work. Our role while there (start praying now) is to encourage and support the church in Cuba, it's leaders and the people there. We will do that by our participation in Bible distribution and potentially in sports and children's ministry (AND WE WILL HAVE **MUCHO** FUN!). This will be a mission/vision trip that will be full of fun, fellowship and experiences. This is **NOT** a **VACATION** or **TOUR**.

#### **DETAILS**

##### **Our Hosts:**

David Isais of the American Bible Society and Dopico (Joel Dopico Ortega) and Alain (Alain Montano Hernandez) of the Cuban Council of Churches.

##### **Airport to Havana:**

Departure on Jet Blue from Ft. Lauderdale to Cuba is TERMINAL 3 (**not the international terminal**). Look for the Cuba desk inside the terminal.

You will NOT need to be at the airport 3 hours early per the airline instructions - 2 hours is fine.

Make sure you get both the customs form and the health form before you get on the plane. It will save time going through immigration and customs in Havana.

**Visas:**

If we cannot obtain, or do not obtain, religious visas then we will get visa as per the following:

You will get your visa at the airport in Ft. Lauderdale. You will have to answer two questions and should do as I have in the image below. Say your trip is authorized under Cuban regulations (by checking the box, as I have, or by doing whatever the format requires), and say that your trip is in "support of the Cuban people." You may have already done this with the airline, but you will, in any case, have to answer these two questions at the airport before you board the plane to Cuba.

IMAGE ATTACHED

**Schedule/Agenda:**

Plans/schedules are as "Cuba Time" as any country I've visited. Stay loose, be flexible, enjoy, have fun. Draft trip schedule will be sent out to the team 1/4/2018

**Time Zone:**

Havana and Cuba are three hours ahead of Sacramento. 8:00 AM in Sacramento is 11:00 AM in Havana. The time zone is CDT (Cuba Daylight Time), which mirrors EST.

**Weather:**

Highs in the mid-80s

Lows in the mid-70s

**Electricity:**

Electrical outlets and power are the same as in the United States. No need for adapters or converters. If you have multiple items to plug in bring a multi-receptacle adaptor.

**People/Customs/Safety:**

The people of Cuba are warm, friendly and, within the church, full of hope. Prepare to be blessed. Cuba is a very safe country, day and night. Having said that, it is always smart to keep your wallet in your front pocket. It is always prudent to be aware and to never let your guard down.

**Language:**

Spanish is the official language of Cuba. David Isais is bilingual and will serve as our translator. Some Cubans speak English, but not many are skilled. Practice some Spanish before you arrive and have fun with those you interact with while on the trip.

**Attire:**

Havana isn't too formal. I will wear polo or buttoned shirts and shorts except at church services, when I will wear long pants and a buttoned shirt (but you can wear shorts). Women are free to wear almost anything, except in church, where they need to keep their shoulders covered.

**Currency/Costs:**

You will need to bring cash for **ALL** costs. Credit and debit cards aren't accepted yet. Cuba uses two currencies: You will need the currency of the tourists, officially known as the Cuban convertible peso, or CUC. It is pegged at parity with the U.S. dollar, but you actually receive about 87 centavos CUC for one U.S. dollar. (We may get a better rate). The other currency is the currency of the people, officially known as the Cuban peso, or CUP.

**Cash:**

**Your cash MUST be in the form of new, \$100 bills.** Older, ripped or lower-denomination bills will not be exchanged. Once in Cuba, you will hand him an envelope with your cash in it and with your name and the dollar amount on the outside. It will take David 12-36 hours to exchange it at favorable rates. You will have opportunities to exchange money at less favorable rates prior to that if necessary. **LET DAVID KNOW BY 11/6/2017 (CC ME) HOW MUCH YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT EXCHANGING SO HE CAN PLAN AHEAD.**

**Food/Water:**

Food is relatively safe. Water from taps is not potable...bottled water only. Soda is available but usually the national brand, not Coke, etc.

**Communication:**

Cell phones now work in Cuba, but AT&T doesn't have an international plan. Calls and texts will be expensive. Wi-Fi is sporadic and difficult. Check on details with your provider. **TURN DATA ROAMING OFF PRIOR TO LANDING IN CUBA.**

**Housing:**

You will be in a guest house owned by the Council of Churches -- comfortable and clean but basic. Housing includes breakfast and AC! Why the guest house? Hotels are difficult to reserve with confidence, and rates can be quite expensive.

**Bring:**

- Towel
- Washcloth
- Blanket and pillow
- Toilet paper
- Soap and shampoo
- The usual other toiletries

**Also bring:**

- Bug spray and mosquito repellent
- Snacks for between meals
- A liking for Cuban espresso

**Guest house address:**

Council of Churches Official Address  
Calle 14 entre 3ra y 5ta Ave  
Near La Casa de La Habana in Miramar  
Miramar, Havana

**Facilities/Baños:**

Toilets outside of the guest house may or may not include a seat. You will want to bring toilet paper.

**Tourist Stuff:**

We will have a chance to do some touring and have fun around Havana (see below).

**If some official approaches you:**

If anyone has any issue with an official (I've never had any) away from David, just say that you are touring in Cuba visiting the Council of Churches (Learn the phrase: "Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba") in support of the Cuban people.

**Tourist Stuff**

Old Havana – La Habana Vieja (walking, auto, horse-drawn carriage)

Malecón (miles-long, famous seawall in Havana)

City of Havana tour (horse-drawn carriage, old car)

Morro Castle – Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro

Jesus Statue - Cristo de La Habana

Hotel National – Hotel Nacional de Cuba...classic property featured in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Godfather movie

Fusterlandia – cool neighborhood with art-themed elements

Art Studio – Estudio Taller Santacana near 5th Ave at 166<sup>th</sup> Street (Nautico Barrio) and 1RA, Playa, Habana

Art Market – Almacenes San Jose, on the water near Old Havana (look for Damien in stall 409)

Havana Cathedral/Plaza de la Catedral

The Forest of Havana – El bosque de La Habana

Museum of the Bay of Pigs – Museo de la Denuncia

Ernest Hemingway's Cuba House – Finca La Vigia

Cigar Museum

Granma Memorial

José Martí House

Revolution Square – Plaza de la Revolución

Colon Cemetery – Cemeterio de Cristóbal Colón (as in, Christopher Columbus)

Museum of the Revolution in Havana

**Cigar Factory Tours** (tickets can be difficult to find...try Cubanacan at the Plaza Hotel or in the Habana Libre Hotel)

La Corona (Biggest)

"New" Partagas Factory

El Laguito (best!)

**Cigar Lounges**

La Casa del Habano – 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Miramar (walkable from the guest house)

Hotel Manazana near Old Havana – Ground floor shop (expensive) and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor lounge (Daniel is the GM...great guy)

Meliá Cohiba Hotel – ask for Rafael

## **Restaurants**

We will be eating at the guest house, churches and some of the following:

**Paladar Vistmar** – Avenue 1RA NO. 2206 between 22 and 24 Streets

**Casa Nostra** – 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 130<sup>th</sup> Street

**Razones** – F Street between 5 and 3 Avenues

**Habana Blues** – H Street near Avenue of the Presidents between 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Streets, Vedado

**Mediterraneo Havana** – Between F and G near 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Vedado

**304 O'Reilly** – O'Reilly and Aguiar, Habana Vieja

**Toros y Tapas** – 6<sup>th</sup> Street near 3rd Avenue

## **Famous Bars**

La Floridita – Hemingway's spot for daiquiris

La Bodeguita del Medio - Hemingway's spot for mojitos

## **FAQs:**

**Formal Name** – Republic of Cuba

**Population** – 11.3 to 11.5 million

**Size** – Roughly 780 miles long and 119 miles across at the widest point. 40,369 sq. miles (about the size of Tennessee), making Cuba the largest island in the Caribbean and 17<sup>th</sup> largest island in the world

**Administration** - Cuba consists of 15 provinces and the Isla de la Juventud (an island on the southwest coast) which is a "special municipality."

**Time Zone** – CDT (see above)

**Literacy** – 100% not including those with disabilities/special needs

## **RECENT HISTORY**

**Declaration of Independence** - (from Spain, on 2/24/1895) – aided by U.S. as part of the Spanish-American War

**Recognized** – by Spain 12/12/1898 – occupied by U.S., to a gradually decreasing degree

**Republic declared** - from U.S. 5/20/1902

**Revolution starts** - 7/26/1953

**Fidel Castro and 82 others travel by boat (Granma) from Mexico to Cuba** - 11/56

**Independence** - 1/1/1959

**Bay of Pigs** – 4/17-19/1961

**Cuban Missile Crisis** – 10/16-28/1962

**Raúl Castro succeeds his brother** – 2/24/08

**Fidel dies (at age 90)** – 11/25/2016

**Central figures in the revolution** – Fulgencio Batista (dictator from 1952-59), Fidel and Raúl Castro, Che Guevara (yes, that Che), Camilo Cienfuegos (killed in 1959), Vilma Espín (married to Raúl) ...

## **American Bible Society (ABS)**

Not many people know it, but Christianity in Cuba is growing rapidly! Yet there are few Bibles, and most people there cannot afford one even if they can find one. Easing of tensions between the United States and Cuba after fifty years offers an unprecedented opportunity for the Church, and American Bible Society and our partners are poised to help.

American Bible Society already has strong relationships with Cuban churches, Catholic and Protestant. In 2013, we began the “Million Bible Mission” to bring a million Bibles to this island nation over five years. In 2014, the government allowed our church partners to import and distribute the first 60,000 Bibles.

You can help accelerate this ambitious project. It costs \$5.40 to print, ship and distribute a Bible anywhere in Cuba (Cuban salary for a family \$30 a month)—whether Havana or the most remote village. You can help Cubans discover the life and love of Jesus found in God's Word.

### **CUBA TODAY**

With a population of 11 million, a literacy rate of nearly 100 percent and an unprecedented growth in Christianity thanks to social, economic and political reforms, many Cubans are seeking guidance and hope found in God's Word. As a result of this unprecedented spiritual and cultural shift, demand for Bibles and engagement resources has outpaced supply. In addition, many Cubans cannot afford to import high-quality Bibles.

### **OUR RESPONSE**

American Bible Society is addressing this crucial need through the Cuba: Million Bible Mission. Through this five-year initiative, generations of Christians will have access to Bibles, which is the basis for discipleship, church planting, solid spiritual growth to help them cultivate a deeper relationship with Jesus.

American Bible Society's Cuba: Million Bible Mission will reach five distinct audiences: school-aged children receiving their first Bible; teens and college-age youth; adult new believers; prisoners; and seminary students and clergy. Thanks to this critical program, Cuban children, youth and adults will experience the saving knowledge of Christ. By providing Church leaders and seminarians with Bibles and Scripture resources, even more people will experience the transformative power of God's love for us.

### **Cuban Council of Churches**

#### ***Concilio de Iglesias de Cuba (CIC)***

The Cuban Council of Churches in Havana was founded on May 28, 1941, on the theme “united to serve.” Originally named the Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches, it later became the Cuban Ecumenical Council, and in 1995 the Cuban Council of Churches. The Cuban Council of Churches is an entity of Christian inspiration; it is non-governmental, non-profit, and legally established. CIC is a bridge to the Churches from the government and a bridge from the Churches to the government. Both sides believe the council works for them.

It is a fellowship of Christian churches and ecumenical institutions confessing Jesus Christ the Savior with a common mission to the glory of God the Father and Holy Spirit. Its objectives are to promote the fellowship and unity of the churches of Cuba through participative programs, dialogue, theological formation and service to the community.

For more than half a century, the CIC has stood by its churches and people during economic unsettlement and natural disasters. The CIC gives unity to the Christian Churches of Cuba and to help unify Cuban churches with other churches around the world. The CIC encourages dialogue between different movements and institutions as a means for churches to expand their ecumenical vocation of service, thus deepening their responsibilities toward society and all of God's creation. CIC also promotes



study, dialogue, and cooperation among Christians to increase Christian witness and enhance life in Cuba.

Because Cuba is located in the Caribbean, it suffers from strong hurricanes and natural disasters. The CIC Committee of Emergency Relief stands committed to providing relief and building an emergency response infrastructure for the Cuban population. The Committee of Emergency Relief is deployed the minute an emergency arrives, and the CIC churches coordinate to help those in need to overcome damage and other issues that arise after a natural disaster. This has been very evident recently as a result of hurricane Irma. CIC emergency response teams were assessing and coordinating humanitarian relief operations from outside sources right away with the support from Europe, Canada, the USA and other parts of the world. Seven of the 15 Provinces were devastated by Irma. Others suffered major damage as well.

Let us know of any questions or comments.

I'm so looking forward to traveling with you and watching God at work!

Big Blessings,

Scott Shaul (on behalf of David Isais)