

*Motorcycle Diaries* Directed by Walter Salles, Brazil 2004



**One sentence description:**

*Motorcycle Diaries* is a South America road-trip movie that focuses on the events that culminated in the radicalization Ernesto Che Guevara, the prominent South American revolutionary of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Director:**

*The Motorcycle Diaries* is the sixteenth film by Brazilian director Walter Salles. It was his international office success, as well as his first film not in Portuguese. It was written by Jose Riveria as part of the international co-production of the film. Much of the script and screenplay borrows directly from Guevara's diary, which share the same name. Quite a bit of context was also added by Alberto Granado's book, *Traveling with Che Guevara: The Making of a Revolutionary*. Salles' most recent film is *Jia Zhang-ke* (2014), is a biographical film about Jia Zhang-ke, who is a filmmaker, and raises some of the same themes of society as well as the structure of towns, with the setting of China replacing Latin America.

**Historical Context:**

*The Motorcycle Diaries* takes place in the 1950's and spans across Latin America, specifically Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela. This was an era of nationalism in the wake of World War II, when countries were beginning to recognize their national identities and pursue economic progress. The protagonists of the film, Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Alberto Granado, departed from their homes in Buenos Aires, setting out to travel across Latin America to a leper colony in Peru. While Buenos Aires was one of the more affluent regions in Argentina at this time, it was also the site of political conflicts stemming from Juan Peron's presidency. Chile and Peru, on the other hand, were still struggling to establish stable democracies, leading to more widespread poverty throughout the nations. The issues that Guevara and Granado encountered were a direct result of colonialism, which caused political and economic instability in Latin America.

**Reception:**

Motorcycle Diaries received an Oscar for Best Original Song, was nominated for Best Writing for an Adapted Screenplay, as well as 49 other nominations and 36 wins, including Best Actor, Screenplay, Music from the Argentine Film Critics Association.

### Characters:

- Ernesto “Fuser” Guevara: An Argentinian medical student who travels across Latin America with Alberto and whose views of society are fundamentally changed.
- Alberto Granado: Ernesto’s friend and a biochemist from Cordoba, Argentina. He is older than Ernesto and his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday occurs during the trip.
- Doctor Hugo Pesce: A Peruvian doctor who sends Ernesto and Alberto to the leper colony.
- Chichina: Ernesto’s girlfriend at the start of the film, who sends him off with fifteen USD to buy her a swimsuit during his trip.

### Questions:

- 1- What is the largest emotional shift in the movie? How does this change the tone of the movie?
- 2- What was Ernesto’s reception for his speech at the leper colony? Why?
- 3- What does the river at the leper colony represent?
- 4- How is Christianity represented throughout the movie? Is there a commonality?
- 5- Does Alberto grow throughout the movie? How?
- 6- How is Lima contrasted with Machu Picchu?
- 7- What was the significance of the Mining Couple?
- 8- Do Ernesto and Alberto permanently alter relations on the leper colony?
- 9- How is Chichina and her family portrayed? What do they represent?
- 10- Is *La Poderosa* symbolic? If so, of what?

### Sources:

Guevara, Ernesto “Che”, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Ocean Press, 2003

- The book that the film was based on, which featured excerpts from Guevara’s personal travel diaries

“Map of Che Guevara’s Motorcycle Diaries”, *Tripline*,

[https://www.tripline.net/trip/Map\\_of\\_Che\\_Guevara%27s\\_Motorcycle\\_Diaries-6663666201441004BFD7D7A952E2785C](https://www.tripline.net/trip/Map_of_Che_Guevara%27s_Motorcycle_Diaries-6663666201441004BFD7D7A952E2785C)

- Map outlining Che Guevara and Alberto Granado’s travels across Latin America

Granado, Alberto, *Traveling with Che Guevara: The Making of a Revolutionary*, Newmarket Press, 1978

- Book from Alberto Granado’s perspective detailing his travels, focusing on Guevara’s radicalization