



Traveling With Che Guevara: The Making of a Revolutionary

Alberto Granado , Lucía Álvarez de Toledo

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Published for the first time in the U.S.—one of the two diaries on which the movie *The Motorcycle Diaries* is based—the moving and at times hilarious account of Che Guevara and Alberto Granado's eight-month tour of South America in 1952.

In 1952 Alberto Granado, a young doctor, and his friend Ernesto Guevara, a 23-year-old medical student from a distinguished Buenos Aires family, decided to explore their continent. They set off from Cordoba in Argentina on a Norton 500cc motorbike and traveled through Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela. The duo's adventures vary from the suspenseful (stowing away on a cargo ship, exploring Incan ruins) to the comedic (falling in love, drinking, fighting...) to the serious (volunteering as firemen and at a leper colony). They worked as day laborers along the way—as soccer coaches, medical assistants, and furniture movers. The poverty and exploitation of the native population started the process that was to turn Ernesto—the debonair, fun-loving student—into Che, the revolutionary who had a profound impact on the history of several nations.

Originally published in Spanish in Cuba in 1978, the first English translation was published by Random House UK in 2003. The movie, based on Granado's and Che's diaries, directed by Walter Salles (*Central Station*, *Behind the Sun*), was produced by Robert Redford and others. Shown at the Sundance Film Festival, it generated great reviews and a frenzied auction for distribution rights, which was won by Focus Features. Granado, now 82, was a consultant to Salles during the production. 10 b/w photos.

Traveling With Che Guevara: The Making of a Revolutionary Details

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Emma Cornelius says

Traveling with Che Guevara is the diary written by Alberto Granado while on his journey across South America alongside Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, for whom this journey would mark the beginning of his transformation into a revolutionary. 'The Motorcycle Diaries' is the diary written by Che, and should most likely be read first. However, Traveling with Che Guevara is a great account in its own right, and gives insight into Ernesto's personality and evolution into a revolutionary that not even his own diary could pinpoint. Not only this, it lets those curious about their journey relive it through the eyes of someone other than Ernesto.

In contrast with the Motorcycle Diaries, the translation of this book seems rougher and less true to the meaning of Alberto's words in parts. As well as this, Ernesto's version is much more poetic and his writing more elaborate. Traveling with Che is a diary based mostly on day to day accounts of the long-awaited journey in which Granado finally gets to live his dream: to travel his continent on his own terms, seeing the two sides of the coin: the injustice that occurs through exploitation of the poor against the backdrop of a beautiful landscape.

Aswath Narayanan says

Two sides of a coin

Heads refer to beautiful, fertile, rich with minerals South American landscapes.

Tails mean western or elitist exploitation of those resources that leave the natives in poverty.

((Seeing Heads always dominating the tails the Revolution Begins))

This book is about the two young travelers (Granado & fuser) who is traveling to the most of the Latin America, this book is full of adventures, they travel by all kind of possible ways, but the interesting part is the view on Ernesto. how he was in his young age & his views on the world which made a transformation as a revolutionary personality.

Jessica Lu says

It was a good read of a young man's big dream trip diary. Not just because of his good job done on recording the scenery, people, event and thoughts on the way... It was about his companion, Che Guevara, and about the beautiful and mystic western of Latin America! It inspired me a lot for a tour there myself!

Che Guevara of course has been a controversial political figure. He is the symbol of Latin American forever young rebelling revolutionary. Also he was accused as a radical ideologist, a guerrilla fighter and a cold blooded executor (I think the CIA did a good job criminalizing him)... This dairy serves well as a profile description of how this medical student, keen sportsman and widely read intellect was shaped into a fighter for others to undo the injustice of foreign exploitation and dictatorship. The world he saw changed him, thus he then changed the world.

After reading this book, I also watched several documentaries on Che's biography and one movie "Cuba" about his involvement in Cuba revolution. He was truly an extraordinary person... His words are still pondering in my thought: "The true revolution is guided by love... love of humanity, justice and truth. Without the love, it is never an authentic revolution."

Paul says

The first half of this book was a bit hard to get through as Granado's writing was so....bad? I suppose he was just beginning to try his hand and writing, and of course it was a somewhat random and ad hoc style that he probably thought no one would ever be reading. And of course, it had been translated. However, as the book/journal continues, Granado is able to capture and share the thoughts and experiences that helped to shape the philosophy and motivations of Che. I especially enjoyed the latter chapters and the chronology at the end of the book that summarizes the major events in both Granado's and Che's life. Reading this has made me want to learn more about Che and his work.

Jonny says

If you're looking for a glimpse into the making of Che Guevara, then this is arguably the best option, even more so than Che's own documentation of this journey in his Motorcycle Diaries.

However, this is by no means a political work, and anyone interested in true, amusing, life-changing travel stories should enjoy this, regardless of background knowledge on Guevara, or opinion of him.

Granado was able to edit this book to show the relevant moments in their journey that would eventually lead Guevara to Marxism, whereas Che was unfortunately not able to add to his diaries, making this a far better account of their journey through Latin America, which is made yet more enjoyable by Alberto Granado's humourous observations and wit.

DPaola G says

Un viaje a la triste realidad de nuestro continente, el dolor y las alegrías de nuestra historia. "...mi casa rodante tendrá dos patas otra vez y mis sueños no tendrán fronteras, hasta que las balas digan al menos. Te espero, gitano sedentario, cuando el olor a pólvora amaine."

Che

Joseph says

Once again I've had one of those adventures that are only possible when you make your dreams come true.
~ Alberto Granado

Traveling with Che Guevara: The Making of a Revolutionary by Alberto Granado is the diary that The Motorcycle Diaries was based. Granado (August 8, 1922 – March 5, 2011) was an Argentine–Cuban biochemist, doctor, writer, and scientist. He was also the youthful friend and traveling companion of revolutionary Che Guevara during their 1952 trip around Latin America, and later founded the Santiago School of Medicine in Cuba.

Traveling cross-continent was a challenge in the early 1950s, especially on a British motorcycle. Granted their Norton was more dependable than the Triumphs I rode years later, but that really isn't saying too much. Granado documents his trip with Che Guevara from Argentina, Chile, skirting Bolivia, into Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. Of course, the diary is full of the problems encountered, good times, bad times, and the people they met. There are contrasts between the new industrial areas and the beauty of the natural land.

One thing that jumps out at the reader is the undertone of the book is the class system and exploitation. They visit a huge mine in Chile where the workers are poor, but the foreigners operating the mine make a fortune. There is a division between the landed and the workers. At tea harvest time, land owners put out hiring notices and people flooded in for the work. With the glut of labor, landowners auctioned off jobs to those willing to take the lowest wages. It is this treatment of the people that turned Che against the foreign capitalist and rich landowners. This became Che's calling in life.

...the best and most generous of Chile is in its ordinary people, that we hadn't been wrong in choosing the poor over the rich and the revolutionary over the reactionary.

This was a life changing trip for Che. Without it he may have become just another drone in the society that that was growing apart. Che is condemned by the West as would be expected by someone who openly opposed their system. He remains a hero to the poor and underclass in Latin America. Differing and passionate accounts from both camps keep Che's life in controversy. No matter which side the reader occupies, the story is well worth reading. The accounts of the trip are entertaining and informative. This diary was originally printed in Spanish in 1978. It wasn't until the Cold War and the threat of communism were long over before it was published in English in 2003. With the normalizing of relations with Cuba, it will be interesting to see if many more Spanish language books on the struggle in Latin America will make it into English.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

This is a diary Alberto Granado kept during a seven month road trip with Ernesto Guevara in 1952. They started out in Buenos Aires, crossed over to Chile, and worked their way up the Pacific coast of South America, then into the Amazon and eventually up to Caracas, Venezuela. Although they did manage to have a lot of fun, this wasn't a lark like you'd expect from two buddies in their twenties. They had specific goals of observing social injustice and caring for lepers. They traveled with almost no money and had to rely on the generosity and good will of the people they met along the way. Sometimes they went days without food, and often had nowhere to sleep.

Alberto was an M.D. and Ernesto was a doctor in training, so they visited several leprosariums for extended stays, caring for the patients and observing how the places were operated. Both had a strong desire for social change, so they also visited several mining operations and other industries to observe how the local people were being exploited to fatten Yankee wallets. It's interesting, as an American, to see capitalism described so unflatteringly, but it really is exploitation. Millions of peons slaving away so a limited few can be obscenely rich. Too bad the other systems are no better.

This was pretty interesting for amateur travel writing that was not originally intended for publication. The second half was more interesting. I especially liked the part where they traveled down the Amazon. They built a raft and floated it like a couple of Argentinian Huck Finns!!

Julian Schlaen says

Un viaje épico por Latinoamérica con muchos contratiempos, y una lectura muy entretenida y ligera. Si ya viste la película "Diarios de Motocicleta" vas a conocer la mayoría de las situaciones que van a vivir los dos personajes del libro, sin embargo, dado que se trata de un diario de viaje real, lo más interesante son las anotaciones y opiniones que Alberto Granado va dejando regadas en el relato.

Ed Terrell says

The storyline is a 5, and does nothing but increase my admiration for two young doctors who take a trip to visit leper colonies throughout South America leaving their well to do friends and families behind. Between sipping mate and drinking the local alcoholic beverage of choice, their story is pegged by a Norton motor cycle and by mostly free hitching hiking across the pampas, deserts and mountain ranges. Hardly fun, but a life changing event and one that spawned one of the worlds greatest revolutionaries.

Tito Quiling, Jr. says

Bicycles were the preferred mode of transportation in Anne Mustoe's pilgrimage in Amber, Furs and Cockleshells: Bike Rides with Pilgrims and Merchants and in the cross-country ride shown in Tim Cope's and Chris Hatherly's Off The Rails. In an upgraded version, going on a motorcycle allows a traveler to go faster due to the inclusion of mechanical assistance, however, just like every vehicle, it also falls into disrepair after some time. And with that, one must exhaust every mile that your preferred means of transportation can do.

I loved the film *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) by Walter Salles because of the rawness of the characters and of course, the spirit of adventure that the film has althroughout. This film is based on the memoir written by Guevara himself when he made the life-changing trip with Granado, whose diary also inspired the film.

In **Traveling with Che Guevara: The Making of a Revolutionary** (2004) by Alberto Granado, as translated by Lucia Alvarez de Toledo, the dynamic duo of Granado and Ernesto "Che" Guevara gets on a Norton motorcycle and goes through South America --- from Peru to Venezuela, Argentina to Chile, to learn about its diverse culture, specifically, to meet various personalities that are often unheard and generalized at the time. Both come from a medical background, and probably their main research is thus concerned with those people afflicted with leprosy. With the chance to visit a number of hospitals and leprosaria, Granado and Guevara witnessed how bleak the conditions that these people are in, not to mention the lack of stability in terms of observation and continued support by the government in certain places.

Aside from their medical journey, they are also exposed to the unfair treatment of local government units as influenced by the prevalent dictatorial nature of the countries that they have been to, which also includes racism -- the Europeans and half-castes on the Indians and locals. While the bulk of their travels consisted of having to deal with unruly souls and Guevara's bouts of asthma, the people they have met along the way made their 7-month journey worth it and the bond that they shared has concretized their friendship, one that will transcend countries and time. The trip eventually starts Guevara's revolutionary statement of using radical means to overcome economic inequalities and social injustices. Overall, one can only wish (and hopefully realize) that having a true sense of camaraderie is finding treasure in itself.

Rick Brindle says

Alberto Granado's account of the South American road trip he made with Ernesto Guevara. I read it in tandem with Ernesto's book, and was struck by the different approaches. Alberto is much more serious, reflective, and it's interesting to see how the two different people viewed the same events. Very profound reading, and gives great insights into how some experiences can shape your whole life.

Cynda says

Che Guevara's companion Alberto Granado, who was junior doctor and Guevara who was a medical student travelled South American educating prpfessional leprologists about new preventative actions in controlling the spread of leprosy. Most of the time, their presence and guidance was appreciated. Not always. Once they were kicked out of their accommodations for educating the experienced dcotr in the field. Oh well.... On to other adventures.

Interesting side note: Che Guevara ca,e from a middle-class family. I wonder why they never got allergy shots? Seems that the connection between allergies and asthma was not as commonly known as now.....Just like the leprologists didn't ways know and mostly were willing to try now preventative measures?

Read this book for my "What does it Mean to be Hispanic" reading thread. Political revolt is an important aspect of any group's history. So I wanted to see how Che Guevara became Che Che Guevara.

Daniel says

Norton motorcycles are not very reliable. But like all well-constructed finely tuned machines (and men), when they are running well, they are things of glorious power and beauty.

26 March 2009

The guys finished their trip.

One of my favorite bits was when they were led into the Amazon to be engaged in a monkey hunt with some Indians, then a banquet of roasted monkey, which didn't sit well with Granado.

Then their raft trip on the Amazon - reminds one of "Aguirre" - and how Che made a difficult swim across the Amazon, just to say he'd done it.

Travel expands the mind, but didn't change these dude's politics. Just confirmed their socialist tendencies. South America rife with cruel capitalistic examples that would turn any conservative towards the way of the people.

Matt says

Alberto Granado's diary of his 7-month trip across South America with Ernesto-before-he-was-"Che" Guevara. It was a good, but not-quite-as-enticing a read as I would've thought, for a couple big reasons.

For one, the duo's trip seemed much more reinforcing rather than formative of their worldview (singular not plural – as far as I can remember, Granado and Guevara always seem to have the same ideas). It seems like their trip confirms what they already know, whereas I was more interested in seeing an evolution in that respect. Secondly, the political opinions almost always seemed to the negative – eg, what institutions don't work, what systems deserve to be overthrown, etc – than specific about what these new institutions would actually look like. That point notwithstanding, Granado's descriptions give the reader very true insight into the rationale behind the politics, as the pair has reoccurring encounters with miserable working conditions, corrupt officials and soldiers, and ill-staffed hospitals and leper sanctuaries. True to the Marxist narrative, even the Church is negatively featured in a short scene or two.

On a different level though, seeing the human side – from chronic asthma attacks to chasing women at parties – of such a polarizing figure as Guevara was interesting in itself.
