



COLIMA'S MIRACLES

A turtle makes its first trip to the ocean



Colours of Mexico
History and Mythology
Mighty Nature
Nature's Wonders
Finance
RV Travel
Recipe
Learn Spanish
Path to Citizenship

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Article submissions:

- Preferred subjects are Manzanillo and Mexico
- All articles should be 1000 words or less or may be serialized or 500-750 words if accompanied by photos
- Pictures are welcome
- Comments, letters to the editor, articles, photos and advertisements are always welcome

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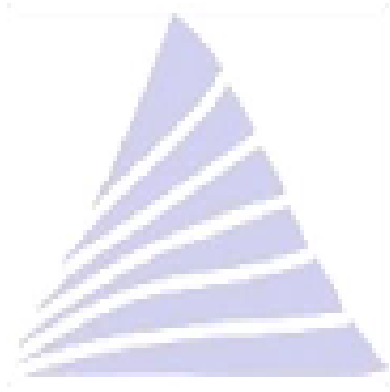
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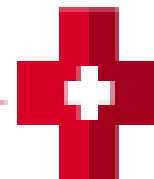
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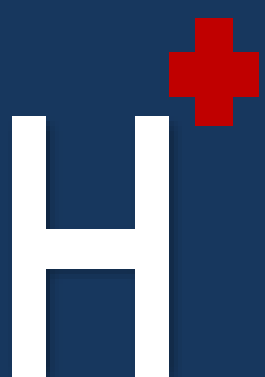


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Our Escape to Tapalpa, Jalisco

by Suzanne A. Marshall

What were we escaping from you may wonder. Here we are living in paradise, on the beaches of Manzanillo, and we certainly have no desires to change that. But this season it's been very, very hot. This isn't so unusual in Mexico, and certainly not given the global heat wave the planet has experienced this summer, but what a perfect excuse to find a little temporary reprieve from the temperatures and head up the mountain into the Sierra Madre mountains to cool off and explore, yet another, lovely Mexican location.

We learned about Tapalpa from our Mexican neighbours who encouraged us to go and explore the area. It was easily accessible by car and only takes 3 – 3 ½ hours to drive there. It's a pretty basic route on the freeway to Guadalajara then a turn into the city of Sayula (which I previously wrote about) and on past Sayula and up the road until you reach Tapalpa.

It's a lovely location, situated at about 1,950 metres (6,400 ft.) and is one of the 83 designated "Pueblos Mágicos", or magic towns, found throughout Mexico. Tapalpa was the fifth town to earn this designation which is only awarded to towns with real natural beauty; cultural richness, traditions, historical relevance and more. Tapalpa means "place of coloured earth" derived from the ancient Nahuatl language spoken by the Aztecs and many of Mexico's indigenous civilizations. Its population is approximately 19,506, taken from a 2015 census.



A nopali cactus tree frames one of many rustic log cabins hugging the tree lines entering Tapalpa.

Atop the mountainside, the local flora includes cacti, pine, oak, cedar and fir trees. The wildlife includes deer, rabbits, squirrels, armadillos, snakes and a small wildcat known as the oncilla. There are even a few elusive pumas. (I prefer them elusive.)

My first impression of the area also included pastoral scenes of large, green, grassy fields with plump cattle grazing everywhere as well as beautiful rustic log-structured homes and cabins, with terra cotta tile roofs, scattered among the pines as we entered the city proper. We were destined for a small hotel, just off the main town square, named Hotel Casona de Manzano. It was a lovely, convenient spot for walking about the town and had a wood-burning stove/fireplace in the room.



This nopali cactus tree near Las Piedrotas was surprisingly large and appeared to have weathered many years on the mountain.

We immediately noticed the cooler temperature, of course, and adjusted instantly just like the good old Canadians that we are. During the day, the temperatures in July are around mid 20C and then down to 15C during the night. (77F – 59F). This felt very cool to us, having just left indexed temperatures of up to 40C+, with humidity.

The hotel also offers breakfasts in a central courtyard, completely open to the sky, but tables are under cover on the perimeter if there should be some rain. It was just a truly lovely, green oasis with potted plants and plenty of ambiance. We enjoyed our meals and coffee there before starting out to explore the area each day.

We walked the town square and dipped in and out of the little shops for a while enjoying the colonial architecture and ever-present, towering cathedral. While doing so, we came upon a small tour operation and found out some information about the area.

...Our Escape to Tapalpa

There are two main attractions to visit - a place named Las Piedrotas (the big rocks) and a hiking tour into El Salto del Nogal, a spectacular waterfall set in a canyon. As we were not really prepared for hiking, given footwear and such, we opted for a short drive to Las Piedrotas. We were only staying for two nights and had to make a choice. (I might add here that we were very comfortable in jeans and running shoes with light, long-sleeved, cotton sweaters. Many of the population were wearing boots and jackets.



A street view of Casona de Manzano, Tapalpa, Jalisco.

Las Piedrotas is a gigantic rock formation in the Valley of the Enigmas about 4KM out of Tapalpa. No one knows how these colossal rocks (several of which are bigger than houses) came to be in the middle of a vast green pasture, complete with grazing cattle. The area is aptly named the Valley of the Enigmas.

When you first arrive at this area, you feel a little underwhelmed as the rocks and scenery look completely out of scale given the expansiveness of the entire scene. Then you begin to see the people walking the paths and horseback riding and your perspective is changed completely by the comparisons. Some of these stones/rocks are five stories high.

There is plenty of parking beside the road, and a gate to enter, where you will find snacks and small food kiosks. Much to my surprise, they even had a zip line in operation between the two largest rocks where people were enjoying a big thrill after climbing their way up to the platform. You could also rent horses for riding the paths and around the rocks and pastures.



A typical Tapalpa street leads to the central square, shops and cathedral.

Tapalpa was originally part of an indigenous community of several small nearby towns and ruled by King Cuantomá. In 1523, a group of Spaniards, led by Captain Alonso De Avalon Saavedra, arrived and the colonization and catechizing of the Indians commenced.

Tapalpa itself did not become established as a town until 1869 and officially, until 1878.

The first paper factory in Latin America was opened in Tapalpa in 1840. [4] The factory shut down and was abandoned in 1923 due to the Mexican Revolution. [5] Today, its abandoned ruins have become a tourist attraction.

We'd be happy to return to Tapalpa one day and continue our exploration of this lovely area. I would be remiss if I didn't mention how reasonable the restaurant and shop pricing is in this town. As a tourist destination, a person often anticipates elevated pricing but that was not the case here and a very pleasant surprise. I know we haven't seen it all and we will be happy to pick up where we left off and enjoy this breathtaking area again.

... more pics follow



The second-floor interior circumference of the hotel has many quiet areas and vistas. An interior courtyard is a lovely feature.



If it rains in the courtyard, the water conveniently drains away via this escape, attractively decorated with ceramic frogs and pot.



A comfy set of sofas and a wood burning fireplace were just outside our room for enjoyable fires and cozy visiting or reading.

...Our Escape to Tapalpa



Above - The upper hallways displayed gorgeous wooden carved cabinet pieces.



Right - A lovely breakfast in the courtyard Before the day's exploring begins.



Above - The cathedral in the central square, so typical of Mexican town squares where people attend church services and socialize on the benches and around the area.

Left - A group of children and caregivers enjoyed ice cream in the central square. So did we!

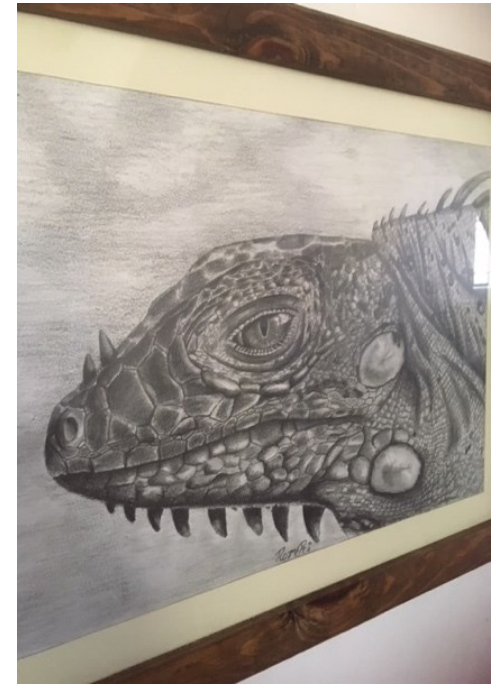
...Our Escape to Tapalpa



Just off the central square, we noticed La Casa de Cultura. It has three resident artists and some artwork displays as seen above and right.

These works are of charcoal and pencil and very detailed. We also viewed some riding gear and found a large empty hall with a grand piano where recitals would take place.

A lovely local man named Oscar Ernesto Eustacio Aguilera gave us the tour and stretched our Spanish comprehension beyond our limits.



...Our Escape to Tapalpa



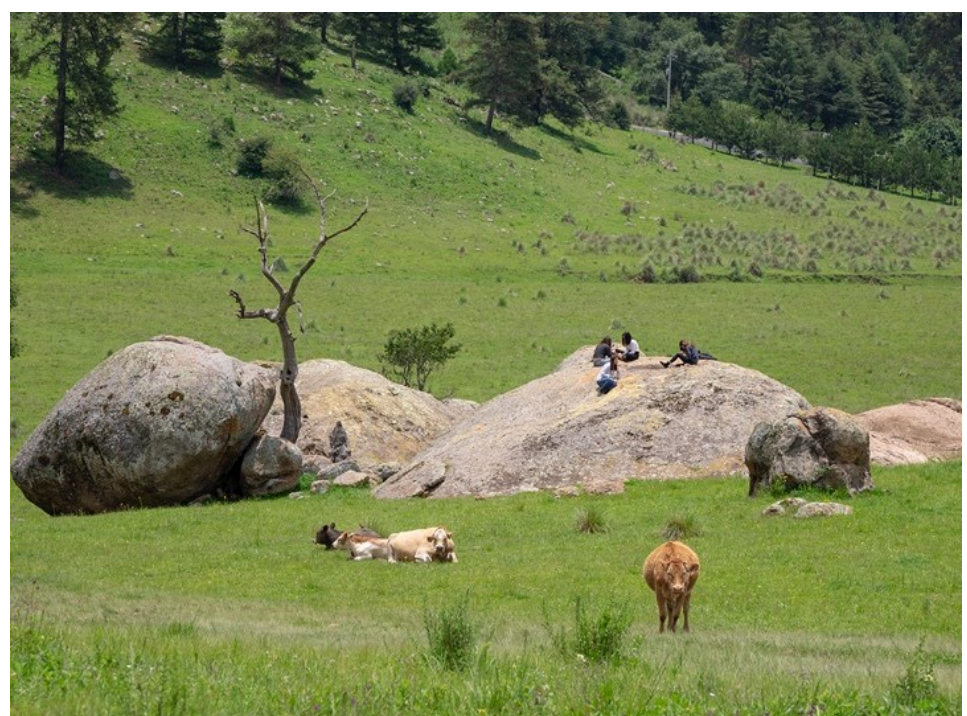
Left - El Salto del Nogal is a beautiful attraction near Tapalpa and available by tour. Bring your hiking gear.

Below - Around Las Piedrotas, cows graze the lush green grasses contentedly.



It's a bit of a climb and scaling the rocks to reach the zip line platform. But many did.

A few young visitors take a break among the rocks and the cattle.



...Our Escape to Tapalpa

A number of visitors chose to see the area on horseback from rental services available.



A visit to Las Piedrotas is for the whole family to enjoy.

you can reach Suzanne A. Marshall at suzanne@manzanillosun.com



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The Rubber People

(Olmec)

by Kirby Vickery

The Mexican people, and all their friends, will again celebrate their Independence Day on the 16th of September. No Johnny, it's really not on the 5th of May. But, you can celebrate it then too, if you like. For that matter, in Mexico, you can celebrate most anything any time you want, usually starting as the sun sets.



Olmec carved head

Of the world's people, they are known for gaiety and the love for loud and brassy music to go with their celebration. Where did all this uniquely jovial manner of expressing their heartfelt gusto for life and fun come from?

Cinco de Mayo, by the way, came about because Mexico had gotten themselves in a financial hole with France. Napoleon III had sent his army to overtake the country and align it with the Confederacy. He wanted to support the Confederacy in the United States civil war and, it was rumored, to also reintroduce slavery into Mexico when the South won.

Like most histories, what you and I get to read was written by the winner in any conflict, and most histories are all about conflicts of one sort or another. So:

Benito Juarez was the president in 1861. Mexico had defaulted

on loans made from various countries in Europe. Spain, France and England had all sent troops to Veracruz for demands of payment. Juarez's army went out and dealt with them and Spain and England retired. France, on the other hand, didn't, and marched inland to a little town named Puebla. The Battle of Puebla was fought on May 5, 1862, under the leadership of General Ignacio Zaragoza. Vastly outnumbered and outgunned when it all hit the fan, he was able to turn the French back.

The Mexican peoples in America (especially California because it was a new state) didn't hear about the triumph until the 27th but celebrated anyway. Although the French reattacked, and won a year later, that never changed the fact that France would never be able to help sway the USA to slavery in the New World which was the major concern of everyone else involved. History now shows that the celebration of Cinco de Mayo is slowly spreading in Mexico and it is still observed, and partied to, by more and more Americans. Yipee!



Olmec jade mask

Today, the existing Mexican combined culture is a salad bowl of recent exposures to Spanish, which would include hints of the Moor, central Mediterranean, the French, and the German cultures. To look at it as a cake mix, this would be poured over a multi-century base existence of what is known today as a

...The Rubber People

Mesoamerican settlement and resettlement going back some eight thousand years before Christ.



A hollow baby figurine

All the while I was writing about the Aztec Mythology, I was under the impression that the Olmec civilization was the oldest Mesoamerican culture to arise from the 'hunter/gatherers' coming over the land bridge to what is now Southern Mexico and Central America. In looking around for 'lifestyle' things, I discovered that there was an earlier culture that came into being about 2500 BCE and went away in around 2200 BCE, which is long before the Olmecs ever got started.

These people appeared and formed a culture along the Pacific coast of Mexico, just north of Jalisco. From what I understand, one of these groups survived on shell fish and water plants and left mounds of them along the waters edge. This seems to be the only reason we know of their existence. They were pre-ceramic folks, today called the Matachin or Matachen, and consist of peoples named La Blanca, Ujuxte (although another source has that tribe in Guatemala), Monte Alto and Mokayo.

This interested me, primarily because they were a culture on the west, before anything got started on the east. What's even more fascinating than that they are all classified as being around during the "Formative Period", is that these peoples were the first to cultivate and use the cacao plant which we know as chocolate and other things not quite so popular (maybe). For you Flat-Earther types, this could be the tie into the slanted eyes all the carved, multi-ton, stone heads the Olmec people left laying around in the jungles. So, what part of China did they come from? Well, haven't they found several Chinese junk boat anchors up and down the west coast of the Americas? Hmmm.

I'm looking at this and thinking about the Olmecs, who appeared after these folks, but are touted as being the first civilization in the New World, when I note some cultures growing in South America during Period I in Columbia. The El Abra (the Archeological site) people were hunter-gathers but were writing on cave walls from 12,500 to 10,000 BCE. I'm thinking that our land bridge was an awful busy place, a lot earlier than what I was taught in school.



Priest with baby

The sunburned people (archeologists) have broken time periods down to suit each other, but I find it confusing that they change time periods and eras around to suit the geographic location of where they are talking about. Just to give us a refer-

...The Rubber People

ence to cement all this period-era stuff, I can tell you that Stonehenge was built about 1400 BCE and they don't know the 'why' about it either. It was the queen of Egypt. She was the influential wife to the Pharaoh Amenhotep.



African or Asian featured?

Back in North Central America and Southern Mexico, our hunter-gathers have hit pay dirt. They found that they had settled in an area where they didn't have to concern themselves all the time with just feeding their children. They have time to glance up and wonder about the stars and what caused all of this, as they knew it. As populations grew, specialization within community requirements started to occur. Some hunted, while others planted, and others rose to coordinate and further specialize in pottery, fabric (skins?), jewelry, etc. Also, within this society, an elite class grew. They were the controllers and directed production for trade, as well as art, religion for self preservation, and weaponry (a knife made from obsidian could bring a lot of masa or cocoa for that matter).

Man has always figured that there is reason for everything and these peoples started to come up with their own gods. The priests (class) told stories about which these gods created what to everyone sitting around the camp fire or on an Olmec pyramid. The first people to do this in our area (Southern Mexico, etc.) were the Olmecs.

The red-necked people (archeologists) are still wondering if the Olmec had a written language. Big controversy here. We do know they had outstanding mathematics and time-telling skills,

along with a strong working knowledge of astronomy. The pattern of their calendars was still in use by the Aztec and other Nahua-speaking peoples long after the Olmec disappeared.



A carved eagle

Family life would have been very dull compared with today's styles. Social engagements would evolve around celebrations and holidays established by the priests in their endeavor to keep everyone in line and not question that what they said was "divine."

The Olmecs were into blood letting and child sacrifice. Their calendar was built on a 360 solar-day year which left five days in which the entire society would hunker down and hope to make it through to the new year. Sorta like the Jewish Sabbath, only longer.

Food was built around the corn plant with gourds, and mostly tropical fruits, with everything flavored by the currently ubiquitous pepper plant and of course - cocoa. One of their tribes, today known as the Totonaca people, discovered the seed of the Vanilla plant (an Orchid). Because of the Spanish exporting all parts of this plant, its commercial epicenter has shifted to the island of Madagascar.

The social elite was the priest class as they were the time keepers. The whole idea of keeping the gods happy, which would keep man kind going, was the integrated religious trade-off.

...The Rubber People

Another reason for their success was their trade routes. Apparently, they were the first to establish treaties based on trade. As such, today's scientific community can find Olmec art, weaponry, and influence over much of Central America. They dealt in jewelry made of onyx and other objects made of jade. They were excellent craftsmen.

Scientists are not sure exactly why the great cities and monuments were abandoned. There is speculation that rivers changed their flow. Others feel cyclic droughts or other climate changes caused the Olmec downfall. The trade with the Maya and the Toltec was tenuous at times, but nothing to spark a four-to-five hundred steady abandonment of an entire civilization. And, there is another mystery. They have never found any skeletal remains of any Olmec people.

The Olmecs are known as the Jaguar people because of their love of the supreme animal predator in their jungles. This fact isn't so surprising, as most primitive cultures chose some dominate animal to build into god-like status or at least to emulate. Look to almost every high school and college/university society in the western world, only today they call them mascots. (. . . and my Little League Baseball team in Oklahoma was named the Midwest City Mud Hens.)

The average age of an Olmec would have been anywhere into their 40's or 50's. They weren't as warlike as the Aztecs, preferring to establish and maintain their trade routes. But, they were the start of the super colossal temple building that went on until Columbus put a sudden stop to it, via Hernán Cortez, in 1519CE.



Olmec heartland...Manzanillo is further west and north

you can reach Kirby at kirby.vickery@manzanillosun.com



by Tommy Clarkson

Cape Jasmine *Gardenia jasminoides*

Family: *Rubiaceae*

Also known as: *Gardenia*, *Cape Jessamine* or *Jasmin*

(In this, I am going to liberally share sound advice kindly provided to me by Paul Crist - a successful grower of these beauties who lives in the Puerto Vallarta area. In all candor, regarding these magnificent flowers, he is more experienced and conversant on them than am I. Accordingly, I tip my Ola Brisa Gardens hat to him in grateful appreciation for his input!)

Cape Jasmine is one of the better known of the 142 species in the *Gardenia* genus. These evergreen shrubs are indigenous to the tropical and subtropical areas of Africa, Asia and Australia. In that natural habitat, they can grow from two to twenty feet or more in height. Their leaves are glossy, dark green and, depending on the species, can grow from about one to ten inches (2 1/2 to 25 1/2 cm) long. Their flowers - many of which have an intoxicatingly sweet scent - are white or yellow and develop either a single or a cluster of blossoms.

Given their "*druthers*", they prefer moist, well-drained, acidic soil that is rich in organic matter. If the soil is not acidic enough, the leaves will turn yellow. And water? I like the way Paul said it, "(I use) insane amounts of water during the dry, winter sea-



Some say it looks like a carnation while others think it more resembles a rose.

son". He finds "it useful to (employ) an oscillating sprinkler underneath the plants (with) the underside spray helping to keep down the spider mites that attack gardenias during the dry season."

He continues saying that "watering deeply . . . helps establish deep roots and grows a hardier plant. Moistening the surface of the soil without a good drenching can result in a plant (having) more surface roots which are more susceptible to drying out (this should never be allowed for gardenias)." And, he is absolutely correct when he says that "Gardenias like the cooler, moister soil that is at least six to eight inches underground in a well-tended planting bed."

In his care for them, he "regularly use(s) a mild preventive insecticide containing pyrethrins, which is an extract of chrysanthemums. (It) is a fast-acting poison which disrupts the nervous system and causes paralysis of the insects, while at the same time being non-toxic to warm-blooded animals. (It is) also biodegradable and breaks down quickly in sunlight, moisture and oxygen." He adds that, "When using insecticide, (strive) to cover all surfaces, including the undersides of the leaves and stems."

...Cape Jasmine

He then says that "leaf cutter ants adore gardenias and can strip a plant bare of leaves in one night." To thwart them, he uses "Trompa" which are pellets that ants find to be delicious. They take these pellets back to their nests, for a "last supper" - as it were!" (I concur that this is the best local product for these little nasties!)



A simply nice aromatic bush to have!

He suggests that "if you see damage from leaf cutter ants, go out at night, around eleven pm, with a flashlight in hand, and look for the column of marching ants. Follow them back to the nest, and sprinkle Trompa liberally around the nest. One or two treatments usually will "do the job".

He "use(s) lots of Miracle Gro (by) drench(ing) the plants and soil every two weeks" and he advises that the "nutrients are absorbed through leaf pores as well as through roots." He continues that "Miracle gro has a good mix of trace minerals such as magnesium, which helps distribute phosphorus throughout the plant, so it is, in my opinion, the best water soluble fertilizer for gardenias."

To this, he adds, "I also add a bit of granular fertilizer around the base of the plants about once each month. You don't need to use much, as it's a supplement to the Miracle Grow that



As leaves go, they're, actually, rather attractive!

provides a more continuous feeding. Use a granular one with high phosphorus (rose fertilizers work well). In selecting fertilizers, the middle number is phosphorous (e.g. 5 - 10-5)." He correctly suggests that one "Go for a big middle number."

In closing, he said that, to obtain the very best results, all "Gardenias need full sun . . . all day long. They'll survive some shade but won't bloom. And be sure to pluck or clip dried blooms, which help to encourage more flowering. Gardenias are a challenge in western Mexico, where the dry winter season means more care for a spectacular plant. But the scent and beauty of these regal plants are well worth the effort."

Get your copy of The Civilized Jungle: Tropical Plants Facts and Fun From Ola Brisa Gardens [Volume I](#), and now [Volume II](#) is here!!

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you can reach Tommy Clarkson at tommy@manzanillosun.com

Alternative Energy

by Terry Sovil

When we talk about "alternative energy", we are talking about renewable types of energy. Generally, we are talking about solar energy, wind energy, biomass, hydro power and geothermal. Renewable energy is from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished, such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves and geothermal heat. Mexico is doing quite well in this area and sets a good example for other nations.

Solar energy – This is radiant light and heat from the sun. These are captured using current and evolving technologies.

Wind energy – The windmills of old used the wind to grind grain or pump water. Using generators and turbines, this mechanical power can be converted into electricity to power homes, business, schools etc.

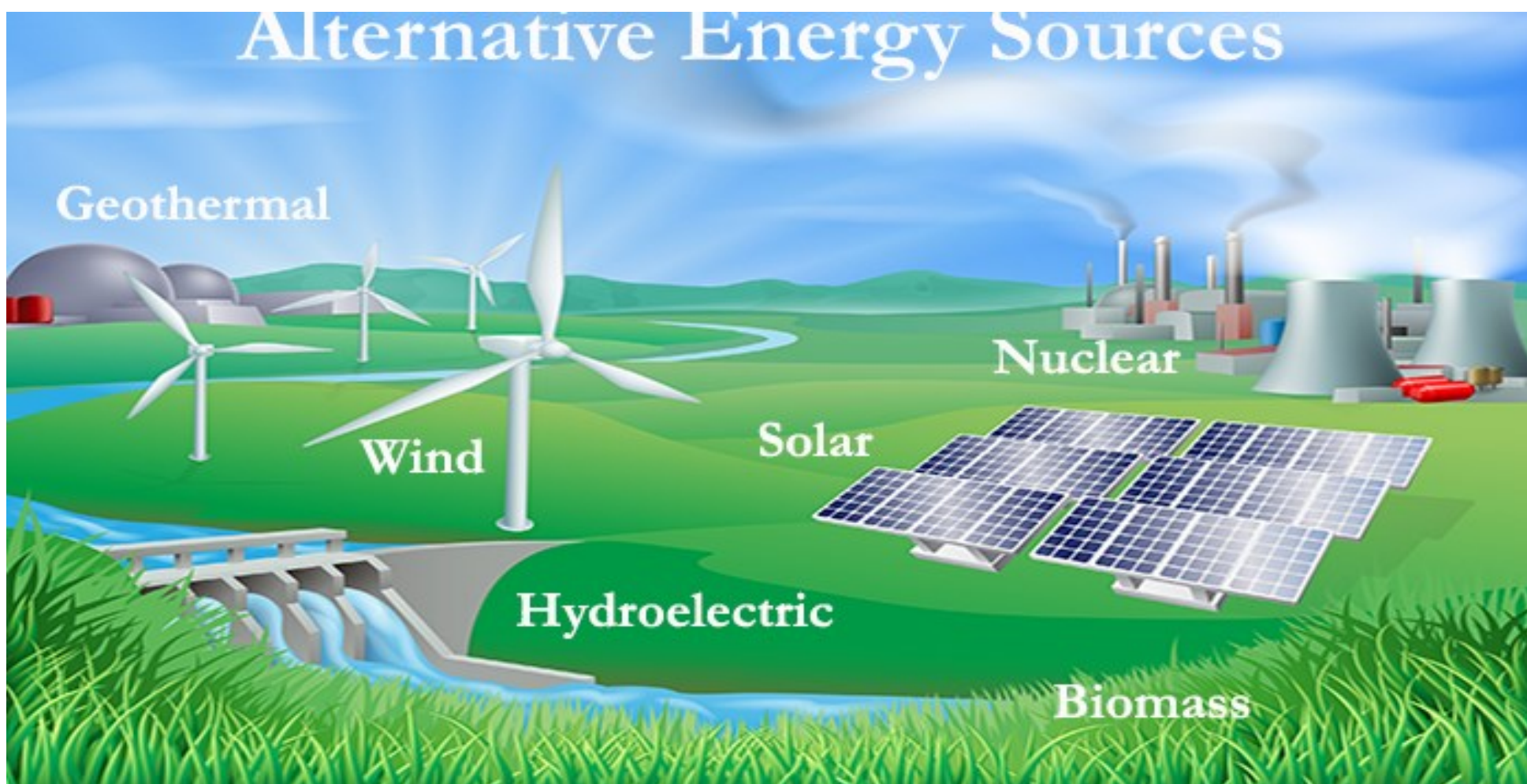
Biomass energy – This involves the use of plant material, animal waste, wood and other organic matter. Burning biomass does create carbon emissions, but it has been labeled as a renewable energy source by the European Union. It is used mainly for the generation of electricity.

Hydropower energy – Simply put, water power is power created from falling or fast-moving water which can be harnessed for various purposes.

Geothermal energy - This is power from shallow ground to hot water and hot rock found a few miles deep and generated by geothermal energy. This includes dry steam power and flash steam power.

What does Mexico have now?

- ✓ Mexico is 9th in the world for reserves of crude oil.
- ✓ Mexico is 4th in natural gas reserves in the Americas.
- ✓ Mexico is highly rich in all of the primary renewable energy sources measured in MW or Megawatts. One megawatt is 1,000 kilowatts which is 1,000,000 watts. For example, a typical coal plant is about 600 MW in size. Gigawatts measures large power plants or many plants.
- ✓ Solar – Solar install costs are falling. It is estimated that the 2012 climate law will lead to 6 GW of solar capacity in Mexico by 2020.
- ✓ Wind – Energy potential is very high in five main zones including Oaxaca and Mexico's ideal location in the "Solar Belt".
- ✓ Biomass – This has the highest potential and the highest number of research projects during the last 35 years (1982-2017).
- ✓ Hydropower – With 11,603 MW, it is the highest installed capacity with Mexico.
- ✓ Geothermal – With 958 MW, puts Mexico at #4 worldwide for this type of energy.



...Alternative Energy

At the end of 2018, Mexico's oil and gas industries will be totally open to private investments from both domestic and foreign companies. That includes everything from oil exploration to opening gas stations. In order to meet Mexico's requirements in CECs, clean energy certificates, they developed a system of auctions for energy and capacity. These auctions offer long-term contracts for investors, both foreign and domestic, for 15 years in energy and capacity and 20 years for CEC's.

It is exciting to note that, for the first time in history, producing renewable energies is lower than the cost of fossil fuels! Electricity generated from renewables went up 18.8% in 2016 (83.2 TWh to 98.9 TWh) and 87.1 TWh to 97.8 TWh in 2017. TWh is terawatt hours.

Researchers found that the photovoltaic energy auctions in 2017 showed that the standard cost of energy can be brought down to \$30 USD per MWh from 2018 in Dubai, Mexico, Chili, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia. Wind energy onshore saw similar costs reaching \$30 USD per MWh in Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Mexico and Morocco.

Hanno Schoklitsch, Chief Executive Officer of Kaiserwetter, said: "We are in a scenario in which renewable energy is already less expensive than conventional energy.

From now on, the digital platforms that use the Internet of Things (IoT) and Smart Data will be the next key factor to achieve the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement and attract more investors."

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Another Happy Client
...Patty Murphy



Solar power was the winner in Mexico's latest energy auctions. Solar won 1.3 gigawatts for 55% of the projects and 58.3% of the clean energy certificates awarded. Solar came in with a new world record average price of \$20.57 USD per MWh. That's nearly \$10 USD per MWh lower than the price from a 120 MWh solar farm in Chili that year had a cost of \$29.10 USD per MWh.

The company [ENEL](#) won solar and wind farm bids for the latest projects. "We are thrilled about yet another great success in Mexico, a core market for us, and we are proud to confirm our

leadership in the country's renewables arena," said Antonio Cammisecra, head of Enel Green Power. Enel is investing about \$700 million for the construction of 4 wind projects that will total 593 MWh. They are also constructing a 754 MW solar farm in Coahuila and a 238 MW project in Guanajuato.

AMLO (President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador), has announced projects for 2019. He also appointed new heads for the Ministry of Energy and CFE. The World Association of Nuclear Operators also visited Laguna Verde for a close-up inspection. The association concluded that the plant has not undergone any significant event that may increase potential incident risks, and that the plant is under normal operational conditions. The public and private companies are making investments with positive results.

AMLO announced 4 priority projects with an investment of \$175 billion MXN (\$9.4 billion USD). Three of the projects are in the oil and gas industry. The fourth is to increase electricity production, with emphasis on modernizing CFE's power plants, starting with hydroelectric plants.

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by Tommy Clarkson

Common Hibiscus, *Hibiscus syriacus*

Family: *Malvaceae*

Also known as: *Hibiscus*, *Rose of China*, *Rose Mallow*, *Flor de Jamaica*, and *Shrub Althaceae*

Actually, there is very little that is "common" in the appearance of the many species in this genus. The brilliant flowers of the hibiscus are to the tropics what beans are to chili!

At the basic level, the "care and feeding" of all *Hibiscus* species is rather similar so, as to information on the group, just consider them glomped together herein. (*That word, I hasten to state, is not generally used in the technical, botanical lexicon!*) Their general renown comes from the fact that numerous of these have large, five-petaled, disk-like, colorful flowers, with a rather long, central protrusion consisting of its stamens and pistils.

Throughout the subtropical and tropical regions of the world, these vivid, mallow-like, hibiscus flowers magnificently bloom in a wide array of colors (and combinations thereof) and in slightly differing configurations. Very popular as free-standing plants or landscape shrubs, they may also be effectively incorporated into tropical gardens or dramatically placed on terraces or balconies in pots. (At last count, we have over ten different species.)



There's certainly nothing "common" about this beautiful Hibiscus cultivar!

The large, showy and, usually, trumpet-shaped flowers of *Hibiscus* are what give these plants their great allure. (*Some of us, slightly more seasoned sorts, may recall Dorothy Lamour wearing one in her hair in the Bing Crosby/Bob Hope "Road" pictures of the – dare I say it – 1940's!*)

This genus consists of nearly three hundred annual and perennial, temperate growing, herbaceous plants, sized from smallish, woody shrubs to the awesome, 70-80-foot (21.34-24.38 meters) *hibiscus macrophyllus* trees. Per Dr. Arthur Whistler, six of the most common species are the Confederate - or Cotton - Rose (*H. mutabilis*), a ten-foot (3.05 meter) shrub, native to Southern China; Chinese Hibiscus (*H. rosa-sinensis*), the same shape and size as the preceding; Roselle, though sometimes called Red Sorrel or Jamaica Sorrel, (*H. sabdaroffa*), a six-and-a-half-foot (1.98 meters) shrub, thought to be from West Africa; the East African Coral or Fringed Hibiscus (*H. Schizopetalus*) – the same as the first two in size; Rose of Sharon (*H. syriacus*), of warm, temperate China, and a shrub of thirteen feet (3.97 meters); and, the Beach or Yellow Hibiscus (*H. tillaceus*), a tree or tall shrub of thirty-three feet (10.06 meters), found throughout the tropics.

There are a wide array of cultivars and hybrids spawned from the *H. rosa-sinensis* and *H. schizopetalus*. (*I have found the cultivars, generally, don't grow as fast, or as well, as the originals.*)

...Common Hibiscus

Beyond the blooms, a few of the larger species are singularly magnificent-appearing plants wholly unto themselves. Some have beautiful leaves. In fact, the leaves of the *H. acetosella* are purportedly edible and can be cooked or used in salads. However, their flowers are the general focus of attention of those of this genus. It is worthy of note that the plant entirety, of the noble appearing *H. elatus*, is recognized as one of the most attractive tropical flowering trees in the world. However, it is the eye-striking beauty of their bright blooms most often sought. The largest variety grows flowers that are nearly one foot (30 cm) across.



Many have large, five-petaled, somewhat disk-like, colorful flowers.

While not from the conventional garden variety Hibiscus, in Mexico, an herbal tea, *agua de Flor de Jamaica*, is made by boiling the dehydrated *Hibiscus sabdariffa* flowers. With sugar it tastes somewhat like cranberry juice. Our preferred drink, *Jamaica*, helps fight high blood pressure and high cholesterol, as well as digestive, immune system and inflammatory problems, cures liver disease, reduces the risk of cancer, speeds up the metabolism and helps in healthy, gradual weight loss. Jams are made often from it in the Caribbean area. In Polynesia, the Hibiscus bark fibers are used to make grass skirts and even wigs. In Southern India, a ground paste shampoo of hibiscus leaves and flowers solves dandruff problems, while its petals are used to cure fever and its roots stop coughs.



Some species are multi-colored but most have the protruding stamens and pistils in their center.

But for those who seek solely the beauty of its flowers, remember, they require regular moisture, sandy, well-drained, loamy soil, some peat or pulverized coconut coir and recurring fertilization is a plus. Hibiscus can be propagated by seed, cuttings or simple plantings – I'd encourage the latter. As long as the temperature stays warm, most of these are perpetual bloomers.

Plant, enjoy them, and every morning upon sighting your little beauties, greet them with a hearty "*Hi bisco*"!

(I know, I know. I really need to work on my material!)

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Five Health Financial Habits to Fortify your Future

by Yann Kostic and Tom Zachystal

Financial advice is often directed at the very young or very old: spend less than you earn every month and don't put too much of your retirement savings in stocks as your retirement progresses. But what about the rest of us—those of us in our working years who are approaching retirement? Here are five tips to keep us on track.

Track your income and expenses. Do it while you're working. Do it in retirement. Knowing what you earn and what you spend is the key to financial freedom.

Save part of your income every month. In your working years, save for retirement. In your retirement, save for a rainy day. Take advantage of automatic paycheck deductions, if they're available.

Take advantage of your employer's tax-savings plans. If you have a 401(k) plan, a pretax transportation plan, or a health savings account, use them. Every little bit of tax savings helps.

Be diligent. Open bills when you get them. Review your bank and credit card statements for errors. Pay your bills on time (and online when possible; it can help keep you on track). Pay attention to interest rates on mortgages and other loans. Plan your dinner menus in advance and shop accordingly. Read all contracts before signing.

Don't overspend. Keep the money in your wallet to a minimum. Avoid buying on impulse by making a shopping list and sticking with it. Gifts are no exception. They may seem like they don't count, but your generosity shouldn't threaten your financial security.

Note: This material has been prepared for informational purposes only, and is not intended to provide financial advice for your particular situation.

Yann Kostic, MBA and Tom Zachystal, CFP, are Presidents of their respective Assets Management firms, both US-Registered Investment Advisors (RIA). Tom is the San Francisco Financial Planners' Association President. Tom and Yann cater to US expats in Mexico and worldwide. Comments, questions or to request his newsletter, "News you can use" contact him at yannk@atlantisgrp.com, in the US at (321) 574-1 529 or in Mexico, (376) 106-1613.



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Cenote Suytun

by Dan and Lisa Goy, exclusive to Manzanillo Sun

February 2, 2016 (Day 27)

Cenotes Cabañas Suytun, Valladolid, Yucatán, MX

This was a short drive led by the Goys, only 60 km (40 miles) along Hwy 180, from Pisté to our Cenote destination. We opted to stay on the free road and, in turn, had an interesting drive thru downtown Valladolid. We departed at 9 am and arrived before lunch. The \$250 Pesos (\$13 USD) fee per RV included overnight parking, entrance to the Cenote plus access to the pool. What a deal!



Hwy 180 opens up after Valladolid

We enjoyed lots of swimming, an afternoon siesta and, of course, a Happy Hour, on this unplanned stop. This was an idyllic location, which was full of tourists when we arrived, but emptied out shortly after set-up. For almost our entire stay it was just us and an occasional staff person (and a rattlesnake nest which we avoided). Some decided to cool off before bed-time with a late swim in the pool, some with bathing suits, others dressed as they arrived. Overall, this was a terrific one-night stay before heading off to Cancun the next day.

Valladolid is named after Valladolid, at the time the capital of Spain, located approximately 160 km east of the state capital, Mérida, 40 km east of Chichén Itzá, and 150 km west of Cancún. On August 30, 2012, Valladolid became part of the Pueblo Mágico promotional initiative led by the Mexican tourism department.

The first Valladolid in Yucatán was established by Spanish Con-



Happy Hour at the Cenote Suytun Resort

quistador, Francisco de Montejo's nephew on May 27, 1543, at some distance from the current town, at a lagoon called Chouac-Ha in the municipality of Tizimín. However, early Spanish settlers complained about the mosquitos and humidity at the original location and petitioned to have the city moved farther inland.

On March 24, 1545, Valladolid was relocated to its current location, built atop a Maya town called Zaci or Zaci-Val, whose buildings were dismantled to reuse the stones to build the Spanish colonial town. The following year, the Maya people revolted, but were put down with additional Spanish troops coming from Mérida.

In January 1847, the native Mayans rioted, killing some eighty whites and sacking their houses. After a Mayan noble was shot by firing squad, the riot became a general uprising. It was led by Jacinto Pat, batab of Tihosuco and by Cecilio Chi of nearby Ichmul. The city, and the surrounding region, were the scene of intense battle during Yucatán's Caste War, and the Ladino forces were forced to abandon Valladolid on March 14, 1848, with half being killed by ambush before they reached Mérida.

The city was sacked by the Maya rebels but was recaptured later in the war. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Valladolid was the third largest and most important city of the Yucatán Peninsula, (after Mérida and Campeche). It had a sizable well-to

...Cenote Suytun

-do Criollo population, with a number of old Spanish style mansions in the old city. Valladolid was widely known by its nickname **"The Sultana of the East"**.

A **Cenote** (seh-NOH-tay) is the Maya term for a natural fresh-water sinkhole, a geological feature found in the northern Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, and other similar landscapes throughout the world. There are no rivers in the Yucatán; the regular high rainfall (1,300 mm or about 50 inches of rain falls every year) simply trickles through its calcareous landscape. Once below ground, the water forms a thin layer of water called a lens aquifer.



Mural on the way to Valladolid

Those aquifers flow horizontally, carving sinuous underground caves and, when the ceilings of those caves collapse, sinkhole openings to the surface are created. Especially with the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, cenotes were sometimes used by the ancient Maya for sacrificial offerings.

While the best-known cenotes are large, open-water pools measuring tens of meters in diameter, such as those at Chichén Itzá in Mexico, the greatest number of cenotes are smaller shel-



Cenote Suytan

tered sites and do not necessarily have any surface exposed water. There are over 6,000 different cenotes in the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico alone. In the north and northwest of the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico, the cenotes generally overlie vertically extensive voids, penetrating 50 to 100 m (160 to 330 ft) below the modern water table.

However, very few of these cenotes appear to be connected with horizontally extensive underground river systems, with water flow through them being more likely dominated by aquifer matrix and fracture flows. In contrast, the cenotes along the Caribbean coast of the Yucatán Peninsula (within the state of Quintana Roo) often provide access to extensive underwater cave systems, such as Sistema Ox Bel Ha, Sistema Sac Actun/ Sistema Nohoch Nah Chich and Sistema Dos Ojos.

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...Cenote Suytun

In 1936, a simple **morphometry-based classification system for cenotes** was presented.

Cenotes-cántaro (Jug or pit cenotes) are those with a surface connection narrower than the diameter of the water body;

Cenotes-cilíndricos (Cylinder cenotes) are those with strictly vertical walls;

Cenotes-aguadas (Basin cenotes) are those with shallow water basins;

Cenote-grutas (Cave cenotes) are those having a horizontal entrance with dry sections.



Entrance and exit to the Cenote

The classification scheme was based on morphometric observations above the water table, and therefore incompletely reflects the processes by which the cenotes formed and the inherent hydrogeochemical relationship with the underlying flooded cave networks, which were only discovered in the 1980s and later with the initiation of cave diving exploration.



Narrow streets in Valladolid



Archaeology and anthropology

In 2001-2002, expeditions led by Arturo H. González and Carmen Rojas Sandoval in the Yucatán discovered three human skeletons; one of them, Eve of Naharon, was carbon-dated to be 13,600 years old. In March 2008, three members of the Proyecto Espeleológico de Tulum and Global Underwater Explorers dive team, Alex Alvarez, Franco Attolini, and Alberto Nava, explored a section of Sistema Aktun Hu (part of Sistema Sac Actun) known as the pit Hoyo Negro. At a depth of 57 m (187 ft), the divers located the remains of a mastodon and a human skull (at 43 m or 141 ft) that might be the oldest evidence of human habitation in the region.

Major Maya settlements required access to adequate water supplies, and therefore cities, including the famous Chichén Itzá, were built around these natural wells. Some cenotes, like the Sacred Cenote in Chichén Itzá, played an important role in Maya rites. Believing that these pools were gateways to the afterlife, the Maya sometimes threw valuable items into them. The discovery of golden sacrificial artifacts in some cenotes led to the archaeological exploration of most cenotes in the first part of the 20th century. Edward Herbert Thompson (1857-1935), an American diplomat who had bought the Chichén Itzá site, began dredging the Sacred Cenote there in 1904. He discovered human skeletons and sacrificial objects confirming a local legend, the Cult of the Cenote, involving human sacrifice to the rain god, Chaac, by ritual casting of victims and objects into the cenote. The remains of this cultural heritage are protected by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

... more pics follow

...Cenote Suytun



100 years of the Mexican Army



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Bruce in front of the RVs



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...Cenote Suytun



Day 27 heading to Valladolid



Driving in downtown Valladolid



Eileen and Kelly poolside



Grant and Mike kicked back at Cenote Suytun



Above - Great pool at the RV park

Right - Relaxing drive to Valladolid



...Cenote Suytun



Roland relaxing at Cenote Suytun



Heading down for our swim



Path from the RVs to the Cenote



Kelly soaking up the sun



Lisa and the gals in the shade

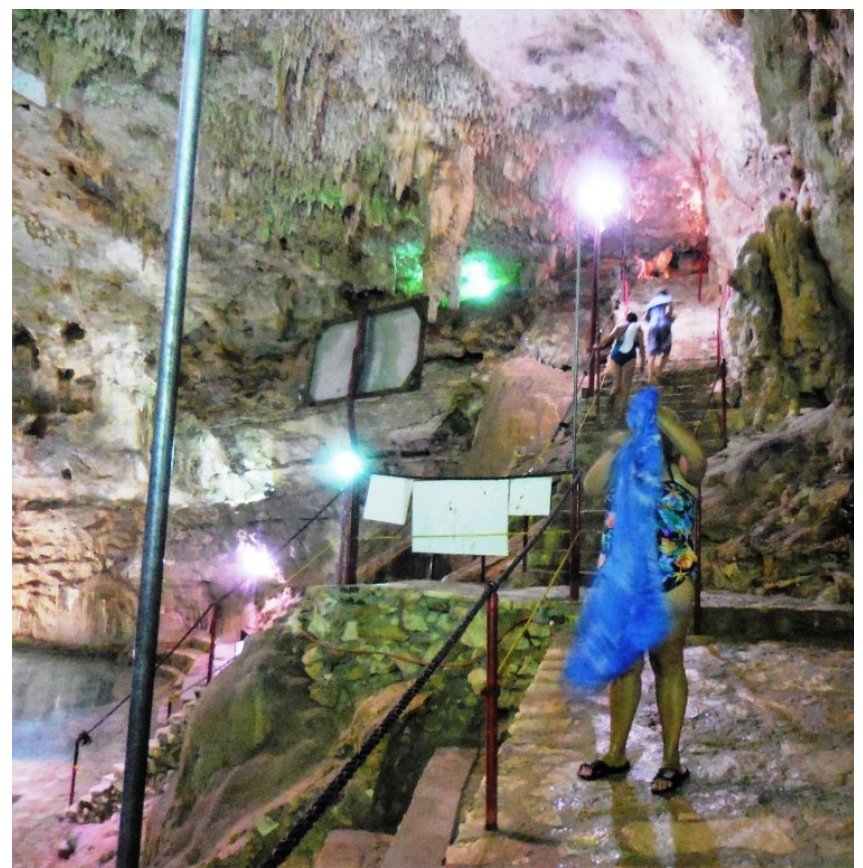


Rafael and Eileen enjoying the floating experience

...Cenote Suytun



RVs parked behind the resort



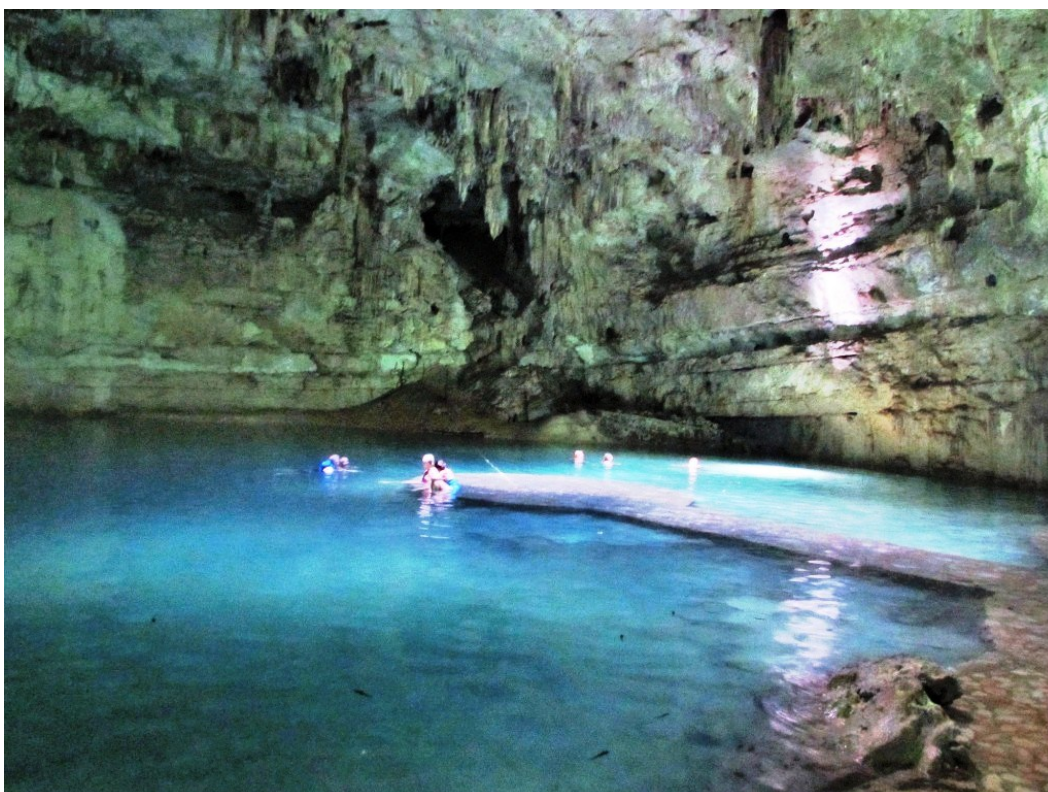
Steep stairs at the Cenote



RVs parked with the Cabañas



Suytun Cenote Resort - poolside



We had the Cenote
all to ourselves!

Submitted by Dan and Lisa Goy
 Owners of Baja Amigos RV Caravan Tours
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Carlota de Limón

Although Cinco de Mayo (5th of May) is a popular holiday associated with Mexico, el Dieciséis de Septiembre (16th of September) is seen as more important. Whereas May 5 commemorates the victory of the Mexican army over Napoleon's French troops/invasers in 1862, September 16 marks Mexico's declaration of independence from Spain in 1810. Either date is cause for celebration.

Carlota de limón (also called postre de limón) is one of the quick and easy recipes. It is like a trifle that consists of alternating layers of cookies and a creamy lime filling. This makes for a delicious dessert for Dieciséis de Septiembre and during other Mexican holidays.

Ingredients

- ✓ ½ cup lime juice (from approximately 6-7 fresh-squeezed limes)
- ✓ 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
- ✓ 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- ✓ 2 rolls/packages of Maria Mexican cookies
- ✓ sliced limes (optional garnish)

Directions

1. Juice the limes. Place the juice with the evaporated and condensed milks in a blender. Blend until smooth.
2. In a large glass casserole dish, layer the cookies. Pour 1/3 of the lime-milk mixture over the cookies and spread to cover them. Arrange more cookies on top. Pour another layer of the lime-milk mixture over it and spread to cover them. Arrange the last layer of cookies and finish spreading the lime-milk mixture over it.
3. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least three hours or overnight to allow the cookies to soften, the lime-milk mixture to solidify and the flavors to develop. Before serving, garnish with limes (optional). Cut into 24 squares.

Notes

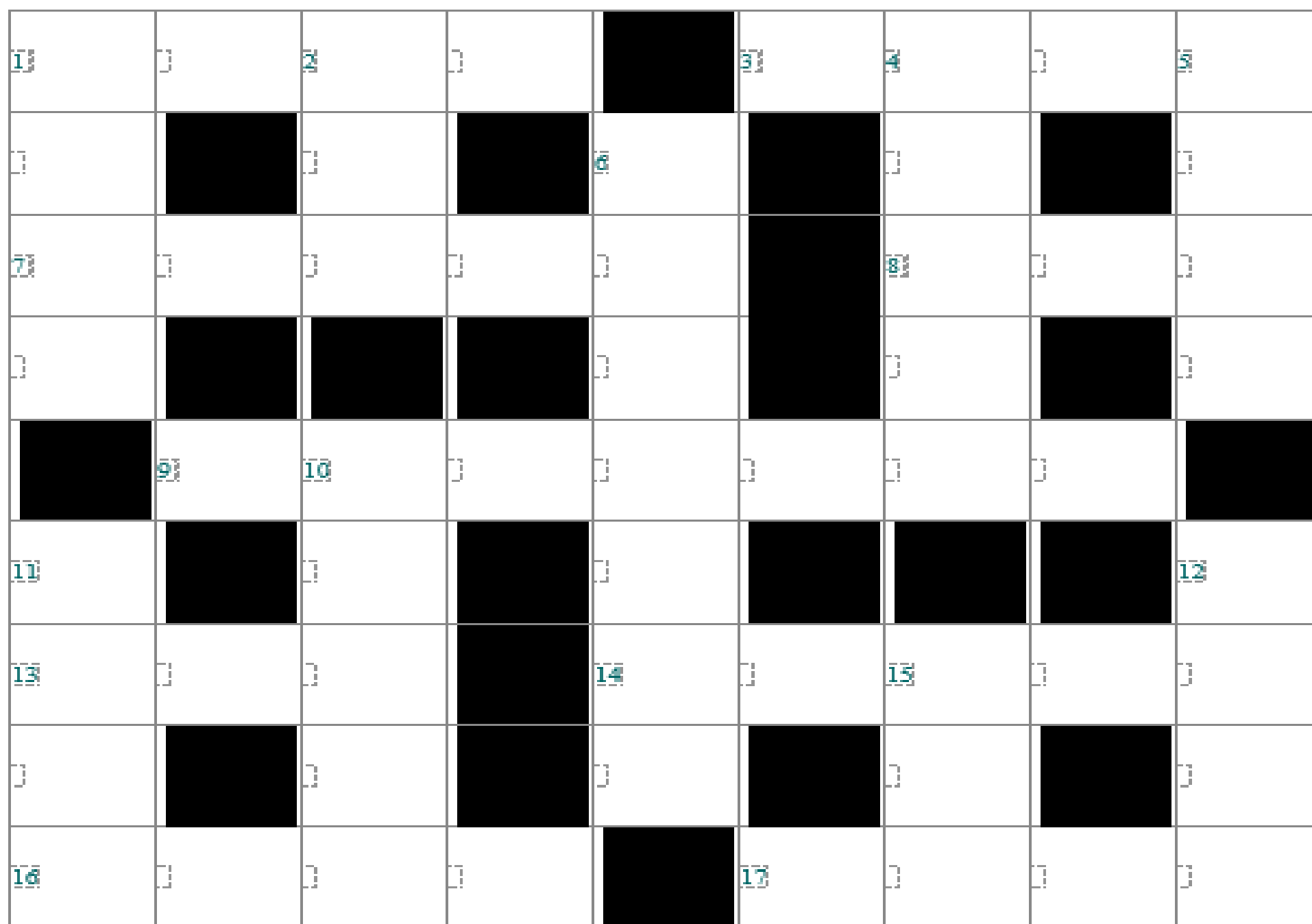
Some recipes add a cup of softened whipped cream cheese to make the filling fluffier and thicker. Pipe a pretty border with whipped cream to decorate the edges (optional).

Recipe source: hicookery.com



Crossword

solution posted in next month's edition



Across

- 1 hair
- 3 case, instance
- 7 beams, rays
- 8 anger
- 9 natural
- 13 eye
- 14 (you/usted) arrive, get to, (he, she) arrives, gets to
- 16 wings
- 17 coffee

Down

- 1 but
- 2 law
- 4 friend, girlfriend
- 5 waves
- 6 school
- 10 now
- 11 clothing, clothes
- 12 (I) will do, make
- 15 (he, she) used to be, (I) used to be

Last month's crossword solution:



lexisrex.com

Independence Day

from the Path to Citizenship series

Mexico's independence from Spain is celebrated every year in September. From the beginning of the month, Mexico's streets and buildings are festooned with an explosion of green, white, and red, but the main events occur on the evening of September 15 when crowds gather in town squares across the nation to shout "Viva México!" and on September 16 when you'll find parades and other civic celebrations. Mexican patriotic spirit is embodied in a multitude of popular traditions. Find out more about Mexican Independence Day—an important national holiday for the country.

This holiday is also referred to in Mexico by the date of the event: el dieciséis de Septiembre (the 16th of September). It is one of Las Fiestas Patrias (the patriotic festivals) and is celebrated on the night of September 15 and all day on September 16. This is one of the most important fiestas of the year in Mexico, and the whole month of September is referred to as el mes de la patria (month of the homeland). Some people outside of Mexico may confuse Mexican Independence Day with Cinco de Mayo (5th of May), but that is a different celebration (and a much less important one in Mexico).

El Grito de Dolores

Mexico's War of Independence officially began in the early hours of September 16, 1810, when the priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla rang the church bell and cried out to the townspeople to take up arms and rise up against the Spanish Crown, an event that is known as el grito de Dolores (the cry of Dolores), named after the town in Guanajuato state where it took place. Within no time the priest had assembled a large and unruly but resolute mob to march with him toward Mexico City, sparking the uprising against Spanish rule.

The Mexican War of Independence

The Mexican War of Independence was an armed conflict between the people of Mexico and Spanish colonial authorities. The movement was initiated by criollos (Mexican-born people of Spanish descent), with mestizos (people of mixed indigenous and European heritage) and native people joining in the struggle, though each of these groups had different motives and goals. The war lasted more than a decade and ended with the signing of the Treaty of Córdoba on August 24, 1821, ending three centuries of Spanish rule.

Source: TripSavvy.com

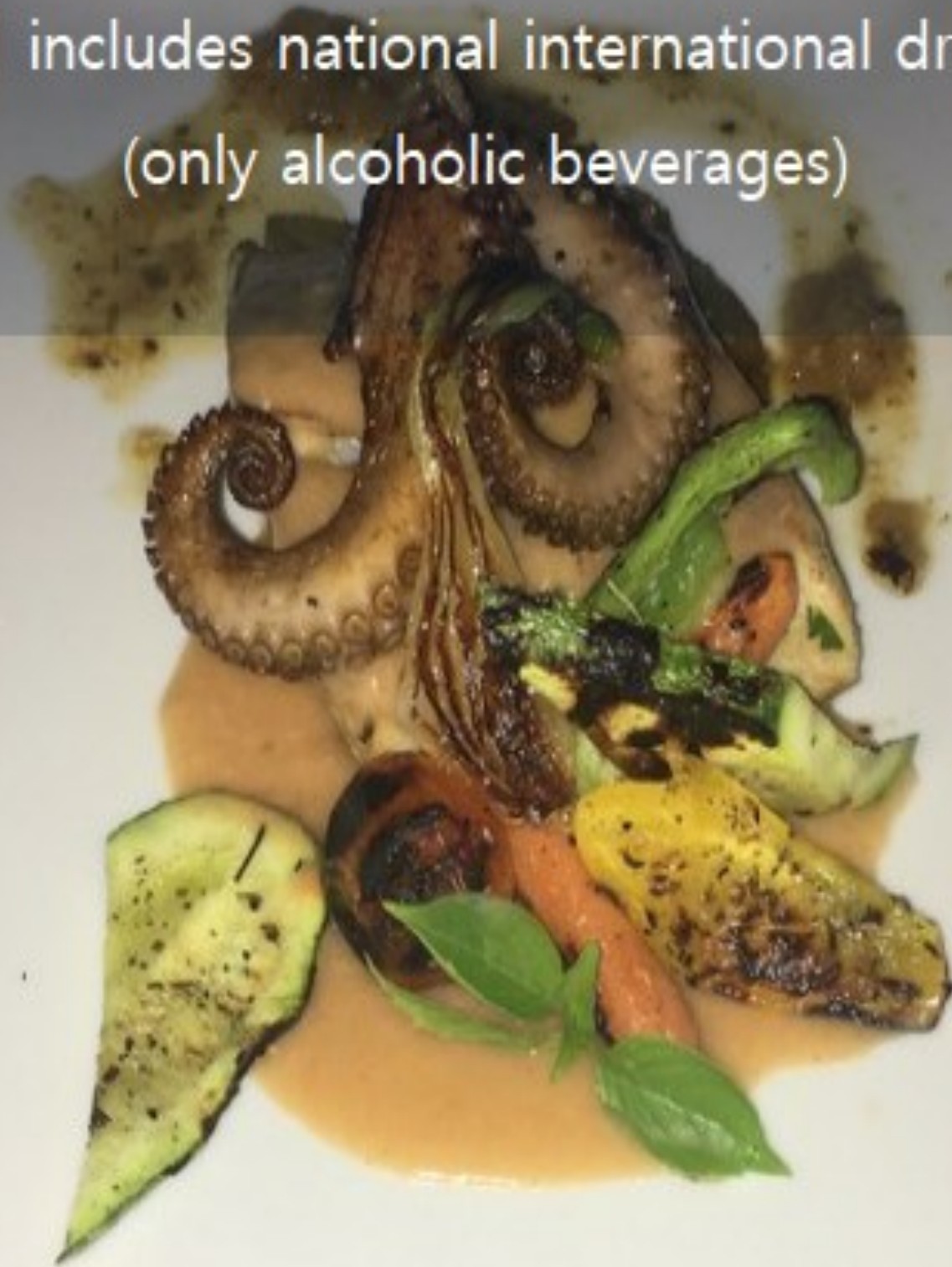
To see more about this article series, visit us at [Path to Citizenship \(P2C\) online](#)



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