

CANADIANS ADVISE TO THINK TWICE ABOUT CAR HIRE ABROAD



As unimportant as it may seem, hiring a car in certain countries can make you end up in serious trouble, sometimes even being forced to stay abroad for a number of months before bureaucratically enforced nightmares have been sorted out.

The case of a young Canadian, Cody LeCompte, is quite frightening: after hiring a car in Cuba and crashing it into a truck on a potholed road, he was forced to stay on the island for a number of months before the case was eventually sorted out. Although members of his family and he were hospitalized as a result of the crash, which was not his fault, he was not allowed to leave the country before the case went to court. In Cuba waiting for the trial usually takes something between 5 months and a year. The expenditures of the prolonged stay are also astronomical: without a fixed abode in Cuba, hotel rooms, legal fees and general expense of living while waiting cost the LeCompte family an estimated \$30,000. It all came about because Cody happened to be behind the wheel in a road accident.

The fact that he was never charged did not help Cody at all. Moreover, **it is quite alarming how easily anybody can be prevented from leaving a country. Cody's case could become the reason why Canadians stop going to Cuba in future** and ultimately cause irretrievable damage to the reputation of the country and its tourism industry. People will presume that the whole system of bureaucracy is so slow and painstaking that they will fear getting involved with it. **Since 2005, 108 Canadians have suffered the same fate in similar countries, whereby 10% of the cases have been vehicle related.**

Mexico, China, Guatemala and Cuba are now renowned for their persecution of foreign drivers. The rules are the same for the locals yet having to stay around for half a year does not bother the locals. That is why many tourists have started to consider either avoiding the countries completely or finding other ways of getting around in them.

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