

Language

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Spanish is the official language of Cuba, and a knowledge of it is a great help in traveling around the country. Away from the hotels and tourist centers, few people speak English and then only very poorly. Despite this, many Cubans have some knowledge of English, since it's taught in primary school from grade six. Almost all museum captions in Cuba are in Spanish only.

If you speak no Spanish at all, you can always ask directions simply by pointing to the name in this guidebook. Never hesitate to try out your broken Spanish on Cubans! A Belgian reader sent us this:

Cuba really is a country where you gain a lot by being able to speak Spanish. We visited Honduras and Mexico before, and especially in Honduras, it doesn't make such a difference, as the local people are not interested in telling their views and stories (which is quite normal, I guess, when there has been so much state and military repression and when the average level of education is low). In Cuba, people are highly skilled and they have a point of view and an opinion on almost everything,

which makes it extremely interesting to be able to talk to them (and we experienced that most of them were quite willing to talk to us). I think the effort to learn Hindi before going to India might be too great, but I would recommend everybody to learn some Spanish before going to Cuba, otherwise you miss the best of the country's culture and complex reality.

Words of Arawak Indian origin that have passed into Spanish and other European languages include *barbacoa* (barbecue), *canoa* (canoe), *cigarro* (cigarette), *hamaca* (hammock), *huracán* (hurricane), *maíz* (maize), *patata* (potato) and *tabaco* (tobacco, cigar). The only commonly used words that are of African origin are generally associated with the Afro-Cuban religions, but Afro-Cuban speakers have given Cuban Spanish its rhythmical intonation and soft accent.

LEARNING SPANISH

If you don't speak Spanish, don't despair. It's easy enough to pick up the basics, and courses are available in Habana (p114) and Santiago de Cuba (p406). Alternatively, you can study books, records and tapes while you're still at home and planning your trip. These study aids are often available free at public libraries – or you might consider taking an evening or college course. For words and phrases for use when ordering at a restaurant, see Eat Your Words on p81.

Lonely Planet's *Latin American Spanish phrasebook* is a compact guide to the Spanish of the region. Another useful resource is the *University of Chicago Spanish-English, English-Spanish Dictionary*. It'll also make a nice gift for some friendly Cuban when you're about to leave the country.

PRONUNCIATION

Spanish spelling is phonetically consistent, meaning that there's a clear and consistent relationship between what you see in writing and how it's pronounced. The pronunciation guides included with all the words

CUBAN SPANISH

Cuban Spanish is rich, varied and astoundingly distinct. Slang and *dichos* (sayings) so dominate daily conversation, even native Spanish speakers sometimes get lost in the mix. Borrowing words from African languages, bastardizing English terms ('Spanglish') and adopting language from movies, marketing and sports, Cuban Spanish is constantly evolving, with new, invented words surfacing all the time. Indeed, the origins of some relatively new slang words seem to have been lost entirely. Ask a Cuban where *rickenbilli* comes from for instance (the word for those motorized bicycles you see around town), and they'll laugh and shrug. Here are some of the most common slang and colloquialisms travelers are likely to hear; see also the Glossary (p494):

asere – man, brother
bárbaro – cool, 'killer'
barro – money (dollars or pesos)
brother – as in the English word: brother
compay – brother, friend (frequently used in Oriente)
¡Coño! – frequently used exclamation akin to 'damn!'; used for good or bad things/situations
cubalse – plastic bag (in Oriente); also see nylon
dame un chance – let me pass, excuse me; literally 'give me a chance'
está en llama – it's screwed/messed up
fiana – police cruiser
fula – dollars
güüiro – party
jamaliche – food, also *jamaliche* which loosely translates as food junkie
kilo(s) – centavo(s)
la lucha – daily struggle
loca – homosexual, queen

mamey – mommy/mum, used as term of endearment for females
nylon – plastic bag
papaya – vagina; the fruit itself is called *fruta bomba* everywhere except in Oriente, where it's called *papaya*
papi – daddy, used as term of endearment for males
pepe – someone from Spain
pincha – job
pollito – pretty girl
por la izquierda – attained through the informal/black market
prieto/a – dark skinned
puto/a – gigolo/prostitute
¿Qué bolá asere? – What's happening man/brother?
¿Qué es la mecánica? – What's the process here; how does this work? (eg when buying bus tickets, entering a crowded club or renting a catamaran)
tortillera – lesbian, dyke
yuma – someone from the US

and phrases in this language guide should help you get the hang of it all.

Spanish language soap operas are probably the best vehicle for getting a grip on pronunciation – the actors tend to speak overdramatically and a lot slower than the Spanish speakers you're likely to meet on the street – it's also easy to follow the plot. Just be careful you don't get hooked!

Vowels

a as in 'father'
e as in 'met'
i as in 'marine'
o as in 'or', without the 'r' sound
u as in 'rule'; the 'u' is not pronounced after **q** and in the letter combinations **gue** and **gui**, unless it's marked with a diaeresis (eg *argüür*), in which case it's pronounced as English 'w'
y at the end of a word or when it stands alone, it's pronounced as the Spanish **i** (eg *ley*). Between vowels within a word it's as the 'y' in 'yonder'.

Consonants

While the consonants **ch**, **ll** and **ñ** are generally considered distinct letters, **ch** and **ll** are now often listed alphabetically under **c** and **l** respectively. The letter **ñ** is still treated as a separate letter and comes after **n** in dictionary listings.

b similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b larga'
c as in 'celery' before **e** and **i**; otherwise as English 'k'
ch as in 'church'
d as in 'dog'; between vowels and after **l** or **n**, it's closer to the 'th' in 'this'
g as the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch* before **e** and **i** ('kh' in our guides to pronunciation); elsewhere, as in 'go' invariably silent; worth noting if your name begins with 'h' and you're waiting for public officials to call you as the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch* ('kh' in our guides to pronunciation)
h invariably silent; worth noting if your name begins with 'h' and you're waiting for public officials to call you as the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch* ('kh' in our guides to pronunciation)
j
ll as the 'y' in 'yellow'

ñ	as the 'ni' in 'onion'
rr	very strongly rolled
v	similar to English 'b', but softer; referred to as 'b corta'
x	as in 'taxi' except for a very few words, when it's pronounced as j
z	as the 's' in 'sun'

Word Stress

In general, words ending in vowels or the letters **n** or **s** have stress on the next-to-last syllable, while those with other endings have stress on the last syllable. Thus *vaca* (cow) and *caballos* (horses) both carry stress on the next-to-last syllable, while *ciudad* (city) and *infeliz* (unhappy) are both stressed on the last syllable.

Written accents will almost always appear in words that don't follow the rules above, eg *sótano* (basement), *América* and *porción* (portion). When counting syllables, be sure to remember that diphthongs (vowel combinations, such as the 'ue' in *puede*) constitute only one. When a word with a written accent appears in capital letters, the accent is often not written, but is still pronounced.

GENDER & PLURALS

In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and there are rules to help determine gender (there are of course some exceptions). Feminine nouns generally end with **-a** or with the groups **-ción**, **-sión** or **-dad**. Other endings typically signify a masculine noun. Endings for adjectives also change to agree with the gender of the noun they modify (masculine/feminine **-o/-a**). Where both masculine and feminine forms are included in this language guide, they are separated by a slash, with the masculine form first, eg *perdido/a*.

If a noun or adjective ends in a vowel, the plural is formed by adding **s** to the end. If it ends in a consonant, the plural is formed by adding **es** to the end.

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for ...	<i>Estoy buscando ...</i>	e-stoy boos-kar-do ...
Where is ...?	<i>¿Dónde hay ...?</i>	don-de ai ...
a hotel	<i>un hotel/ una villa</i>	oon o-tel/ oo-na vee-lya
a boarding house	<i>una pensión/ residencial/ un hospedaje</i>	oo-na pen-syon/ re-see-den-syal/ oon os-pe-da-khe

MAKING A RESERVATION

To ...	<i>A ...</i>
From ...	<i>De ...</i>
Date	<i>Fecha</i>
I'd like to book ...	<i>Quisiera reservar ... (See the list under 'Accommodation' for bed/room options)</i>
in the name of ...	<i>en nombre de ...</i>
for the nights of ...	<i>para las noches del ...</i>
credit card ...	<i>tarjeta de crédito ...</i>
number	<i>número</i>
expiry date	<i>fecha de vencimiento</i>
Please confirm ...	<i>Puede confirmar ...</i>
availability	<i>la disponibilidad</i>
price	<i>el precio</i>

a youth hostel	<i>un albergue juvenil</i>	oon al-ber-ge khoo-ve-neel
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I'd like a ...	<i>Quisiera una</i>	kee-sye-ra oo-na
room.	<i>habitación ...</i>	a-bee-ta-syon ...
double	<i>doble</i>	do-ble
single	<i>individual/ para una persona</i>	een-dee-vee-dwal/ pa-ra oo-na per-so-na
twin	<i>con dos camas</i>	kon dos ka-mas

How much is it per ...?	<i>¿Cuánto cuesta por ...?</i>	kwant-to kwes-ta por ...
night	<i>noche</i>	no-che
person	<i>persona</i>	per-so-na
week	<i>semana</i>	se-ma-na

Does it include breakfast?

¿Incluye el desayuno? een-kloo-ye el de-sa-yoo-no

May I see the room?

¿Puedo ver la habitación? pwe-do ver la a-bee-ta-syon

I don't like it.

No me gusta. no me goos-ta

It's fine. I'll take it.

OK. La alquilo. o-kay la al-kee-lo

I'm leaving now.

Me voy ahora. me voy a-o-ra

full board	<i>pensión completa</i>	pen-syon kom-ple-ta
private/shared bathroom	<i>baño privado/compartido</i>	ba-nyo pree-va-do/ kom-par-tee-do
all-inclusive	<i>todo incluido</i>	to-do een-klwee-do
too expensive	<i>demasiado caro</i>	de-ma-sya-do ka-ro

cheaper discount	<i>más económico descuento</i>	mas e-ko-no-mee-ko des-kwen-to
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CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

In their public behavior, Cubans are very informal, but if you approach a stranger for information, you should always preface your question with a greeting like *buenos días* or *buenas tardes*. Cubans routinely address one another as *compañero* or *compañera* (comrade), but the traditional *señor* and *señora* are always used with foreigners. In addition, you should use only the polite form of address, especially with the police and public officials. Young people may be less likely to expect this, but it's best to stick to the polite form unless you're quite sure you won't offend by using the informal mode. The polite form is used in all cases in this language guide; where options are given, the form is indicated by the abbreviations 'pol' and 'inf'.

Hello.	<i>Hola.</i>	o-la
Good morning.	<i>Buenos días.</i>	bwe-nos dee-as
Good afternoon.	<i>Buenas tardes.</i>	bwe-nas tar-des
Good evening/night.	<i>Buenas noches.</i>	bwe-nas no-ches

Goodbye.	<i>Adiós.</i>	a-dyos
See you soon.	<i>Hasta luego.</i>	as-ta lwe-go
Bye.	<i>Chau.</i>	chow (inf)
Yes.	<i>Sí.</i>	see
No.	<i>No.</i>	no
Please.	<i>Por favor.</i>	por fa-voor
Thank you.	<i>Gracias.</i>	gra-syas
Many thanks.	<i>Muchas gracias.</i>	moo-chas gra-syas
You're welcome.	<i>De nada.</i>	de na-da
Pardon me.	<i>Perdón.</i>	per-don
Excuse me.	<i>Permiso.</i>	per-mee-so
(used when asking permission)		
Forgive me.	<i>Disculpe.</i>	dees-kool-pe
(used when apologizing)		

How are things?

¿Qué tal? ke tal

What's your name?

¿Cómo se llama? ko-mo se ya-ma (pol)
¿Cómo te llamas? ko-mo te ya-mas (inf)

My name is ...

Me llamo ... me ya-mo ...

It's a pleasure to meet you.

Mucho gusto. moo-cho goos-to

The pleasure is mine.

El gusto es mía. el goos-to es mee-o

SIGNS

Entrada	Entrance
Salida	Exit
Información	Information
Abierto	Open
Cerrado	Closed
Prohibido	Prohibited
Comisaría	Police Station
Servicios/Baños	Toilets
Hombres/Varones	Men
Mujeres/Damas	Women

Where are you from?

¿De dónde es/eres? de don-de es/eres (pol/inf)

I'm from ...

Soy de ... soy de ...

Where are you staying?

¿Dónde está alojado? don-de es-ta a-lo-kha-do (pol)

¿Dónde estás alojado? don-de es-tas a-lo-kha-do (inf)

May I take a photo?

¿Puedo sacar una foto? pwe-do sa-kar oo-na fo-to

DIRECTIONS

How do I get to ...?

¿Cómo puedo llegar a ...? ko-mo pwe-do lye-gar a ...

Is it far?

¿Está lejos? es-ta le-khos

Go straight ahead.

Siga/Vaya derecho. see-ga/va-ya de-re-cho

Turn left.

Voltée a la izquierda. vol-te-e a la ees-kyer-da

Turn right.

Voltée a la derecha. vol-te-e a la de-re-cha

I'm lost.

Estoy perdido/a. es-toy per-dee-do/a

Can you show me (on the map)?

¿Me lo podría indicar (en el mapa)? me lo po-dree-a een-dee-kar (en el ma-pa)

north	<i>norte</i>	nor-te
south	<i>sur</i>	soor
east	<i>este/oriente</i>	es-te/o-ryen-te
west	<i>oeste/occidente</i>	o-es-te/ok-see-den-te
here	<i>aquí</i>	a-kee
there	<i>allí</i>	a-ye
on foot	<i>a pie</i>	a-pye
by taxi	<i>en taxi</i>	en tak-see
by bus	<i>en autobús</i>	en ow-to-boos
avenue	<i>avenida</i>	a-ve-nee-da
block	<i>cuadra</i>	kwa-dra
street	<i>calle/paseo</i>	ka-lye/pa-se-o
beach	<i>playa</i>	pla-ya
bathing resort	<i>balneario</i>	bal-ne-a-ryo

EMERGENCIAS

Help!	<i>¡Socorro!</i>	so-ko-ro
Fire!	<i>¡incendio!</i>	een-sen-dyo
I've been robbed.	<i>Me robaron.</i>	me-ro-ba-ron
Go away!	<i>¡Déjeme!</i>	de-khe-me
Get lost!	<i>¡Váyase!</i>	va-ya-se

Call ...!	<i>¡Llame a ...!</i>	ya-me a
the police	<i>la policía</i>	la-po-lee-see-a
a doctor	<i>un médico</i>	oon-me-dee-ko
an ambulance	<i>una ambulancia</i>	oo-na-am-boolan-sya

It's an emergency.
Es una emergencia. es oo-na e-mer-khen-sya

Could you help me, please?
¿Me puede ayudar, por favor? me pwe-de a-yoo-dar por fa-vo-r

I'm lost.
Estoy perdido/a. es-toy per-dee-do/a

Where are the toilets?
¿Dónde están los baños? don-de es-tan los ba-nyos

HEALTH

I'm sick.
Estoy enfermo/a. es-toy en-fer-mo/a

I need a doctor.
Necesito un médico. ne-se-see-to oon-me-dee-ko

Where's the hospital?
¿Dónde está el hospital? don-de es-ta el os-pee-tal

I'm pregnant.
Estoy embarazada. es-toy em-ba-ra-sa-da

I've been vaccinated.
Estoy vacunado/a. es-toy va-koo-na-do/a

I'm allergic to ...
Soy alérgico/a (a) ... soy a-ler-khee-ko/a a ...

antibiotics
los antibióticos los an-tee-byo-tee-kos

peanuts
al maní al ma-nee

penicillin
la penicilina la pe-nee-see-lee-na

I'm ...
Soy ... soy ...

asthmatic
asmático/a as-ma-tee-ko/a

diabetic
diabético/a dya-be-tee-ko/a

epileptic
epiléptico/a e-pee-lep-tee-ko/a

I have ...
Tengo ... ten-go ...

altitude sickness
sorache so-ro-che

diarrhea
diarrea dya-re-a

nausea
náusea now-se-a

a headache
un dolor de cabeza oon-do-lor-de-ka-be-sa

a cough
tos tos

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak (English)?
¿Habla/Hablas (inglés)? a-bla/a-blas (een-gles) (pol/inf)

Does anyone here speak English?
¿Hay alguien que hable inglés? ai al-gyen ke a-ble een-gles

I (don't) understand.
Yo (no) entiendo. yo (no) en-tyen-do

How do you say ...?
¿Cómo se dice ...? ko-mo se dee-se ...

What does ...mean?
¿Qué quiere decir ...? ke kye-re de-seer ...

Could you please ...?
¿Puede ..., por favor? pwe-de ... por fa-vo-r

repeat that
repetirlo re-pe-teer-lo

speak more slowly
hablar más despacio a-blar mas des-pa-syo

write it down
escribirlo es-kree-beer-lo

NUMBERS

1	<i>uno</i>	oo-no
2	<i>dos</i>	dos
3	<i>tres</i>	tres
4	<i>cuatro</i>	kwa-tro
5	<i>cinco</i>	seen-ko
6	<i>seis</i>	seis
7	<i>siete</i>	sye-te
8	<i>ocho</i>	o-cho
9	<i>nueve</i>	nwe-ve
10	<i>diez</i>	dyes
11	<i>once</i>	on-se
12	<i>doce</i>	do-se
13	<i>trece</i>	tre-se
14	<i>catorce</i>	ka-tor-se
15	<i>quince</i>	keen-se
16	<i>dieciséis</i>	dye-see-says
17	<i>diecisiete</i>	dye-see-sye-te
18	<i>dieciocho</i>	dye-see-o-cho
19	<i>diecinueve</i>	dye-see-nwe-ve
20	<i>veinte</i>	vayn-te
21	<i>veintiuno</i>	vayn-tee-oo-no
30	<i>treinta</i>	trayn-ta
31	<i>treinta y uno</i>	trayn-ta ee oo-no
40	<i>cuarenta</i>	kwa-ren-ta
50	<i>cincuenta</i>	seen-kwen-ta
60	<i>sesenta</i>	se-sen-ta
70	<i>setenta</i>	se-ten-ta
80	<i>ochenta</i>	o-chen-ta
90	<i>noventa</i>	no-ven-ta

100	<i> cien</i>	syen
101	<i> ciento uno</i>	syen-to oo-no
200	<i> doscientos</i>	do-syen-tos
1000	<i> mil</i>	mil
5000	<i> cinco mil</i>	seen-ko meel
10,000	<i> diez mil</i>	dyes meel
50,000	<i> cincuenta mil</i>	seen-kwen-ta meel
100,000	<i> cien mil</i>	syen meel
1,000,000	<i> un millón</i>	oon mee-yon

QUESTION WORDS

Who?	<i>¿Quién/es?</i>	kee-en/es (sg/pl)
What?	<i>¿Qué?</i>	ke
Which?	<i>¿Cuál/es?</i>	kwál/es (sg/pl)
When?	<i>¿Cuándo?</i>	kwán-do
Where?	<i>¿Dónde?</i>	don-de
How?	<i>¿Cómo?</i>	ko-mo
How many?	<i>¿Cuántos?</i>	kwán-tos

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'm looking for (the) ...
Estoy buscando ... es-toy boos-kan-do

ATM	<i>el cajero automático</i>	el ka-khe-ro ow-to-ma-tee-ko
bank	<i>el banco</i>	el ban-ko
bookstore	<i>la librería</i>	la lee-bre-ree-a
embassy	<i>la embajada</i>	la em-ba-kha-da
exchange house	<i>la casa de cambio</i>	la ka-sa de kam-byo
general store	<i>la tienda</i>	la tyen-da
laundry	<i>la lavandería</i>	la la-van-de-ree-a
market	<i>el mercado</i>	el mer-ka-do
pharmacy/chemist	<i>la farmacia/la drogería</i>	la far-ma-sya/la dro-ge-ree-a
post office	<i>el correo</i>	el ko-re-o
supermarket	<i>el supermercado</i>	el soo-per-mer-ka-do

tourist office
la oficina de turismo la o-fee-see-na de too-rees-mo

What time does it open/close?
¿A qué hora abre/cierra? a ke o-ra a-bre/sye-ra

I want to change some money/traveler's checks.
Quiero cambiar dinero/cheques de viajero. kye-ro kam-byar dee-ne-ro/che-kes de vya-khe-ro

What is the exchange rate?
¿Cuál es el tipo de cambio? kwál es el tee-po de kam-byo

I want to call ...
Quiero llamar a ... kye-ro lya-mar a ...

airmail	<i>correo aéreo</i>	ko-re-o a-e-re-o
black market	<i>mercado (negro/paralelo)</i>	mer-ka-do ne-gro/pa-ra-le-lo
letter	<i>carta</i>	kar-ta

registered mail stamps
certificado estampillas ser-tee-fee-ka-do es-tam-pee-lyas

I'd like to buy ...
Quisiera comprar ... kee-sye-ra kom-prar ...

I'm just looking.
Sólo estoy mirando. so-lo es-toy mee-ran-do

May I look at it?
¿Puedo mirar (lo/la)? pwe-do mee-rar-(lo/la)

How much is it?
¿Cuánto cuesta? kwán-to kwes-ta

That's too expensive for me.
Es demasiado caro para mí. es de-ma-sya-do ka-ro pa-ra mee

Could you lower the price?
¿Podría bajar un poco el precio? po-dree-a ba-khar oon-po-ko el pre-syo

I don't like it.
No me gusta. no me goos-ta

I'll take it.
Lo llevo. lo ye-vo

less	<i>menos</i>	me-nos
more	<i>más</i>	mas
large	<i>grande</i>	gran-de
small	<i>pequeño/a</i>	pe-ke-nyo/a

Do you accept ...?
¿Aceptan ...? a-sep-tan ...

American dollars	<i>dólares americanos</i>	do-la-res a-me-ree-ka-nos
credit cards	<i>tarjetas de crédito</i>	tar-khe-tas de kre-dee-to
traveler's checks	<i>cheques de viajero</i>	che-kes de vya-khe-ro

TIME & DATES

What time is it?
¿Qué hora es? ke o-ra es

It's one o'clock.
Es la una. es la oo-na

It's seven o'clock.
Son las siete. son las sye-te

midnight
medianoche me-dya-no-che

noon
mediodía me-dyo-dee-a

half past two
dos y media dos ee me-dya

now	<i>ahora</i>	a-o-ra
today	<i>hoy</i>	oy
tonight	<i>esta noche</i>	es-ta no-che
tomorrow	<i>mañana</i>	ma-nya-na
yesterday	<i>ayer</i>	a-yer

Monday	<i>lunes</i>	loo-nes
Tuesday	<i>martes</i>	mar-tes
Wednesday	<i>miércoles</i>	myer-ko-les
Thursday	<i>jueves</i>	khwe-ves
Friday	<i>viernes</i>	vyer-nes

Saturday	<i>sábado</i>	sa-ba-do
Sunday	<i>domingo</i>	do-meen-go
January	<i>enero</i>	e-ne-ro
February	<i>febrero</i>	fe-bre-ro
March	<i>marzo</i>	mar-so
April	<i>abril</i>	a-breel
May	<i>mayo</i>	ma-yo
June	<i>junio</i>	khoo-nyo
July	<i>julio</i>	khoo-lyo
August	<i>agosto</i>	a-gos-to
September	<i>septiembre</i>	sep-tyem-bre
October	<i>octubre</i>	ok-too-bre
November	<i>noviembre</i>	no-vyem-bre
December	<i>diciembre</i>	dee-syem-bre

TRANSPORT

Public Transport

What time does ... leave/arrive? the bus	<i>¿A qué hora ... sale/llega?</i>	a ke o-ra ... sa-le/ye-ga
the plane	<i>el avión</i>	el a-vyon
the ship	<i>el barco/buque</i>	el bar-ko/boo-ke
the train	<i>el tren</i>	el tren

airport	<i>el aeropuerto</i>	el a-e-ro-pwer-to
train station	<i>la estación de ferrocarril</i>	la es-ta-syon de fe-ro-ka-reel
bus station	<i>la estación de autobuses</i>	la es-ta-syon de ow-to-boo-ses
bus stop	<i>la parada de autobuses</i>	la pa-ra-da de ow-to-boo-ses
luggage check room	<i>guardería/ equipaje</i>	gwar-de-ree-a/ e-kee-pa-khe
ticket office	<i>la boletería</i>	la bo-le-te-ree-a

I'd like a ticket to ...

Quiero un boleto a ... kye-ro oon bo-le-to a ...

What's the fare to ...?

¿Cuánto cuesta hasta ...? kwan-to kwes-ta a-sta ...

student's	<i>de estudiante</i>	de es-too-dyan-te
1st class	<i>primera clase</i>	pree-me-ra kla-se
2nd class	<i>segunda clase</i>	se-goan-da kla-se
single/one-way	<i>de ida</i>	de ee-da
return/round trip	<i>de ida y vuelta</i>	de ee-da ee vwel-ta
taxi	<i>taxi</i>	tak-see

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a/an ... car	<i>Quisiera alquilar ... un auto</i>	kee-sye-ra al-kee-lar ... oon ow-to
4WD	<i>un todo terreno</i>	oon to-do te-re-no

ROAD SIGNS

Acceso	Entrance
Aparcamiento	Parking
Ceda el Paso	Give way
Despacio	Slow
Dirección Única	One-way
Mantenga Su Derecha	Keep to the Right
No Adelantar/No Rebase	No Passing
Peaje	Toll
Peligro	Danger
Prohibido Aparcar/ No Estacionar	No Parking
Prohibido el Paso	No Entry
Pare/Stop	Stop
Salida de Autopista	Exit Freeway

motorbike	<i>una moto</i>	oo-na mo-to
bicycle	<i>una bicicleta</i>	oo-na bee-see-kle-ta

pickup (truck)	<i>camioneta</i>	ka-myo-ne-ta
truck	<i>camión</i>	ka-myon
hitchhike	<i>hacer botella</i>	a-ser bo-te-lya

Is this the road to (...)?

¿Se va a (...) por esta carretera? se va a (...) por es-ta ka-re-te-ra

Where's a petrol station?

¿Dónde hay una gasolinera/un grifo? don-de ai oo-na ga-so-lee-ne-ra/oon gree-fo

Please fill it up.

Lleno, por favor. ye-no por fa-vor

I'd like (20) liters.

Quiero (veinte) litros. kye-ro (vayn-te) lee-tros

diesel	<i>diesel</i>	dee-sel
leaded (regular)	<i>gasolina con plomo</i>	ga-so-lee-na kon plo-mo
petrol (gas)	<i>gasolina</i>	ga-so-lee-na
unleaded	<i>gasolina sin plomo</i>	ga-so-lee-na seen plo-mo

(How long) Can I park here?

¿(Por cuánto tiempo) Puedo aparcar aquí? (por kwan-to tyem-po) pwe-do a-par-kar a-kee

Where do I pay?

¿Dónde se paga? don-de se pa-ga

I need a mechanic.

Necesito un mecánico. ne-se-see-to oon me-ka-nee-ko

The car has broken down (in ...).

El carro se ha averiado (en ...). el ka-ro se a-ve-rya-do (en ...)

The motorbike won't start.

No arranca la moto. no a-ran-ka la mo-to

I have a flat tyre.

Tengo un pinchazo. ten-go oon peen-cha-so

I've run out of petrol.

Me quedé sin gasolina. me ke-de seen ga-so-lee-na

I've had an accident.

Tuve un accidente. too-ve oon ak-see-den-te

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

I need ... *Necesito ...* ne-se-see-to ...

Do you have ...? a car baby seat *¿Hay ...?* ai ...

un asiento de seguridad para bebés oon a-syen-to de se-goo-ree-da pa-ra be-bes

a child-minding service *un servicio de cuidado de niños* oon ser-vee-syo de kwee-da-do de nee-nyos

a children's menu *una carta infantil* oona kar-ta een-fan-teel

a creche *una guardería* oo-na gwar-de-ree-a

(disposable) diapers/nappies *pañales (de usar y tirar)* pa-nya-les de oo-sar ee tee-rar

an (English-speaking) babysitter *una niñera (de habla inglesa)* oo-na nee-nye-ra (de a-bla een-gle-sa)

formula (milk) *leche en polvo* le-che en pol-vo

a highchair *una trona* oo-na tro-na

a stroller *un cochecito* oon ko-che-see-to

Do you mind if I breast-feed here?

¿Le molesta que dé de pecho aquí? le mo-les-ta ke de de pe-cho a-kee

Are children allowed?

¿Se admiten niños? se ad-mee-ten nee-nyos



Also available from Lonely Planet: *Latin American Spanish Phrasebook*

Glossary

agropecuario – vegetable market; also sell rice, beans, fruit

aguardiente – fermented cane; literally ‘fire water’

Altos – upstairs apartment, when following an address

ama de llaves – housekeeper; see *camarera*

amarillo – a roadside traffic organizer in a yellow uniform

americano/a – in Cuba this means a citizen of any western hemisphere country (from Canada to Argentina); a citizen of the USA is called a *norteamericano/a* or *estadounidense*; see also *gringo/a* and *yuma*

Arawak – linguistically related Indian tribes that inhabited most of the Caribbean islands and northern South America

Autopista – the national highway that’s four, six or eight lanes depending where you are

abalawo – a Santería priest; also *babalao*; see also *santero*

bajos – lower apartment, when following an address

balseros – rafter; used to describe the emigrants who escaped to the US in the 1990s on homemade rafts

bárbaro – cool, killer

barbuda – bearded one, name given to Castro’s rebel army

batá – a conical two-headed drum

bici-taxi – bicycle taxi

bloqueo – Cuban term for the US embargo

bodega – stores distributing ration-card products

bohío – thatched hut

bolero – a romantic love song

botella – hitchhiking; literally ‘bottle’

cabildo – a town council during the colonial era; also an association of tribes in Cuban religions of African origin

Cachita – popular name for the Virgin of El Cobre

cacique – chief; originally used to describe an Indian chief and today used to designate a petty tyrant

cadeca – change booth

cajita – take-out meal; literally ‘small box’

caliente – hot

camarera – housekeeper or waitress (the Spanish term *criada*, which also means ‘brought up,’ is considered offensive in revolutionary Cuba); see also *ama de llaves*

camello – Metro buses in Habana named for their two humps; literally ‘camel’

compañero/a – widely used in revolutionary Cuba as a respectful term of address (in place of *señor/a*); literally ‘a revolutionary’

campesinos – people who live in the *campo*

campismo – national network of 82 camping installations, not all of which rent to foreigners

campo – countryside

canoñazo – shooting of the cannons, a nightly ceremony performed at the Fortaleza de la Cabaña across Habana harbor

carnet – the identification document that allows foreigners to pay for museums, transport (including colectivos) and theater performances in pesos

carpeta – hotel reception desk

cartelera – culture calendar or schedule, entertainment brochure

casa de la cultura – literally ‘culture house’ where music, art, theater and dance events happen

casa natal – birth house

casa particular – private houses that let out rooms to foreigners (and sometimes Cubans); all legal *casas* must display a green triangle on the door

casco histórico – historic center of a city (eg Trinidad, Santiago de Cuba)

cayo – a coral key

CDR – Comités de Defensa de la Revolución; neighborhood-watch bodies originally formed in 1960 to consolidate grassroots support for the revolution; they now play a decisive role in health, education, social, recycling and voluntary labor campaigns

central – modern sugar mill; see *ingenio*

chachachá – cha-cha; dance music in 4/4 meter derived from the rumba and mambo

Changó – the Santería deity signifying war and fire, twinned with Santa Barbara in Catholicism

chequeré – a gourd covered with beads to form a rattle

cimarrón – a runaway slave

circunvalación – a road that circumvents city centers, allowing you to drive on without plunging into the heart of urban hell

claves – rhythm sticks used by musicians

coches – carts, normally drawn by horses

coco-taxi – egg-shaped taxis that hold two to three people; also called *huevitos* (literally ‘little eggs’)

Cohiba – native Indian name for a smoking implement; one of Cuba’s top brands of cigar

cola – line, queue

colectivo – collective taxi that takes on as many passengers as possible; usually a classic American car

compañero/a – companion or partner, with revolutionary connotations

conseguir – to get, obtain

Convertibles – Convertible pesos

creyentes – believers

criadero – hatchery

criollo – Creole; Spaniard born in the Americas

c/u – *cada uno*; used in vegetable markets to denote price per unit

Cubanacán – soon after landing in Cuba, Christopher Columbus visited a Taino village the Indians called *Cubanacán*, meaning ‘in the center of the island’; a large Cuban tourism company uses the name

cuero guardia – area offering emergency services at hospitals

daiquirí – rum cocktail made with crushed ice and other ingredients, named for the Río Daiquirí, near Santiago de Cuba, where it was invented in 1899

danzón – a traditional Cuban ballroom dance colored with African influences, pioneered in Matanzas during the late 19th century

décimas – the rhyming, eight-syllable verses that provide the lyrics for Cuban *son*

diente de perro – jagged rock shelf that lines most of Cuba’s southern shore

duende – spirit/charm; used in Flamenco to describe the ultimate climax to the music

el imperio – ‘the empire’; a term used in the official Cuban media to refer to the USA, which is led by *imperialistas*

el líder máximo – ‘maximum leader’; title often used to describe Fidel Castro

el último – literally ‘the last’; this term is key to mastering Cuban queues (you must ‘take’ *el último* when joining a line and ‘give it up’ when someone new arrives)

Eleggua – the god of destiny in Cuban religions of African origin such as Santería

embalse – reservoir

encomienda – a section of land and an indigenous workforce entrusted to an individual by the Spanish crown during the early colonial era

entronque – crossroads in rural areas

espectaculares – show/extravaganza

esquina caliente – where baseball fanatics debate stats, teams, history and who’s up and who’s down; literally ‘hot corner’; also called a *peña*

fiesta campesinas – country or rural fairs

finca – farmhouse

flota – a fleet of Spanish ships

Gitmo – American slang for Guantánamo naval base

Granma – the yacht that carried Fidel and his companions from Mexico to Cuba in 1956 to launch the revolution; in 1975 the name was adopted for the province where the *Granma* arrived; also the daily newspaper

gringo/a – any Caucasian; see also *americano/a* and *yuma*

guagua – a bus

guajiro/a – a country bumpkin or hick

Guantanamera – a girl from Guantánamo Province

guaracha – a satirical song for a single voice backed by a chorus

guarapo – fresh sugarcane juice

guayabera – a pleated, buttoned men’s shirt; tropical formal-wear

guerrillero – fighter, warrior

Habanero/a – someone from Habana

herbero – seller of herbs, natural medicines and concocter of remedies; typically a wealth of knowledge on natural cures

ingenio – an antiquated term for a sugar mill; see *central*

jefe de turno – shift manager

jején(es) – sand flea(s)

jinetera – a woman who attaches herself to male foreigners for monetary or material gain; the exchange may or may not involve sex

jinetero – a male tout who hustles tourists; literally ‘jockey’

joder – to mess up, to spoil

kometa – hydrofoil

libreta – the ration booklet

loma – hill

luchar – literally ‘to struggle or fight’; used in all sorts of daily situations

M-26-7 – the ‘26th of July Movement,’ Fidel Castro’s revolutionary organization, was named for the abortive assault on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953

mambi/ses – 19th-century rebel/s fighting Spain

Mamey – delicious fleshy tropical fruit that resembles a red avocado

maqueta – scale model

maraca – a rattle used by musicians

merendero – outdoor bar; picnic spot

mirador – lookout or viewpoint

Misión Milagros – the unofficial name given to a pioneering medical program hatched between Cuba and Venezuela in 2004 that offers free eye treatment for impoverished Venezuelans in Cuban hospitals

mogote – a limestone monolith found at Viñales

mojito – cocktails made from rum, mint, sugar, seltzer and fresh lime juice

Moncada – a former army barracks in Santiago de Cuba named for General Guillermo Moncada (1848–1895), a hero of the wars of independence

moneda nacional – abbreviated to MN; Cuban pesos

mulattas – mixed race; dark color

nueva trova – philosophical folk/guitar music popularized in the late '60s and early '70s by Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés

Oriente – the region comprised of Las Tunas, Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo Provinces

orisha – a Santería deity

organipónico – urban vegetable garden

paladar – a privately owned restaurant

palenque – a hiding place for runaway slaves during the colonial era

palestino – a nickname given to people from the Oriente by those in the west

parada – bus stop

patria – homeland, country

PCC – Partido Comunista de Cuba; Cuba's only political party, which was formed in October 1965 by merging cadres from the Partido Socialista Popular (the pre-1959 Communist Party) and veterans of the guerrilla campaign

pedraplén – stone causeways connecting offshore islands to mainland Cuba

pelota – Cuban baseball

peninsular – a Spaniard born in Spain but living in the Americas

peña – musical performance or get-together in any genre: *son*, rap, rock, poetry etc; see also *esquina caliente*

período especial – the special period in a time of peace; Cuba's new economic reality post 1991

piropo – flirtatious remark/commentary

ponchero – a fixer of flat tires

pregón – a singsong manner of selling fruits, vegetables, brooms, whatever; often comic, they are belted out by *pregoneros/as*

presa – dam

puente – bridge

¿que bola? – 'what's up?' popular greeting, especially in the Oriente

quinciñera – Cuban rite of passage for girls turning 15 (*quince*), whereby they dress up like brides, have their photos taken in gorgeous natural or architectural settings and then have a big party with lots of food and dancing

ranchón – rural farm/restaurant

reconcentración – a tactic of forcibly concentrating rural populations, used by the Spaniards during the Second War of Independence

Regla de Ocha – set of related religious beliefs popularly known as Santería

resolver – to resolve or fix a problematic situation; along with *el último*, this is among the most indispensable words in Cuban vocabulary

rumba – an Afro-Cuban dance form that originated among plantation slaves during the 19th century; during the '20s and '30s, the term *rumba* was adopted in North America and Europe for a ballroom dance in 4/4 time; in Cuba today, to *rumba* simply means to 'party'

salsa – Cuban music based on *son*

salsero – *salsa* singer

Santería – Afro-Cuban religion resulting from the syncretization of the Yoruba religion of West Africa and Spanish Catholicism

santero – a priest of Santería; see also *babalawo*

Santiaguero – someone from Santiago de Cuba

sello – stamp (in a passport or on a letter)

SIDA – *síndrome de inmunodeficiencia adquirida*; AIDS

s/n – *sin número*, indicates an address that has no street number

son – Cuba's basic form of popular music that jelled from African and Spanish elements in the late 19th century

sucu-sucu – a variation of *son* music

Taino – a settled, Arawak-speaking tribe that inhabited much of Cuba prior to the Spanish conquest; the word itself means 'we the good people'

tambores – *Santería* drumming ritual

taquilla – ticket window

telenovela – soap opera

Telepunto – Etecsa (Cuban state-run telecommunications company) telephone and Internet shop/call center

temporada alta/baja – high/low season

terminal de ómnibus – bus station

tinajones – large earthenware jars particularly common in the city of Camagüey

tres – a guitar with seven strings and an integral part of Cuban *son* music

trova – traditional poetic singing/songwriting

trovador – traditional singer/songwriter

Uneac – Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba; National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists

vaqueros – cowboys

vega – tobacco plantation

VIH – *virus de inmunodeficiencia humana*; HIV

Yanquí – someone from the USA

Yoruba – an ethno-linguistic group originating in West Africa

yuma – slang for someone from the US; can be used for any foreigner; see *americano/a* and *gringo/a*

zafra – sugarcane harvest

zarzuela – operetta

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