

Cuba open from the Inside

TRAVELS IN THE FORBIDDEN LAND

Chris Messner

Synopsis

Cuba occupies a place of undisputed fascination in the American psyche. Despite its proximity to the United States, this island nation remains a mystery to most Americans. Few Americans have traveled to Havana, and still fewer have traveled deep into this isolated country.

Chris Messner, photographer, is one of the few Americans who has been able to travel extensively throughout Cuba. In his book, *Cuba Open from the Inside*, Messner documents the character of Cuba's people, its rich history, and the vast culture of the country.

Through multiple journeys, Messner has covered more than 4,000 miles on the back roads of Cuba. Through his words and pictures, he provides a snapshot of Cuba as it is today—the 1950s time-capsule country 90 miles from the United States' coast.

About the Author

From early in his life, fine art photographer Chris Messner has had a strong visual relationship with the world around him.

His artistic curiosity led him to Cuba, an unlikely destination, where during multiple trips he has traveled extensively. He was struck by the raw reality of Cuba, and its unique beauty was an unexpected surprise. Looking through his lens with a human eye rather than a political one, Messner found Cuba to be different from what he originally expected. He encountered centuries of Cuban history, its powerful artistic culture, unpretentious people, and the daunting grandeur of the human environment on full display. These multi-faceted elements presented him with a visual experience that he found artistically stimulating and inspired him to capture the grace and mystery of the Cuban nation with his first narrative nonfiction book, *Cuba Open from the Inside*.

Messner currently resides in Santa Barbara, California, with his wife and three children.



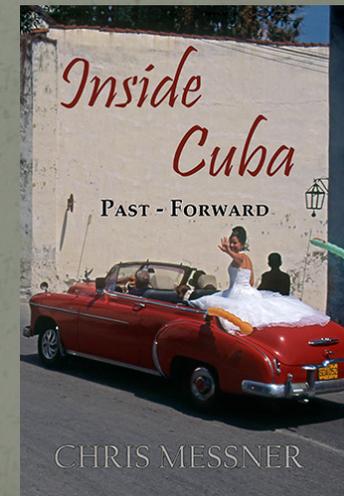
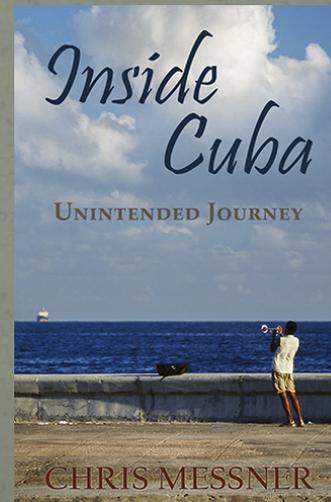
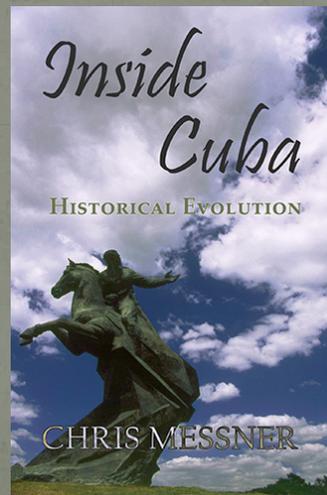
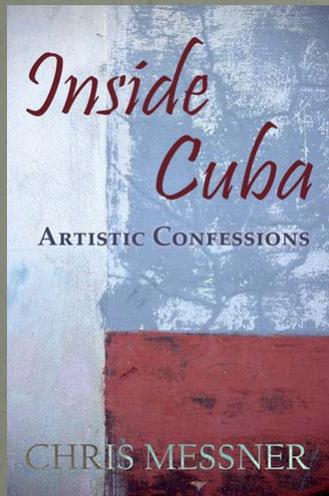
Other Works

In addition to authoring *Cuba Open from the Inside*, Messner completed a series of photo essay e-books comprised of images he captured in Cuba. Messner's books document aspects of the country that will eventually become folkloric as it continues to open and inevitably change.

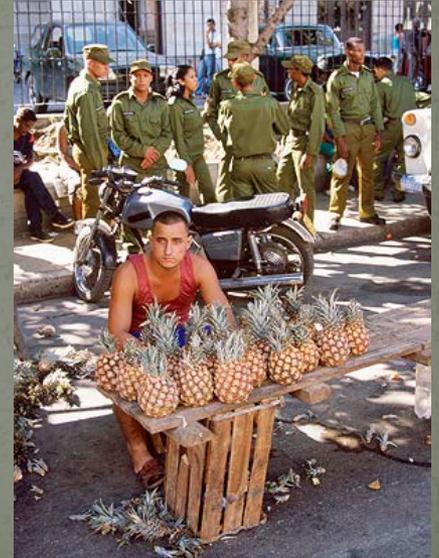
Although Messner was moved to capture his Cuban experience in a more comprehensive fashion in *Cuba Open from the Inside*, as a professional photographer his initial goal had been to present a series of books featuring a collection of his images with detailed notes. He accomplished this original goal in the following four-book collection:

Inside Cuba Artistic Confessions
Inside Cuba Historical Evolution

Inside Cuba Past-Forward
Inside Cuba Unintended Journey



Photographs



Audio Book

The Audio Book version of *Cuba Open from the Inside* was produced and narrated by jenkev productions, Inc., a production company based in Los Angeles. Narrator Kevin Haberer is a graduate of the Stella Adler Conservatory in NYC.

[Link to - Sample audiobook excerpt](#)

Excerpt

SO THERE I was, ready to really see the infamous Bay of Pigs, to see what this battle was about. We were able to drive right up on the sand to see the beachhead and the museum in Girón. I admit, I had preconceived ideas of what it would all be like; it was not quite what I envisioned. The only pictures I had seen of the beach were in documentaries related to the battle. It's a beautiful beach. I thought, *This beachhead is one of the actual places where they landed. Wow! It's hard to imagine that a big battle took place right here in this tranquil pristine place. You could be lying on this beautiful white sand, lying here under some of these coconut palm trees with a light breeze fluttering through the palm fronds, and hearing the light sound of the waves.* Playa Girón was named for a French pirate, Gilbert Girón, who frequented this area at the turn of the sixteenth century. Who could have known that this area would become so famous over three centuries. I stood there in silence and looked around quietly.

Standing here thinking about the history of Cuba, I saw the rhythm of the tides. The tides come in and out and wash the beach clean. Over centuries, many people have explored and colonized Cuba as far back as the Guanajatabey, Sibony, and Taino Indians. Each wave of people brought new changes. When the US embargo ends and the tide goes out, what vacuum will occur? And what exactly will fill it? I thought, *What will happen after Castro?* Many Cubans have known no one other than Fidel Castro, and after all many have come to revere him like a father. When the US embargo ends and Cuba opens, yet another new wave of people will arrive. Major changes will occur, and with them more commercialization. Standing here, it was difficult to believe that I was really in Cuba, again seeing it for what it truly is, the real Cuba, not some portrayal. And I thought, *This thing is bigger than I realized.* At one time this place was the edge of the known world and a major hub for shipping—the United States was not even born yet. During this time, America was undeveloped and unexplored. Ironically, now America is well developed, and Cuba is the unexplored frontier.

I was glad and feeling lucky to be here before the floodgates open. I feel I'm seeing the natural beauty of this land before it becomes developed and commercialized. Once the floodgates are indeed opened, Americans will rush in with gold fever. Collectors will come in, and all the old cars will disappear. In an indirect way, its isolation has given Cuba its unique culture. I saw that culture in the movement of the people—the horses, the carts, the bikes, and the old cars. And I saw it in their music. Cuba's isolation has created unique microcosms at all levels. Even endemic plants and animals are preserved, and in a way, have been protected. Ending the embargo would improve Cuba economically. Sure, I want the people to have a better life. I sensed, though, that the Cuba I was standing in at that moment would become a folkloric memory. I sensed that the Cuban microcosm I was witnessing would not be the same.

Commentary

"Messner's personal journey as told through his travel logs and photographs of Cuba and its people is inspiring."

Charles Regan, Vice President, National Geographic Maps

"Messner takes you into the island on a rare, intimate journey through the eyes of a detailed photographer. This book will expose you to Cuba's rich history, intertwined with a touching, personal narrative."

Stephanie Chen, Former Travel Writer, CNN.com

Websites

- [Link to the official *Cuba Open from the Inside* web site: www.cubaopenfromtheinside.com](http://www.cubaopenfromtheinside.com)
- [Link to - Cuba open from the inside - Amazon: **Paper back / Ebook**](#)
- [Link to - Cuba open from the inside - iTunes: **Ebook**](#)
- [Link to – Chris Messner Fine Art Photography: www.cmpictures.com](http://www.cmpictures.com)

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