

CheapAir First to Sell Single-Purchase Cuba Flights

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The image is a screenshot of a website announcement. At the top left is the Cuban flag. To its right, the text reads "Cuba Flights are Live on CheapAir!". Below this, a paragraph says: "Wahoot! Your trip to Cuba is just clicks away. But before you commit, we want to give you a heads up about some important details:". This is followed by a bulleted list of four items: 1. Travel to Cuba from the U.S.A. is only legally permitted for 12 approved reasons, and (unfortunately) hitting the beach isn't one of them. A license is no longer required, but prior to completing your purchase you will be asked which of the authorized reasons applies for you. 2. To fly to Cuba, federal regulations require you to book separate tickets -- one from the U.S. to Mexico and another from Mexico to Cuba. Luckily, CheapAir will package it all together and let you make one seamless purchase! 3. If you are checking luggage, you will have to collect your bags in Mexico City and then re-check them on to Havana. 4. If you need to cancel or change, or if the airline initiates a schedule change, the policies and penalties of each airline will be applied separately. At the bottom of the screenshot is a green button with the text "View Flights to Cuba".

Travel booking site CheapAir.com is making a play for the Cuba market, USAToday reports.

The company says it has become the first on-line travel agency to allow U.S. travelers to book flights between the U.S. and Cuba in a single on-line transaction. The option began at 8 a.m. ET Thursday morning, when CheapAir enabled booking for flights between U.S. cities and Havana.

New travel rules enacted by U.S. President Barack Obama have broaden the opportunities for Americans to travel to Cuba under twelve special categories, excluding tourism.

"Since the rule change, we have seen a surge in search volumes for travel to Cuba," CheapAir.com CEO Jeff Klee says in a statement. "Arranging flights to Cuba is a little complicated, but it's the kind of thing we're good at and our technology platform is flexible enough to make it possible. Our team did a great job building it out in just a few weeks' time."

CheapAir's move follows the move of popular search site Kayak.com, which earlier this month began showing -- but not selling -- flight and hotel options for Cuba.

But, as CheapAir's Klee suggests, there are notable catches for those interested in booking travel to Cuba.
