

# Castro visits home of Che Guevara

## Fidel Castro's visit to the home of leftist revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara surprised residents of the Argentine town near Córdoba.

The Miami Herald  
Jul. 23, 2006

**ALTA GRACIA, Argentina** - Cuban President Fidel Castro took Venezuelan ally Hugo Chávez on an emotional pilgrimage Saturday to the boyhood home of the guerilla Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who had been Castro's comrade.

"Fidel! Fidel!" and "Hugo! Hugo!" the crowd of about 2,000 chanted as Castro, wearing his trademark green military fatigues, got out of his limousine. Chávez was right by Castro's side as they entered the house amid a crush of security agents who kept bystanders back.

"I'm sure Fidel will be touched because he knew Che so well," local tour guide Lauren González said.

Castro, who first visited Argentina in 1959 after the Cuban revolution and returned last week to attend a summit that inducted Venezuela into the Mercosur trade bloc, had never before visited the home of the guerrilla who is revered in Cuba.

Guevara spent most of his childhood in the central Argentine province, where his family hoped a mild climate would ease his severe asthma. Neither Castro nor Chávez had visited before.

Guevara's family later moved to Buenos Aires, where he enrolled in medical school before launching the famous motorcycle trip around South America that inspired him to give up medicine for leftist revolution.

He was killed in 1967 while directing a guerrilla movement in Bolivia. Three decades later, his remains were taken to Cuba, where they are entombed under a monument.

On Saturday, blackuniformed police with guard dogs contained the crowd for hours as bystanders jammed the space outside the green-painted, brick-and-tile middle class home where Guevara once lived -- now a local attraction.

The house on Saturday bore the famous iconic photograph taken in 1960 that shows the legendary "Che" wearing his classic beret. A bronze statue out front also depicted Guevara as a young boy.

The house is typical of many on narrow streets of Alta Gracia, a community 35 miles west of the city of Córdoba where Castro, Chávez and six other Latin American presidents attended a regional trade summit Friday.

González, the tour guide, said Cubans are today among favorite pilgrims to the house in Alta Gracia, but it also draws admirers of the leftist figure from around the world -- along with tourists drawn to central Argentina's bucolic hill country.

Guevara was 7 years old when he came to Alta Gracia. The house now is owned by the Alta Gracia city government. Guevara lived in the house for two stretches, first from 1935-1937 and then again from 1939-43.

Ana Ledesma, a 50-year-old housewife, said the visit had caused a real fuss in the quiet community of Alta Gracia.

"The truth is we are all surprised by Castro's visit," she said. "This has thrown the whole city into a state of shock."