
"Fast and Furious" Filming Attracts Onlookers, Causes Traffic Jams in Havana

29/04/2016



The eighth film in the series, the first major U.S. film production to be undertaken in the Caribbean country in more than 50 years, has changed the Cuban capital's landscape, particularly in the residential neighborhoods of Vedado, Central Havana and Old Havana, where barriers have been set up to keep people from approaching and prevent actors and crew from being distracted by onlookers.

Those most affected by the filming, without doubt, have been local motorists, who now have to take alternate routes because major streets have been closed off, including the emblematic Malecon, which has been converted into a raceway in a city where this type of activity is completely out of the ordinary.

"This has never happened before," Yani, a state worker, told EFE, adding that it had been "a nightmare" to try and ride the regular bus routes, which had all been "diverted because of the film."

The Central Havana resident said that the "neighborhood's tranquility has ended," although she admitted that locals had flocked to the film locations – to which the press has been denied access – to try and capture some of the activity on their cellphone cameras.

"It's really crazy. There are many people complaining because they're arriving late to work, sometimes they don't announce where the filming will occur ... but Cubans are adapting to it all," said Alain, a Havana resident who, with a group of young people, took position at the Malecon to "see if we could see anything."

Many, including Alain, are thrilled that Cuba was selected as the location for the latest "Fast and Furious" flick, a series that is popular for its spectacular car races and high-tech action scenes.

In real life on the island, however, many U.S. autos from the 1950s are still on the streets, a symbol both of the depressed automobile sector and Cubans' ability to get by and make the best of things. But these antique vehicles feature prominently in the film.

"Papa: Hemingway in Cuba," a film about the U.S. author, was the first to be shot in Havana over a six-week period in 2014, despite the U.S. embargo and thanks to the persistence of director Bob Yari, who pursued lengthy negotiations with U.S. and Cuban authorities to get the job done.
