

## Cuba on 8 wheels

I'm certainly not the only one having had the dream of visiting Fidel's Cuba, seeing all the old timers, the historic buildings with this special charm on past glory, all accompanied with live son and salsa.

Reading Gabi Schibler's report in the inside about one year ago, the decision was easy, the goal set: learn to inline skate!  
The concept of Gabi and Alexis (her husbands, Cuban himself) is uppy-like diverse and intense: getting to know a country by making a tour for two weeks in a group, daily physical exercise (blades or, in my case, sometimes the bike), accompanied with sightseeing, historical and political background information from insiders, some free-time, culture, chances of meeting locals and getting some insights on the today's living - the perfect mix.

The blisters reminded me for some more weeks of the physical part of this exciting tour. But more important are all the impressions I'm still digesting. Knowing about their daily troubles, seeing and living some of the non comprehensible restrictions and controls Cubans are doing to Cubans (e.g. police controls and punishments), it's amazing seeing all those happy, friendly faces. The positive spirit of this multi-cultural people is reaching even well isolated tourists travelling in a group and is infective, inspiring!

### Every dollar spent, makes a difference

Cuba has one of the best educational standards worldwide. Nobody confuses Switzerland with Sweden but they ask if one does speak all four national languages and how many would still speak Roman. 10 years ago this country was starving as their business partners (former East Germany and UdSSR) did not exist any more. One reaction of the Cuban Regime was then to accept the US Dollar and tourism. And here we are: tourists spending easily 10 USD for two drinks and 1 USD for carrying the luggage. What motions and group

dynamics does tourism provoke keeping in mind that 11 USD is a Cuban average monthly salary? I hope that I was a conscious tourist.

My strong impression is that this country moves and changes fast. Visiting Cuba nowadays is definitely an experience. Every dollar is a gift to them, making this person's life a little simpler at the moment. But for the country, the economy every dollar opens the social scissors between poor and rich a little more.

### Nobody knows what Cuba will be after Fidel

And I remember the host families in former Eastern Germany. After the German unification, they did not know who would pay the extra expenses for their two handicapped children, the wheelchairs until the kids are grown up and it was not certain that the kids were able to go to the kindergarten on the corner with all their friends as it would have been in the socialist times. Hopefully Cuba will sometime have a smooth transition to who or whatever will be after Fidel and I wish that this paradise will not be preserved, it today's multicultural nation.

I had many flashbacks to my UWP year in 1993: training with the kids - how FUN, talking with hand & blades, visiting a hospital (no patients though), visiting a school!

These some memories and thoughts about my vacation in Cuba. Unfortunately, the omnipresent music, the friendliness of the people and the past of the island can hardly be transmitted – go and experience it yourself! For more information on the tour → [www.cubactiva.ch](http://www.cubactiva.ch)

Oh – and if you can not imagine how inline skating is possible in Cuba, be sure, Gabi and Alexis know the roads!

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