

CUBA 2006 by Jean-Emmanuel Chevy

In July 2006, we spent 3 weeks vacationning and travelling all over Cuba with a rental car. I really encourage people who love cars from the 50s and contacts with the population to visit this unique country, by themselves and using the Cuban equivalent of B&B, called "casa particular". I believe Cuba is the largest country in the world where you may not see any car registered in another one (apart from Guantanamo Bay, but is it Cuba ?..). I just saw several trucks or buses donated by Spain, France, Italy or Netherlands, with the current Cuban registration and the former one.



Cuba current serie of plates was issued in 2002 and I saw only one car with the former system plate. As Havana city (H as first letter) has much more cars than in any of the 15 other provinces, the second letter denoting the status of the vehicle :

- D, E, F and now G or H for private vehicles (black on yellow) : maximum seen HGY 409 as pictured
- R and now S for private motorcycles and "cocotaxis" (black on yellow) : such as HSB over 3 digits
- S, T, U, V and now W for state owned vehicles (white on blue), such as HWC (123)
- Z and now Y for state owned motorcycles (white on blue) : for instance HYB over 058 picture.
- K for foreign owned vehicles and motorcycles (black on orange), with a third letter up to H for cars (see HKH 437 picture) and R for motorcycles, such as HKR over 696 picture. Cuban people call these foreign people living in Cuba "Etchekistas", from the way you pronounce HK in spanish ! (I didn't mentionned any KK(A) plates for press vehicles).

Another similar serie : These plates are black on orange, with AB or AC as second and third letter, and look like semi official plates, such as HAC123 from Havana or AAB 004 from Ciego de Avila.



- A (and no B) as second letter for joint venture company vehicules, with a third letter from F to L (white on beige) : minimum seen in Camaguey province CAF 068 maximum seen HAL (123)

- and AA as second and third letters for government ministers (and provincial officials), such as HAA 161, the maximum seen in Havana, and also MAA 001 seen in Matanzas province, and AAA 001 and AAA 003 seen in Ciego de Avila province.

In this format, and in addition to these types, I confirm (as mentioned in the Eu 138 newsletter) that Cooperativa plates, mostly on trucks, are now quite common in most provinces (not in Havana city). All of them have the province code followed by BM and are white on light orange.



Letters I, Q and O are never used as second letter, and K, I, Q and O are never used as third letter.

Provisional plates are white on red, with a P suffix. I saw a motorcycle plate (S00 over 003 picture) in the Sancti Spiritus province, and M00 over 023 in Matanzas, without any P suffix.

Tourist plates are very common, such as my T16856 car plate or this motorcycle T00 over 412 picture (white on dark red).

I saw all types of diplomatic cars, such as this 060001 consular plate (Dominica), white on black, and also a motorcycle plate that I could not photograph (I believe 010 over 001).



Police vehicle have large digits, sometimes directly painted on the vehicle, but in addition to RPW4 police plates in other provinces than Habana show a smaller size suffix for the province, such as 595u seen in Santiago de Cuba. I also saw two small police truck with 4 digits instead of 3 usually, such as 1499 in Havana.



Vehicle belonging to the ministry of the Interior (MIN INT), are the only ones in the regular format (no motorcycle seen) with black letter instead of white, such as F15066 from Cienfuegos. Even if the Army (FAR) plates have the same green background as the MININT plates, and often an F prefix for FAR, army vehicle have no front plate and are white on green. Army plates always start with F, A, B or C prefix, and as I travelled from west to east, I think that B is the prefix for the former Occidental province, C for the former Central province and A for the former Oriente province. I also spotted several trailer army plates with an R suffix.



Agricultural tractors have very small, not painted, aluminum plates on the front of the vehicle, sch as this one from Pinar del Rio (P).

Finally, I mentionned that firemen vehicle usually have no plate at all, but this only one I spotted in Santiago de Cuba, U-828, most probably unofficial



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