



CUBA- A TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR HISTORIANS, ECONOMISTS, MUSIC LOVERS, AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. From a Report to the Australia Cuba Friendship Society delivered by Peter Meggitt in February 2016.



Historical Context:



- Obama was in power, diplomatic relations re-established, embassies re-opened and entrepreneurial visits exchanged.
- The US and Cuba were cooperating on matters like aviation safety & security, combatting drug trafficking, illegal migration, alien smuggling and migration fraud.
- Further cooperation was planned on matters including environmental protection, law enforcement, maritime and port security and health.
- Dialogue on climate change, compensation (reparations of \$102,00bn USD for the 57yo blockade), traffic in persons, and human rights had been initiated.
- Direct postal services and commercial air flights had been resumed. The return of Guantanamo (gained in 1898 when Spain handed Cuba to the US in return for the Philippines) was to be discussed. **An era of GOOD NEIGHBOUR policies appeared to have dawned !**

Achievements since 2002-3 visit



- 1. 80% of food grown in Ag. Coops. 20% for open market but 5% tax; the 80% free at food outlets in family baskets.
- 2. Organic methods (90% farms) no pesticides, control with insects, other plants, beer to repel snails, Solar & methane for power. Heavy composting to restore humidity. Main customers China & Russia.
- 3. Major foreign investment Canada (oil)Spain (food)French (rum)Brazil (machines)China (machines,cranes, technology
- Singapore (construction) in NEW ECONOMIC ZONES (Mariel port) but with Cuban Equity(51%)Joint Ventures & transfer ownership in 30yrs.
- 4. Growth in tourism, biotech services & infrastructure (4%)
- 5. Minerals oil (low grade),cobalt, nickel (major product), copper, gold, gas with a very strict ENVIRONMENTAL CODE (cf Mexico & US)

Achievements Cont.



- 6. Pol system decentralised (reps volunteers- not paid) Voting age 16+ More women than men science, higher ed & national assembly. Every city block & village has a CDR every person a member, duties patrol, vaccination, welfare neighbours, schools & hospitals. 94% workers in Unions, One Political Party (only 10% members selected by whole community “vanguard workers with links to masses”.)
- 7. Youth unemployment under 3% but provided voc ed by neighbourhood and State. 36% young women join Fedn Women at age 14. Strikes rare because workers own means of production. Maternity leave paid for 12 months after birth. 7 1/2 months home to rest receive 60% wages for 10 1/2 months & position KEPT OPEN for return. After 6 mnths male can take care baby on full pay. Child care centres free.

Cuba Achievements:



- 8. Fidel's Adult Literacy campaign (1961) sent teachers (literate of all ages) to countryside to teach adults to read and write (7 to 106). Adopted by Jack Beeton (Sydney) in Wilcannia, Bourke and Engonnia) with Indigenous communities YO SI PUEDO! In their homes. 3 phases mobilising community, training and post-training activities (e.g. borrowing books)
- "We need literate mothers to get literate children" Closed literacy gap after colonial era claims 6-7m grads world-wide.
- 9. Casa de abuelos (Houses of Elderly) fed and engaged in crafts, dominoes, music and return to homes at night FREE.
- 10. House of Hope and Happiness for Downes Syndrome youth who sang, danced & showed us their art. Printed and sold to visitors. (Display Jose)
- 11. One of biggest exports is doctors. Trained free. In fact get allowance min Cub wage from Cuba. Mainly Latin Amer. & Africa but also US & Aus & Pacific (See list). Must return to home country & practise where needed. In 2016 3000 students from 193 diff countries. Many Afr Americans but their govt has never contributed. 6 months intensive Spanish, 2 yrs basic med science & 4 yrs clinical studies in Cub hospitals but not recognised by AMA in US. 27,000 Drs since start in 1999.
- **TRAVEL WITH A LEARNING GOAL AS WELL AS PLEASURE & RELAXATION?**