

CUBA



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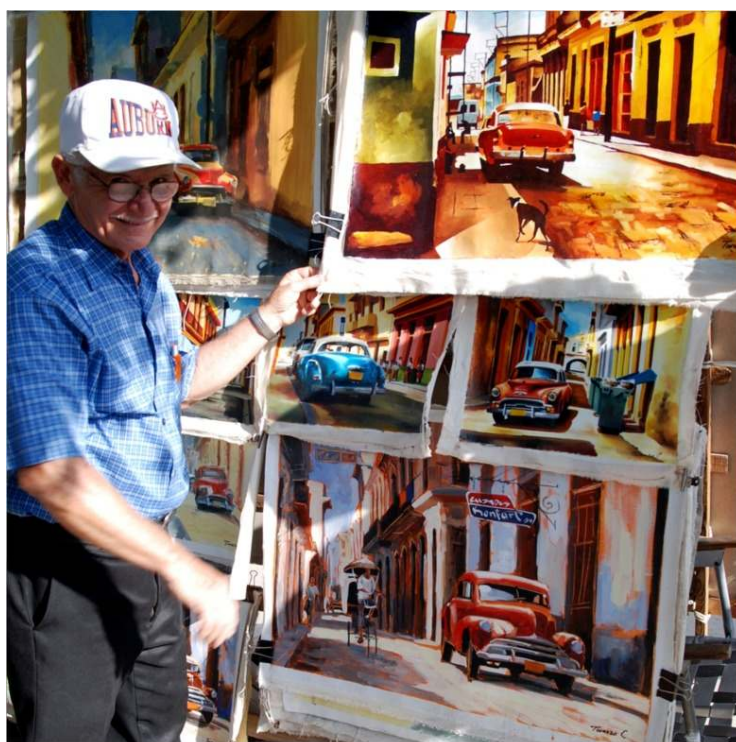
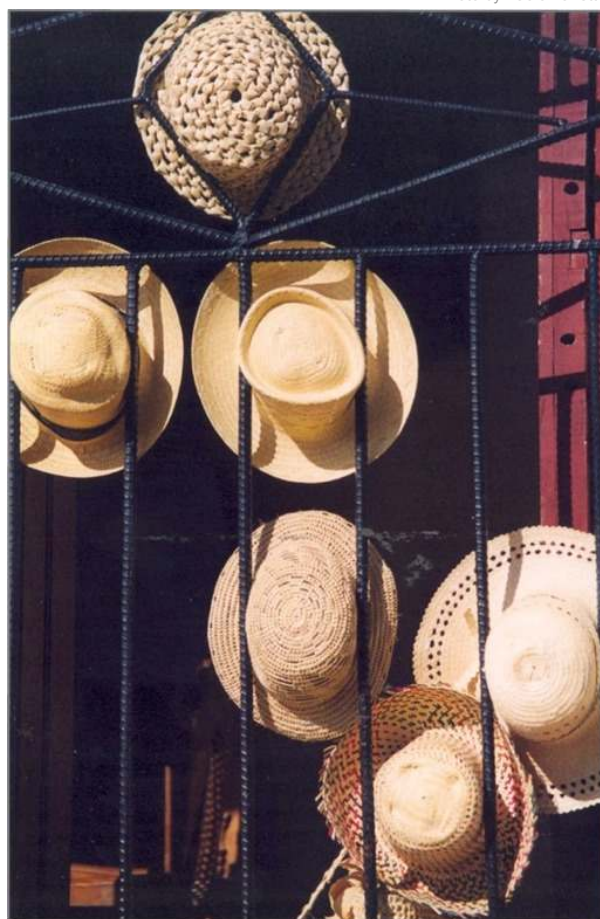
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Photo by Paolo Zanetti



Geography

Placed strategically between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, the biggest island of the Antilles (whose shape resembles a crocodile) is only 170 km south of Key West, US southernmost point. Together with Jamaica, Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic) and Puerto Rico forms the Great Antilles; its size is comparable to that of all the Antilles island together. The main island is 1250 km long and 31 to 191 km wide; there is also the Isla de la Joventud and more than 4000 Cayos, small coral islands.

Cuba has around 12 million inhabitants, 2,5 of which in la Habana and 500.000 in Santiago. The island can be divided in 4 main zones: el Occidente, which includes the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana e Matanzas, with shallow coral reef on the north coast, a plateau in the centre, and muddy lands in the south. The Central region, from S.ta Clara to Ciego de Avila, is a hilly region, surrounded by plain and muddy lands.

The Camaguey region is very similar to savannah, while the Oriente provinces (Santiago and Guantanamo) is the most beautiful, with the Sierra Maestra mounts group, rivers and marvelous bays. The Isla de la Joventud, also called Pines Island, is extensively cultivated with grapefruits. There are no major lakes and on its largest river, the Cauto, 383 km long, is not possible to navigate, even on small boats.

Climate

The moderate sub-tropical climate is chilled throughout the country - thanks to its long and thin shape - by aliseus breezes from north-east. There are two main seasons: the dry season spans from November to April and is the best period to visit the island. The wet seasons goes from May to October. Temperatures go from 22°C in February to 30°C in August.

Electricity

Electricity voltage is 110 Volts, 60Hz, with US type plugs. In some hotels in the super-touristic areas there are european sockets with 220 Volts electricity.

Population

The Cuban population is a melting-pot of races; Spanish, Africans and Asians. After all the Indios were killed by the hard work conditions and by illnesses brought by the Spanish, land owners started to import slaves from Africa and workers from China. Then migration from Europe started (Germans and French) and other populations from the Antilles (Haiti and Jamaica) have formed the current Cuban population. All racial segregation were cancelled after the revolution; nowadays mixed marriages are common and there is no sign of racial tensions on the island.