



A Healthy Cuba, Healthy World: Linking Culture, Community & Cooperation

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

I. CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Will the Conference happen despite damages in Cuba from Hurricane Irma in September?

Yes, the Conference will go on. There was no structural damage to the Conference hotel, the [Meliá Varadero](#), and it is open and operating. Your Conference travel and the contribution it leaves behind will in fact help Cuba to recover! If you wish to make a donation toward hurricane recovery, please visit [MEDICC's website](#) for more information.

Is it legal to travel to Cuba for this Conference? And who can participate?

YES, under US travel regulations—US Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)'s Cuban Assets Control Regulations 31 C.F.R. §§ 515.564(a)—**persons whose work or profession, professional background, or area of expertise, including area of graduate-level full-time study, relates to the Conference content** may travel to Cuba to attend conferences organized by US entities such as MEDICC (“Professional Research and Professional Meetings” category).

In the case of MEDICC's 20th Anniversary Conference, this would **include, among others, health workers and professionals, social scientists (including historians, political scientists, sociologists, and all others), cultural workers and performing artists, culinary and environmental professionals, as well as community, labor, senior, and youth organizers, and more**. If you are not sure if you qualify, write MEDICC's Gateways Program Manager, Christian Vigil, at cvigil@mediccglobal.org, or call him at 510-350-3054.

Despite recent State Department announcements, Cuba travel remains one of the safest travel destinations in the world. MEDICC endorses a recent statement issued by RESPECT, an association of more than 150 member organizations working in the Cuba travel industry, opposing the recent State Department actions: [RESPECT statement](#).

Can others join me?

YES, your family members may travel with you, no matter their work or profession, as long as they are at least 16 years of age, under Cuban Assets Control Regulations 31 C.F. R. 515.561(a), the “Family Visits” category. Additionally, other friends may join you whose work or profession, professional background, or area of expertise, including area of graduate-level full-time study, relates to the Conference content (see answer above).

NOTE: OFAC requires that you have a full schedule of Conference activities during your time in Cuba. This is not tourism. See [U.S. Department of the Treasury Frequently Asked Questions Related to Cuba](#) and the [OFAC Fact Sheet](#) for more information. MEDICC requires all participants and companions to select from Conference options, to create a personalized, full schedule of Conference-related activities.

Do I need a Special License from the US Treasury Department?

NO, you do not need a Special License from the US Treasury Department (OFAC). Your travel is covered under the existing General License, or authorization. The only related paperwork you need to fill out is a Certification (provided by [Marazul Charters](#) and/or your airline) where you simply check “professional research and professional meetings” as your category (among the 12 permitted), unless you are an accompanying family member, and then you check “family visits.”

Will I need a Cuban visa?

YES, you will need a visa from Cuba, but this is quite simple. Please see below under **Travel Arrangements**. Either [Marazul Charters](#) (if you arrange flights through Marazul) or **your airline** will provide your visa.

Where will the Conference be held?

A Healthy Cuba, Healthy World: Linking Culture, Community & Cooperation will be held at the five-star [Meliã Varadero Hotel](#), operated by Meliã in conjunction with Cuban hotelier Cubanacan, complemented by Conference site visits in the cities of Matanzas and Cárdenas. This hotel has an excellent reputation for organizing events, making it an ideal venue. The hotel is approximately a 2.5 – 3-hour drive from Havana, and about 20 minutes from the airport in Varadero. Airport transfers from either Havana or Varadero are included in Conference fees. Travelers arriving in Havana must arrive **no later than 2 pm on Sunday, December 3** to connect to transportation to Varadero.

How do I register?

Simply click here: [REGISTRATION](#). If more than one family member will attend, please register each person individually, using a unique email for each, if possible.

What is the Conference cost, and what does this include? What are the early bird discounts?

The cost for your entire stay in Cuba, including Conference registration, is US\$2,000 (per person, double occupancy), or US\$2,500 (single occupancy) if you take advantage of the **early, early bird registration through September 14, 2017**). From September 14 to October 13, the **early bird registration** prices are US\$2,100 per person for double occupancy and US\$2,600 for single occupancy. From October 13 to October 28, prices are US\$2,300 for double occupancy and US\$2,800 for single occupancy. **October 28, 2017 is the final day to register and make travel arrangements for the Conference.**

All prices include:

- Conference registration
- 6 nights of all-inclusive hotel accommodations at the [Meliã Varadero Hotel](#) (lodging, meals, snacks, drinks, etc.)
- Airport transfers to/from Havana or Varadero airports
- Cuban health insurance through ASISTUR
- Registration for the entire Conference, including all Conference activities and site visits (in small groups, per sign-up according to your interests) and the MEDICC 20th Anniversary Evening Gala
- Specialized interpretation for all Conference activities and site visits
- Transportation to site visits
- Assistance from Amistur personnel for site visits and at the hotel Conference venue.

MEDICC Board, staff and special guests will be on hand to assist in guiding and organizing all activities.

Airfare, Cuban visa, and FedEx document delivery **are not included**, nor are telephone/internet charges in Cuba and personal items such as gifts.

Please contact Christian Vigil, at cvigil@mediccglobal.org or 510-350-3054, for rates if you are only able to attend for three nights, or if you are interested in Executive Floor rooms or suites. You must attend for at least three nights (see below).

How do I make my travel arrangements?

Your Conference land package will be finalized once you register with MEDICC, which works with [Marazul Charters](#), the official travel agency for the Conference.

The deadline to claim seats on American Airlines flights pre-reserved by Marazul has already passed (September 29). **We recommend that you book your own flights ASAP**, since there is high demand for Cuba travel through the end of the year.

If you wish to work through Marazul to book your flights, please contact [Giselle Ortega](#). [Joel Andujar at Marazul](#) will invoice you via email for the flights, your visa, and FedEx delivery of travel documents (not included in Conference fees).

Alternatively, you can choose to make your own flight arrangements through American Airlines or another airline (Delta, JetBlue, Southwest, Alaska, United or any other) that flies to Havana or Varadero, the airports from which transportation will be provided to the Conference venue. If you book your own flights, the airline will assist you in obtaining the visa (usually at the departure airport).

Once you have booked your flights, MEDICC will ask for your itinerary in order to arrange for your airport transfers.

PLEASE NOTE:

A minimum 3-hour layover is recommended for international flights – please plan accordingly when arranging domestic flights to cities whose airports have flights to Cuba.

Travelers arriving in Havana on Sunday, December 3, **must arrive by 2 pm local time** in order to connect to Conference-related transportation to Varadero.**for the Conference opening session.**

Travelers arriving in Havana on Saturday, December 2, **must make their own hotel reservations for Saturday night and will be advised of a meeting point in Havana for departure to Varadero on Sunday, December 3.**

How do I pay for the Conference and my travel?

MEDICC requires payment of Conference fees **at the time of registration**. You can pay online using a Visa, MasterCard, or Discover Card.

[Please click here to pay online for a space in a double room.](#)

[Please click here to pay online for a single room.](#)

Airfare, visa, FedEx delivery charge, and personal expenses are not included in the Conference rates. If you book air through Marazul, they will arrange for your visa, and **Joel Andujar at Marazul** will invoice you via email after your registration deadline. **Giselle Ortega at Marazul** can help you resolve any questions or problems with air arrangements made through Marazul. **If you make your own flight reservations, your airline will help you obtain your visa (usually at the departure airport).**

What are your refund and cancellation policies?

If you have to cancel your travel for any unforeseen reason, here are our refund policies:

- If you cancel by September 29, MEDICC will refund 100% of your Conference fees
- If you cancel by October 28, MEDICC will refund 50% of your Conference fees
- After October 28, Conference fees are **non-refundable**.
- In the case of cancellation of flight reservations, Marazul Charters' policies and airline policies will apply.

Can you find me a roommate so I can share a double room?

If you wish to share a double, MEDICC will make an attempt to find you a roommate of the same gender, **but cannot guarantee a match**. If a roommate cannot be found, MEDICC will invoice you for the remainder of the cost for a single room.

How can I travel FOR FREE?

If you refer **20 people** who register for the Conference, you may travel for free, except for airfare to Miami or Charlotte, NC. Please have all your people add your name on the **REGISTRATION** form when they sign up for the Conference.

How do I sign up for specific Conference activities?

MEDICC has posted a detailed program on the [Conference website](#) and will contact you by email in October so you can sign up for the activities that interest you most.

What if I can't stay for the whole time?

It is possible to attend the Conference, if you register for at least three nights. This option is limited, due to limited availability of hotel rooms. Please contact Christian Vigil at MEDICC, at cvigil@mediccglobal.org or 510-35-3054, for more information. We encourage you to take advantage of the full Conference, which will offer you more opportunities for engaging and educational activities and site visits.

Can I stay in Cuba longer or arrive earlier than the Conference?

The only way you can extend your visit to Cuba is if you complete a separate CERTIFICATION (see above) that you will be in Cuba for a reason consistent with [the US 12 categories of permitted travel](#). **NOTE:** MEDICC cannot be responsible for your accommodations, arrangements, or airport transfers if you arrive early or stay late; you must still attend all Conference activities; and you alone are responsible for ensuring that all your travel is legal under US and Cuban law.

Is there a dress code for the Conference?

Generally, business casual is fine. The weather tends to be warm even in December, but always check the web before you travel. A sweater or jacket is recommended for air-conditioned meeting rooms or a chilly evening. Be sure to bring comfortable walking shoes for site visits. And dressing up for the MEDICC 20th Anniversary Gala is welcome!

II. MORE TIPS FOR TRAVEL TO CUBA

You'll find answers to some additional questions below. [MEDICC](#) is a founding member of [RESPECT \(Responsible Ethical Cuba Travel\)](#), a [US association of non-profits, travel organizations and companies in the travel industry](#) that uphold a set of principles for responsible travel and global citizenry.

Will the hotel serve dishes for vegetarians, vegans or others with dietary restrictions?

YES, there is a large selection at the buffet restaurant. However, always ask staff about ingredients since sauces and soups may contain animal products.

Health: immunizations, water, food. What should be my concerns?

No immunizations are required to travel to Cuba. MEDICC recommends you drink bottled water (all water and ice served at the hotel is bottled) and do not eat from street vendors.

What if I have a medical emergency?

A physician is on site at the hotel, and the International Clinic is also located nearby. **BUT make sure to take with you all prescription and any other medications you need.** They may not be readily available.

Is there Internet at the hotel?

YES, Internet cards may be purchased for approximately US\$1.75 for one hour of Internet, or you may use roaming, if your service provider has an agreement with Cuba (check with your carrier for the latest information).

Are there lock boxes at the hotel?

Yes, in every room, and we recommend you store your passports, tickets any any large amount of cash or other valuables. In general, Cuba is a very safe place, but guarding against petty theft is always a good idea. Outside the hotel, it is best to carry with you a photocopy of your passport, although this is not required.

Is the electricity the same as in the US?

In Cuba, yes, but at the Meliã hotels it is usually 220V. However, your usual two-pronged plug will fit. Just be sure your phone, laptop or other device can work on 220V, or purchase a converter prior to travel and bring it with you.

Should I tip at the hotel, and at what rate?

We recommend tipping housekeeping staff about 2CUC daily. Tipping is not expected at an all-inclusive hotel, but appreciated for especially good service at any of the restaurants or bars, and of course for assisting you with your luggage.

Can I take pictures or video?

YES, just make sure to ask permission when photographing or video recording individual Cubans, or professional performers, as a matter of courtesy.

What is the exchange rate between the dollar and Cuban currency?

When you change one US dollar you will receive .87 in Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC).

Can I pay for items in Cuba with a credit card?

NO, due to the US embargo, there are limited banking relations between the US and Cuba. All expenditures must be made in CASH in CUC. You can change US dollars or Euros at the hotel or airport. However, we recommend you **bring a credit or debit card for use during the domestic portion of your trip**, and a money belt may be handy.

What can I purchase in Cuba during my stay to bring back to the US?

Currently, the same US Customs limits apply to Cuba and all other travel destinations on gifts and personal items that travelers can bring back. You cannot carry any flora or fauna, as it is against both Cuban and US law. There will be opportunities to purchase such items as artwork and music. Airports are also stocked with Cuban goods. You can take back up to \$800 in goods, including alcohol and tobacco products if you are over 21 years of age, for personal use, as described [here](#).

If you have additional questions that are not answered here, please don't hesitate to contact us! You can email Christian Vigil, Gateways Program Manager, at cvigil@medicglobal.org, or call him at 510-350-3054.