

Saturday, July 2. 2011

In Cuba

View from our hotel roof, Havana. Car. Sofa. I am a shifty, devious, scoundrel. At least in the eyes of the customs officers of the world. Liz thinks it's the way I walk and look around, or it might simply be the bad jokes I tell when waiting in line. Doesn't matter whether it's USA, Australia, Colombia or Cuba, I seem to fit everybody's checklist of people to randomly pick for a thorough search and interview. The interview upon entering Cuba lasted for 90 minutes, followed by an inspection of every single item in my luggage. Liz noted, while waiting, that some other people had to open their luggage as well, but that only took a few minutes. Liz, however, must be looking pretty shifty herself, because she was selected for a methodical search and a walk through the body scanner on leaving Colombia as well. I attribute it to her looking impossibly cute and trusting. Heedful people must think it's an act. In the end we both made it into Cuba. And after the scariest taxi ride ever we made it even alive into the hotel. It had started out as your usual after-dark Caribbean taxi ride. No seat-belts and unlit streets full of people, bicycles and handcarts. The old Lada smelled of gasoline, the dampers were gone, and I could tell from the way the driver worked the wheel that the left brakes were gone as well. All that didn't stop the driver from going as fast as possible. Then he received a call on his mobile phone (I didn't know they had such things here). After that he was in a hurry, and the fact that the brakes didn't work so well was irrelevant, since he didn't use them anymore. Drifting around corners slowed us down enough to avoid what was waiting behind them - usually people. Am I not easily scared in a car, but I truly wished I was somewhere else. Dining in a "paladar", somebody's livingroom Since our epic arrival a week ago we stayed a few days in a hotel and then moved into a guest house, called a "casa particular". During the day we walked through the different parts of Havana, explored the Cuban cuisine (bad news for vegetarians), or worked on our respective projects in the hotel lobby (being the only place with internet access). Liz is writing, and I am making a movie about our favorite cafe in Santa Marta. Vinales valley Bottling station in the rum factory Yesterday we visited the obligatory Rum and Cigar factories, and tomorrow we'll fly to Baracoa at the very east of Cuba. From there we plan to travel back to Cuba by bus via Santiago, Santa Clara, and other notable sites of the revolution. I hope to go diving somewhere on the way as well. The first impression is that this is a country with some serious housing and transportation issues. Crumbling buildings and overflowing buses everywhere. The rest seems to work quite well, though a lot of people are very poor. But in this Cuba is no different from most other countries in the Caribbean and South America. But there are many areas in which Cuba is different, about which I'll write another time.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 09:02