

Cuba Final Parents Meeting – Feb 27th

Arrive at Colonel By for 9:30am
Bus Departs at 10:00am sharp

Flight itinerary :

Friday, April 10th - Montreal-Havana direct, Air China #879, departure 15:20 arrive Havana 19:35

Saturday April 18th - Havana -Montreal direct: Air China #880, departure 09:50 arrive Montreal 13:20

Expected return time to Colonel By Secondary School 16:00

Hotels in Cuba:

Havana: Palco Hotel 011 53-7 204-7235

Matanzas: Velasco Hotel 011 53-45-253-885

Rio San Juan Hotel 011 53-45-281 185

Groups of 10 – students will be given this info at the last rehearsal – organized with roommate – 5 rooms in each group

Passport – We will collect passports upon arrival at the Hotel

Make sure that your children understand the importance of the visitors visa you receive during the flight down to Cuba. Fill them out accurately. One section will be retained at Cuban customs upon arrival and the other will be collected on departure. If you lose this you will have to pay an additional fee.

Mandatory – Last Rehearsal – Thursday, April 9th

Music stand to take home

Assigned instrument to carry to airport

Volunteers to bring extra luggage (such as various pieces of percussion)

Emergency Contacts in Cuba:

Aldo Mazza: 011 53-483-4240

We will email updates when possible if there is WiFi available. For example, we will let you know when we are about to depart, when we've landed, arrived at hotel, departing Cuba etc.

Cell Phones/Internet

Smart phones/tablets should be used for emergencies only, since roaming and texting charges are very high in Cuba. Internet access is limited, mobile data and Wi-Fi networks are scarce and can be very slow.

Canadian Embassy in Havana

Calle 30 No. 518 esq. 7ma
Miramar, Havana, Cuba
Tel: 011-53-7-204-2516

Tip Money

I will collect \$50 CAD from each student at the airport. This money will cover the tips for the bus driver and tour guides. It will also include a \$10 donation that will be used to purchase supplies for the music school that we will be attending. Please make sure they have two 20 dollar bills and one 10 dollar bill ready. I will exchange the money to CUC when we arrive and pay tips as a group. These tip calculations are based on the following traditions: \$2 CUC per person per day for the guide, and \$1 CUC per person per day for the driver.

It is also common in Cuba to leave toiletries as opposed to money for tipping chambermaids at the hotels. We recommend that each person bring 2 extra toothbrushes and toothpaste so that each student can leave a toothbrush & toothpaste as a tip in the room at the two hotels we will be staying at.

Spending Money

Students will want to bring some spending money along so they can buy souvenirs and for lunches and snacks. Breakfasts and dinners will be provided however they will need to purchase their own lunches. We recommend 10 CUC (roughly \$15 CAD) for each lunch. Tipping in restaurants is common, a \$1 - \$2 CUC tip (per person) is adequate for wait staff. There should be ATMs at the airport to take out CUCs and you can always exchange cash at the hotel. As there won't be many ATM machines around it might be easier to bring cash to exchange.

Baggage

- Each student can bring *1 checked bag (20kg/44lbs)* (the weight limit is very strict so please weigh your bags first at home to avoid extra charges at the airport)
- *1 carry on bag (5kg/11lbs - no liquids over 100ml)* (a backpack that will serve as your day bag on the trip - most days you will not be going back to the hotel until the very end of the day)
- If you have a small instrument (flute, clarinet, etc.) you can pack it in your bag.
- If you have a larger instrument you will be able to check it in separately at no extra cost.
- Ensure that an Identification tag is on all your baggage

Packing List

Passport

Cash (\$50 CAD for tip money to be handed in at the airport: 2 X \$20, 1 X \$10)

Bank Card (for taking out CUCs at an ATM at airport or hotel)

Music Stand (small wire stand from school)

Assigned Instrument

Music folder (each student is responsible for their own music)

Instrument accessories such extra reeds, valve oil, etc.

Performance attire (to be discussed)

Clothes for hot weather (average temperature 25 C):

Shorts

T-shirts

Socks & underwear for 8 days

Long pants and a nicer shirt or blouse for evenings

Good walking/running shoes (we will be walking a lot)

Hat, baseball caps

Flip-flops/sandals

Bathing suit

Windbreaker or shell (in case we get rain)

Sunscreen

Insect repellent

Sunglasses

Camera

Individual water bottle

Snacks

A book for the flights

Toiletries and personal items:

Shampoo/conditioner and soap (hotels provide soap, but you may prefer your own brand)

Toothpaste and toothbrush

Female hygiene products

Small packages of facial tissues (toilet paper substitute when outside of hotel)

Aspirin/Tylenol, Imodium, Gravol (especially if you are prone to motion sickness)

Glasses/contact lenses & cleaning solution

2 Extra toothbrush & toothpaste for tips for chambermaids

Any prescription medicines (Make sure staff know about these and about any special medical conditions before we leave)

If you wish to donate more it is suggested bringing school supplies, and/or the following music related items: strings for violin, cello or guitar, mouthpieces for trumpets/clarinets/saxophones, rotor, valve and key oil, slide grease, string sets for upright/electric bass. Please note that each person is allowed to bring \$50 worth of gifts/donations duty-free. Let the teachers know in advance if you have any extra donations so that it can be presented to the music school in Cuba together with our group donations.

Food and Water

Cuban is not known for their food so keep a positive attitude

There is a variety of food, although it may look different than what you are used to. Most meals are buffet-style, so you can pick and choose what you like. There are no North American style fast food restaurants in Cuba. Meals are not included on board the flights, so bring snacks. We recommend drinking bottled water only, which is available everywhere for purchase.

Health and Welfare of Students:

- Well rested
- Vitamins
- No time for homework, stress from parents (ie. pressure to contact them every day - there will be regular emails to parents group to keep them updated)

Public Washrooms

Public washrooms may have attendants (usually with tissue), and a possibility of no toilet seats and no toilet paper. Be prepared! Pocket change is the usual gratuity.