

US-Cuba culture trips back on as licenses renewed

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MIAMI (AP) — Travel companies say they are getting permits once again to take Americans on cultural trips to Cuba after the U.S. government tightened requirements over complaints that the tours were skirting a ban on outright tourism to the Communist island.

At least 20 have been granted a month after U.S. travel companies reported delays in processing their so-called people-to-people licenses for legal group travel to Cuba.

Travel operators say they have kept most of their itineraries intact, but some have added additional programming and eliminated others after Florida's Cuban-American Sen. Marco Rubio criticized the programs as essentially being cover-ups for tourism.

The Obama administration reinstated the licenses over a year ago, allowing organizations to take U.S. citizens to the forbidden island for educational activities that promote contact with ordinary Cubans.