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## Travel Restrictions to Cuba Affects Cruise and Other Industries

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Critics say new federal restrictions on travel to Cuba may lead to a half million fewer visitors to the island annually and small, private business owners definitely will be hurt by confusion caused by those restrictions.

In June 2017, President Donald Trump [issued a Presidential Memorandum](#), “Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba,” with the purpose of tightening sanctions on the Cuban regime. [According to the Department of the Treasury](#), the new restrictions would “help keep U.S. dollars out of the hands of Cuban military, intelligence, and security services.” Regulations, however, have yet to be drafted.

Nevertheless, those restrictions are in effect and it is estimated that up to 800,000 cruise passengers may be affected. Beginning June 5, 2019, cruise ships and most private aircraft will no longer be able to stop in Cuba and people-to-people educational travel will no longer be authorized, unless the traveler already purchased a flight or reserved accommodations. Various cruise lines are in the process of evaluating the restrictions and thinking about new strategies. This sort of exercise is not new. American visitors to Cuba have had to adapt to changes in the regulations since the 1990s, as the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations [loosened and tightened restrictions on Cuba](#).

While simple tourism for Americans has long been embargoed, there have been exceptions and the people-to-people educational exception has been a very popular one with Americans. The Trump Administration considered this exception to be “veiled tourism” and so [eliminated it](#). But other exceptions to the embargo will remain in effect, including, among others: family visits, official U.S. government business, journalistic activity, professional research and meetings, educational activities conducted by universities and the like, religious activities, humanitarian projects, and “support for the Cuban people.”

The “support of the Cuban people” exception may be the next best way to travel to Cuba. Indeed, some tour companies have already been providing these types of tours and they stand to benefit from the recent change. This [exception includes](#) individuals working with recognized human rights organizations, organizations designed to promote a peaceful transition to democracy, and individuals or NGOs that promote independent activity to strengthen civil society in Cuba. Individuals must have a full-time itinerary of meetings with local business people, artists, or others to promote these purposes. American visitors also must be prepared to [document their activities and maintain their records for five years](#).

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