

Guidelines for Professional Conference Travel to Cuba

There are significant restrictions on travel to Cuba for persons subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The purpose of this note is to delineate those restrictions so as to avoid problems with your travel to your professional conference, as well as after your return.

U.S. regulations governing travel to Cuba are enforced by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. There are five major groups of regulations/restrictions regarding this type of travel that you need to be aware of:

1. § 515.564 Professional meetings in Cuba – covers the conditions to be met for a general license for the travel to your conference.
Ref: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple&c=ecfr&cc=ecfr&sid=bec44afbb1d74fcd15c982f3c8d7df76&idno=31®ion=DIV1-&q1=%A7515.560&rgn=div8&view=text&node=31%3A3.1.1.1.3.5.1.58>
2. § 515.560 Travel-related transactions – covers permissible transportation to and from Cuba, living expenses in Cuba, and prohibitions on importation of Cuban merchandise.
Ref: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple&c=ecfr&cc=ecfr&sid=bec44afbb1d74fcd15c982f3c8d7df76&idno=31®ion=DIV1-&q1=%A7%20515.560&rgn=div8&view=text&node=31%3A3.1.1.1.3.5.1.54>
3. Per Diem Rates for Cuba – covers the maximum permissible per diem allowances. These limits apply irrespective of who is funding the trip.
Ref: http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem_action.asp?MenuHide=1&CountryCode=1049
4. § 501.601 Records and recordkeeping requirements – covers the records that shall be kept by the traveler, for a period of five years.
Ref: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple&c=ecfr&cc=ecfr&sid=1c6ea8716c8a6557a4e0fe1923221b06&idno=31®ion=DIV-1&q1=%A7%20501.601&rgn=div8&view=text&node=31%3A3.1.1.1.1.3.1.1>
5. § 501.602 Reports to be furnished on demand – covers the requirement for the traveler to produce transaction records on demand.
Ref: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple&c=ecfr&cc=ecfr&sid=1c6ea8716c8a6557a4e0fe1923221b06&idno=31®ion=DIV-1&q1=%A7%20501.601&rgn=div8&view=text&node=31%3A3.1.1.1.1.3.1.2>

Note that arrangements for travel to Cuba can only be made through an OFAC-authorized Travel Service Provider (“TSP”), listed at http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/cuba_tsp.pdf. Alternatively, you may make travel arrangements with a travel service provider that is located outside the United States and that is not subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

Note also that you should obtain a visa for your travel to Cuba, which is best accomplished through an authorized visa bureau. Google “Cuba visa bureau” for a list of bureaus. Processing time can be as long as four weeks.

In addition, it would be advisable travel with a letter signed by your Division Chair, on Caltech letterhead, stating that you are a faculty member at Caltech, and are authorized by Caltech to travel to Cuba for the conference. This office can provide you with guidance regarding the content of the letter once we determine the license that will be used for your travel.

The U.S. Department of State website on Cuba provides a wealth of information and tips regarding travel to Cuba – http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1097.html.

Please contact this office as early as possible to discuss your proposed travel, and for any guidance or advice. If your proposed travel does not fall under the general license, a specific license may be required, and that could take as long as eight weeks, with no guarantee of approval.