

Dear Colleague,

Concerning traveling to Cuba, I am glad to let you know that as part as the process for the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between our governments, the US regulations have changed several times during 2015 and it is now much easier for US scientists to attend meetings in Cuba!

Now, you can travel to Cuba under the General License that requires no application, no permission, and no prior approval. It is now explicitly stated by the OFAC Regulations as follows:

§ 515.564 Professional research and professional meetings in Cuba.

(a) General license

(2) Professional meetings. The travel-related transactions set forth in § 515.560(c) and such additional transactions as are directly incident to travel to Cuba to attend professional meetings or conferences in Cuba are authorized, provided that:

(i) The purpose of the meeting or conference is not the promotion of tourism in Cuba;

(ii) The purpose of the meeting directly relates to the traveler's profession, professional background, or area of expertise, including area of graduate-level full-time study;

(extracted from the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) original document 31cfr515_new.pdf)

This means you can travel under the so called "General License", Scientists traveling under this rule don't need to apply for any specific license. As I said before, it requires no application, no permission, and no prior approval to travel to Cuba. Travelers just need to keep printed records of their attendance to show it in case it is required at return.

Please read the following FAQ for more details:

1. **What are the travel authorizations in the Cuba program?** OFAC has issued general licenses within the 12 categories of authorized travel for many travel-related transactions to, from, or within Cuba that previously required a specific license (i.e., an application and a case-by-case determination). Travel-related transactions are permitted by general license for certain travel related to the following activities, subject to criteria and conditions in each general license: family visits; official business of the U.S. government, foreign governments, and certain intergovernmental organizations; journalistic activity; **professional research and professional meetings**; educational activities; religious activities; public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions; support for the Cuban people; humanitarian projects; activities of private foundations or research or educational institutes; exportation, importation, or transmission of information or information materials; and certain authorized export transactions.
2. **What constitutes generally authorized travel-related transactions for "professional meetings" in Cuba?** OFAC has issued an expanded general license that incorporates prior specific licensing

policy and authorizes, subject to conditions, travel-related transactions and other transactions that are directly incident to attending professional meetings in Cuba. Among other things, this general license authorizes attendance at professional meetings or conferences in Cuba relating to a traveler's profession, professional background, or area of expertise, provided that the purpose of the meeting or conference is not the promotion of tourism in Cuba. For a complete description of what this general license authorizes and the restrictions that apply, please see 31 CFR § 515.564.

3. **Do travelers who fall within the scope of a general license need to submit a written request to OFAC for permission to travel or conduct transactions?** No. No further permission from OFAC is required to engage in transactions by a person who meets all criteria in a general license. Individuals wishing to engage in activities that may fall within the scope of a general license should review the relevant general licenses contained in the CACR to determine whether their travel-related transactions are covered by such general licenses.
4. **What constitutes "a close relative" for generally authorized family travel?** OFAC regulations authorize persons to accompany a close relative who is traveling to Cuba pursuant to the authorizations in § 515.564 (professional research and professional meetings). A close relative is defined as any individual related to a person "by blood, marriage, or adoption that is no more than three generations removed from that person or from a common ancestor with that person." For a complete description of what this general license authorizes and the restrictions that apply, please see 31 CFR § 515.339 and § 515.561.
5. **Do I need a Cuban Visa?** US citizens travelling to Cuba to attend a meeting to be held in a hotel, just need a Tourist Card, sometimes called a Tourist Visa, to enter the country along with a valid passport. Some Travel Agencies supply these as part of your package and send them out, either with your tickets, or under separate cover usually around ten days before you fly. Besides, with some Airlines you can purchase the visas at Airport Customer Services Desk.
6. **Do I need special medical insurance to travel to Cuba?** Cuba requires non-U.S. medical insurance. There are agents who will sell you a temporary policy upon arrival at the Havana airport for a reasonable rate (roughly \$3 USD per day). When traveling direct from the U.S. the price of your flight includes a Cuban health insurance policy (valued around \$46).
7. **Can I purchase a ticket to Cuba directly from an airline based or operating out of the United States?** Yes, provided that you are authorized to travel to Cuba pursuant to a general or specific license. Airlines subject to U.S. jurisdiction are authorized to provide air carrier services to authorized travelers, and travelers may purchase tickets provided that their travel is authorized pursuant to the CACR. Airlines and travelers are responsible for maintaining records of their Cuba-related transactions for at least five years.
8. **Are there any spending limits for authorized U.S. travelers while in Cuba?** There is no specific dollar limit on authorized expenses. Authorized travelers may engage in transactions ordinarily incident to travel within Cuba, including payment of living expenses and the acquisition in Cuba

of goods for personal consumption there. In addition, travelers are authorized to acquire in Cuba and import as accompanied baggage into the United States merchandise with a value not to exceed \$400 per person, provided that no more than \$100 of the merchandise consists of alcohol or tobacco products and the merchandise is imported for personal use only.

9. **As an authorized traveler, may I travel from a third country to Cuba and from Cuba to a third country?** Yes, a person subject to U.S. jurisdiction engaging in authorized travel-related transactions may travel to Cuba from a third country or to a third country from Cuba. Persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction traveling to and from Cuba via a third country may only do so if their travel-related transactions are authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, and are subject to the same restrictions and requirements as persons traveling directly from the United States.
10. **Are authorized travelers in Cuba permitted to use credit or debit cards issued by a U.S. financial institution?** Yes. Travelers are advised to check with their financial institution before traveling to Cuba to determine whether the institution has established the necessary mechanisms for its issued credit or debit cards to be used in Cuba. See 31 CFR § 515.560(c)(5) and 515.584(c).
11. **Are there ATMs in Cuba? Can I use my credit card?** At the moment, ATMs are not available in Cuba for U.S. travelers, though banking relationships are in the beginning stages. In theory, Cuban ATMs could work for Americans traveling abroad in the near future. For now, you're going to need to bring cash with you and convert to the Cuban Peso at local banks. You're better off exchanging USD, EUR or CAD for Cuban Pesos. Euros and Canadian dollars historically get a more favorable exchange rate on the ground in Cuba. There is a 10% Fee to exchange USD to the Convertible Cuban Peso (CUC).