



Manzanillo **SUN**

coastal Mexico's lifestyle magazine

Winter 2023/2024

Good Deeds
A Thousand Words
RV Travel
Nature's Wonders
Good to Know
New Skills
Handy Tech
History

Norwegian Bliss in Manzanillo
Photo by John Chalmers



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Christmas Celebrations in Manzanillo

story and photos by John Chalmers

While celebrations of Christmas take many forms from family dinners to public events, and decorations are seen such as Christmas trees, Santa Claus inflatables, and colourful lights strung up at homes and on trees, two activities in the Manzanillo area each celebrated the true meaning of Christmas on December 16, 2023.

In the small town of El Naranjo, population 1,400-plus, just north of Manzanillo on Highway 200, a *posada* includes a reenactment of a biblical story, an event organized by the Santiago Foundation. In Manzanillo, at the Centro de Artes Los Angelitos, a live performance of music, song and dance was staged by Casa Hogar Los Angelitos.

The Posada at El Naranjo

Although the word *posada* commonly means an inn or lodging and may be a term familiar to travellers in Spain who seek accommodation, in Mexico a *posada* celebrates the journey made by Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem while looking for a place to stay where Mary could give birth to her son, Jesus.

For the *posada* at El Naranjo, children first gather at the church, then the boy and girl portraying Joseph and Mary are accompanied by an angel in a walk to the Santiago Foundation Center, reenacting the journey to Bethlehem. Upon arrival at the gates to the Center, in keeping with the biblical story, Mary and Joseph are refused entry.



ABOVE and LEFT
For the *posada* at El Naranjo, children first gather at the church, then the boy and girl portraying Joseph and Mary are accompanied by an angel in a walk to the Santiago Foundation Center, reenacting the journey to Bethlehem. Upon arrival at the gates to the Center, in keeping with the biblical story, Mary and Joseph are refused entry.



As an important part of Christmas celebrations, *posadas* are held by communities throughout Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. A tradition that began some 400 years ago, Las *Posadas* are held in the nine days preceding Christmas Day on December 25, the nine days representing the period of pregnancy for Mary before giving birth.

BELOW, LEFT and RIGHT
After entering, the children then take turns as they attempt to break *piñatas*, to scatter their contents of candies, prompting a scramble by the children to pick them up. I wondered how a *piñata* could fit into a biblical story, which made me realize I had to do some internet research to learn more about *posadas* and *piñatas*! A good web site that will tell you about both *posadas* and *piñatas* is <https://www.mexicanholidays.com/posadas>. An internet search will bring up many informative sites to tell you more.



...Christmas Celebrations in Manzanillo



Prior to admission to the "inn" where entry is denied by Center personnel representing innkeepers, the posada litany is sung, with alternate verses sung by the innkeepers and those outside the gate. After begging for entry with lodging declined, the litany concludes with permission granted for Joseph and Mary to enter.

To learn more about the Santiago Foundation, please see my article from the March 2021 issue of the Manzanillo Sun online magazine when you [click here](#).

On January 18, 2024, the Santiago Foundation will hold a special fund raiser to support its very worthwhile work in the community. Financial support is vital in order to continue the Foundation's operation. For details and contact, see the full-page ad for that event in this issue.



ABOVE and LEFT
Following the breaking of two piñatas, a much more modern aspect of the posada in El Naranjo occurred with the arrival of Santa Claus when children were lined up from youngest to oldest to meet him. Each child met Santa and with the help of Mrs. Claus, who had come with Santa, was given a bag of candy. Then keeping with tradition of providing food and drink, each child received a box of juice, a cup of jelly and a tamale. There is probably not much Spanish spoken at the North Pole among Santa and his elves, as mostly what he had to say was "Ho! Ho! Ho!" and "Feliz Navidad!"

BELOW, LEFT and RIGHT
The El Naranjo posada is a special event organized by the Santiago Foundation, for which its main activity is to provide training in crafts and trades to provide individuals with skills that can lead to new opportunities and employment. As a non-profit organization supporting education for young people and adults alike to expand their skills, the Foundation operates two centers in the Manzanillo area. With no public funding, they are entirely dependent upon donations and fund raising activities.



...Christmas Celebrations in Manzanillo

Christmas Under the Stars

For the third consecutive year the boys and girls of Casa Hogar Los Angelitos (CHLA) staged a dramatic presentation of the Christmas story in a presentation called "Christmas Under the Stars." Held at the Centro de Artes Los Angelitos (CALA), the production featured a large cast with music, song and dance to tell the Christmas story.

The success of Casa Hogar as a home for its young charges is evident in more ways than in flawless stage productions.

Presently housing some 75 young people, the home can boast that several of its young people have lived there most of their lives and are now attending university. Others have graduated with university degrees and moved on.



The open air dinner event at the spacious CALA facility featured another spectacular program that is the result of the Expressive Arts program of CHLA. Located in Salagua, Manzanillo, Casa Hogar is a home for girls and boys who come from broken homes, abusive situations, from parents who are unable to provide for their children, and who in extreme cases have been abandoned to fend on their own.

In 2023, the program also featured contributions by three guest performers. For the second time, Miami-based professional musician and operatic tenor Francesco Puglisi lent his voice to the presentation. Two young singers of exceptional talent also delighted the very appreciative audience. Both 11-year old Luis Rangel and 13-year old Isabella Sosa not only amazed the crowd with solos, they also sang with Francesco in classic Christmas numbers.

As with any posada in Mexico, Mary and Joseph are central to Casa Hogar's Christmas presentation. Of course the Three Wise Men and the shepherds are part of the story and their roles included lively dances before meeting at the stable to present gifts and to welcome the Christ child.

Thus the stage performances and fund raising events are critical to maintaining the home as no government funding is provided for Casa Hogar Los Angelitos in giving 24-hour emotional support and medical care. Instruction in English complements the students' formal education.

It is through events such as Christmas Under the Stars and the upcoming January 25 benefit dinner event, "We are the World," followed by the Valentine's show and a golf tournament in February, plus donations that enable CHLA to operate. See advertisements for those events in this issue. For more information, to donate, or to sponsor a child, go to <https://tcfcares.org/>.

At CHLA, girls and boys from pre-school to university age are able to continue their education in a home that provides a loving and caring environment for them. There, if they wish, the young residents have opportunity to participate in the Expressive Arts program that teaches singing, instrumental music and dance.

The results are splendid productions on the CALA stage that showcase the talents of the young participants in a variety of thematic programs. For Christmas Under the Stars, the skills of the young performers were clearly evident in the timeless story of Christmas.



...more pics follow

...Christmas Celebrations in Manzanillo



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Girls and boys are able to attend school while living at Casa Hogar, where they learn some things beyond the classroom. With participation in Ballet Folklórico, established in 2005 as part of the CHLA Culture and Art program, the young performers learn to sing, to play musical instruments, and to perform traditional Mexican dances that are part of their heritage, while developing the confidence needed for public performances. To see more photos of this year's Christmas show, [click here](#).

...Christmas Celebrations in Manzanillo



Seen above are three key people who help to make Casa Hogar Los Angelitos such a special place. At left is founder Nancy Nystrom. At center is Marisol Gonzalez, the Artistic director of CHLA's Ballet Folklórico Los Angelitos. At right is Director Dr. Guiber Nuñez. Founded in 1996 by Nancy and her late husband, Dave, Casa Hogar has given a better life to over a thousand girls and boys who have lived there during the past 28 years. Your donation and attendance at the special events presented for support of Casa Hogar Los Angelitos will help provide love and education that lead to opportunity for deserving children.

you can reach John at john.chalmers@manzanillosun.com



Norwegian Bliss on her visit to the port of Manzanillo
Photos by John Chalmers





WE ARE
THE WORLD!



**A Benefit Dinner and Event for CASA HOGAR
LOS ANGELITOS Thursday January 25, 2024**

**6:00pm Doors open
6:30pm Dinner and Show
8:00pm LIVE AUCTION**

**DINNER and SPECTACULAR SHOW with
Ballet Folklórico Los Angelitos**

<https://secure.qgiv.com/event/casahogar2024gala/>

TICKETS AVAILABLE: \$75 US - \$1350 pesos

Tables of 8 or 10 also available

Order Online by QR code above

In person sales or Cash with Walter Hill

at 204-230-5231, +52-314-124-0793,

email: Whillwpg@gmail.com

Location: "CALA"

Centro de Artes Los Angelitos

Octavio Paz • 5 Nuevo Salagua

Information 314 33 4 08 78

info@tcfcare.org or mexico@tcfcare.org



Photographer: **Tami Marcus**



Fresh Bananas Anyone?



Colima Dogs



Guadalupe at Orchid Farm



Orchid Farm in La Central: A MUST SEE



King Neptune

Photographer: **Tami Marcus**



No need for On Line Shopping



What ? No Electronics ?



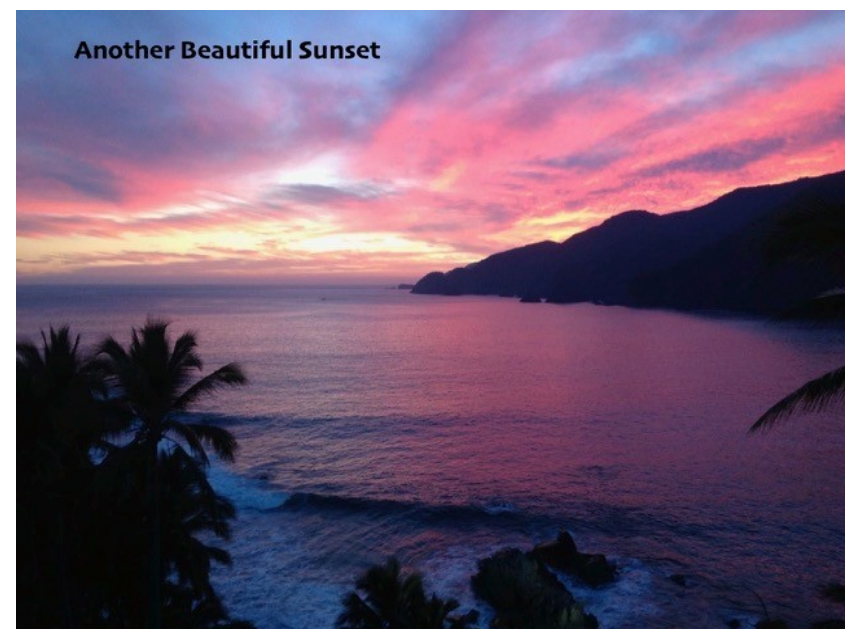
Las Brisas Beach Area



Great Hiking Destination



Pacific Ocean Coastline close to Manzanillo Airport



Another Beautiful Sunset



For the Kid in All of Us



Coconut Shrimp - always a delight

Photographer: **Tami Marcus**



Photographer: **Tami Marcus**



Mexican Free Range Chicken anyone ?



Vida del Mar: Unspoiled Beauty



Getting around in Manzanillo



How sweet it is !



Night Shot of Gecko



Lovely Day at the Beach



Outdoor Dining in Barra de Navidad

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE "FUN"RAISER OF THE SEASON!



**The 7th Annual BOCCE BALL TOURNAMENT
and SILENT AUCTION is
*Thursday, February 22st, 2024***

All proceeds benefit Friends of Mexican Animal Welfare-Animal Angels of Manzanillo and their commitment to providing ongoing sterilizations and vet care for animals in need.

- Teams Competing for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Place Prizes
- \$800 peso Team Entry Fee (2 person team)
- Goofy Hat/Costume Contest for Players
- Registration begins December 1st on a First Come Basis
- Contact Fred Taylor to register—fltaylor88@yahoo.com or Mex cell 314-125-8093 or US 206-581-8332

***Amazing Silent Auction *Premium Booze Basket Raffle**

***50/50 Raffle *Dancing to Music by DJ Randy Dean**

***2 x 1 Beer, Margaritas and Well Drinks All Day**

***\$200 Peso Entry Donation for non players**



See You On the Beach!

OASIS
ocean club
restaurant bar



by Tommy Clarkson

Chia Seeds and Sprouts



And after a few days...

Chia. To my ear, that word always seems to be missing a good, hard consonant somewhere between the "chi" and the "a." But, upon a bit of scrutiny, one finds that might be about the only thing it is missing!

First, a momentary regression: For many of us, our first experience with these plants came with the Chia Pets - particularly popular in the early 80's - with the introduction of the Chia ram, followed by Chia frogs, kittens, pigs, puppies and turtles. A unique product, it was effectively marketed with a TV commercial whose catchy phrase of "Ch-ch-ch-chia!" was sung as the plant "grew," via time lapse photography.

However, there is significantly more to the Chia plant than being a vegetative equivalent of the pogo stick, hula hoop or pet rock. If eaten, it's quite healthful and, simply a fine addition to one's diet!

But, before getting into that, as one who writes no little about plants, I would feel remiss if I didn't first impart a tiny bit of botanical information! Chia seeds are derived from one of

several flowering plants in the mint family, not altogether that far from where we permanently reside - in central to southern Mexico and a bit more south into Guatemala.

These seeds are oval and gray with black and white spots and are approximately two millimeters in diameter. They are harvested from the *Salvia hispanica* or its kin, *Salvia columbariae*, *Salvia polystachya* or *Salvia tiliifolia*.

Now, as to their health worth: Chia seeds contain large amounts of fiber and omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants which can improve digestive health, as well as lowering both blood pressure and improving blood sugar control.

Besides being low in cholesterol and sodium, one serving size includes 18 percent of the recommended daily amount of calcium and four grams of protein - as well as being packed with copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, niacin, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. They're sort of Mother Nature's multi-vitamin plants!

...Chia Seeds and Sprouts



Only a couple of days after planting...sprouts!

Here in Ola Brisa Gardens, my dear Beate - much more health conscious than me - likes to add Chia sprouts to salads or sandwiches and sometimes uses them as an attractive garnish for sunny side (or over easy) fried eggs and main dishes.

We know of others who use them as an addition for breakfast smoothies, (after soaking them in almond milk), mixed into puddings and juices . . . or, simply, eaten by themselves, raw!

Outside of the preceding applications, in that they naturally absorb a great deal of water, forming a gel, they make a great egg substitute when baking cakes and cookies. Furthermore, they can be sprinkled on yogurt, porridge, oatmeal or chicken nuggets, added to quesadillas and pancakes or, incorporated - with berries and nut milk - into a yummy, healthful jam.

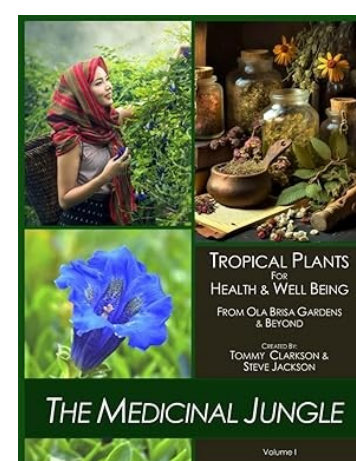
When consumed, that afore mentioned insoluble fiber and protein helps us feel satisfied and full. I recently read some USDA data which stated that a 100-gram serving of Chia seeds can fulfil up to 34% of the daily fiber intake . . . purportedly facilitating the reduction of belly fat. Now, if only my rotund tummy would take note - and act upon - that!

So how does one grow their own Chia sprouts? Beyond commercially available terracotta, clay or ceramic dishes or trays, a basic and easy way is as follows: Lay a nylon or linen cloth on a plate; Spray a fine mist of water on the cloth; Sprinkle a layer of chia seeds on top of the cloth; Mist seeds lightly with fresh, clean water; and, cover with another plate.



Your Chia seeds sprouts will be ready to harvest in only two to three days. (Other means to accomplish the same task can be found on-line by merely Googling "Sprouting Chia Seeds.")

Come on. Be adventuresome. Try this!



Get your copy of The Civilized Jungle: Tropical Plants Facts and Fun From Ola Brisa Gardens

[Volume I](#), [Volume II](#) and [Volume III](#)!!

Hard copy, paperback and e-book formats are available.

[The Medicine Jungle Volume I](#) is out and Volume II is coming soon, also in all formats.

Books are available for purchase at Ola Brisa Gardens.

For back issues of "Roots", gardening tips, tropical plant book reviews and videos of numerous, highly unique eco/adventure/nature tours, as well as memorable "Ultimate Experiences" such as Tropical Garden Brunches get in touch at <https://www.facebook.com/olabrisagardens/> or +52 314 334 0856.

you can reach Tommy Clarkson at tommy@manzanillosun.com



THE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION PRESENTS
OUR:

3RD ANNUAL GOLF

**TOURNAMENT
BENEFITING CASA
HOGAR LOS
ANGELITOS**

**IN BEAUTIFUL
MANZANILLO, COLIMA, MX**



**Featuring Celebrity NBA
1991 Slam Dunk
Champion:
Dee Brown**

**WEDNESDAY- SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 14-17TH
ISLA NAVIDAD GOLF CLUB**

.....
All proceeds benefit
Casa Hogar Los
Angelitos
.....

Instructions
For the QR code

1. Add the amount of **\$465** to the "Other" field.
2. Select "**Special Event**" in the Designation drop-down menu.
3. Press "**Next**".



\$465.00- Per Player

Includes: Cocktail party, one dinner, practice & tournament round, swag, photo with celebrity host, and VIP seats for Casa Hogar Special Performance.

Register now. Space is limited
www.tcfcare.org



Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



Beach and new outdoor swing at Miramar



Snowy Egrets



Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



ABOVE Fishermen bringing in the morning catch
LEFT Early morning fishing in La Boquita



Fishing from shore
with a bottle and string
La Boquita



Lagoon side of La Boquita



Little blue boat catches the big fish near La Boquita

Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



ABOVE La Boquita Bridge
RIGHT La Boquita fishermen feeding the high-flying frigate birds



Repairing the huge co-op net belonging to the
La Boquita Pescadores



ABOVE Beach delivery guy in La Boquita
BELOW Wood Stork in the Trees of La Boquita Lagoon



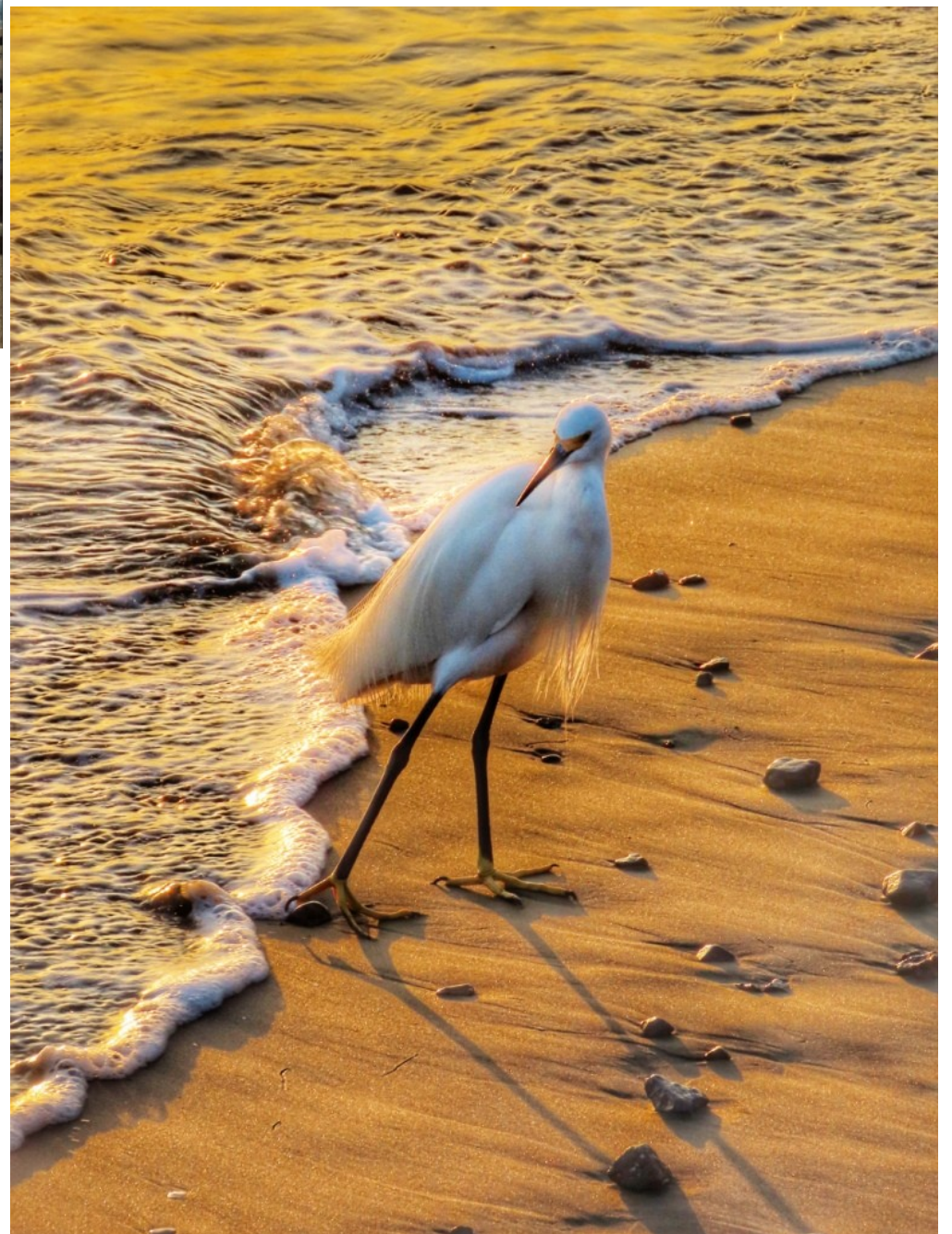
Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



Whimbrels out for a stroll (RIGHT), looking for an early breakfast (ABOVE)



ABOVE Morning at the beach
BELOW Sunrise at La Boquita
RIGHT Snowy Egret at the beach



Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



Whale at Juluapán Peninsula



Miramar Beach

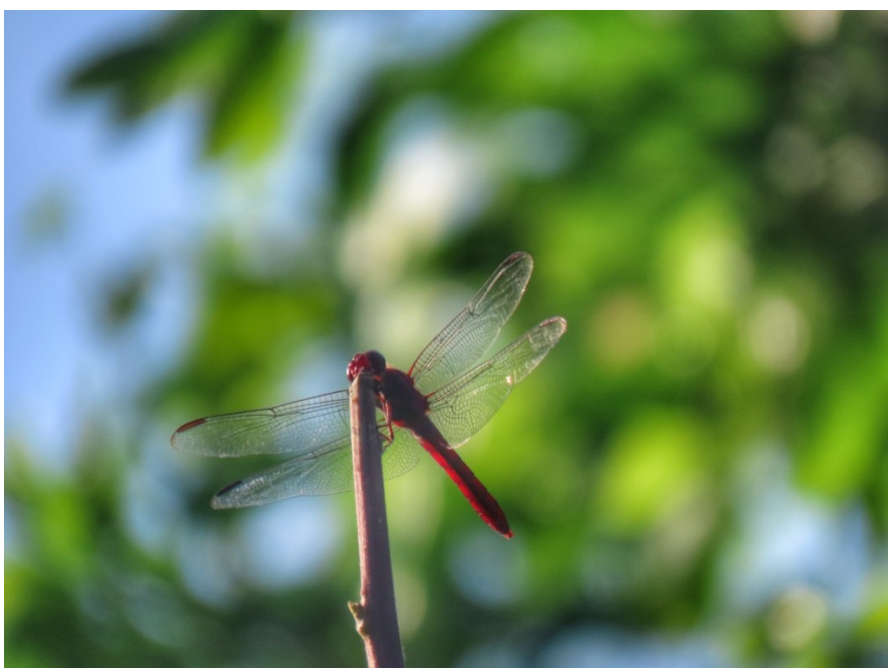
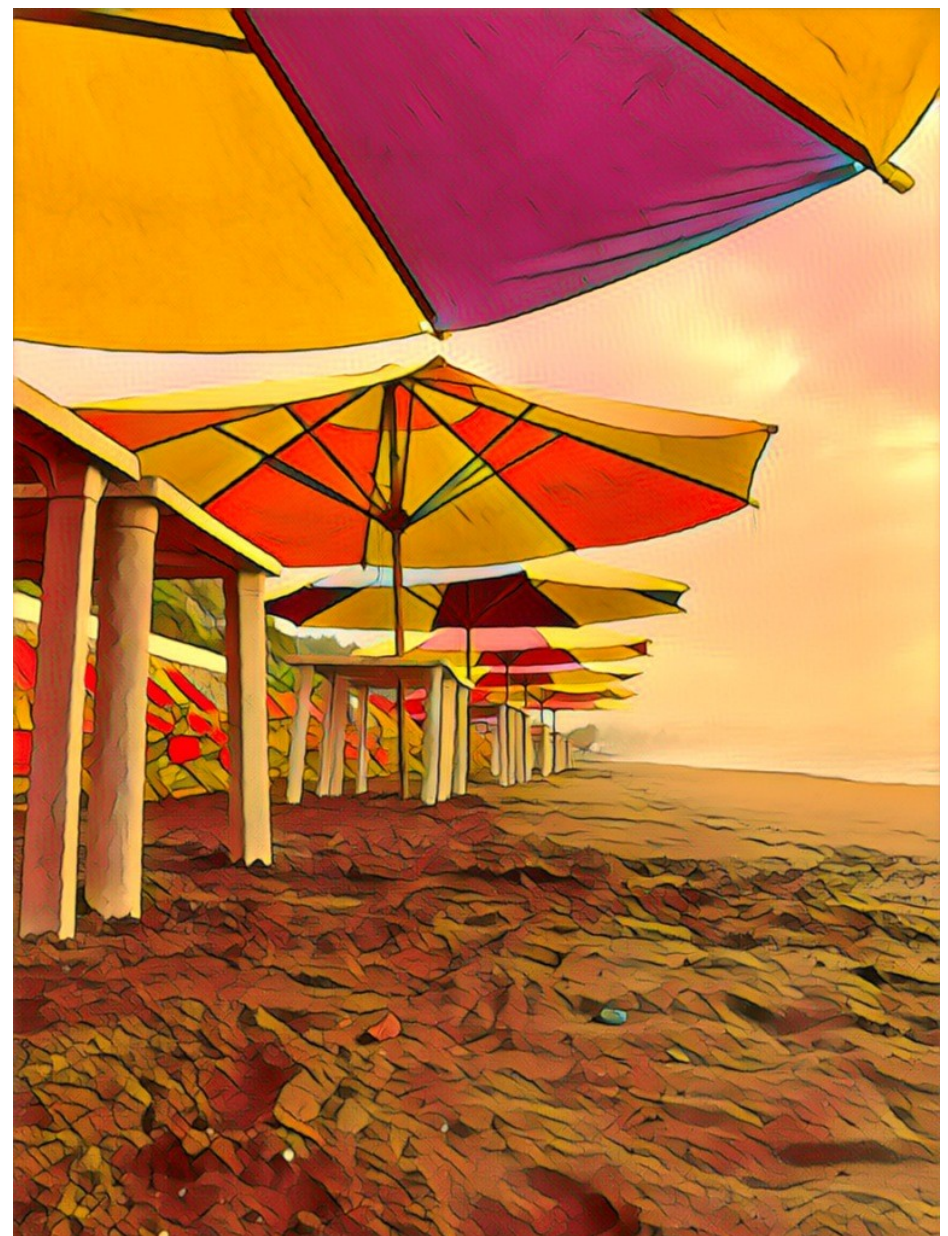
Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



Roseate Spoonbill of the Lagoon



RIGHT Umbrellas near El Indio (filter applied)
BELOW Marg's backyard dragonfly



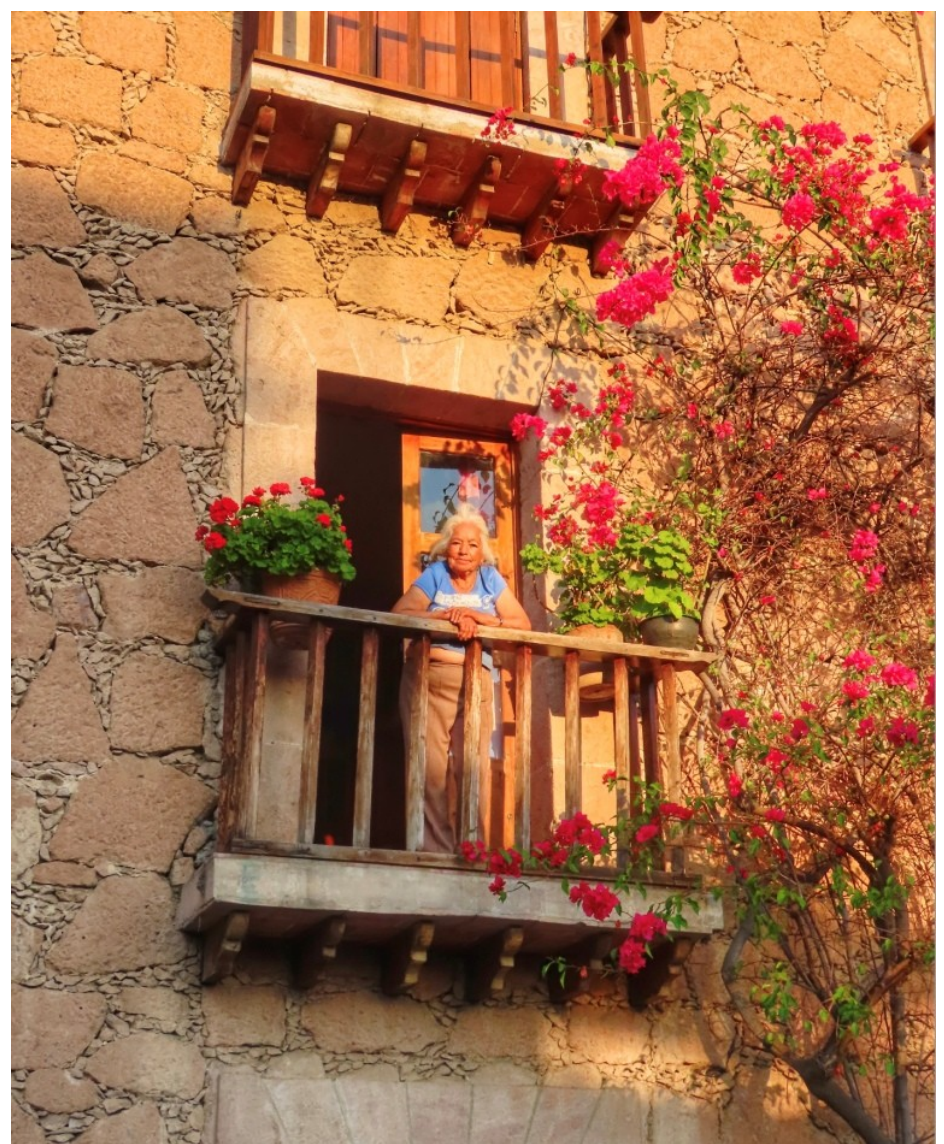
Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



ABOVE Mural outside Jofal Insurance on the Boulevard
RIGHT Pots lining the cobblestone road at Palma Real



ABOVE Umbrella lady in Morelia
RIGHT Beautiful lady of Taxco



Photographer: **Marg McKenna**



Gorgeous sky at the beach



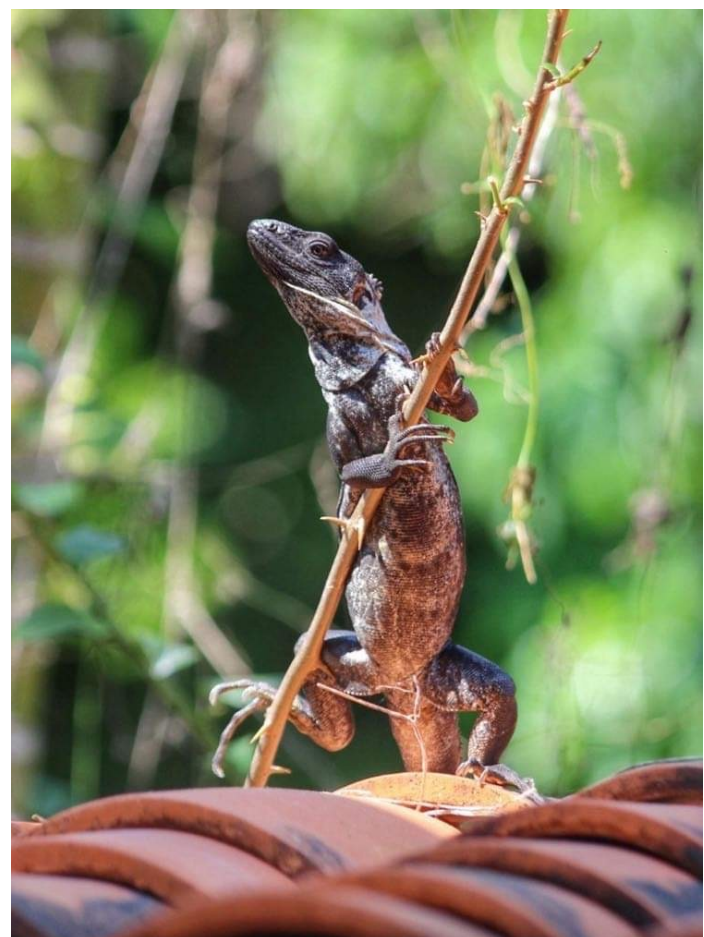
Black Vulture at La Boquita, very pretty



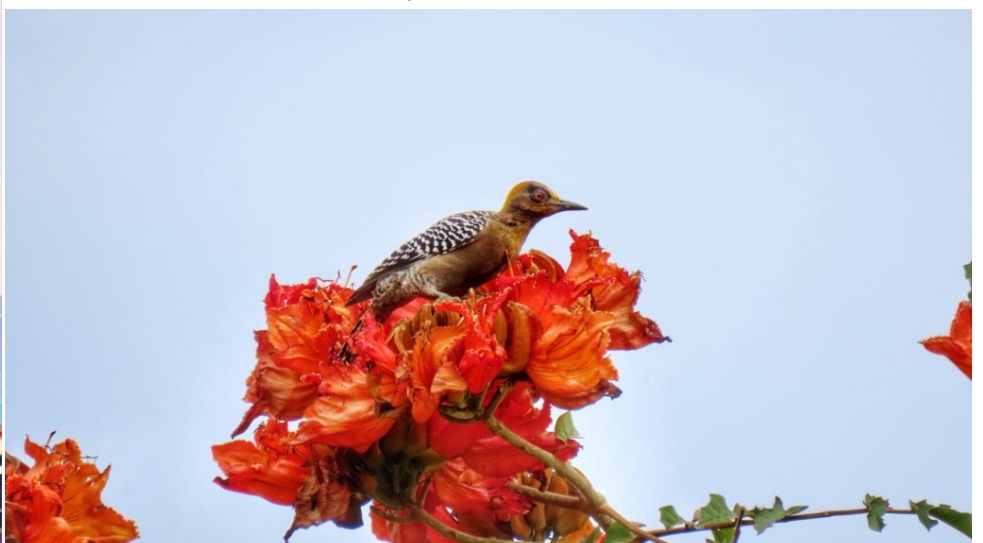
ABOVE Coatiundi (Tejón)

RIGHT Dancing iguana

BELOW Lady enjoying a meal at a ramada in Barra de Navidad



BELOW Golden-cheeked Woodpecker
in a Tulip tree, Isla Navidad



Riviera Nayarit

by Dan and Lisa Goy (Baja Amigos RV Caravan Tours)

Riviera Nayarit Mexico; this may be a new name however this region has been around for RVers and tourists for decades. Located in the State of Nayarit on a 322 km (200 mile) stretch of coastline in Mexico between the historic port of San Blas, south to where the Río Ameca empties into Banderas Bay, Nuevo Vallarta located just minutes north of Puerto Vallarta's International Airport. The name Riviera Nayarit reflects the reality of a tropical paradise, exotic getaway and RV Snowbird destination only available in Mexico.

Riviera Nayarit's pristine pacific coastline is dotted with dozens of seaside coastal towns and pueblos, growing in size and sophistication the closer you get to Puerto Vallarta. Here you can enjoy lush rainforest covered mountain peaks, nature sanctuaries, golden sand, palm-fringed beaches and everything luxurious 5 Star resorts to beach front campgrounds.

As is always the case as locations grow in popularity, development continues to close campgrounds replaced by condos or hotels. Fortunately there are also new RV Parks opening at the same time.

How to get there?

For those travelling from Western Canada or US we recommend crossing into Mexico at Nogales, AZ, use the westerly truck crossing (Mariposa Gate). 21 km (13 miles) after crossing you arrive at the Immigration Office and Aduana where you get your tourist permit and vehicle temporary import permit (TIPS), do not drive by it.

After that, you are on Toll Hwy 15D and you always have the option of Hwy 15 and no tolls. Aside from the stops you may make southbound over the next 3 or 4 days we recommend you remain on Hwy 15D. At some point you need to leave Hwy 15D and onto Hwy 200 to the coast. We recommend after the Toll Booth "**Trapichilo**", not far from Tepic, take the exit "**Guadalajara/San Blas**".

This takes you to the **Tepic – San Blas Autopista (Libramiento)**, head to San Blas, this is a very long descent, watch your speed. Others prefer going to Tepic and picking up Hwy 200, descending to Las Varas and entering Riviera Nayarit there, we have driven both. Currently there is a toll road under construction that will connect Hwy 15D from Guadalajara with Puerto Vallarta, it is completed from Las Varas to Bucerias. It may be completed in late 2024 or early 2025.

The **Tepic – San Blas Autopista** is a wonderful toll road with spectacular views taking you from 3000' (900 m) to the Pacific Ocean and the beautiful Matanchén Bay and the start of the Riviera Nayarit. The downside is the 54 km (34 m) drive on Hwy 16 thru the Jungle to Las Varas. The first half is narrow with lots of encroaching flora. We have driven this many times, with and without a group.

Our advice is go slow, caution at corners, close to the center and watch for low overhanging growth. Commercial trucks and buses also use the road. **Hwy 200 from Tepic to Las Varas** is 73 km (45 m) of jungle, a little wider, many more hairpin corners and 10 times the traffic, mostly in a steep descent.

...Riviera Nayarit

We guarantee you will find many RVers that have strong opinions about both routes. You can find campgrounds, RV parks across the Riviera Nayarit, we will focus on the most popular including our favourites.

San Blas-El Chaco Hotel, Restaurant & RV Park

El Chaco is actually located on Matanchén Bay on the beach 15 minutes south of San Blas, 7 minutes north of the village of Aticama. There a couple of other campgrounds on this stretch, we prefer El Chaco. We stayed here last season for the first time and added this to our tour next season. They have 8 back-in spaces, full-service including 30A and a dry camping area for 20 units. No shade at the sites but a beautiful palm shaded pool and restaurant area. Bity bugs are bad at dusk for about an hour, stay inside or lather on the bug spray. Access is simple, exit Hwy 15D to the Tepic – San Blas Autopista, drop down to the ocean.

See: <https://hoteleselchaco.com/>



El Chaco RV Park & Hotel

Matanchén Bay is best known for its long surf break at Playa Las Islitas that made the Guinness Book of World Records, the bay is also a serene, peaceful area filled with incredible biodiversity, including undeveloped beaches, wetlands and mangroves, hundreds of native and migratory birds and other wildlife, most notably in the town of Singaita and along

La Tovar, a fresh water spring with canals that flow from the bay into the jungle—all only minutes from **El Chaco**.



Hwy 200D now completed Las Varas to Bucerias

Bahía de Chacala-Beach Camping

Chacala is a beach village 13 km (8 m) from Las Varas and Hwy 200, 100 km (60 m) north of Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco. Chacala has a population of around 300 inhabitants, which can triple during Christmas and Easter and high season which is during the winter months (December to March). There is fabulous beach camping on the south side of the village amongst the palm trees on the beach and very swimmable bay.

The village has many good seaside restaurants and is very popular with locals. This is dry camping with no access to a dump station so plan on a week at most. We have camped at Playa Chacala and visited many times and have friends that recently built a house in the village. We include Playa Chacala as an excursion on our tour from the La Peñita RV Park.



Chacala Beach Camping

...Riviera Nayarit

La Peñita de Jaltemba commonly called La Peñita, is a small beach town located on Jaltemba Bay, 64 km (40 m) north of Puerto Vallarta, 20 km (12 m) south of Las Varas on Hwy 200. The vast majority of camping opportunities in the Riviera Nayarit are found off of this coastal stretch of Hwy 200 beginning here and ending in Nuevo Vallarta.



La Peñita RV Park Beach

Each Thursday, a six-block long **tianguis (street market)** takes place in La Peñita de Jaltemba. This market sells a wide range of goods, from fresh fruits, vegetables, and seafood to housewares, clothing, hardware, and arts and crafts. We have visited this market many times and have included this in our mainland fall tour.

There are 2 RV Parks and 1 RV compound in La Peñita. We prefer the La Peñita RV Resort which can hold over a 100 RVs and has been running for over 40 years. Many have said it is the best run RV Park in Mexico, we agree. Located on the ocean with great beach access, the RV spaces are set on a number of terraces above the beach and access is directly from Hwy 200.

The La Peñita RV Park has many features we really enjoy including daily laundry, the pool, pickle ball, the green grocer and much more. The camaraderie and reasonable fees work well for us.

<http://www.lapenitarpark.com/home/>

Rincón de Guayabitos (also known simply as Rincón or Guayabitos) is a popular beach resort area located right next door to La Peñita separated by the Guayabitos River. The resort area occupies about 2 km (1 m) of beachfront and is a very popular vacation destination for both Mexicans and international tourists.



Rincón de Guayabitos Beach

The Rincón de Guayabitos (Corner of the small guava trees) has many RV Parks and all under 30 RV spaces, many right on the beach almost all attached to hotels. Pickle ball and Tennis are very popular in this community and there are many courts to play on.

Seafood is very popular and most of the fish is sold in the early morning, when fishermen return with their catches which include dorados (*Salminus brasiliensis*), mojarra and red snapper. Last year Dan went fishing with some buddies from Rincón on his birthday in January and they all caught Dorado.

...Riviera Nayarit

Lo de Marcos is located 57 km (35 m) north of Puerto Vallarta and 39 km (24) south of Las Varas on the beach. As with many of the smaller villages and cities in Nayarit along Hwy 200 between Tepic and Puerto Vallarta, Lo de Marcos is an unassuming little town. Most people seem to just drive by, particularly given that the village is a block behind entrance not expecting to find anything of interest along the way. However, Lo de Marcos is actually a bustling community and many will say one of the most charming places along the picturesque Riviera Nayarit where you can actually experience and witness what life is like in a small authentic Mexican town, something we experienced near Puerto Vallarta almost 40 years ago.



Inside Tlaquepaque RV Park - Lo de Marcos

There are several small RV Parks in Lo de Marcos, mostly along the beach. We also understand a new RV Park was started and opened last season near the entrance of town. And then there is **Tlaquepaque**, a 5 star RV Park & Hotel, easily comparable to any fancy RV Park you would find in the US or Canada. It is on the north end of the beach (not the safest because of tides) and is also the most expensive RV Park in Mexico.



Entrance to Tlaquepaque RV Park - Lo de Marcos

This park has all the bells and whistles including 2 swimming pools, soccer field, pickle ball and tennis courts and much more. French Canadians love this park and Snowbirds double the population of this village every season and almost 50% are RVers.

<http://www.villastlaquepaque.com.mx/>

The last time we checked you could still find RV Parks in **Sayulita** and **Bucerias** however they are increasingly under pressure to be developed into condos and hotels

<https://sayulita.com/>

<https://beachpleasemexico.com/bucerias-welcome-guide/>

We do know that a new RV Park has been opened near Lo De Marcos and another along Hwy 200 north of La Penita de Jaltemba (Altavista RV Park). However, as we mentioned earlier, times are changing in **Riviera Nayarit**, a new toll highway in construction for years running parallel to Hwy 200 from Bucerias to Hwy 15D has now been completed to Las Varas. When this is finished major development will not be far behind driven by the population in Mexico's 2nd largest city, Guadalajara.

...more pics follow

...Riviera Nayarit



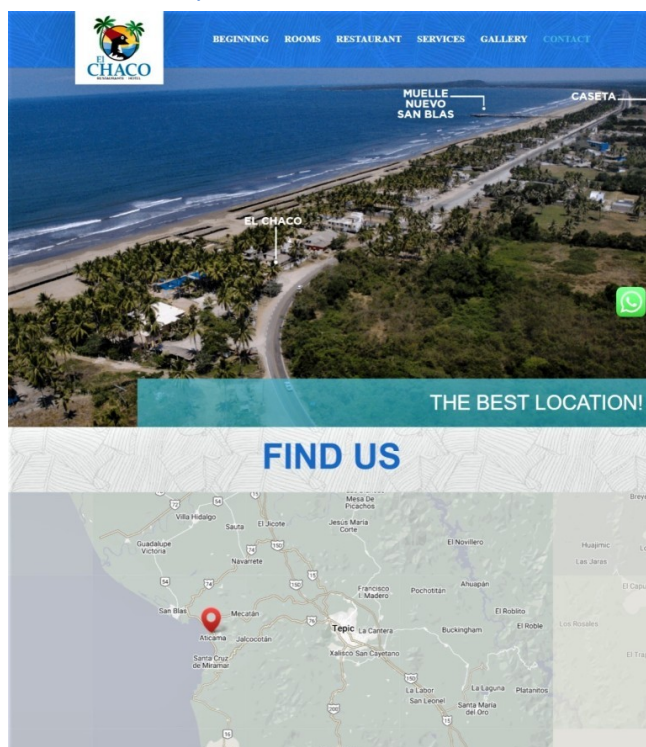
La Peña RV Park



Playa Chacala beach camping



Plenty of beach restaurants in Chacala



El Chaco and Matanchen Bay



Guayabitos Paraiso del Pescador RV Park

Submitted by
Dan and Lisa Goy
Baja Amigos RV
Caravan Tours
www.BajaAmigos.net

Tips and Tricks to Stay Safe and Spend Less While Travelling

The following are tips, gathered over time and through experience, to make travel in Mexico, and elsewhere, smoother and safer. For ease of reading, this context is for visitors to Mexico.

Money

1. Decline offers to have the charge in CAD, USD or other foreign currency at bank machines and establishments and take the charge in local currency.
2. Know what your bank/credit card charges you for foreign currency transactions (withdrawals and purchases) as some don't charge any fee.
3. Know what your bank at home charges you for an ATM withdrawal in addition to the charge the bank machine's bank will charge as some don't charge you a fee.
4. Know what your bank's daily limit for withdrawal is for cash withdrawals or debit purchases.
5. Know what your bank at home charges you for foreign currency transactions on a credit card.
6. Don't use a bank machine that has a card reader that sucks the card into the machine. There are several where you don't need to lose sight of your card while using the machine. This saves it being swallowed by the machine and having to get it back or get it replaced.
7. A preferable cash withdrawal bank machine will ask you to remove your card before you get your cash out.
8. Take the receipt offered and keep it. Shred it when you are done with it.
9. If exchanging money somewhere, keep the transaction receipt and shred it later. Don't leave it in the trash.
10. Learn what each local bank charges for an ATM withdrawal and what the maximum local currency withdrawal amount is.
11. Check the bank machine or establishment's card reader to see if it looks newly replaced or bulkier than usual (card skimmers).
12. Preferably use a bank machine within or near a large store, before you start your shopping and will walk around quite a bit before exiting the building, to be a less interesting target for opportunists.
13. Don't keep all your cards or ID on you while walking around (check if required to carry passport, visa with you).
14. Put ID stickers with your mobile phone number (and country), email address on your debit and credit cards, ID, passport, items that a Good Samaritan would make an effort to return to you, and ideally get a secondary email address and phone number (available free online) for that purpose so that you are not giving away the email and phone number attached to the account itself.

...Tips and Tricks to Stay Safe and Spend Less While Travelling

15. Decline options to defer payments (zero interest, *months with no interest* as they call the promotions in Mexico) over several months unless it is your own credit card company offering it and you know the terms as zero interest offers may only apply to local banks and not foreign credit cards.
16. Ideally don't let a merchant take your card away "to the back" to process the charge, although this is a common practice still in some countries without intention of fraud, so it's good to talk to people locally to understand how this normally works.
17. Use prepaid credit/debit cards (CIBC AC Conversion Card, Wise, others) where possible, or keep your available balance/limit low to limit liability in the event a card or its info are stolen.
18. Keep an eye on your bank accounts and credit cards while you are away to see if any unexpected charges show up.
19. Sign up for transaction alerts on your credit or debit card transactions by email rather than SMS (text message) in case you are not using your phone from home while traveling. Some people get a local SIM card while on the road and a text message won't help.
20. Set up multi-factor authentication that uses email or an authenticator app and not SMS (text message).
21. Know if the practice in the country or the establishment you are using, is to charge tax or if tax is included in the price, as well as whether a service charge or tip is already included with the bill before you do calculations in your head about what the item really costs and so that you don't double tip. It is a common practice in many establishments, especially when there is a large group dining, to include the tip (*servicio*) with the bill.
22. Check with your phone company before you go about enabling Wi-Fi calling on your device and understand about any roaming charges or a roaming cap you may put on your phone before you leave, as it may be cheaper to get a local SIM card and pay as you go or take a second unlocked phone with you for that purpose while you leave your main phone on Wi-Fi calling.

Safety

1. Always have your belongings in view and don't leave them unattended. Don't put your own purse or backpack on the back of your chair where you cannot see it. Rather, put it on the back of a chair next to you where you can keep an eye on it. It's best to have some kind of buckle or strap to secure it to a chair rung or other so it can't be lifted away quickly.
2. Do not accept help from anyone at a bank machine unless you went into the branch and got an employee to help you. If uncertain, ask for the bank manager.
3. Watch for distractions in stores, parking lots, etc. where seemingly innocent or well-intended people distract you while another pickpockets you.
4. Keep an eye out for new scams on social media.

All of the aforementioned said, it is not common to fall victim to scams and pranks. While it can happen to anyone, it is also largely possible to prevent such events by staying vigilant and using your instincts. With that, wishing you safe and happy travels ahead!



MANZANILLO

Converting Photos to Other Formats

story and photos by John Chalmers

Converting a photograph to one of many different types and styles gives an image a new and different appearance. Below is one of my favourite conversions. It was originally a photo taken while on a hike with friends in the Manzanillo area, then converted to a painting effect with a software product found on the internet. I was so pleased with the result that I had an enlargement printed!



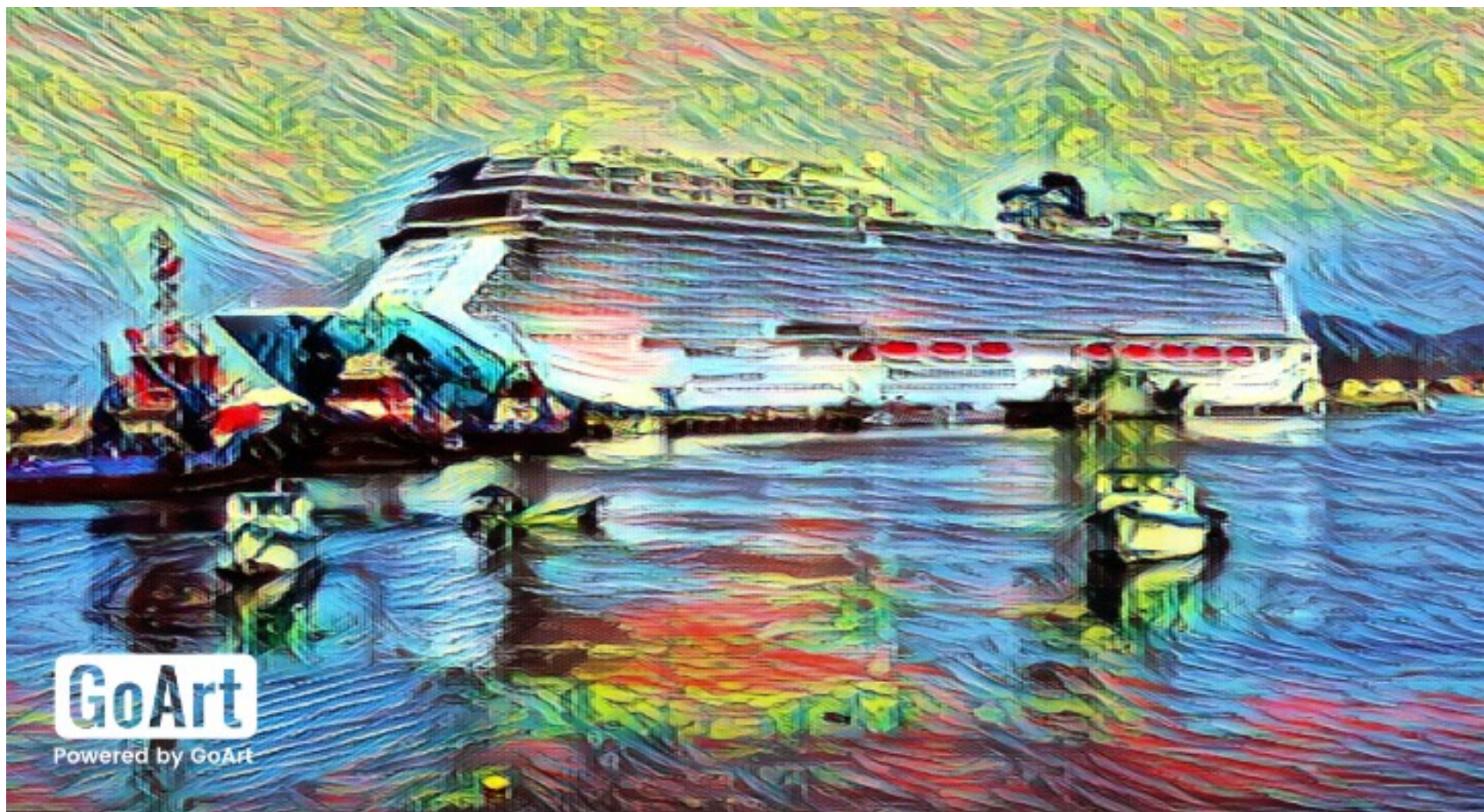
While escaping a Canadian winter to spend the months in the Manzanillo area, I never go anywhere without my camera! Whether it be to enjoy the scenery on a hike, to visit an outdoor market, to see historic towns or structures of ancient civilizations while on a tour, to dine out with friends, or simply to gaze in wonder at a beautiful sunrise or sunset, my photos provide a visual record of our time in Mexico.

But photographs aren't always finished when I press the shutter button! Often I crop pictures to make more efficient use of the image or to remove superfluous content not wanted. As well, I use photo editing software when necessary to retouch or remove details, to adjust contrast and brightness, and to make minor adjustments in colour. All blue text in this article is a link to software used for conversion.

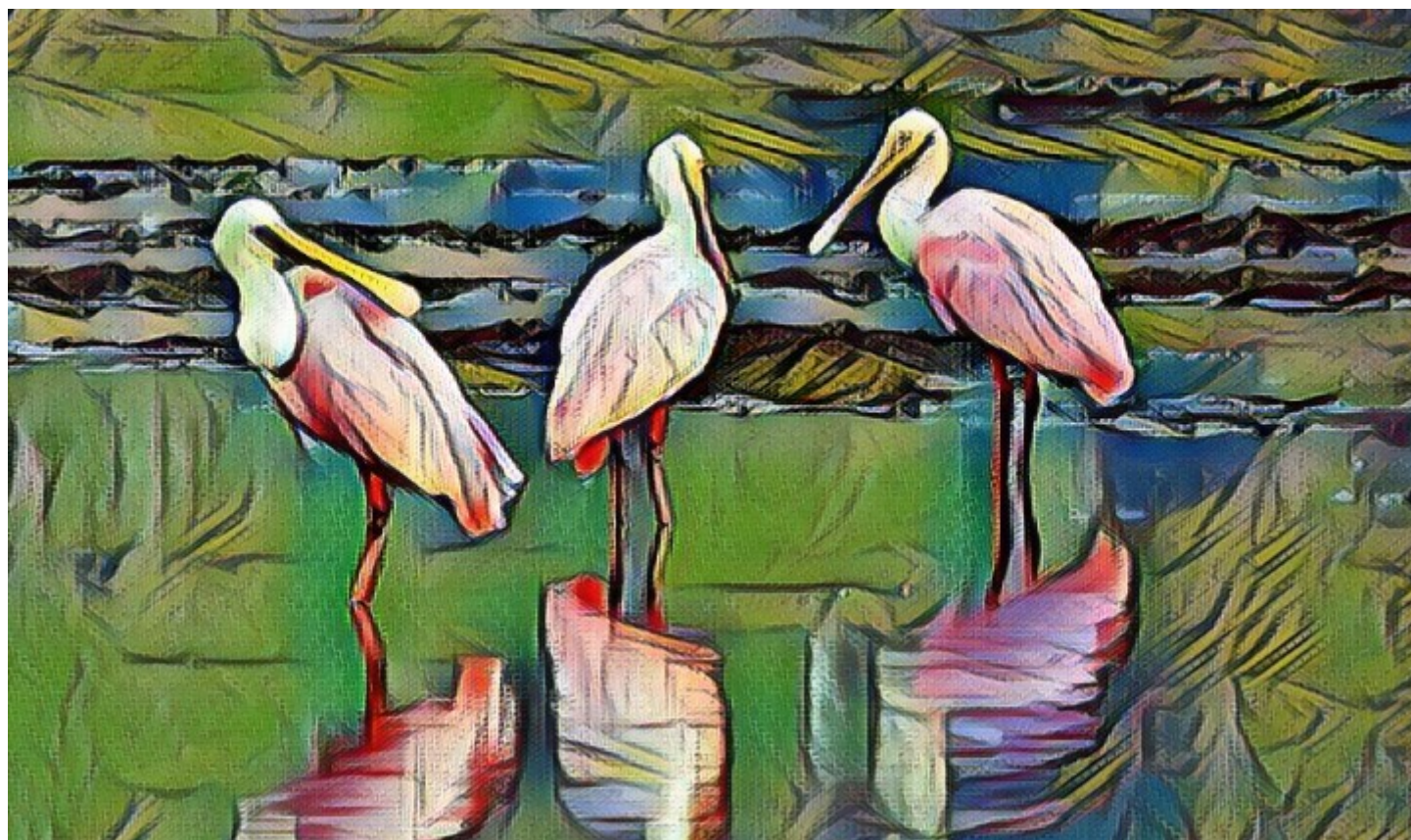


...Converting Photos to Other Formats

Sometimes, just for fun, I convert a photograph to a painting to see what it will look like, which I have done with a photo of two chachalacas you see in the previous pictures. Converting is a simple task that requires no skill and can be done with just a couple of mouse clicks! The software does all the work with artificial intelligence (which I don't understand!).



You will find many choices of software on the internet to try out when you search for *converting photographs to paintings*. A click on the link for a selected product will open the software. You then select a photograph to convert and upload it. Next, a click on a button will start the conversion, a job that takes only a moment or two. And presto, just like magic you will have a painting!



When the conversion is completed, you then can save the image. Some products allow you to download and save the image immediately. Others may require you to log in to save the image. Some products are totally free to use. Some products may provide the image with a watermark that does not appear if you buy the product. Some products are trial versions that allow you to convert only a few photos before purchasing the full featured software.

...Converting Photos to Other Formats



The results may vary. Sometimes you may get a conversion that is completely acceptable on your first try, while at other times you may not like the results. However, trying out different products and different photos is sure to produce a new image that is totally satisfactory. As well, many products will allow you to try the conversion in many different styles of painting, from watercolor to impressionist to oil painting to abstract. The possibilities are endless!

Besides converting a photo to a painting, some products also provide the tools to convert a painting to other formats such as a cartoon, a pencil sketch, a charcoal drawing, and so on. My best advice is to try out different effects, and it won't cost you a peso!

Why do I do it? Primarily I do it for illustrative purposes in articles I write, in order to provide something different from a photograph, but to provide an image of a subject that is still recognizable and, I hope, to help capture reader interest. In some cases for purely personal use and satisfaction, I have enlarged a converted image, mounted and framed it, then hung it on a wall in my home. Each photo shown up to here has been converted with [Fotor](#).

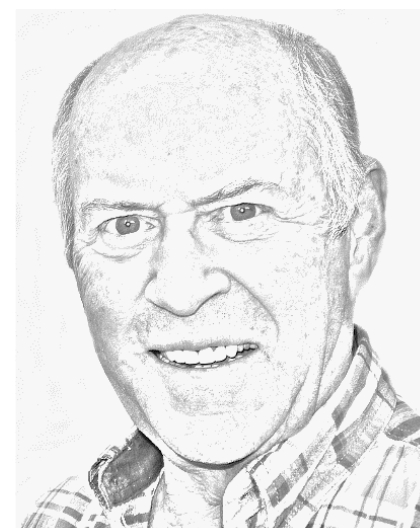


...Converting Photos to Other Formats

One of the many things I have discovered in trying out different products is that some will use artificial intelligence (AI) to create an image for you from a text description! Above left is an image created when I asked the AI Art Generator of [Artguru](#) software to create an image from text of a *hummingbird and a flower*, and the software produced it in just a few minutes! At above right is the result from asking for an *ocean liner with palm trees*.



The fun doesn't end with converting photos to paintings! It's just as easy to convert a painting to a sketch, as shown at right, which was done with [Image to Sketch](#). A search on the internet for *converting photos to cartoons* or *converting photos to drawings*, will bring up links to several sites that will do the job. Again, you will have to try out the programs to see which ones you like to use or might consider purchasing. Rather than embarrass any of my friends, I tried converting the photo of myself at left to a cartoon, using three different programs.



Realistic cartoon at far left was created with [Workin Tool](#). The "Homer Simpson" effect at centre and the drawing effect at right were created with [AI Face Editor](#).

While it is fun to try out the different effects, there is a practical side to this as well. At right is an image of the building in which our condo in Mexico is located. I used the picture in our Christmas letter!

What could you do? When you are comfortable working with conversion software, you might like to print and frame an enlargement. Maybe you could take portrait photos of all your family and convert the pictures to paintings or cartoons.

Perhaps you would like to convert a photo to print and include with a gift card. I'm sure you will think of something! In conclusion, the abundance of software programs provides many opportunities to experiment with your photos.



you can reach John at john.chalmers@manzanillosun.com



Fundraiser

January 18, 2024
5:30-8:30 pm

Sunset at L'Recif



cocktails, appetizers from Oasis, live music, exclusive boutique, silent

Limited Tickets - \$120 US or \$2,000p includes two drink tickets. Only cash or checks accepted.

This event is probably our last big fundraiser to help support our two family learning centers in the El Naranjo and Francisco Villa communities.

WE REALLY NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

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by Tommy Clarkson

More than a Pretty Face Poinsettia

(Those acquainted with my botanical writings may be familiar with some of the more basic aspects of this - generally thought of - holiday plant, from its inclusion in Volume I of our three volume set, "The Civilized Jungle." What follows will be included in Volume III of the ensuing series, "The Medicinal Jungle. Volume I" which is available for purchase (hardback, soft cover and e-book, like the preceding series). Volume II, fully researched and written, is presently in the very final stages of layout/design by my creative partner, Steve Jackson and, hopefully, will be going to the publisher in the next couple of months. Volume II is but 1/5 on its way to realization but - I fully intend - to have it completed within the next six months or so!)

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) The Civilized Jungle, Volume I Also known as: Christmas Flower, Mexican Flame Leaf, and Lobster Flower Plant Family: *Euphorbiaceae* Origin: Mexico and Central America Traditional, purported and contemporary uses: Generally thought of only as a Christmas plant, in traditional medicine, parts of it have been employed to treat fever, stimulate breast milk production, ease pain, kill bacteria and stimulate vomiting.

Additionally, some have topically applied its latex to the skin to remove unwanted hair, treat warts, and heal various skin wounds, ulcers, diseases and disorders. It has also been employed topically for toothaches. It has also been additionally used as an external remedy for inflammation problems, such as arthritis and muscle or bone contusions.

For many years, it has been used in Mexican phytotherapy (the practice of using medicines derived from plants or herbs to treat or prevent health conditions) for respiratory difficulties such as bronchitis, colds, coughs and sore throat - as well as for heart diseases.



Much more than a Christmas plant

This all noted, however, I have found no comprehensive clinical, scientific evidence unequivocally supporting these therapeutic uses.

Beyond this, I must warn that - as surely as negative effects sometimes come about even from the very best of intentions - there are some downsides.

Contact with its sap might, in particularly sensitive skinned folks, cause blisters and, if rubbed into them, its latex can irritate the eyes.

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

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you can reach Tommy Clarkson at tommy@manzanillosun.com

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Handy Apps for your Phone While in Mexico

article by Ken Waldie

SASSLA is the mobile application that provides notification of the official earthquake early warning of Mexico and also of other emergencies. It will let you know if there is a Civil defense alarm, Tsunami, Tornado, Hurricanes, and Volcanic Eruptions to name the main features. SASSLA can send warnings on other platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) as well.

SASSLA monitors some of the major centers in Mexico but is also able to indicate seismic activity in any area in Mexico. It will send a warning as early as possible, up to two minutes in advance of the shaking. While not a perfect system, I appreciate an opportunity to get out of a grocery store aisle or out of a building, or just to take shelter and be prepared for an event.

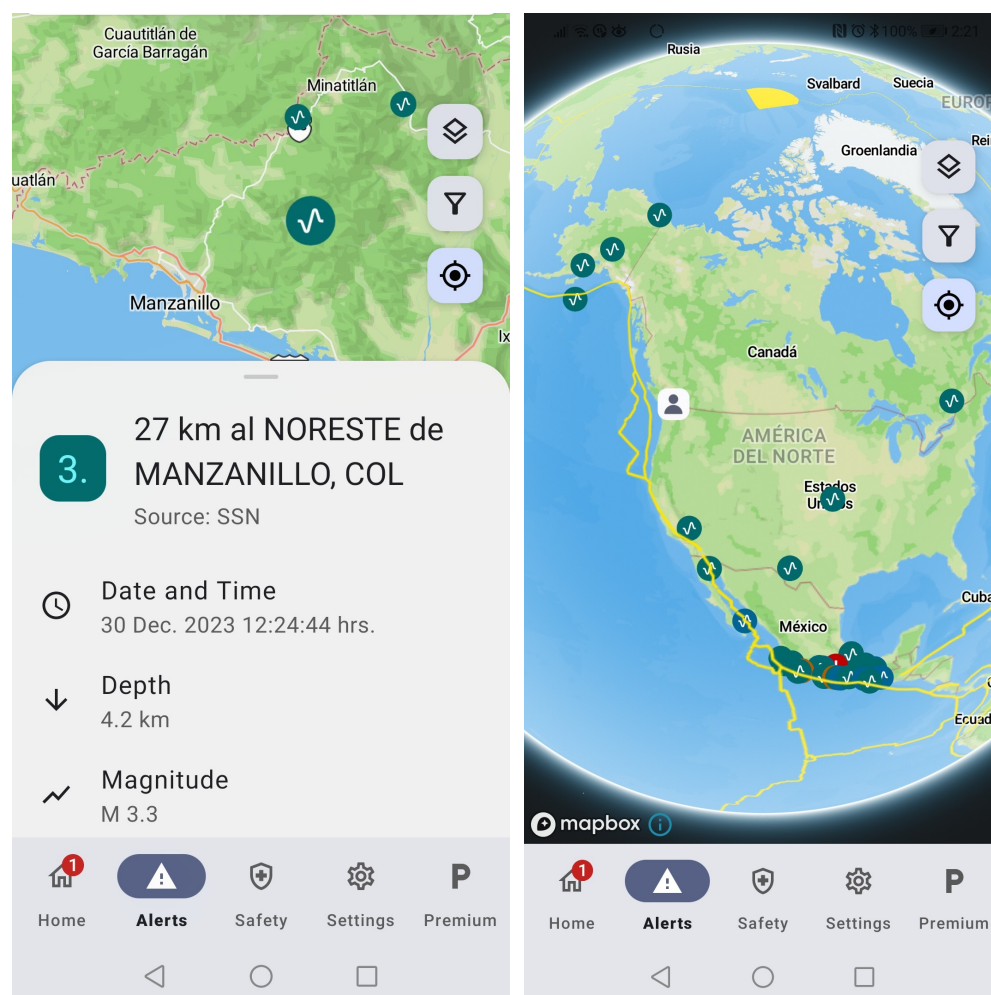
SASSLA can be downloaded and used on your phone or smart watch for Android and Apple platforms through Google Play or Apple App Store. And you can turn the alerts and tracking on or off in the Settings feature.

There is a "panic button" feature that alerts family to your location. You can also record your location in real time to alert family or friends to your last known location in the event of an earthquake or other disaster. Of course, this is a big help for your people to know where to start looking for you in any emergency situation.

The alerts feature shows a map graphic with symbols for the seismic events on buttons. A click of a button will show you a monitoring record: Date and time, magnitude and depth AND, the big one, it's distance from your location. The map is expandable, it can zoom close enough to show streets and buildings of your area. It can zoom out to show the half the globe on the map, at a glance, with fault lines depicted in yellow.

Most features are available in the free version with some enhancements in the paid version.

Mexico is a seismically active area. Less than two years ago, Manzanillo experienced a substantial earthquake that affected several buildings near where we stay.



I don't hesitate to get to Mexico as much and as often as I can, but, being an old country boy, I like to be prepared. Having seen the SASSLA App in action from Canada I can tell you it's a handy tool.

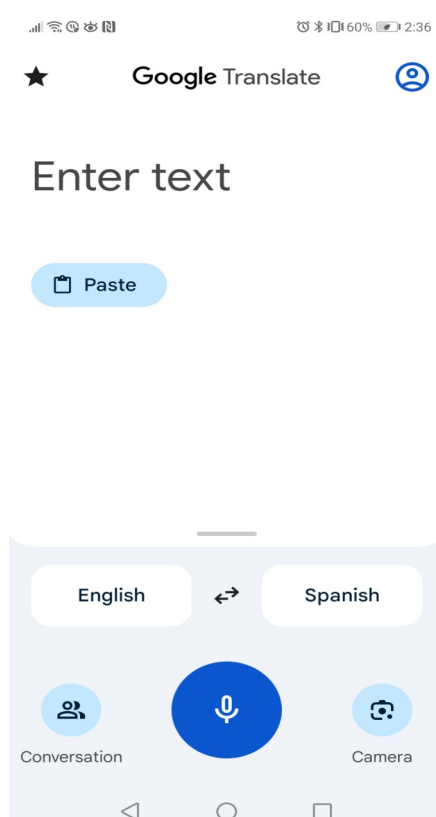
The app has even warned of events near our home on the west coast of Canada. As the TV salesman says: Get it today and take it away!

Language apps

Speaking and being understood in a Spanish-speaking country is an interesting experience. I am tenacious, taking weekly Spanish lessons here in Canada, because I don't get the opportunity to speak Spanish here, but I understand how daunting, how difficult and interesting it can be when we mispronounce words or use the wrong words completely.

Fortunately, Spanish uses thousands of words that are very similar to English ones (cognates), pronounced differently, but similar.

...Handy Apps for your Phone While in Mexico



Usually, our problem can be summed up as having, "English Ears", which is where what we hear we associate with the English sounds we know. Words such as *huevo* and *uva* – egg and grape, walked and pathway – *camino* and *camino* (pronounced differently) can confuse a novice.

Of course, there's my favourite error (I'm sure you noticed my Canadian spelling,

ha ha) – *naranja* and *araña*, being orange and spider, respectively. The pronunciation is close to one another - really sort of similar and to my English Ears they sound pretty much the same.

Orange is pronounced: "nar-ang-ha" and Spider is "aran-ya". When I first started visiting Mexico, I pretty much ordered the same breakfast because I had learned that *huevos rancheros* were the same in Canada-land as in Mexico. But can you picture the waitress' wide-eyed expression when I ordered, jugo de *araña* (spider juice)? My Spanish speaking friends thought I was funny... oh well...

I wasn't using **Google Translate** or any other translator then. I wasn't familiar with the app at all. And I didn't speak Spanish back then. Over the years, I've learned that I can pre-type some phrases and Google Translate will save them for me to say later or to show a non-English speaking person that I want to communicate with.

GT or Translate, has a few handy features that I use. It copies translations easily to allow me to converse effectively through WhatsApp, email, or text. And has been handy in saving me further orange-spider incidents, well to a degree at least. I still put my foot in it all the time.

GT is also available on both Google Play and the Apple App Store. Many android phones, not sure about Apple, have a built-in translate app that are worth exploring also.

One thing to keep in mind when using a translation software is that, while it does manage to understand many English slang terms or idioms, it's probably best to use more correct grammar and avoid sayings like: "Raining cats and dogs", which the Google translates as: "*Lueve a cántaros*", and that comes out to equal "It's raining heavily" - I got lucky on this one. Remember, though, that slang doesn't always translate into our intended meaning, it is best to use more formal language to translate as a rule.

Google Translate works by taking the text you type in English and converting it to Spanish below. After typing what you want to say in English, you will find an arrow pointing outward below. Hit the arrow and the translation appears below that.

Just above the translation there are three symbols. The first is for rating the quality of the translation; essentially you can ignore that one. The middle symbol will copy your translated text to insert elsewhere, Facebook, email, or WhatsApp, etc. The third symbol is a speaker. It will play an audio of the translation so you could play it for a person. This feature is very handy if you have a longer statement or explanation that you need to convey to someone.

But wait, there's more, between the English-Spanish language designations below the translation sections (Google will translate into many languages; a feature I've used when teaching content to foreign students with limited English) you will see a star.

The star opens a feature where you can speak in English and GT will play an audio in the corresponding other language. I say something in English and the recording plays the translated audio out in Spanish. They say something in Spanish and the audio plays the translation out in English. Totally Amazing!!!

Apparently, this is a new feature and I really like it. It's time to play with Google Translate and learn how to use it so you can be heard correctly the next time you go to order orange juice.

You can also use GT to point your camera at a sign and have it translate it for you in real time, so take it on the road!

you can reach Ken Waldie at ken@manzanillosun.com

Colima Dogs and the Xoloescuintle

The history of Colima dogs and the Xoloescuintle is a fascinating journey through time, weaving together the rich tapestry of Mesoamerican civilizations and the enduring bond between humans and dogs. These ancient breeds, with roots tracing back thousands of years, have played pivotal roles in the cultures that revered them.

The Colima dog, also known as the Mexican Hairless Dog, holds a special place in the archaeological record of pre-Columbian Mexico. Dating back to around 300 BC, the Colima dog was often depicted in the art and pottery of the Colima civilization, which thrived in the western part of present-day Mexico. These dogs were not merely pets; they were revered companions and had symbolic significance in religious and funerary practices.

Colima dogs were known for their distinctive appearance - compact bodies, slender legs, and, most notably, their hairlessness. The lack of fur was not a result of a genetic anomaly but a deliberate breeding choice by the ancient Mesoamerican people. This trait made them well-adapted to the warm climate of the region. Additionally, the Colima dogs were often adorned with jewelry, further emphasizing their elevated status in society.

As Mesoamerican cultures flourished and interacted, the Colima dog's influence spread, reaching the Aztecs and beyond. The Aztecs, in particular, held a deep reverence for the Xoloescuintle, a closely related breed to the Colima dog. The Xoloescuintle, commonly referred to as the Xoloitzcuintli or Xolo, was considered sacred by the Aztecs and played a vital role in their religious beliefs.

The name "Xoloitzcuintli" is a combination of two Nahuatl words: "Xolotl," the Aztec god of lightning and death, and "itzcuintli," meaning dog. According to Aztec mythology, Xolotl guided the souls of the deceased through the afterlife, and the Xoloescuintle was believed to accompany the departed on this spiritual journey. This sacred role led to the frequent inclusion of Xolos in burial sites and sacrificial ceremonies.

The Aztecs valued the Xoloescuintle not only for its spiritual significance but also for its practical qualities. The breed's keen senses and agility made it an excellent hunting and guarding companion. The Aztecs even believed that the Xolo possessed healing properties, attributing therapeutic benefits to its warm body temperature and soothing presence.



Image by Anders Mejlvang from Pixabay



Dancing Dogs figurine by Guillermo Ríos

With the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century, the indigenous civilizations of Mesoamerica faced drastic changes. The once-flourishing cultures were disrupted, and the sacred status of the Xoloescuintle diminished. However, despite these challenges, the Xolo endured, adapting to the evolving cultural landscape.

In the subsequent centuries, the Xoloescuintle faced periods of decline and resurgence, but its unique qualities and historical significance were not forgotten. Efforts to preserve the breed gained momentum in the 20th century, with dedicated breeders working to maintain the purity and cultural heritage of the Xolo. The breed's recognition and popularity grew globally, and in 2016, the Xoloitzcuintli was officially recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC) in the United States.

Today, both the Colima dog and the Xoloescuintle stand as living links to the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica. Their unique features and historical importance continue to capture the fascination of dog enthusiasts and historians alike. Whether cherished as beloved companions or admired for their cultural legacy, these breeds serve as reminders of the enduring bond between humans and dogs that transcends time and borders.

Often seen in pairs dancing entwined, a popular theory of this is the representation of the older, wiser dog teaching the younger one about the world.



Dog from the Minneapolis Institute of Art


Casa Hogar para Menores
Liborio Espinoza
Cena de gala
CASA HOGAR PARA MENORES
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