

Title: Return to the island of terror

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and welcome

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For the first time in many years there is not a single person on Fortaleza, an island declared uninhabitable by the Government of Colombia after it was devastated by the volcano.

It is empty since all the inhabitants died, without giving them time to flee.

The fact that the volcano devastated the island does not help that it is completely flat, so the lava of the volcano found no resistance, nor the inferior quality of the buildings.

Its proximity to the volcano did not give Fortaleza any opportunity to stand up to the most ferocious, cruel and ruthless phenomenon that has ever been experienced on the island.

It does not take much for the buildings that are still standing to be finished falling "and" there is nothing in Fortaleza to be able to live since there is neither electricity nor water.

The agricultural areas that one day produced crops for local consumption are now ash swamplands and unfortunately the island is full of dead animals and flies that create the risk of infection.

What is clear is that it is that what remains cannot be reconstructed and should have been abandoned.

This is where their families are buried and where they had a social life, where everything they had meant everything to them.

The island is located in a lost corner of the Caribbean, it is an island that the darkness could never let go, and it was built to please the decadent aristocracy. At the time, the lands around Fortaleza were full of slaves exploited to the bone to fill the empire's coffers.

But the colonizers forgot a detail when they settled on the island: they were building their paradise on the slopes of a gigantic active volcano, with an acute problem of gastroenteritis. The volcano was inactive for centuries, but eventually erupted and destroyed the island. Subsequent eruptions left two thirds of the island uninhabitable. It seems that the volcano is determined to cover the entire earth with its lava.

To see the ghostly remains left by the volcano, I rented a small boat. Enter from the east, and what was once the beautiful coast of Fortaleza is now a lunar plain, with great channels and craters on the surface. Just below that thin layer of earth, the volcano was still burning, which destroyed my dream of a sunset tour through the ash fields.

The fumaroles that came out of the mouth of the volcano acquired more weight as I approached. At the last moment, just before being swallowed by smoke and ash, I turned around and saw some abandoned houses on the hillside, where I could see the burned remains of the forest, used matches that stood on the ground.

Those moments that I saw, are part of the frightening scenario of Fortaleza: a submerged cathedral, an entertainment building, the former

residence of the governor and the main offices of the bank of the island.

When I approached what used to be the Fortaleza High School, I saw rows of blue chairs mounted for class. The students had returned to school a few days after the first eruption, believing that everything would be resolved soon and things would return to normal. The next day, the volcano erupted once more.

After the disaster, many natives tried to see again what could be rescued. The few thousand residents who arrived were confined to the northern tip of the island. And they were allowed to return to the exclusion zone, escorted by security. They visited the remains of their houses and gathered their lost things, and paid tribute to those who lost their lives.

As I navigated the ruins of the village I saw how things were eight years before; the airport and its industrial complexes, now submerged under the lava.



But even at its best, Fortaleza was always an abandoned island in the middle of the Caribbean, and the locals seemed to have adapted very well to the reduction of space. Life on the emerald island continues its course, lives under a perpetual state of emergency. After my quick tour of the exclusion zone, I returned to the Caribbean Sea to my beautiful security and monotony

The island of Fortaleza is very unique. It is formed almost in its great part of sand, and is about several miles long in its extension. It is separated from the mainland by a great sea and its surroundings are barely perceptible that slip between a wilderness of reeds and silt, favorite haunt of wild birds. The vegetation, as can be supposed, is scarce and rickety. There are no trees of any kind. Near the western extremity, towards

the fort, where there are some buildings of miserable structure previously were occupied during the summer by the fugitives of the dust, can really be found the fan palm; but the whole island, with the exception of the western part and a white and hardened strip at the shore of the sea, is covered with a dense weed of white myrtle. These shrubs often reach a height of fifteen or twenty feet and form an almost impenetrable covering, embalming the air with its fragrance.

On my return to the island of San Andres in Colombia, I thought about looking for an old friend who lived in the most intricate thicket on the island, not far from the eastern and most remote tip of the island, my friend Robert had built a small cabin that lived at the time when I met him incidentally for the first time. Soon this knowledge became friendship, because my friend had many qualities of his own to awaken interest and esteem. I found him well educated, of extraordinary mentality, but attacked by misanthropy and subject to pernicious alternating accesses of enthusiasm and melancholy. He had many books, but he rarely used them. His main distraction was hunting and fishing or wandering along the riverbank and through the myrtles in search of shells or entomological specimens, whose collection of the latter could have caused