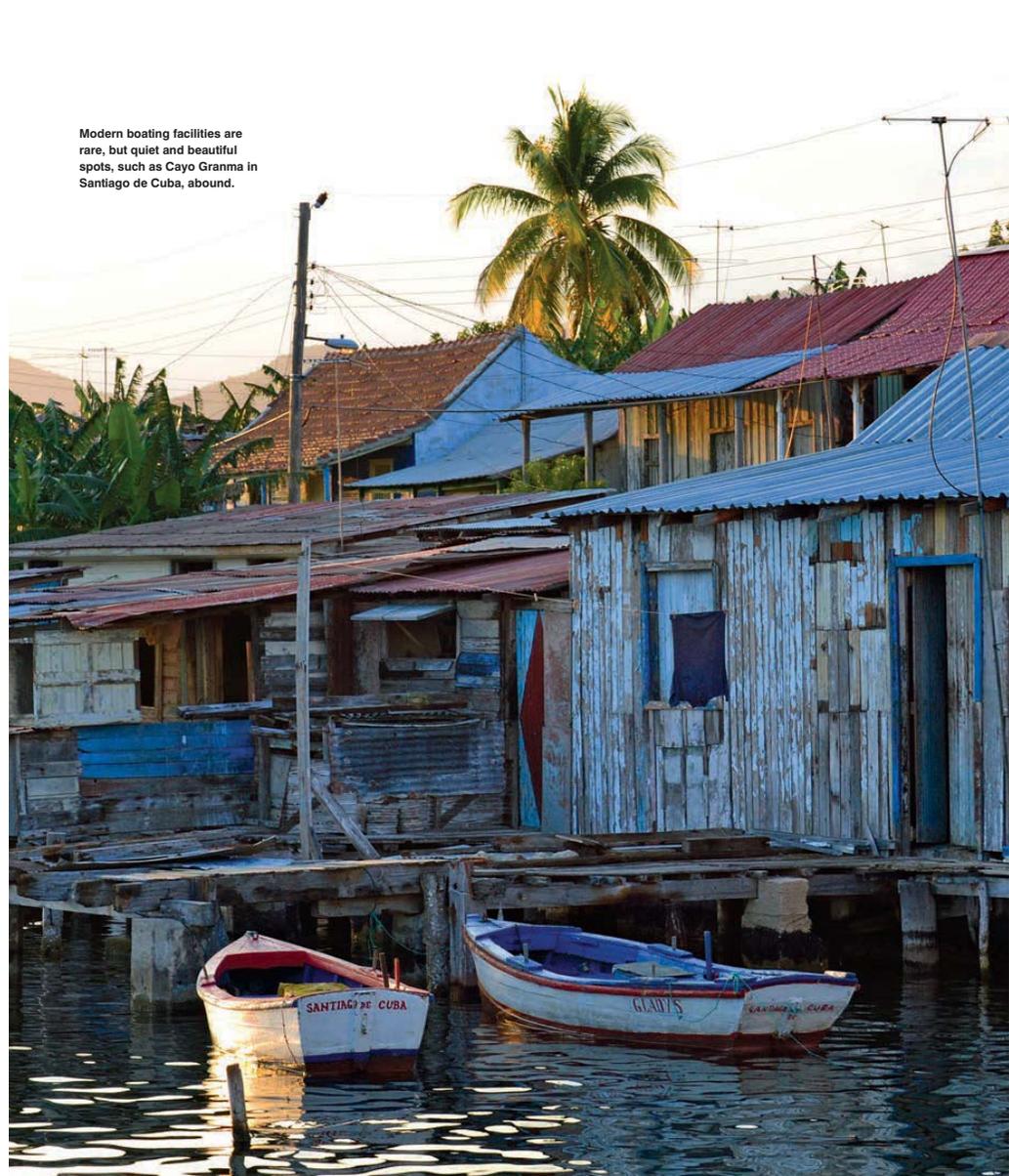


Modern boating facilities are rare, but quiet and beautiful spots, such as Cayo Granma in Santiago de Cuba, abound.



Cruise to **CUBA?** Maybe *mañana*

The boating ban remains unaffected by President Obama's new travel policy, but changes are coming

By Stephen Blakely

Photos by Cheryl Barr

Now that President Obama has moved to re-establish full diplomatic relations with Cuba and eased the embargo against visiting this long-forbidden Caribbean island, will Americans finally be able to cruise there legally in their own boats?

After a half-century of "no," the answer is still no. For American cruisers, the regulatory blockade of Cuba remains unaffected by the president's actions, even though it has been significantly reduced — but not eliminated — for visitors who arrive by air. That means the potential penalties for taking your boat to Cuba without a special permit remain in effect: possible confiscation of the vessel, fines of as much as \$10,000 and up to 10 years in jail. For good measure, U.S. law also prohibits American insurance carriers from providing coverage to boats in Cuban waters.

"Nothing has changed for recreational boaters and Cuba today, and we don't know when it's going to change," says Scott Croft, a spokesman for BoatUS. "The overall message is: Hold off — not yet."

Enforcement of the boating restrictions tends to vary with the political party in the White House. Democrats generally favor engagement and commerce as the way to end the communist government in Cuba. Republicans usually push isolation and embargo. The Coast Guard patrols the 93 miles of water between the two estranged countries, mainly to catch drug runners and Cubans fleeing the island, but boaters can be stopped, as well.