



# Featuring **CUBA**

## **The TTCSI Congratulates Cuba**

Known particularly for his travel writing, Siddharth Pico Raghavan Iyer, British-born essayist and novelist said, "For centuries, Cuba's greatest resource has been its people." It is no surprise that for years, the Trinidad and Tobago government has looked to Cuba for nurses and doctors.

One of the highest patient -to-doctor ratios can be found in Cuba which is also known to have a high literacy rate. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "the literacy rate in Cuba is estimated to be over 99%, which is among the highest in the Americas and the world. It's also one of the few countries in the world where the female literacy rate is higher than the male literacy rate." Even up to May 2020, a team of 11 nurses arrived to assist T&T with COVID-19 efforts.

The Centre for Language Learning (CLL) at UWI St. Augustine later conducted a specialised 40-hour English language training course for the 11 Cuban healthcare professionals to improve their ability to communicate with speakers of Trinidadian English in a medical context.

The TTCSI is delighted to send greetings to Cuba and its people today. The TTCSI agrees that

Cuba's greatest resource is its people but we are aware too of the tremendous work its people have done thereby contributing to the beauty that is Cuba.

In order to write about and truly capture the awe-inspiring charm of this, the largest island in the Caribbean Sea, is simply impossible but here, we feature some of the reasons why everyone is fascinated by Cuba and its offerings. Officially named the Republic of Cuba with a population of 11,116,396, its capital is Havana and its official language is Spanish. With an area of 42,802 square miles (110,860 square kilometres), its currency is Peso.

One-third of Cuba is covered by high mountains and rolling hills while the rest of land is used for farming as it is mainly lowland plains. In 2018, T&T reaffirmed trade ties with Cuba when Minister of Trade and Industry, Paula Gopee-Scoon, met with Cuba's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rogelio Sierra Diaz. Matters discussed included opportunities for increased trade with the country since at that point, Trinidad and Tobago was Cuba's largest Caricom trading partner, recording 80 per cent of trade in the region.

So what about Cuba fascinates the world?

## **The people**

As previously mentioned, Cuba's people are certainly a valuable resource. A history and culture that is rich is heavily impacted by the mixture of indigenous, African and European influence. Music is a great part of Cuban culture and son (a combination of lively rhythms with classical guitar) can be heard anytime of year.

## **Cuban Cigars**

If you haven't had or heard of Cuban cigars then where have you been? Cuban cigars are among the most popular in the world. Prestige and class are associated with these meticulously made, handmade cigars that are said to be full of unique flavour and aroma. Tobacco grown in the rich Vuelta Abajo region of Cuba is used to make these exquisite cigars.

## **Old Cars**

One thing you are sure to see in Cuba would be old cars. Upon Cuba becoming a socialist country after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cubans had to rely on old American cars already in the country due to a trade embargo imposed by the US in 1960. The embargo prevents new American parts and cars from entering Cuba. Today, a sense of nostalgia comes upon seeing these cars from the 1940's and 1950's, remodelled and repaired using Cuban talent and skill.







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## Landmarks and heritage sites are aplenty

Cuba is especially known for its landmarks and historic cities. It is home to nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites including Old Havana and its Fortification System, Trinidad and the Valley de Los Ingenios, Viñales Valley, Alejandro de Humboldt National Park, the Archaeological Landscapes of the First Coffee Plantations in the South East of Cuba, the Historic Centre of Camaguey, San Pedro de La Roca Castle, the Urban Historic Centre of Cienfuegos, and Desembarco del Granma National Park.

Cienaga de Zapata National Park, the National Schools of Art, and the Reef System in the Cuban Caribbean are also being considered for nomination.

## Medical Tourism

Thanks to its highly skilled medical professionals and competitive prices, Cuba is now being looked at as a place to venture for medical assistance and procedures including cosmetic and dental surgery. Cutting edge equipment, specialist clinics and hospitals all form part of Cuba's offerings to those seeking medical care.

## Carnival

If you're a carnival lover, then you can look forward to Carnaval de Santiago de Cuba which is a massive colourful and lively event that takes place in the town of Santiago de Cuba.

## Cuban Cuisine

As rich as its people, so too is Cuba's cuisine. Here, a fusion of African, Spanish and Caribbean ingredients and recipes meet to provide a wide variety of sumptuous dishes that simply tantalise the taste buds.

*Sandwich Cubano (Cuban Sandwich)* - Cubans love sandwiches so trying a Cuban sandwich is a must whenever possible. Perfection is the only word to describe these sandwiches. With ideal texture and taste, these Cuban buns are stacked with salsa, ham, cheese, pickles and mustard.

*Arroz y Frijoles Negros (Rice and Black Beans)* - While rice and beans are popular in the Caribbean, Arroz y Frijoles Negros served with accompanying Cuban dishes makes for a taste out of this world. This is certainly something to try when in Cuba.

*Masas de Cerdo Frita (Fried Pork Dough)* - If you're a pork lover then Masas de Cerdo Frita is guaranteed to please. Marinated in lime (sometimes orange), seasoned with salt and then fried, this simple dish's taste is certainly far from that - it is a burst of tender, juicy pork with just the right kick.

*Tamal Cubano (Cuban Tamal)* - You've probably heard of "Tamales" before and for good reason - they're quite popular in South America. Tamales in Cuba offer foodies different textures, flavours and fillings with various soups and sauces. This is another must-try in Cuba.

*Ropa Vieja (Old Clothes)* - Made with beef (can be substituted with pork) that has been previously boiled and shredded, the meat is cooked in a creamy, rich sauce of bay leaves, cumin, onions, peppers and more.

*Lechon Asado (Roasted Pork)* - Many people do roasted pork differently and this is the case from restaurants to individual homes in Cuba. What is special about the flavour profile of this dish (mostly made for holidays) is the seasonings combined with vinegar and garlic.

A lot of Cuban dishes are also accompanied by side dishes made from corn, rice, plantains, beef and eggs.

In Cuba, you are certain to feast your eyes, have many adventures, learn and explore a rich culture, all while treating your taste buds.

