

# B&B EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS

## Reference Book Sample



**OFFICIAL NAME:** Republic of Cuba (República de Cuba).  
**LOCATION:** Caribbean Island south of Florida, United States and the most populous

insular nation in the Caribbean.  
Slightly smaller than Pennsylvania.  
**CAPITAL:** Havana.

**COUNTRY SYMBOLS:**



Flag

The Cuban flag consists of five horizontal stripes of equal width. The top, middle, and bottom stripes are blue while the other two are white. There is a red horizontal triangle on the left side of the Cuban flag pointing toward the middle. In the middle of the triangle lies a white five-pointed star. The blue stripes refer to the three old divisions of the island. The two white stripes represent the strength of the independent ideal. The red triangle symbolizes equality, brotherhood, and freedom, as well as the bloodshed in the island's struggle for independence. The white star symbolizes the absolute freedom among the Cuban people.



Coat of Arms

The Coat of Arms of Cuba is divided into three sections. In its upper part, there is a golden key between two mountains and a sun rising over the sea—symbolic of Cuba's position in the Gulf, between the two Americas, as an emerging new state. The blue and white stripes on the left hand side represent the division into states in the colonial period. On the right-hand side, a Cuban country scene is dominated by a royal palm tree—symbol of the unbreakable character of the Cuban people.

### CURRENCY



\$1 Peso (CUP)

\$100 Peso convertible

(CUC)

The Cuban *peso* (CUP) is the official currency; the symbol for the peso is the same as that of the U.S. dollar: \$. The peso is divided into one hundred *centavos* (cents); it comes in coins of one, five, and twenty centavos, as well as \$1 and \$3; and in banknotes of \$1, \$3, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. The Cuban convertible peso (CUC) was introduced in 2004 to replace foreign currencies in Cuba, especially the U.S. dollar, which was legal tender from 1993 to 2004!

### BASIC PRODUCTS:

Cuba's most famous product—and one that became a rallying point for political defiance after the Castro Revolution—is sugar; the second most famous product, also famous around the world, is tobacco, and indeed, the standard against which other countries measure their own product is the Cuban cigar. The sugar and cigar industries are the mainstays of Cuban exports. Cuba also produces citrus, coffee, rice, potatoes, beans, and livestock. In recent years, another industry—tourism, mostly from Europe—has become important as well, but, due to the U.S. embargo, has not reached

the levels of pre-Revolutionary times. Finally, Cuba has developed several other industries, including petroleum and petroleum products, construction materials, cement, metallurgy (nickel, steel), agricultural machinery, and pharmaceuticals.

### TYPICAL FOODS:

Cuban cuisine is a fusion of Spanish, African, and Caribbean tastes. Cubans consume large quantities of rice, corn, and black beans (all three are staples), as well as meat, especially pork, the all-time favorite—which they cook whole or use only the leg (*pernil*), marinated in *mojo* and roasted slowly—or beef and chicken (*arroz con pollo*). They enjoy fresh fish (and, if fresh is not available, salted fish), which they eat fried, grilled, or in preparations like the popular *bocadillos*. A typical snack is *empanadas*, prepared with different types of fillings. Cuban dishes are accompanied by root vegetables (potatoes, yucca, *malanga*) or fruits (plantains). Many of their dishes often have a *sofrito* base. Dairy products (cheeses, yogurt) and grains (pastas, different breads) are also part of their diet. Cubans enjoy a wide variety of tropical fruits, fresh, in *batidos* (shakes), or cooked (e.g., *tostones* or fried plantains); they also have milk-based desserts, such as *flan* and ice cream. They accompany their meals with sodas, juices, coffee, or tea; they also consume beer, wine, and fine rums.

### FAVORITE PASTIMES:

Cubans love to party with family and friends; they dance to African (Afro-Cuban) rhythms (Cuban music has provided the basis for most Latin American musical styles, including *salsa*, *cha-cha-cha*, *mambo*, *bolero*). They often meet with friends in parks or by the sea for picnics and conversation. They engage in all types of water sports, including swimming, sailing, water polo, or they go fishing or surfing in the Caribbean Sea. Young and old (especially the latter) also enjoy playing what some view as a national pastime: dominoes! And, even though Cubans engage in a number of sports, including volleyball, basketball, soccer, table tennis, etc., their passion continues to be baseball, which is by far the most popular sport, with *pon* class teams and performances.

### HISTORICAL LANDMARKS:

- **La Habana Vieja (Old Havana)**, a collection of buildings that are slowly being restored to their former elegance, offers excellent examples of seventeenth century Spanish colonial architecture; the *Habana Vieja* has been recognized and entered in UNESCO's World Heritage list.
- **The Castillo de la Real Fuerza**, in Havana, was built in 1577 and guarded the city and the Spanish fleets for hundreds of years.
- **Piazza de Armas**, Havana's first known public square, was finalized in 1584. Because of the many military exercises in it, it became known as Havana's "Parade Ground."