

International Travel to Cuba during the Omicron Variant

My XO Adventures Travels to Cuba During the Omicron Wave

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA, USA, January 22, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- International Travel during the Pandemic can prove a little tricky, but not impossible. A recent visit to Cuba under the OFAC license of "[Support of the Cuban People](#)" proved to be quite extraordinary given the circumstances of the Omicron spread. Cuba stands out as one of the most vaccinated countries in the world, due to being the only Latin American country to develop its own home-grown vaccines. Many Americans are unaware that Cuba shines in the worldwide community, coming in at 86.4% of its population vaccinated. That's 2nd only to the UAE, which stands at 93.3%.

That's pretty impressive and raising eyebrows with travelers as one of the safest destinations in the world. My XO Adventures owner, Daniel Milks recently traveled to Cuba from January 2-18, 2022 to prepare for a group arriving and get the lay of the land. It wasn't going to be easy, but was it worth the trouble?

"[Cuba Travel](#) has always been a little tricky to navigate, but travelers to the country are almost always seasoned." Entry into the country begins with securing accommodations, followed by an



My XO Adventures at Al Carbon with Chef Ivan in Havana Cuba



Historical Tour of Old Havana

airline ticket into Havana. Tampa and Miami are popular points of origin, but surprisingly Iceland Air has been approved to enter the market and expand options for those who are interested.

“Travel to anywhere in the world takes a risk acceptance, and we were approaching the higher end of that limit.” Omicron was beginning to rage across Florida, with its 7-day average peak on January 10th, 2022 just before the group arrived. Already in Cuba on January 2, 2022, Daniel had a little time to prepare, reconnect with people, businesses and witness the current state of the country.



Opera House of Havana at Night

“After landing in Havana and taking a moment to look around, it didn’t appear that much had changed”, reported Daniel on January 3rd. Quite a few of the more well-known shopping districts were dotted with closed signs, but the economy officially opened in November, and this was only a month later in a country that suffers from the U.S. imposed embargo. Reportedly, Cubans were going about their business, spending time in markets, using public transportation, and enjoying outdoor games.

“Being able to see Cuba after two years of the Pandemic was pretty incredible. I’m always amazed at the resiliency of the people, and the magic of this gem in the Caribbean.” After meeting up with friends, a deeper look began. The restaurants that were open had limited selections each day, requiring the traveler to exercise patience and understanding. Certain places had long lines, but to the Cubans, this is something that’s become a part of life.

Walking through the streets Daniel reports major renovations and new construction. Hotels are being built all over Havana as if they have their eye on the future, and tourism is the way out of the economic challenges Cuba faces. Most notably, the former Convertible Peso (CUC) has been eliminated and replaced with the local peso (CUP). Inflation isn’t something that just exists in the U.S., it’s being felt in Cuba by all the people.

During this visit, the official government exchange was \$1 USD for 26 Pesos. The street rate was around \$1 USD for 55-68 CUP depending on what day and person tried to hit you up. The monetary changes can be very confusing and should be left for another article. To say the least, wrapping your head around it, along with the fluctuations keeps you on your feet.

“As U.S. Citizen, and under the OFAC license Support of the Cuban People the only lodging available is from privately owned homes. To tell you the truth, this is the only way I’d visit Cuba, even if the restrictions were eliminated.” Private homes are called Casa Particulars, which are privately owned, and the family or managers live on site. Miramar, a high-end neighborhood dotted with Embassies, beautiful trees, and flowering bougainvillea makes it a great place to stay.

Before even making it to the accommodations, a meeting with some local Cuban’s at Grandma's house was the beginning of the experience. Here, we had three locals, Grandma, her grandson, and a friend. They were able to explain to the group about everyday life in the country. All this while enjoying some Cuban Rum, plantains, croquettes, and other tasty treats from Grandma's kitchen. Participants were drawn into the discussion and ready to ask questions. The most interesting was when it was Grandma’s turn. She is a Cuban that lived through the Triumph of the Revolution and had quite a few words to say about her experience. This is a behind the curtain look that any traveler to Cuba needs to experience and makes a great start to the beginning of the journey.

All the protocols are in place, wet mats with bleach, hand sanitizer, masks, and even grandma had her plastic face shield. Cuba took it seriously at the beginning of the pandemic. Lockdowns were in place, and COVID raged just like anywhere else until the vaccines began to roll out. Here you can see a drastic reduction in cases, deaths, and hospitalizations on charts found all over google. For Cubans, it wasn’t a matter of choice to get the vaccine. It was an obligation each person had to meet.

“I felt safer here than in the U.S.”, says Daniel Milks. Omicron cases in Cuba are low by comparison. The World Health Organization has Soberana, Cuba’s most effective vaccine in stage three trials. It’s already being used in Vietnam, Mexico, Iran, Venezuela, and more. Cuba boasts a 91.2% efficacy rate with three jabs being a full set.

Guests reflect back on the “Forbidden Fruit” that Cuba is for Americans. The complexities of operating a nation under an embargo. The desire of both governments to mend fences and establish relationships. Minds wander with memories as the airport nears. Soon, family and friends will be shown pictures and hear experiences. Maybe those stories are powerful enough to lead to change, one person at a time.

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