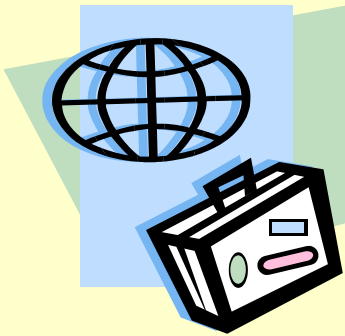




What Travel Writers Say Newsletter

www.whattravelwriterssay.com

Outward Bound: Mike Keenan



May 2-10, I was in Cuba, one of many journalists from as far away as Russia, Japan and Australia, travelling aboard Chinese-made busses and accessing most of Cuba's 14 provinces.

I'm was invited to The International Tourism Fair, the most important event in the Cuban tourism industry's calendar now that tourism is the country's main industry with sugar derived from thick, heavy cane, slipping to number two. We travelled efficiently in a four-bus cavalcade with motorcycle cops leading the way, my first impersonation of a VIP. I empathized for Cuban drivers rudely forced off the two-lane road so we could speed ahead, unimpeded.

Everywhere, I witnessed queues of people lined up along the roads, day and night. When vehicles pass, they extend their arms and vehicles that are not full are required to stop and pick up those whom they can. Apparently, the option is

Please see *Outward Bound* on page 2

*I travel not to go
anywhere, but to go.*

Robert Louis Stevenson

Focus on Cuba

Sitting by Gate C-27 in Toronto's International Airport, the plane arrives that will ferry me to Cuba for the first time. At the exit ramp, I notice behaviour that automatically distances Cuba from North America. Cuban Airline staff, pilot, co-pilot, stewards, and stewardesses exhibit broad smiles and wave grand hellos to the fresh crew waiting to embark. No downcast eyes, sullen faces or anxiety to rush away, cell phone in hand. They stop, establish eye contact and initiate toothy grins. This bodes well. I am heading to a happy country. When I get there, and people ask where I'm from, upon hearing the response, the first word that they utter is "amigo" or friend.

Cubana Airline: <http://www.cubana.cu/home/>

Cuban Tourist Board, Canada: <http://www.gocuba.ca/en/index.asp>

1200 Bay Street. Suite 305. Toronto. ON. M5R 2A5 Tel.: 1 (416) 362-0700

Please see Free Weekend in Toronto? on page 3

Featured Tip

Worried about deep-vein thrombosis on long plane flights? Check: <http://www.whattravelwriterssay.com/tipsthrombosis.html> for the latest information.

Also for your consideration, do you want to:

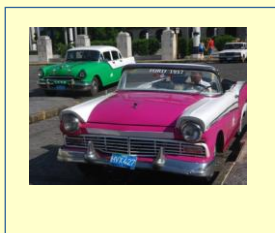
- Calculate distance from your home to anywhere else?
- Play disc golf?
- Sign up for a “driveaway” automobile delivery program?
- Find a specific desert?
- View the earth from space?
- Take a European cruise?
- Engage in an expedition?
- Discover a country’s death rate?
- Access an embassy?
- Learn about the European Union?
- Know what side of the road to drive on?
- Acquire a discount book?
- Rent a car in Europe?
- Take a flight in Europe?
- Compare ethnicity and race by country?
- Read about England?
- Discover country employment rates?
- Know what states are extinct?

Well, that’s just the “D-E” list of travel tips at www.whattravelwriterssay.com

Please see *Featured Tip* on page 4

When we get out of the glass bottle of our ego and when we escape like the squirrels in the cage of our personality and get into the forest again, we shall shiver with cold and fright. But things will happen to us so that we don’t know ourselves. Cool, unlying life will rush in.

D. H. Lawrence



1957 Ford Fairlane

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to extract a fare or not, enforced by a visible police force on all roads. What a great public transit idea! And in Cuba, one feels quite safe. Chalk one up for the socialist government.

We sampled all-inclusive resorts in Varadero and Holguin, were welcomed with music and dance in lovely places such as Remedios and Santiago de Cuba and roamed amazing Havana for two days, not near long enough. Havana’s faded colonial architecture is impressive. I took a taxi ride in a 1957 Ford Fairlane convertible, one of a fleet of ancient U.S. automobiles that are terrific to observe, still running well amid Havana streets.

Havana boasts great museums and history. Watch for Cuban articles at www.whattravelwriterssay.com.

Travel website of the month: National Geographic: Kids

National Geographic: Kids <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/> features different people, animals, and places each month with facts, games, activities, and related links.

This site is a *Parents Choice* winner (2008), loaded with fun learning opportunities for children. Great videos, graphics and content. No more “Are we there yet’s?” from tiny tots.

Cuba



Pictures (left to right): Havana's Capitol Building modeled on the U.S. Capitol, Coffee with Che, Jose Marti Square, Coco-taxi (Photos by Mike Keenan)

Toronto from page 1

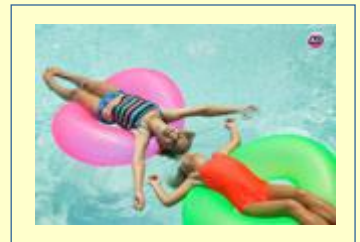
Toll Free: 1-866-404 CUBA (2822)

Fax: 1 (416) 362-6799 e-mail: info@gocuba.ca

Under Castro's government, aside from the U.S.A., Cuba's International Economic Association has spurred the rapid advancement of tourism, placing it in high gear primarily from “joint ventures,” established by law in 1995. This involves co-development of hotels, golf courses, recreational parks and marinas. Many hotel groups operate in Cuba: Cubanacán, Gaviota, Gran Caribe, Islazul, Habaguanex, Sol Meliá, Iberostar, NH Hoteles, Barceló, Occidental, Accor, Blau, Hoteles C, Sandals, Super Clubs, Sirenis, Globalia, Hotetur and Hotel PLANTA. Thirteen international hotel groups signed contracts for administration of 47,500 rooms in 319 new hotels, management already working at 62 hotels offering 24,167 rooms; American capitalistic conglomerates drool to not be part of the action.

The current Cuban tourism market in terms of tourist visits is led by Canada, followed closely by the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Germany and France. Cuba boasts three cruise terminals and 10 international marinas.

One wonders if Cuba can maintain the momentum and what will happen as a result of the recent Obama initiative to ease restrictions.



National Geographic Kids

The Sheraton Centre is mere steps away from the Eaton (indoor shopping) Centre, close to opera, theatre and Blue Jay baseball.

Featured Tip from page 2

where there are 389 more links to every travel question that you might have. Bookmark the site to assist you in the future.

If you have additional travel tips that you would like to share with others, please send them to us for inclusion on our site.

To awaken quite alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world.

Freya Stark

Industry News

For the latest travel industry news, visit: <http://www.whattravelwriterssay.com/indexnews.html>

In Varadero, I stayed two nights at Gran Caribe's Villa Cuba Hotel, 20 km. from the airport <http://gran-caribe.com/english/> an all-inclusive with access to the beach, swimming pools, restaurants and bars nestled in the colorful gardens. There is also a good selection of water-sports to enjoy on the waterfront or simply lie back and relax in the sun.

In Havana, I stayed another two nights at Cubanacan's Comodoro Hotel in Miramar near the embassy residences, fifteen minutes from old Havana. Bungalows are conveniently located around a series of refreshing pools. (http://www.cubanacan.cu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=39&Itemid=0)

Supper was hosted by Sol Melia Cuba at the Melia Cohiba Hotel followed by a floor show at the Havana Café, a nifty evening of entertainment, but only a prelude to the incredible entertainment at The Tropicana nightclub with athletic Cuban dancers strutting their stuff in colourful, skimpy costumes.

The next few days it was a new hotel each night

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Including the Hotel Brisas Trinidad del Mar, after a tour of Cienfuegos, the Melia Santiago Hotel in Santiago de Cuba, after a tour of Camaguey, and finally the Playa Pesquero Hotel in Holguin.

The flight from Toronto's Pearson Airport aboard Cubana (<http://www.cubana.cu/home/>) Airlines out of Terminal 3 was smooth. Leaving at Gate C-27 at the exit ramp, I noticed behaviour automatically distancing Cuba from North America. Cubana Airline staff, pilot, co-pilot, stewards, and stewardesses exhibit broad smiles and wave grand hellos to the fresh crew waiting to embark. No downcast eyes, sullen faces or anxiety to rush away, cell phone in hand. They stop, establish eye contact and initiate toothy grins. This bodes well, I thought. I am heading to a happy country. And when I arrived, and people asked where I'm from, upon hearing the response, the first word that they uttered was "amigo" or friend.

A good place to visit? You bet; I'm anxious to return, especially to devote more time to Havana where I took in only the Museum of the Revolution, The Rum Museum, the Capitol and the Museum of Fine Arts, all thoroughly enjoyable, but leaving me much more to see.

Travel tip: use bicycle cabs in the city, saving lots of walking and neat to be close to the action. Going farther? Try a coco-cab, cheaper than the old Buicks, Fords and Chevies.