

January 2015

Manzanillo Sun

Manzanillo's Lifestyle E-Magazine

In this Issue

Nature

Planting Roots in Mexico - Baby Sun Rose - **Tommy Clarkson**
- Boston Fern - **Tommy Clarkson**

The whale - **Dave Boroughs**

Living in Mexico

Cafe Review- La Brasserie/La Parroquia - **Allan Yanitski**

A Journey to San Miguel de Allende - **Suzanne Marshall**

Considering a trip to San Miguel de Allende - **Suzanne Marshall**

Where Fantasy becomes Reality - **John Chalmers**

Travel Part 2 - **Terry Sovil**

Here's to Mexico - **Kirby Vickery**

Technology

What's that I hear in yon window? - **Senior Tech**



Young Gray Whale at play
Sr. Dave Boroughs



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Publisher: Ian T. Rumford

Editors: Freda A. Vickery

Kirby L. Vickery

Contact: info@manzanillosun.com

freda@manzanillosun.com

For advertising information in
magazine or web pages contact:

Manzanillo-

jaime@manzanillosun.com

ian@manzanillosun.com

Lake Chapala-

yann@manzanillosun.com

gabriela@manzanillosun.com

Writers and contributors:

Tommy Clarkson

David Fitzpatrick

Suzanne Marshall

Vivian Molick

Terry Sovil

Senior Tech

Karen Trom

Freda Vickery

Kirby Vickery

Mark Wright

*Comments, brickbats and bouquets
on our featured articles are always
welcome.*

Individual writers or authors may
also be reached via the following:
freda@manzanillosun.com

Submissions for possible inclusion
in the magazine, please send to the
editor by 20th of each month.
We are always looking for writers
or ideas on what you would like us
to write about in the magazine.
Preferred subjects are concerning
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All articles should be 1000 words
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Sample Hotel Web Ad



Baby Sun Rose, *Aptenia cordifolia*

(Alternative Botanical Name: *Mesembryanthemum cordifolium*)

Family: Aizoaceae

(Also known as Heartleaf Ice Plant, Heart and Flower, Dew Plant, Red Apple or Red Aptenia)

While she enjoys the hundreds of tropical plants that comprise *Ola Brisa Gardens*, seldom does Ana (our housekeeper and dear friend) inquire specifically about a plant. She did so with this one!

This succulent is native to the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (also found in KwaZulu-Natal). It is often planted in hanging baskets or window boxes as well as serving as an excellent bedding plant or ground cover for rock gardens or small garden areas. It spreads its pretty self via creeping, mat forming stems that can reach up to two feet (61 centimeters) in length.

But, before going further, please allow me to share a bit of botanical minutia. The family Aizoaceae (or Ficoideaceae) is in the fig-marigold family or 'ice plant family' and comprises 135 genera and about 1900 species. Often called stone plants or carpet weeds, this species somewhat resembles stones or pebbles. The several species known as "ice plants" derive their name as a result of their glistening globular bladder cells which cover their stems, fruit and leaves.

Preferring dry to medium, well-drained, sandy loams with full sun, this evergreen can grow well in dry soils, but therein tends to remain compact. So what does that tell us? Correct! They'll grow more aggressively in moist soils – but allow the soil to fully dry before watering again.



Ana and our potted Baby Sun Rose

They are, however, like us and have a terminus, lasting two to three years and, accordingly, they will require replacement.

As to propagation, plant division, tip cuttings or seed are best. Container plants – with very good drainage - also need full sun. In fact, water in hot, dry conditions and never when it's cool. While Baby Sun Rose can grow in nutrient-poor conditions, it will thank you profusely if you give it two or three light fertilizations every year with ammonium phosphate.

They grow to around four inches (10 cm) tall with prostrate (a problem also encountered by older men . . . errrrr, woops, no, my mistake, that's prostate. Never mind.) stems trailing along the ground to two inches (2 cm) long. Those stems sport fleshy, heart-shaped, smooth, bright green leaves of one inch (2.5 cm) in width. These solitary, many-petaled and colorful flowers have

axils (the upper angle between leaf and stem) with yellow stamens (the pollen - producing reproductive organs of a flower).

These magenta-pink, purple to red button-like (astor-like) flowers are, indeed, sun lovers and attract bees. They not only close up at night, but will remain closed on cloudy days – I sorta relate to that! And, “oh, by the way”, there is a variegated form which has white leaf margins.

In moist soils the Baby Sun Rose will grow rapidly to the point of overwhelming nearby vegetation. Though introduced to the State as a horticultural plant, the California Invasive Plant Council now says that *Aptenia cordifolia* is invasive to that State and has listed it as a wildland weed red alert. But you know those west coast folks . . . they're nice and mean well!

So just how did it come by its genus name? Well, from Greek *aptenos* meaning wingless and refers to the wingless seed capsules while *cordi*, in Latin, means heart and *folia* means leaf in regard to the cordate leaf shape.

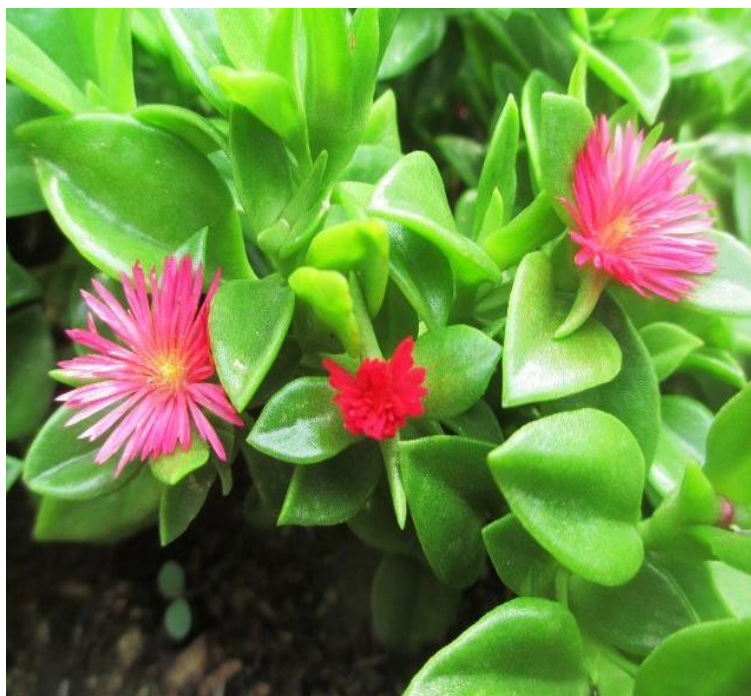
Now supposedly (though I have not yet tried it) these crunchy – though bland leaves are, purportedly, edible and can be added to a salad. . . but iguana supposedly tastes like chicken too though it's not yet graced my dinner plate. (But that may soon change if they don't start leaving my Nopal Cactus, Bleeding Heart and Passion fruit Vines alone!)

According to Arthur Lee Jacobson, who knows a bit about plants, too, “In Swaziland, this species is reported to be a love charm and a protection against sorcery.” So should you have *amore* difficulties or need a bit of magic . . . maybe he knows! Check at his site:

<http://www.arthurleej.com/p-o-m-Sept10.html>

While it has no serious insect or disease problems, too much sustained, saturated soil can lead to root rot. Now, please remember that while the Baby Sun Rose is a drought-resistant plant, can tolerate high rainfall and will put up with irregular watering, it's no different than us and would really prefer at least a tiny bit of regular love, care and attention!

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Its magenta-pink, purple to red button-like flowers are sun lovers and they attract bees.



These crunchy leaves are, purportedly, edible and can be added to a salad.



Tommy Clarkson

Boston Fern, *Nephrolepis exaltata*

Family: *Lomariopsidaceae* or *Davalliaceae*

(Also known as: Sword Fern, Wild Boston Fern, Tuber Ladder Fern, or Fishbone Fern)

Who hasn't heard of a Boston Fern? As I recall, my first contact with such was some sixty years ago when my grandmother, Rose Unruh, had a large, healthy specimen. All ferns I have since met have been consciously compared to hers!

As to the origin of this species, that's open for debate. It's a pretty good bet that they didn't begin out in the countryside around Boston! The base plant probably came from tropical America. But the form we know apparently originated in the late 1800's when plants of a particular form of *N. exaltata* became popular in nurseries around that area.

One story supporting such speculation is that the "Boston fern originated in a shipment of 200 plants sent from a Philadelphia florist to F. C. Becker, a florist in Cambridge, Mass. Mr. Becker recognized (that) one plant in the shipment was faster growing, had wider fronds and an unusual drooping habit, instead of the stiffly upright form of the species. He began to propagate it in 1894. Two years later, botanists in London identified the plant and suggested the Boston name for the variant form."

According to Philip Perl, author of "Ferns", "This original mutant (has) more graceful fronds than Sword Ferns and (has been) the founder of a whole line of attractive freaks (so much that) by 1920 about 75 varieties were known."



Most of the species are referred to as Sword Ferns what with the typical shape of the frond being long and narrow.

The leaflets of the Boston fern are alternately arranged – contrary to most other species of ferns – and are united in a somewhat parallel plane along its rachis (the main shaft of the frond).

As a genus, ferns number around thirty different species and are found all over the tropical and subtropical world. Most of the species are referred to as Sword Ferns what with the typical shape of the frond being long and narrow.

Let's briefly speak of longevity. Suffice it to say that ferns, overall – like cycads – have been around a long, long time. "The Age of Ferns" evolved well before there were flowering plants. An example of such is a fossil of a *Pepcopteris miltoni* that was found in an Illinois coal mine. It had lived 280 million years ago in a Paleozoic-era swamp. However, it looks virtually identical to its modern form. Humans have been around, reasonably as we are today, for a mere 100,000 years which begs the question as to what life forms have true staying power!

Whatever and whenever its beginnings, it is today perhaps the most popular of all ferns grown indoors. Low in maintenance requirements, loving partial shade and requiring but a medium amount of water, they will grow as wide as they grow tall (something I sometimes fear my body may be striving to attain) at two to three feet in all directions.

The University of Florida Extension Service describes the *Nephrolepis exaltata* as "a dependable, easy-to-grow fern (that) produces great masses of long, narrow, pale green leaves, creating beautiful hanging baskets or gently arching out of raised containers. But (they) also make a wonderful ground cover, creating a dense, tropical effect, (with its) graceful fronds quickly spreading over the ground by means of thin, green runners." Well said!

Its fronds are 20 to 99 inches (50–250 cm) long and 2 ½ to 6 inches (6–15 cm) broad, with alternate pinnae (these are the small "leaflets" on either side of the midrib). Each one of these is 0.8 to 3.2 inches (2–8 cm) long.

Today, there are some fun variants readily available at many nurseries. Boston Fern cultivars such as 'Fluffy Ruffles', 'Rooseveltii', and 'Whitmanii' all have more finely cut and feathery fronds than the classic original.

Propagation can be easily done by simple division of the clumps. I prefer to gently tear them apart with my hands as opposed to cutting them with a knife.

As for normal plant problems, the Boston Fern may at times be bothered by scale, mites, mealy bugs, snails, or slugs and, occasionally, fungal diseases may be a problem. But, as a rule, such should not be a major concern if proper care is taken.

Should one feed it? Yes. *Nephrolepis exaltata* needs a fertilizer with a balance of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, such as 10-10-10, 13-13-13, 16-16-16 or 20-20-20. How often, however, is open to debate among growers. I'd say try once a month during growing season and see how it does.

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Ferns lived - just as they are today -over 280 million years ago!



It's a pretty good bet that they didn't begin out in the countryside around Boston!

Where Fantasy Becomes Reality

Story and photo by John Chalmers



Drive-in hotels like the Sensual, near El Naranjo, north of Manzanillo on Highway 200, offer more than just off-road parking, security and privacy for travellers in Mexico!

My wife, Linda, and I have vacationed in Mexico in many places, but ten years ago we discovered the Manzanillo area. After renting a condo for six years at the Vida del Mar development four years ago we bought our own place there. After the purchase, we bought a Mexican car and now fly to Manzanillo, not making the long, but spectacular drive from our home in Edmonton.

En route to Mexico and on the way home, we have stayed at an ocean-front hotel in Mazatlan. However, from the highway to that hotel is a time-consuming and complicated drive. So on one trip going south, we watched for a hotel right on the highway and found one with an unusual name, the Xtasis Hotel, quite imposing and looking like a great fortress with no windows. We immediately turned in to book a room. There was no place to park at a reception office, usually seen at a hotel or motel. Instead, as we drove in at the entrance, a voice on a speaker - like a fast-food drive-thru lane - asked us questions in Spanish.

"No comprende. Habla ingles?" I asked in my best Spanish. The security guard, who didn't speak English, then came out and directed us to a room on an avenue inside the fortress. Wow, I thought, we even have a garage with an overhead door!

Almost immediately, a maid came over to check us in. She indicated the cost would be 480 pesos. She took my 500-peso bill, wrote out a receipt and reached into her pocket for the change. First time I was ever checked in by a maid.

The door to the room entered from the garage. I indicated there was no key, so the maid gestured that all I had to do was put the garage door down. It could be lowered from a button on the inside of the garage, or on the outside of the room. With no key, the door could be locked only from the inside.

We took our overnight bags into the room. The maid left and then we started noticing strange things. The lights were dim, too low for reading. Low mood music was playing from a ceiling-mounted speaker controlled by a dial beside the bed. Instead of the usual box of Kleenex in the bathroom, there was a large commercial-type tissue dispenser wall-mounted beside the king-sized bed. There was no closet and only two coat hooks on the wall. No stand on which to set a suitcase and no mini-bar or coffee machine. There were no hand towels, just two big bath towels. But toothbrushes and toothpaste were provided. The hotel had no restaurant, but there was a takeout menu in the room, presumably for ordering food to be delivered.



Each room at the hotel had a device that reminded us of a milk chute. It's a rotating, drum-like device that allows things to be put in it, then spun half way around for these objects to be extracted from the inside without being able to see through it. We thought maybe it was for receiving items from the menu.

Linda soon found the control for the TV. It was a set of wall-mounted buttons beside the bed. "Look at this," she said turning on the television, showing me that we got only six channels. Four were in Spanish and the other two were porn channels in English.

We finally realized we had booked into a hotel that rents by the hour, or in the case of seniors like us, for a whole night. We had booked into a "love hotel" for the first time. But it was quiet and we never saw another person except maids who always seemed to have a room to make up at any time of day or night. Then we discovered a sealed plastic package in the bathroom. We thought it was condoms. But it turned out to be a shower cap. "I bet this place even has rubber sheets!" Linda said. She checked and, sure enough, there was a rubber-like sheet over the mattress.

The name of the hotel should have been my first clue. It's the Xtasis Hotel. Pronounced "Ecstasies." We did have wireless Internet, although the signal was weak. Of course, most people don't come to the Xtasis to check their e-mail. After going out for dinner, about 10:30 p.m., we went to sleep after a long and tiring day. At exactly 5 a.m., as indicated on my digital travel clock, we were awakened from a sound sleep by the telephone. It had to be either a wrong number or the office, as we weren't asked for names when we paid. "What do you want?" I snarled into the phone. A female voice said something in Spanish. It sounded like the voice on the speaker at the entrance to the hotel.

"No comprende. Habla inglése?" I replied.
"Una momento." She replied and seemed to be pausing to check with someone. I hung up.
At 5:12, a maid knocked on our door. "Buenos dias!" she said.
"Go away, we're trying to sleep!" I replied. She said something more, and then her voice came through the milk chute, a device obviously capable of more than just delivering a sandwich. Not understanding her, we again said to leave us alone.

Three minutes later came another knock on the garage door, accompanied by a male voice speaking English. "Good morning," he said. "It is time for you to check out."

We replied that we were trying to sleep, it was too early and he should leave us alone. He responded by moving to the milk chute and saying again that it was time for us to leave. By then we had enough and told him we were going. I took the complimentary bottle of water with the Xtasis label bearing the hotel's slogan:

Donde tus fantasías se vuelven realidad -
"Where your fantasies become reality."

Quickly we dressed, packed our bags and left in the dark of 5:40 a.m. Soon we were leaving Mazatlan in light traffic as the day was beginning, with shadowy figures walking the streets. Others were caught by our headlights as they rode their bicycles. By 6:30 there was a little light in the sky as the day unfolded and the sun came up over the mountains. Some three hours after we left, the earliest start we had made in our trip, Linda was looking in her purse for something and came upon the receipt from the love hotel.

The Spanish wording was simple enough to understand. "It says here that we had the room for only 12 hours," she announced.

Obviously, the night staff pays attention to the records. We got what we paid for! The phone in the room had rung exactly 12 hours after we checked in. Perhaps we should be grateful for getting such an early start to the last day of our trip as we arrived at our condo ten hours after starting out and 765 kilometres of driving. Without that early wake-up call we would have been two or three hours later.

We weren't asked for names, make of car, licence number or any of the usual data collected at a registration desk when we checked in at the Xtasis Hotel. We paid cash, got a receipt, and there is no record that we ever stayed in accommodation intended to provide the utmost in privacy and discretion for clandestine trysts.

What happens at Xtasis stays at Xtasis.

Author note: John Chalmers is a Canadian snowbird from Edmonton, Alberta johnchalmers@shaw.ca

Here's to Mexico

Kirby Vickery

Here's to the country that gave us christophene, or otherwise known as: christophine, cho-cho, mirliton or merleton (although I heard it pronounced as mee-lee ton by a friend of mine from the bayou's of Louisiana), chu-chu, cidra, guatila, pimpinela, pipinola choushoute, choko, chowchow pataste, tayota, pear squash, and chayote. The same country gave us chocolate (actually cocoa but that's where it comes from), the coyote, tomato, pine nuts, the avocado, the world's first really adequate sun hat and corn. Not to mention the agave plant from which they extract its juice to produce tequila.

Here's to the country that gave us the taco and the enchilada. It's the same one that put some good peppery sauces on and in our food to make it bright and tasty. The rest of that stuff which is called border food is made up 'gringo' food sold by marketers mimicking the real thing. As it turns out there is quite a bit one can do with some masa, chili peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, ground or chopped meat, onions, a little lemon, and probably several other herbs and spices which I can't remember right now.

Here's to the country that put bright colors and very loud brassy music with a definite beat to it and the next coming international super holiday of Cinco de Mayo (which really isn't the day of independence for Mexico) into our lives. Ole.

Here's to the country that gave us something that the world over likes and uses for various reasons. Use of this stuff reads like a commercial for a cure all. In one story it made a U.S. Army captain super rich and started an industry which is still growing and changing today. Actually it was one Mexican person that started it all. Antonio de Padua Maria Severino Lopez de Santa Anna y Perez de Libron is otherwise known as General Santa Anna to the people of the United States. While in exile in New York City he had come up with an idea of using pith from a grass that grew along the Rio Grande River from which children would gouge out and chew, as a substitute for rubber for tire making. The more accepted story is that an assigned aide de camp by the name of Thomas Adams purchased a ton of this *chicle* and tried to turn it into rubber. When he couldn't get it to work he turned it around and made chewing gum out of it.

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This started Chicklets Chewing Gum Company. In another version of the story involved the Wrigley family. They were producing among other things some baking soda. Wrigley added a free piece of chewing gum in each box which very rapidly started to sell on its own. He just dropped Santa Anna who was left penniless.

In the Adams version General Santa Anna returned to Mexico to die there two years later. In the Wrigley version Santa Anna never made it back and died in New York where he is currently buried. Everybody knows that everything that is printed in the internet is the absolute truth so one can pick what one wants to believe.

Here's to the country that gave the world two very controversial writers who are a must for every student of Literature, Philosophy, and Social History from any country. The first is Octavio Paz Lozano. A winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990 which culminated an extremely varied career as a writer of poetry and prose, a teacher in several countries and a person of deep thought and not just a person with a way with words.

"There can be no society without poetry,
But society can never be realized as poetry,
It is never poetic. Sometimes the two terms
seek to break apart. They cannot."

Octavio Paz

People will argue with me about my vote for the other literary gift that Mexico has given to the world. However, in the interests of free thought, action on belief, and creativity, I feel the world would be a better place if everyone would read the words of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz also known in her own life time as the tenth muse. As a member of a cloister she thought and wrote of things way outside of her own purview straight from what some would consider an over-active imagination. Her delivery is said to be that equal to Walt Whitman or Emily Dickerson. I think she was a feminist crying to be revealed. Among other things she was very popular with European women writers and philosophers of her time due to her 'Hermeticism' stated beliefs and writings.

Here's to the country that produces a proud yet mild mannered people. They welcome guests to their country and forgive the arragance of some. They take

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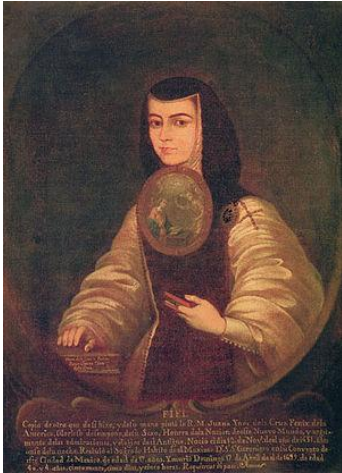
En "Las Abejas" tenemos la parrilla para ahumar indirecta más grande en Manzanillo. No contamos con el típico menú impreso, pero sí con un tablero con el menú del día. Esto nos permite ofrecerle diariamente las carnes más frescas, así como las frutas y verduras más sabrosas de temporada.

At "Las Abejas" we have the largest indirect heat smoker-grill in all of Manzanillo. We do not have a typical printed menu, but a daily menu board. This will allow us to bring you only the freshest meats available each day along with the most flavorful 'in season fruits and vegetables.

Estamos 3 cuadras atrás del Wings Army



their time and energy to help these guests not for money but for a satisfaction of helping another soul. Their entire culture is centered around the family. The head



Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz
by Friar Miguel de Herrera (1700-1789)

of the family is the father who is also, in most cases, the only bread winner. In poorer families the eldest son is recruited to support that family and allow his younger siblings to go further than he. The mother is the glue that holds the inner family together. Many times with

other siblings gathered around the family patriot. This includes in-laws and cousins sometimes two and three generations done. Foreigners must understand that in Mexico, the family comes first, then the job or family business. There is no way for any person to affect any cut in those ties.

Should you or yours be lucky enough to be invited to a Mexican's home take heed to score high on their 'compradre' list. Please show up at least a half an hour late. Meet everyone there. Greet the ladies but only shake hands with the men. Women can do a hand-on-forearm thing. You might want to bring a gift. If its flowers make sure they are bright and gay but not yellow or red. Yellow is the color of death and red is unseemly. Leave a little on the plate if you eat. That shows that you were served enough and you won't insult anyone by having them thinking that they starved you. Depart after giving farewells to everyone present.

The Mexican culture is made up of mostly mesoamerican heritage with 300 years of Old World Spanish heratiage, flavored with just a bit of French and German as influenced by the rest of the North American peoples. Please enjoy your time in Mexico and make it worth while to come back to.

monkey's

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ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO BY DAVE BOROUGHS: THE WHALE

On Sunday morning, December 14, a group of eight friends and new acquaintances set out in a panga from Rincón de Guayabitos for a day of fishing and whale seeking. The trip was arranged by Alicia's Tours, a small local family business. Our helmsman was Captain Tony, Alicia's father. We were headed for the small fishing and beach community of Chacala, Nayarit, for lunch and a swim or two. After about three hours into a very relaxing and uneventful cruise, we had only caught two small bonitas.

We hadn't sighted any whales and we were all feeling a bit hungry and thirsty. It was lunch time. We were about a kilometer out from Chacala. It was, after all, early in the whale season and there was always the trip back to Rincón to sight whales. Suddenly, one of our members thought he saw a spout to the north. I guessed that malnourishment and wishful thinking were the reasons for the call. We had already had several false alarms brought on by jumping fish. As Captain Tony swung us about, another blow occurred confirming that we had at least one whale ahead of us.

As we approached, a large adult breached, presumably to see what was going on. That was the only adult breach we would see this day. As we got closer, it appeared that we had an adult and a youngster swimming side-by-side. Motoring in quite close, the calf became much more curious about us than the parent. It did several rolls and breeches within easy photo distance. After a few minutes of showing off, he started slapping the water surface repeatedly with his tail, obviously communicating. Soon a parent was at his side as a second adult, previously unknown to us, came in to join them directly beneath our little panga in very clear water. They were absolutely stunning!

Together, the family of three headed out to sea and we the opposite direction for a great lunch under the palapas of Chacala.

Dave Boroughs



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A Journey to San Miguel de Allende

Suzanne A. Marshall

Entering the state of Guanajuato came as a quiet reprieve after 7-8 hours of driving the Mexican freeways from Manzanillo. These roads are remarkably good with four lanes most of the way but there are also a lot of improvements going on which can back up traffic and reduce speeds through construction zones. Nonetheless, the beauty of the undulating mountainous countryside still tickles my sense of awe having presumed like so many, a land of dry deserts and gulches.

Exiting the toll booth lane, we were surprised by a couple of men in what we learned was a tourist welcome service. At first we thought they wanted to sell us something but they merely confirmed our directions to San Miguel de Allende. From there we were quickly driving a two-lane highway with little traffic and spectacular views of ranches, goat herds and small towns crafting and selling wares. It was a quaint and slower relief from the hectic freeway.

One small town was filled with straw and wood reindeers large and small, lining the entire main street. I love this enterprising side of Mexico. They are keenly inventive and creative as is seen by the export of so many works by the artisans and artists. This countryside seemed so untouched and abundant with displays of cactus and indigenous shrubs and trees. No palm trees here. We were heading directly into the mountains now. We passed caballeros on horseback, boys herding goats and men riding donkeys. It was absolutely beautiful with the sun at our backs and the late afternoon sun casting shadows and lighting up the faces of the hills and mountains. It was quite a spiritual feeling for me.

As the temperatures cooled from our ascent, we reached the city of San Miguel de Allende. And when I say cool, I mean up to 20C during the day and down to a chill 6C at night. You need layers of warmer clothing or a light jacket to be comfortable in the evenings.

The city is impressively clean and antique. Once again, as noted on other journeys in Mexico, we are greeted by colorful walled streets with interesting doorways displaying large decorative doors and glimpses inside to gorgeous cavernous spaces, some with hotel lobbies and restaurants, and others with lush gardens and



Central cathedral San Miguel



Treasures in every doorway

courtyards, quiet and cool and beckoning. Oh how I wish we lived this way in Canada and the US instead of having everything outwardly displayed. The buildings in Mexico for me seem like gift wrapped presents ready to be opened and discovered. As this city dates back to the 1500's, cobble stones and flat rock sidewalks are the norm particularly in the tourist central district surrounding the Central Square and the two ornate cathedrals are beyond imagination.

Relying on our GPS system to find the hotel was admittedly some frustration as we seemed to go in endless circles through the small narrow streets. On the other hand we certainly had an entertaining look at so many small café door fronts, shops with beautifully decorated door trimmings and also the huge decorated tree in the square ready for the Christmas holidays. I could hardly wait to go exploring. We finally arrived at the front door of our hidden hotel Hacienda El Santuario. There was just a little sign on the wall where gated wrought-iron doors announced its presence and my interest was piqued immediately.

Thanks to seasonally discounted pre-Christmas rates, our friends and I, treated ourselves to two master suites that were quite sumptuous. Vaulted brick ceilings, outdoor terraces overlooking interior gardens and distant vistas. These rooms were filled with the local trimmings of handmade ceramic tiles, tooled tin mirrors that were works of art, chandeliers of iron and glass ornaments and great bedding. This hotel is typical of the area, behind closed walls enclosing half a square block of gardens, patios, fountains and several courtyards for relaxing or enjoying a continental breakfast with local fruits, bread and really good coffee. Another world apart and absolute heaven!

Then the walking, exploring and eating began. Temptations at every turn (or doorway) that sold leather goods, original paintings, hand-made clothing, furniture, jewelry and treats galore. The streets tended to meander with slight inclines, but the vistas before us were show stopping, particularly with the central cathedral (Parroquia de San Miguel Arcangel) in the background. (As an aside, having incorporated a Fitbit bracelet into my fitness life, I received a badge via email when we returned home to Manzanillo for having clocked 43 Km of walking that week. Considering our sitting in a vehicle time, one can imagine how much exploring we did in three full days! Wear comfortable shoes!)



Tourist trolley, well worth the ride



Summit of the trolley tour



Doorways lead to hidden shops and cafes

On another day we hopped a tour trolley with a bilingual tour guide to explain the historical aspects of the architecture, history and ancient cultures of the city. We thoroughly enjoyed this service and our guide had the usual good humor of the Mexicans. The trolley can be found near the central square and takes about 90 minutes for the tour. Well worth the 65 pesos.

Thank goodness we did a lot of walking because we also found some delicious cafes providing for hungry palates with everything from Mexican/Spanish cuisine to French, Italian and even a restaurant of the New Orleans ilk. There is an abundance of enjoyment in San Miguel de Allende and I highly recommend a trip there.

A myriad of information can be found on the internet about San Miguel de Allende so I will not be repeating it in this story, just encouraging anyone who can to go there and absorb the wonderful history and beauty of this location. No wonder so many Canadian and American artists and artisans have made their homes there and given a considerable boost to the local economy. I'd go back in a heartbeat.



Subtle hotel doorway and signage



One of the hotel lounge areas



Master suite bedroom



One of several interior hotel courtyards

Considering a Trip to San Miguel de Allende?

Suzanne A. Marshall

My husband and I were quite happy to put our new 'semi-nuevo' car on the highway for its first long distance trial. All went well and we enjoyed having friends travelling in tandem with us as an extra bit of safety should we encounter engine trouble or a flat tire. They were also great company!

Here is some information about our drive that could be of use to those who wish to do the same trip from Manzanillo, Colima to San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato. We left at around 7:30 AM and arrived at our Hotel around 5:30 PM. This includes; stopping at tolls on the highway, GPS checks and bathroom and lunch breaks.

The hours on the highway will of course depend on speed (we booted it) and delays for construction and traffic. We stopped for eight toll booths each way! The cost of driving each way for tolls was exactly 834 pesos for a total expense of 1668 pesos round trip. This is why those freeways are in such great condition. Adding gasoline as an added expense amounted to approximately 1800 pesos round trip (depending on auto performance etc.). The total driving expense is 3636 pesos.

If you don't own a vehicle or would rather not drive, a good option and more reasonable cost alternative would be the incredible bus service in Mexico. Depending on your tolerance for sitting you could do this trip all in one day since the connection for ETN (first class bus) allows for 45 minutes to change buses in Guadalajara. Or, you could even stay over in Guadalajara as part of your journey since the schedule repeats on several days.

Remember, first class bus service in Mexico is no joke. It **is** first class, with lounge seats and foot rests, Wi-Fi, television, pillows, drink and sandwich and great views out the windows with no need to worry about traffic etc. Now here is where being a 'senior' pays off. If you are over 60 you receive a 50% discount on bus fare. So for two seniors making the bus trip, you will pay 2230 pesos per couple round trip for roughly 1000 pesos less than driving. No stress!

Of course if you drive with another couple and share the expenses then you're laughing. The hotel, cabs, restaurants and shopping sprees will all depend entirely on you!



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What's that I hear in yonder window?

Señior Tech

This month I am writing about in-home audio speakers. Over the years speakers for audiophiles have changed considerably. With the advent of radio the family would sit around the living room and listen to the built-in speaker. In the 60's it became fashionable to have a hi-fidelity system with a big cabinet that had built-in speakers, turntable and AM/FM radio.

Technological advances in the 1970s changed high fidelity stereo systems forever. Manufacturers of audio equipment started to build discrete components, such as amplifiers, speakers, turntables, equalizers and a myriad of other audiophile devices. This meant consumers could buy amplifier/tuner, speakers, turntables, and cassette players from different manufacturers to get the best sounding system they could afford.

Speakers began to be built in different shapes, sizes, and wood finishes. The most popular size was the bookshelf speaker. But for the true audiophile, speakers could be built as high as 5 feet and weigh as much as 60 kg each. Mid to high-quality speakers, typically came with at least a Tweeter (to enhance higher frequency sounds), a midrange cone (for voice in mid-range frequencies) and a Woofer (6" to 15" cones) to resonate deep bass frequencies.

One company, the Bose Corporation, developed a type of speaker using a number of small sound cones (the sound emitters). These cones were arrayed to provide both reflected and direct sound. They could achieve similar or superior sound quality than speakers with much larger cones. Speaker technology remained constant until the nineties, when surround sound became more of a requirement by consumers. The home theater concept changed audiophile listening completely.

Audio systems began to become more integrated. Unless you were prepared to spend a small fortune, the speakers typically included in surround sound systems tended to be of an inferior quality.

In 2001, Apple introduced the iPod. This further changed the way we listen to sound. Now you see people walking around with little earbuds in their ears

as they listen to their portable music devices. Today those earbuds have started to be replaced by brightly colored headphones.

The home theater and iPod era is what I would call the dark age of audio quality in the home. In 2004, a small company named Sonos, developed a new type of speaker. When it was first introduced it was fairly expensive, because you were required to use their controller in order to access the speakers in different parts of the home. The Sonos system uses Wi-Fi to deliver the sound from the Internet. You can have speakers in every room of your home and control them from your iPhone, iPad, Android device or computer.

The free controller allows the listener to control different speakers, and the music, whether it comes from the Internet or their music library. When I bought my Sonos Play1 speakers, I received a one-year subscription to Deezer Premium <www.deezer.com>. I can choose from 34.5 million songs and make playlists to play on the speakers. In Manzanillo, our maid loves coming to clean our condo because we play her favorite Mexican music. There are a number of these subscription music companies. You can find and listen to radio stations thousands of miles away. Or you can search for a song you cannot find at the CD store. The most current music as well as songs from the 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, are searchable and available for listening.



Set-up was extremely easy and only took 3 minutes. It actually took longer to unpack the speakers than to set them up for use. Of course Señora Not-So-Techie was not so happy when I brought the new speakers to our small condo. But her displeasure lasted only until she heard how good they sounded. The speakers have three sound cones, which are individually powered. The size of the speaker is 16 cm. tall, 12 cm. deep, and 12 cm. wide.

The sound is incredible!! My friends cannot believe the room filling crystal clear sound can come from such small speakers. Another advantage of the Sonos Play1 speaker is that they are humidity resistant, important when you live on the beach.

The speakers can be paired in stereo mode or you can have 1 speaker in one room playing one song and the 2nd speaker in another room playing a different song and volume. All controls can be from an iOS or Android device or computer. These speakers are \$219.00 each and well worth the price (in my humble opinion). They

have two other models, which have more sound capabilities.

Go to <www.sonos.com> for more information.

You can set-up as many play lists as you like and you do not even have to use your phone or tablet to control the speakers. It will play whatever playlist last loaded by pressing the play button on top of one of the speakers. Volume controls are also there. You need Internet access to get the most out of this new class of speaker.

Samsung, Bose, and others are now getting into this market, but they are far behind Sonos in ease of use and functionality. The sound quality these speakers produce needs to be heard, to be believed.

You can have speakers in every room of your house and control any of the speakers with one device. And if you are so inclined, you can build a surround sound system using their sound bar, sub-woofer and two Play1 speakers.

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Travel

Part 2 of 2
Terry Sovil



As I mentioned in Part 1, the last couple of years I've spent a lot of time traveling. Flying but also on the buses in Mexico. Most of my bus travel is to Puerto Vallarta or Guadalajara to get the best airline ticket price. Last time we talked about my most recent flight, this time let's focus on travel by bus. Let me just say up front, Mexico has a really great bus line system and they do a really good job at keeping you comfortable.

The primary bus lines I've used have been Primera Plus (favorite), ETN (very nice), TAP (good to very nice), Tufsesa (basic), Coordinados Servicio (nice), Costa Mar (nice) and Cihuatlan Plus (older buses, 2nd class). The route from Manzanillo to Puerto Vallarta is two-lane, passes through many villages and towns and has winding switch-back roads through the mountain. Guadalajara is the same distance as Puerto Vallarta from Manzanillo but the roads are improved, four lanes (two in each direction), and no real stops between Manzanillo and Colima and then Colima to Guadalajara. Best time on a bus to Vallarta is six hours. Normal time to Guadalajara is 4.5 hours.

Bus service has a first class bus (primero) and a second class bus (segundo). The main differences is in the number of stops (fewer on first class), restrooms (first class has them, second class doesn't), TV setups, features and cost. First class will cost more. I have usually



selected first class where it is possible. Second class buses are often a little more run down than the first class buses. The primary routes from Manzanillo are to Puerto Vallarta, Guadalajara and Colima. The buses run to far more places than I've listed but the frequency of travel seems to be pretty high to three cities. Primera Plus provides you with a little snack bag as you board. What you get depends on the time of departure and the distance of the trip.



The arrow points at the footrests



Before I go any farther, let me mention my INAPAM Card (Tarjeta Inapam). One can be obtained from the SEDESOL department in Colima. This is a Senior Citizens Card and can get you a 50% discount on bus tickets. For me, this has added up to a tidy savings. Requirements: You must be 60 or older, bring an original and copy of your birth certificate, original and copy of official identification (Your Mexican Visa, not a temporary, but a resident card), proof of your address in Mexico and two recent passport sized photos taken from the front. When getting a ticket I use this card as my identification and where they can read my name from the card. The only bus line to reject it was Tufesa. They have a senior's discount but need something other than an Inapam Card to prove it. Go figure.

I find riding the bus to be pretty relaxing and a really easy way to get someplace without having to drive. For the trips to Colima or Guadalajara it is perfect. There are frequent buses, the seats recline and many have a little "ironing board" that folds down from the seat in front of you to give you a place to rest your legs. Similar to a recliner. It is air conditioned, you have a bathroom if you need it and pretty comfortable seats. The newer Primer Plus buses have TV's installed on the seat back in front of you. You can pick a movie to watch from a pretty big selection of genre's. Games, photos and music. Some

have wifi services and sometimes they work really well. Often the local router (modem) needs to be reset and so you can connect to the modem but don't get the internet connection. It all helps pass the time. The movies, though usually in Spanish, are generally pretty easy to follow. Especially if you pick an ACTION movie. Drama probably less so.

I mentioned trips to Guaymas/San Carlos, Sonora. I'm in the process of selling my sailboat which has been stored in San Carlos. That is a long trip and a bit of an ordeal sometimes. The trip to Guadalajara is pretty quick and easy. One stop in Colima. But leaving from Guadalajara to get to Guaymas, means leaving Primera Plus or ETN behind. Your choices are now TAP or Tufesa. Primera Plus or ETN can book your trip to Guadalajara and then book your trip from there to Guaymas on TAP, they can't do it for Tufesa. I once took the Tufesa bus from Guaymas back to Guadalajara and it is really a pretty average, no frills bus line. But they do run frequently! The trip to Guadalajara is about 4.5 hours but then the trip to Guaymas is 20-22 hours.

So have I had an "adventure" on a bus? Of course I have. I had to go up to retrieve my sails from a repair man in San Carlos. That was the only thing I had to do. The marina only allows 15 minutes in the storage area and a security guard is with you. So 50 hours of bus rides for about 15 minutes putting those heavy sail bags into the boat. I got tickets for the trip up the day before. I took enough cash to cover the bus fare and have a quick lunch in San Carlos at Barracuda Bob's. But I walked off and forgot my wallet! I realized it about half way to Guadalajara. Now what? No Mexican visa, no credit card, no debit card, no INAPAM old person's card. Well, at least I could get to Guaymas and then I could figure out something. WRONG! TAP in Guadalajara wanted to actually see my INAPAM card. I couldn't produce it. So that ticket doubled in price and I had to pay the other 50%. Now I have a problem. I don't have enough money and no cards to get more. So when I finally got to Guaymas the first stop was the bank, I did have my passport, explained my problem and I was lucky enough to get a new debit card. Tense moments.

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An Excellent Restaurant in San Miguel de Allende.

Allan Yanitski

My wife and two friends were in San Miguel de Allende for a mini vacation in Mexico. One evening we were looking for a restaurant with atmosphere. As we were leaving the main square in town we ran into a group of local residents and asked them where we could find a good restaurant close by. They said to follow them.

One and a half blocks away from the Parroquia de San Miguel Arcángel at #11 Jesús is a delightful little restaurant **La Brasserie/La Parroquia**. The group we followed turned out to be a party of 12.

I spoke to the proprietor, a charming woman, named Valeria. I asked if she could seat four for dinner. She told me they were booked for the night, but that a table reserved for four were 25 minutes late and if they did not show in five minutes, she would release their reservation to us. As luck would have it, they did not appear and we were seated at a nice table next to the party that we followed.

We ordered Bombay Sapphire martinis and two for one margaritas as we perused the menus. I was set on ordering Spaghetti Carbonara, but Valeria came by and told us about her dinner formula (dinner specials).

Three of us decided on the flounder while our friend Larry went with the chicken.

The dinner formula included a mixed salad, made up of fresh vegetables and lettuce with a light dressing. The main course included a glass of wine or beer.

The flounder was covered in a delicious white cream sauce, accompanied by fresh vegetables that were cooked perfectly for crispness and flavour.

We were offered either rice or pasta as a side, and we all choose the pasta that was lightly covered in a butter sauce that complemented the main dish without conflicting with the cream sauce.

The special dinner also included a dessert from generous selection including Crème brûlée, Chocolate Mousse, Crème Caramel, lemon tart and others. I cannot resist either Crème brûlée or Crème Caramel, but I chose the Crème brûlée and was not disappointed. My wife selected the lemon tart, as she loves lemon. She said it was delicious! The cost of the dinner special was a mere 210 pesos per person.



Larry's chicken dinner was a chicken breast that was pounded flat (in the Mexican way) to form a cutlet. It also was covered in a cream sauce, which He said was tasty.

If you plan a visit to San Miguel de Allende, I would strongly recommend this restaurant as a must. The restaurant is small so a reservation is strongly recommended to avoid disappointment. I spoke to some locals and they said La Brasserie/La Parroquia has been around for over 20 years. Valeria said she has been managing the restaurant at night for the last 8 years while her mother has been running it for 20 years.

The atmosphere in the restaurant is funky with an eclectic decor. If you want casual dining with delicious food and friendly attentive service this is a great choice. If you want snooty waiters, overpriced entrees in a pretentious setting then this is not the restaurant for you.

This restaurant does not accept credit cards, so be sure to come with cash; since the meals are reasonably priced, you do not have to have an armed guard with you.

My wife and I each had a Bombay Sapphire martini and the Flounder special for a total of \$550.00 pesos. Adding a 20% tip, the total converted to \$45.00 US.



How Our Rising USD Affects Your Investments

Yann Kostic

Recently, the U.S. dollar has been on a roll: The U.S. Dollar Index (which measures the value of the greenback against the euro, Japanese yen, Canadian dollar, British pound, Swedish krona, and Swiss franc) reached a four-year high in the third quarter of 2014.

Good news in some ways, but what does it mean for your investments?

A rising dollar makes U.S. exports more expensive. That's because American exporters sell their goods in foreign countries and are paid in a foreign currency that is now falling relative to the U.S. dollar. Their profits are thus lower, and their stock values could fall.

Alternatively, when the dollar rises against other currencies, imports are less expensive.

That's because importers buy goods in a foreign currency that's falling relative to the U.S. dollar, so they can pay less to obtain goods than they did previously. That could increase the profits of importers, which could drive their stock prices higher.

A soaring U.S. dollar can also detract from the returns on your foreign investments. Foreign stocks are bought and sold in local currency, meaning U.S. mutual funds. Then, when selling, the fund must exchange the proceeds for U.S. dollars

funds and other such products must convert U.S. dollars to a local currency in order to make a purchase.

As an example of the impact of currency fluctuations, consider that in 2013, Toyota Motor Corporation stock returned 63.1 percent in Japanese yen, but only 33.4 percent in U.S. dollars. That was because the U.S. dollar strengthened against the yen in 2013. U.S.-based investors lost more than 47 percent of the stock's return in the exchange rate.

The U.S. Dollar Index's third-quarter gain was its second-largest quarterly rise since the inception of the euro in 1999.

So keep a weather eye on the dollar, and contact your advisor if you need more information on your investments and our high-flying buck.

Yann Kostic is a Financial Advisor (RIA) and Money Manager with Atlantis Wealth Management, specializing in retirees (or soon to be), self-reliant women and Expats in Mexico. Due to a recent transition to an international custodian, firm clients are now allowed to hold multiple currencies in a single account, including US and Canadian dollars and Mexican pesos, Euros and Yen for instance. Yann splits his time between Florida and Lake Chapala/Manzanillo. Comments, questions or to request his Newsletter "News You Can Use". Contact him at Yannk@AtlantisWealth.com, in Mexico: (376) 106-1613 or in the US: (321) 574-1529



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