

Preface

When I read these notes for the first time, they were not yet in book form and I did not know the person who had written them. I was much younger then and I identified immediately with this man who had narrated his adventures in such a spontaneous way. Of course, as I continued reading, I began to see more clearly who this person was and I was very glad to be his daughter.

It is not my aim to tell you anything of what you will discover as you read, but I do not doubt that when you have finished the book you will want to go back to enjoy some passages again, either for the beauty they describe or the intensity of the feelings they convey.

There were moments when I literally took over Granado's place on the motorbike and clung to my dad's back, journeying with him over the mountains and around the lakes. I admit there were some occasions when I left him to himself, especially at those times when he writes so graphically things I would never talk about myself. When he does, however, he reveals yet again just how honest and unconventional he could be.

To tell you the truth, I should say that the more I read, the more in love I was with the boy my father had been. I do not know if you will share these sentiments with me, but while I was reading, I got to know the young Ernesto better: the Ernesto who left Argentina with his yearning for adventure and his dreams of the great deeds he would perform, and the young man who, as he discovered the reality of our continent, continued to mature as a human being and to develop as a social being.

Slowly we see how his dreams and ambitions changed. He grew increasingly aware of the pain of many others and he allowed it to become a part of himself.

The young man, who makes us smile at the beginning with his absurdities and craziness, becomes before our eyes increasingly sensitive as he tells us about the complex indigenous world of Latin

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America, the poverty of its people and the exploitation to which they are submitted. In spite of it all, he never loses his sense of humor, which instead becomes finer and more subtle.

My father, *'ése, el que fue'* ('myself, the man I used to be'), shows us a Latin America that few of us know about, describing its landscapes with words that color each image and reach into our senses, so that we too can see the things his eyes took in.

His prose is fresh. His words allow us to hear sounds we have never heard before, infusing us with the surroundings that struck this romantic being with their beauty and their crudity, yet he never loses his tenderness even as he becomes firmer in his revolutionary longing. His awareness grows that what poor people need is not so much his scientific knowledge as a physician, but rather his strength and persistence in trying to bring about the social change that would enable them to live with the dignity that had been taken from them and trampled on for centuries.

This young adventurer with his thirst for knowledge and his great capacity to love shows us how reality, if properly interpreted, can permeate a human being to the point of changing his or her way of thinking.

Read these notes of his that were written with so much love, eloquence and sincerity, these notes that more than anything else make me feel closer to my father. I hope you enjoy them and that you can join him on his journey.

If you ever have the opportunity to follow his footsteps in reality, you will discover with sadness that many things remain unchanged or are even worse, and this is a challenge for those of us who – like this young man who years later would become Che – are sensitive to the reality that so mistreats the most wretched among us, those of us who have a commitment to helping create a world that is much more just.

I shall leave you now with the man I knew, the man I love intensely for the strength and tenderness he demonstrated in the way he lived.

Enjoy your reading! Ever onward!

Aleida Guevara March

July 2003

Preface to the First Edition

Ernesto Guevara's travel diaries, transcribed by Che's Personal Archive in Havana,* recount the trials, vicissitudes and tremendous adventure of a young man's journey of discovery through Latin America. Ernesto began writing these diaries when, in December 1951, he set off with his friend Alberto Granado on their long-awaited trip from Buenos Aires, down the Atlantic coast of Argentina, across the *pampas*, through the Andes and into Chile, and from Chile northward to Peru and Colombia and finally to Caracas.

These experiences were later rewritten by Ernesto himself in narrative form, offering the reader a deeper insight into Che's life, especially at a little known stage, and revealing details of his personality, his cultural background and his narrative skill – the genesis of a style which develops in his later works. The reader can also witness the extraordinary change which takes place in him as he discovers Latin America, gets right to its very heart and develops a growing sense of a Latin American identity, ultimately making him a precursor of the new history of America.

Aleida March
Che's Personal Archive, Havana, Cuba, 1993

* Now the Che Guevara Studies Center of Havana, Cuba.



Map of *The Motorcycle Diaries*

Itinerary of The Motorcycle Diaries

Argentina

1951

December Córdoba to Buenos Aires

1952

January 4	Leave Buenos Aires
January 6	Villa Gesell
January 13	Miramar
January 14	Necochea
January 16–21	Bahía Blanca
January 22	En route to Choele Choel
January 25	Choele Choel
January 29	Piedra del Águila
January 31	San Martín de los Andes
February 8	Nahuel Huapí
February 11	San Carlos de Bariloche

Chile

February 14	Take the <i>Modesta Victoria</i> to Peulla
February 18	Temuco
February 21	Lautaro
February 27	Los Ángeles
March 1	Santiago de Chile
March 7	Valparaíso
March 8–10	Aboard the <i>San Antonio</i>
March 11	Antofagasta
March 12	Baquedano

Itinerary of The Motorcycle Diaries

March 13–15	Chuquicamata
March 20	Iquique (and the Toco, La Rica Aventura and Prosperidad Nitrate Companies)
March 22	Arica

Peru

March 24	Tacna
March 25	Tarata
March 26	Puno
March 27	Sail on Lake Titicaca
March 28	Juliaca
March 30	Sicuaní
March 31–April 3	Cuzco
April 4–5	Machu Picchu
April 6–7	Cuzco
April 11	Abancay
April 13	Huancarama
April 14	Huambo
April 15	Huancarama
April 16–19	Andahuaylas
April 22–24	Ayacucho to Huancallo
April 25–26	La Merced
April 27	Between Oxapampa and San Ramón
April 28	San Ramón
April 30	Tarma
May 1–17	Lima
May 19	Cerro de Pasco
May 24	Pucallpa
May 25–31	Aboard <i>La Cenepa</i> sailing down Río Ucayali, a tributary of the Amazon
June 1–5	Iquitos
June 6–7	Aboard <i>El Cisne</i> sailing to the leper colony of San Pablo

Itinerary of The Motorcycle Diaries

June 8–20

San Pablo

June 21

Aboard the *Mambo-Tango* raft on the
Amazon

Colombia

June 23–July 1

Leticia

July 2

Leave Leticia by plane

July 2–10

Bogotá

July 12–13

Cúcuta

Venezuela

July 14

San Cristóbal

July 16

Between Barquisimeto and Corona

July 17–26

Caracas, where Che and Alberto
separate

United States

Late July

Miami

Argentina

August

Che returns to his family in Córdoba

