

Cuba tourism numbers up despite US travel restrictions

By **Ronnie Lovler** on December, 5 2017 | Associations



Cuba expects to end its 2017 tourism year with 4.7 million visitors, up by at least 800,000 from the number of tourists who came to the island last year.

The rise in tourism numbers comes despite the new restrictions on travel for US citizens that were released by the Trump administration in early November.

Cuba's official news agency, *Prensa Latina* reported that as of Nov. 26, had recorded more than 4.2 million tourism arrivals and expects 500,000 more visitors through the end of December.

Of this number, more than 573,000 came from the United States in 2017, according to *Prensa Latina*, though no breakdown was provided as to how many might be Cuban-Americans.

More than 284,000 US visitors came to Cuba through the first five months of 2017, the same amount as visited in all of 2016.

Under the new rules, US citizens can only travel to Cuba as part of a group registered with the US government and on a "people-to-people" trip with an educational component.

Cuban officials expect the numbers of US visitors will drop because of the limits the US government is placing on travel to Cuba. However, North America will continue to play a big role in Cuba travel, given that more than a third of all visitors to the island come from Canada.

Nevertheless, Cuba may pick up some additional numbers from the cruise ships that are making stops in Cuba in increasing numbers. Representatives of major cruise lines met in Havana at the end of November under the auspices of the Cruise Lines International Association.

The US regulations do not restrict cruise ships from making calls at Cuba ports. However, US onboard guests may be limited as to the shore excursions in which they can participate.

Stay up-to-date on all regional industry news! Follow Duty Free Magazine on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).