

CUBANS HOPE TO EASE AMERICAN TOURISM PROBLEMS



American tourists still find it difficult to enter Cuba. Obama's promises may go some way to ease the tension.

Ever since the United States imposed a trade embargo on Cuba in the 1960's, affairs between the two countries have been tense. Despite a large number of Cubans living in the United States, the Americans have often accused the island of having an oppressive and totalitarian government. Despite the proximity of the two nations, **no direct flights** made by Americans to Cuba are allowed and travel by sea is just as difficult from neighbouring Florida. This produces the ridiculous situation whereby some Americans have to make trips costing \$550 in order to travel such a short distance. Going through Mexico or Caribbean nations is the most common way of getting around the problem. It has also been suggested that visa issues between the countries are also getting worse. It is understandable that most people would like to see a lift on the restrictions, including, it seems, Obama. In his presidential campaign, Obama made no secret of the fact that he would like to ease the tension between the USA and Cuba. Whether this happens, as most expect that Cuba must reciprocate, remains to be seen. Obama is not the only one wishing to see freedom of travel. The **Cubans strongly rely on tourism** for the island's well-being and want to see improvements from recent years.

In 2008, Cuba had a record of **2.35 million** visitors from abroad, an increase of 9.3% on the previous year. Visits from Canada, the UK, Italy and Spain were up 9%, yet there is, of course, one major and close power missing from this list. The Cubans want the number of visitors in 2009 to rise to 2.5 million and they need the intervention of the American market for this to be certain.

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