

# Ernesto Che Guevara

## The Motorcycle Diaries



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*The Motorcycle Diaries*

'An extraordinary first-person account. If the world eventually came to know Che Guevara and his New Man, in *The Motorcycle Diaries* we see the formative man. It redoubles his image and lends a touch of humanity with enough rough edges to invite controversy' *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

'It's about a journey of discovery that becomes one of self-discovery as well. It's about the emotional and political choices we have to make in life. It's also about finding friendship, about solidarity. Finally, it's about finding one's place in the world – one that is worth fighting for' Walter Salles, director of *The Motorcycle Diaries*

'A journey, a number of journeys. Ernesto Guevara in search of adventure, Ernesto Guevara in search of America, Ernesto Guevara in search of Che. On this journey of journeys, solitude found solidarity, "I" turned into "we"' Eduardo Galeano

'*Das Kapital* meets *Easy Rider*' *The Times*

'There is pathos in these pages – the pathos of Che himself, ever thoughtful, ever willing to sacrifice all, burning with guilt over his own privileges and never letting his sufferings impede him' *New Yorker*

'What distinguishes these diaries . . . is that they reveal a human side to El Che which historians have successfully managed to suppress. It is in the pages of this breathless journal that one senses El Che's belief that determination and conviction can be enough to change one's self and others . . . a joy to read from start to finish' *Financial Times*

'This journey was obviously the formative influence on Che's Pan-Americanism and the development of his revolutionary consciousness . . . There's political incorrectness galore . . . this book should do much to humanize the image of a man who found his apotheosis as a late '60s cultural icon. It is also, incidentally, a remarkably good travel book about South America' *Scotsman*

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernesto Che Guevara was born into a wealthy family in Argentina in 1928 and trained as a doctor, but became radicalized by the poverty and hunger he witnessed in South America. He played a key role in the Cuban revolution and served in Fidel Castro's government. He then travelled to Bolivia to lead the rebellion there, where he was executed by the Bolivian and US forces in 1967. In 1997 his remains were discovered and returned to Cuba, where he was reburied.

ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

*The Motorcycle Diaries*



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Penguin  
Random House  
UK

This translation first published by Ocean Press 2003  
First published in Penguin Classics 2021  
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Preface copyright © Aleida March, 2003  
Translation copyright © Che Guevara Studies Center, 2003

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Set in 10.5/13pt Dante MT Std  
Typeset by Jouve (UK), Milton Keynes  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,  
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-46510-3

[www.greenpenguin.co.uk](http://www.greenpenguin.co.uk)



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## *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

*Preface*

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	Sicuani
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 <i>Mambo-Tango</i> 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
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Argentina

August	Che returns to his family in Córdoba
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