

## In The News

# Akerman Client Airbnb Announces Launch of Pioneering Platform in Cuba

April 7, 2015

San Francisco-based peer-to-peer home-share pioneer and Akerman client Airbnb, Inc. last Thursday announced the expansion of its global online platform to Cuba, where more than 1,000 independent *casa particular* (Cuban-style bed and breakfast) owners will now be able to market their offerings to licensed U.S. travelers to the island.

“This important development would not have been possible before President Obama’s December 17 policy announcement,” says Akerman Cuba Practice Chair [Augusto E. Maxwell](#). “Airbnb is taking advantage of several new regulatory changes.”

According to Airbnb’s statement, around 40 percent of Cuban listings are in Havana with the remaining 60 percent in cities including Matanzas, Cienfuegos, and Santa Clara. The company says it is eager to expand its presence to other areas of the island in the coming months.

The move is consistent with longstanding U.S. policy goals toward Cuba, says Akerman Cuba Policy Consultant [Matthew Aho](#). “President Obama has long sought to promote meaningful interaction between Americans and Cubans. Our client’s platform will support this by making it easier for everyday Cubans to open their homes to American travelers.”

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[Matthew D. Aho](#)  
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Moreover, airbnb will support Cuban entrepreneurs by making it easier for Americans to stay with private hosts, says company spokesperson Molly Turner. “The service is a win-win for hosts and travelers alike because it connects the local entrepreneurial *casa particular* owners with guests looking for personalized and authentic accommodations.”

Payment mechanisms and Internet infrastructure limitations in Cuba will present an ongoing challenge say Maxwell and Aho, who recently accompanied a small airbnb team to the island, but ongoing conversations on compliance and policy issues with officials on both sides have been encouraging so far. “We are hopeful that airbnb’s groundbreaking work will pave the way for other stakeholders and Akerman clients to make further contributions to the process of bilateral normalization.”

To read more on this historic announcement, please see the following:

*Miami Herald*: “U.S.-based Airbnb adding private Cuban homes to listings”

*Wall Street Journal*: “Airbnb Begins Offering Accommodations in Cuba”

*Washington Post*: “Airbnb to Cuba in major US business expansion”