

## MIAMI & HAVANA GUIDE FOR SPONSORS

as of May 2014

CGE books flights in/out of Havana through Marazul Charters. If you have charter-related problems, call Marazul at 1-800-223-5334 or 201-840-6711. Our primary agents are Luisa Sanchez (ext. 15) and Mayra Alonso (ext. 11); backup is Marazul Vice President Bob Guild (ext. 16).

Marazul issues vouchers for Cuba flights instead of tickets. These vouchers get exchanged for boarding passes at the gateway airport for the outbound flight to Cuba and at the Havana airport for return flight to the United States.

### Miami Gateway

1. Marazul's travel packet will indicate exactly where the group will check in and at what time (i.e. 4:00 am at Concourse G on World Atlantic K8). Four hours for check-in may seem ridiculous, but it can take that long for everyone to go through multiple lines and screenings and get out to the departure gate. Check-in can be complicated to find. Charter companies set up temporarily at a ticket counter right before the charter leaves. Marazul/World Atlantic may be going check-in for 2-4 different charter flights at several different ticket counters. Give a uniformed charter agent your flight number and ask if you are in the correct spot.
2. If possible, get to the area early, have the group stand together (not in any line and out of the way) in an area that is visible from the ticket counter. Identify yourself to the charter agent at the ticket counter as the leader of a group that is ready to check-in. Hand the charter agent all of the signed/dated reservation forms and a list of everyone in your group. Charters are very strict about the weight and size limits for carry-ons and checked luggage (listed on ticket vouchers). Often passengers also are asked to provide their approximate body weight. There are additional fees for checked bags and weight overage. Travel seminar participants are responsible for covering these fees, which must be paid in cash during check-in at both the Miami and Havana airports. There is a US\$20 fee to check a bag. Charter agents may obligate passengers to check a bag that they consider to be too heavy (more than 20 pounds) or too large. Be forewarned that agents have, at times, required that all roller board suitcases and any backpack larger than a daypack be checked (even though a commercial airline would allow them to be carried on). Participants should each have a US\$20 bill handy in case they are told they must check their bag. The charter company will weigh all of a passenger's carry-on and checked items (suitcase, purse, day pack, etc.) together to ensure that the **combined total is less than 44 pounds**. Overage charges are US\$2 per pound.
3. Follow the charter agent's instructions on how best to check in as a group. If the group is assembled and orderly, the agent may open a separate line just for the group. The check-in process usually has 2 steps:
  - a. LINE 1: Each participant will show their passport and Cuban visa. The charter agent will take one ticket voucher and the signed and dated Reservation Form (clipped to the front of the Marazul travel packet). Each passenger will be given Cuban immigration/customs and public health forms.
  - b. LINE 2: Each passenger's carry-on and checked luggage will be screened and weighed. Any overage will have to be paid for in cash. Then each passenger is given

- a boarding pass for the charter flight. Baggage claims may be given to each passenger or to the group leader for everyone.
4. The group then goes through the regular TSA airport security screening process and out to the departure gate. Security lines at the Miami airport, that have always been very long, are now even longer because of the federal government sequester. Please advise participants to proceed on through and then buy food near the departure gate.
  5. Once at the departure gate, **stay alert**. Recently, one CGE group was surprised when their flight loaded and departed ½ hour before its scheduled departure time because all of the passengers had checked in!
  6. The flight from Miami to Havana will be about an hour with only a beverage served. All flights are on jet aircraft, chartered by Marazul. The planes themselves may be unmarked or from another carrier.

Havana Airport Process (Jose Martí International): Upon arrival, disembark from the plane and walk to the terminal. Do not take photos as the airport is considered a secured area. Get in line to go through immigration. Ask your group members to spread out in various lines and position yourself to go through last. Try to float between the lines just in case anyone has any questions or problems. If anyone in the group runs into problems entering Cuba, drop the name of Rev. Raul Suárez, co-founder of the Martin Luther King Center and Cuban legislator.

With the exception of Carlos, your group is travelling with tourist visas that have been issued by the Cuban government. Although everyone will have a visa in hand, Cuban immigration officials make the final call whether a person will be permitted to enter the country. **If asked by Cuban authorities, group members should state that the purpose of their travel is “tourism.” The group is not enrolling in a Cuban university to study and therefore does not need student visas.** [Note: it is the U.S. government that requires that travelers to Cuba demonstrate they are there for educational purposes.] **If they are asked where they are staying in Cuba they should answer the Martin Luther King Memorial Center in Havana, since that it is the official host of your group.** The contact information is:

**Centro Memorial: “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”**  
Ave. 53 No. 9609 e/ 96 y 98 Marianao. La Habana  
☎: 260-3940 ☎: 260-9731

Everyone in your group will have to show their passport, Cuban visa, and return ticket voucher, and get their photo taken. The Cuban immigration official will take one half of the Cuban visa and tuck the other half into the passport. If members of your group want their passport stamped with a Cuban entry stamp, they will have to state that clearly to the official. **Tell folks to be very careful not to lose the second half of their Cuban visa as they will need it to exit the country.**

The next step is to go through security. This involves going through a metal detector and being wanded by person of your same gender.

After security there is a table staffed by nurses where you will turn in your completed public health form.

Next, claim checked luggage off the carousel. If porters help the group with luggage, it will be necessary to tip them about US\$1 per bag.

Advise your group to proceed to the “**Nothing to Declare**” line at Customs. Luggage is commonly inspected due to increased terrorist threats and drug trafficking around the world. It is standard practice to ask arriving passengers to line up their luggage and stand a few feet in front of their bags in a single file line. Bomb/drug dogs may be used to sniff the luggage.

**On September 1, 2012, the Cuban government instituted new customs duties. Travelers are permitted to bring 66 pounds of miscellaneous goods into Cuba without charge. Everything after that is taxed at US\$4.55/pound. The payment of import taxes is the responsibility of individual participants, and is not a CGE program expense.**

**One or two group members and/or the group leader may be picked out of the line for questioning as to what they plan to do in Cuba. Be attentive and try to help answer questions if a student is chosen for questioning. Again, this should not scare people: it is common practice in Cuba as it is in the United States.**

In the customs area, before exiting through the glass sliding door, there is a CADECA (*Casa de Cambio*) with money exchange windows. Each person should change U.S. dollars into Convertible Cuban pesos (CUC) for their spending money during the trip. They will need to show their passport to do this. It is prohibited to use U.S. dollars for transactions in Cuba. The Cuban government levies an additional 10% exchange fee for transactions from U.S. dollars into CUCs.

Before exiting through the glass sliding door, each person must give the claim ticket for their checked luggage to an agent who will verify it matches the tag on the bag.

Upon exiting the customs area, the group should stay together on the sidewalk in the waiting area that is roped off just in front of the sliding door until everyone is through customs and has changed money. Your MLK guide and CGE Trip Leader will be waiting for you there.

Once everyone is ready, you will take your luggage out to the parking lot, put it on the MLK bus, and drive approximately 20-30 minutes from the airport to the MLK Center for a welcome and orientation session.