



History and Mythology
Business in Mexico
Nature's Wonders
Technology
Finance
RV Travel
Recipe
Learn Spanish
Path to Citizenship



Sunset in the bay

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E-MAGAZINE

a publication of Manzanillo Sun

www.manzanillosun.com

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To send submissions for possible inclusion in the magazine, please send to the editor by 15th of each month. We are always looking for writers or ideas on what you would like us to see as topics for the magazine.

Article submissions:

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

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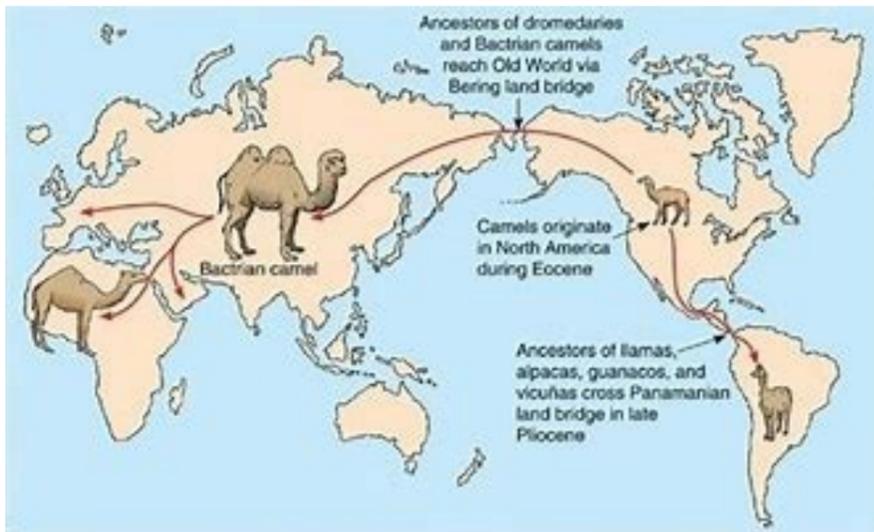
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The First New World Civilization

by Kirby Vickery

I have given the readers of the Manzanillo Sun over four years of Aztec Mythology and have been thinking that it might possibly be an interesting endeavor to branch, not only into their real lifestyle, but that of the Mexican peoples, from as far back as I can go to the present.

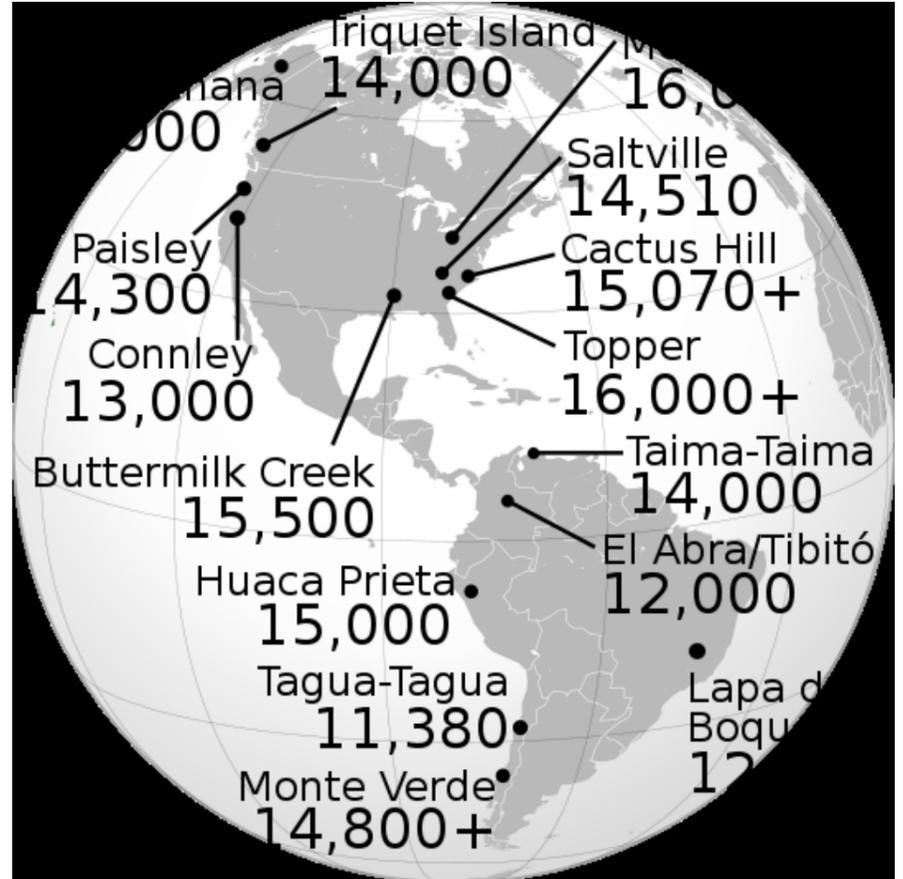
Right now, depending on which internet site you go to, the history of Mesoamerica starts around 8,000 BC. However, while reading about the Ute and early American Southwest Indians, I understand that the land bridge crossing date of the first of four pushes is being pushed back an additional 8,000 years.



It appears Man wasn't the only animal to cross using Beringia Land Bridge.

When we get to Clovis, New Mexico, in a few days, my intent is to ask an anthropologist what the latest is on that score, provided I can find one. Until that happens, I should tell you that there is gathering evidence that some of the Mesoamerican peoples arrived by means other than that popular land bridge around where Alaska sits today. Personally, I have a tendency to believe it, if for no other reason than the variations in the age of all the bones they keep finding from Tierra del Fuego to the Yukon. I should note that modern DNA testing and dating isn't that old, so we shall see what we shall see.

Currently, the society of the Clovis Indians in America's Southwest predates that 8,000 BC mark for Mexico and Central America by approximately another 8,000 years. They were supposedly the first peoples to cross that land bridge. The other



Map showing Pre-Clovis civilization archeological dig sites.

problem I've run into is that there are is an anthropology site in Brazil which is pulling up remains sixteen to twenty thousand years older than the Clovis.

While not to be outdone, some of the newer sites in the United States and in Chile also have remains which predate the Clovis, as do some of the findings of early peoples throughout the Pacific which modern day explorers (Thor Heyerdahl and Phil Buck) are trying to show that the Pacific Rim, to include Australia, could have been populated from the Pacific's east rather than the northwest.

I don't want to get to far from the crux of my topic, however. I intend to stay on our own shores and leave the timing problem with people of more pointed education, drive and sun-burnt necks.

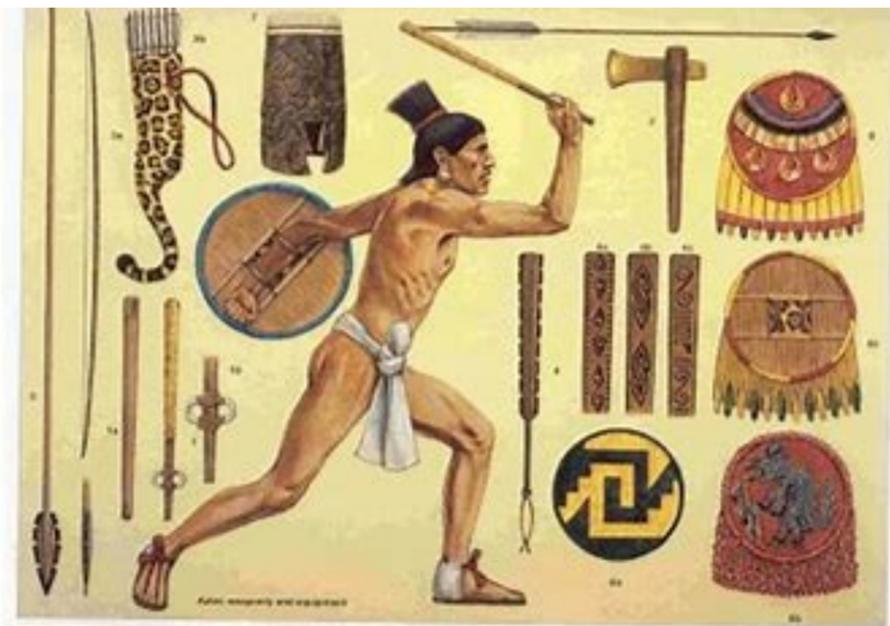
Before the Aztecs in Mexico, there were the Toltecs. Before them the first group of people to build any kind of a society was the Olmecs. They flourished between 1200 BCE and started their decline around 400 BCE, to end a hundred years later. The Olmec legacy was their stone work of which their extremely

...The First New World Civilization



Olmec Head. Art? Culture? Religion?

large stone heads have become a focal point. They were also proficient in carving just about any stone or rock they could lay their hands on. To this end, there is a faction of people from Africa that claim this entire Mesoamerican area based on the facial features of these giant, carved heads.



Olmec warrior dress and arms.

Their first capital was in what is now San Lorenzo, Tenochtitlán which was destroyed and their monuments defaced in 900 BCE. They moved their capital to what is now La Venta, until 300 BCE, and it was all downhill for them after that.

They were basically an agrarian society, cultivating the ever-present maize (corn), and other staples in the form of gourds, to include various squashes, beans and various tropical fruit. You would not recognize their corn. It had kernels about the size of present day natural oats. But the Olmecs were the first people to start cross-pollination processes to make it larger, and to some extent they were successful. For protein, they ate



Routes of the First Americans

fish, possum, armadillo, snakes, birds to include turkey and dogs raised as food. The gathering and processing of cocoa was probably, and still is, one of the most important parts of their society. Hunting prey probably was not considered a profitable vocation, but farming was, as the Central American jungle didn't have any large animals bigger than the jaguar.



Olmec ruins

Some of today's historical sites tell us that the Olmecs had a written language. Others tell us that they didn't – really. We have been able to decipher their numbering system, which was created to support their trading efforts, especially with the Mayans and other tribes scattered. Their religion and style of life set the tone for the rest of the Mesoamerican peoples who followed through time and area. This also includes their timekeeping (you know – the large circular calendars.) Probably their best attribute was working in stone as a lot of their jewelry is still coveted today for its appeal and craftsmanship.

...The First New World Civilization

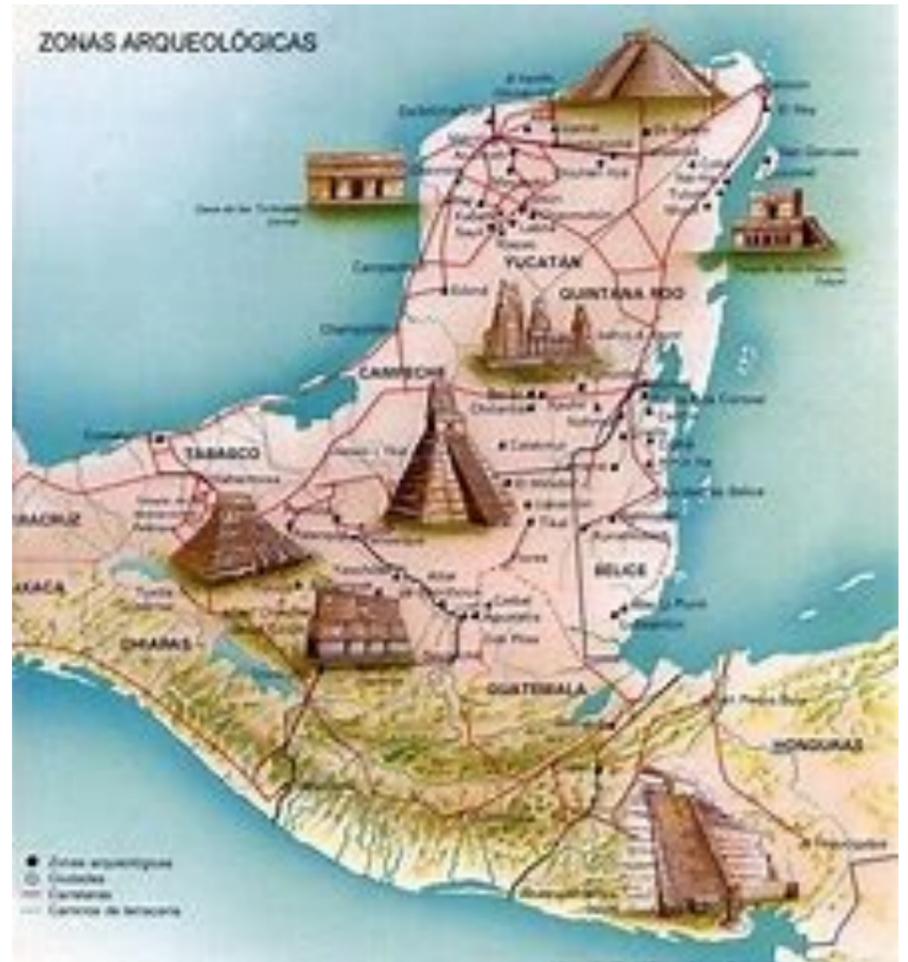


Olmec calendar

Where they came from, and just how their culture came to be, is a mystery. The most common belief is that it was self-generated by the people that lived in the area. Because the soil was rich, and weather was good, the land was able to sustain a growing number of people. As a result, as with any society, it segmented into classes. There were the farmers or tradesmen, the soldiers or military, and the priesthood. This was to be copied by the Toltecs and later by the Aztecs to the 'nth' degree.



The next "Civilizations" to rise were the Toltecs and the Maya. The Toltecs formed their power reign from 900 thru 1000 CE. Their area of control was a lot smaller than the Maya, who started their civilization around 1800 BCE through 300 BCE. From there, the Mayan had their Classic period from 250 BCE



Maya civilization

to about 900 CE but stuck around until the 1500's. What can be gleaned from all this is that the Maya were around during the rise of the Olmecs but didn't really start on their own civilization until much later.

Where the Toltec empire was just replaced by the upstart Aztecs, the downfall of the Mayan civilization is still a bit of a mystery. There are several theories ranging from climate change to a change in temperament and friendship between them and the Olmecs who shared the same timeline. In neither case were they over overrun. But, no one has been able to come up with a good reason for their civilization to have fallen apart.

All this is good stuff if you're a history buff, but, what I needed to tell you is how these people lived. Because the first of the civilizations in the region of Mexico and Central America were the Olmecs, I started with them.

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Shipping into Mexico

by Terry Sovil

Shipping products from USA or Canada to Mexico can be easy, depending on what you are trying to do. If what you need is in larger quantity, or for a specific sport (like snorkeling or SCUBA), you may have a harder time getting it shipped to Mexico. Some things they will just not ship. Other things are identified by a customs agents as a problem. Things like: stain remover, CO2 cylinders, paint and paint pens, makeup, lithium-ion batteries and potential weapons (knives, spear guns) may get stopped.

Also a problem would be cash, traveler's checks, checks of any kind payable to a generic bearer rather than a specific person, precious metals such as gold or silver, some jewelry or precious stones and lottery tickets foreign to Mexico. Other prohibited items include electronic cigarettes, pork products, virtually anything perishable, works that infringe on Mexican intellectual property, ammunition and loaded metal firearm cartridges. You may be faced with sending them back, paying a huge fee or having them confiscated.

Shipping between USA and Mexico includes integral inspections, forms and codes, wait time, customs brokerage, freight forwarding, trucking, air freight, and more. You want to choose a carrier that does business in BOTH Mexico and in the USA or Canada. This leaves you with UPS, DHL and FedEx. If you are in the USA, you can opt to use USPS (United States Postal Service). It will get them to the border and then it is turned over to Correos Express. UPS, DHL and FedEx (the big 3) will fly them to Guadalajara and then have customs review the package and either release it for delivery or create a problem ticket. I have found that, for orders of less than \$300.00 USD, that USPS Global Priority is a good way to ship. I've never encountered an import fee with them. Not as fast as the others, but it does get here and requires a signature. Often it not as expen-

sive as the big 3 shippers. I still get our PADI training materials this way.

Most of what you need with these kinds of orders is done for you. There are basic documents required and they include:

- Import/export form - this is picked up and completed at the post office or is done by the vendor you have purchased from, or by the import broker you have hired.
- Commercial invoice - this is your bill from wherever you bought the merchandise, usually inside and on the top of the package.
- Bill of lading - the document issued by the carrier to acknowledge receipt of cargo for shipment, like the form you get from FedEx with all the information on it and they stick it in a plastic liner or on the package.
- NAFTA Certificate of Origin (only if goods qualify for NAFTA).

Amazon will ship to Mexico from the USA and they also have an Amazon Mexico web site. It can be a bit confusing.

Here are some ideas. You can receive things like health items, movies on DVD, music on CD, tools, watches, jewelry, toys, electronics, etc.

Visit your USA Amazon account (www.amazon.com) and create a shipping address here, in Mexico. As you search for the products, you want make sure your shipping address stays in Mexico. Amazon will tell you what can't be shipped by that seller, so you can find another seller, or that it can't be shipped to Mexico at all.

Otherwise, go to your Amazon Mexico account (www.amazon.com.mx) and browse the products there. If they are coming from the USA and are not already here, in Mexico, they will tell you there will be an import fee.

International shipping fees can be high so, while you are keeping your Mexico shipping address displayed, choose shippers with lower shipping rates. If you click "Amazon" in the seller box in the left hand column, you should be seeing only items sold and shipped by Amazon.

Amazon takes care of the transaction(s) and delivery times are usually pretty good. I once ordered 2 hard drives on a Sunday and had them by the very next Friday. The costs can be high



...Shipping into Mexico

for import, but they have all of that information included so when you pay them for the order, you do not pay again upon delivery. The cost will include shipping, etc. If there is a problem, Amazon works to correct it.

If you are trying to order from a specific store, some will not ship internationally at all.

If you are doing all ground delivery, perhaps of a bigger item, it is similar and looks like this:

Ground freight bound for Mexico travels the same way as any shipment within the US, until it reaches a shipping facility near the border. At that point, a freight forwarder, customs broker and drayage company are needed to get freight into Mexico.

Here's how it works:

- Your domestic carrier will deliver the shipment to a freight forwarder of choice, which then acts on behalf of your Mexican customs broker to prepare it to cross the border.

- The freight forwarder inspects the shipment, makes sure customs documentation is correct and hires a drayage company.
- The drayage company takes the shipment over the border, gets it through customs and delivers the freight to the carrier handling final delivery.
- The carrier delivers the shipment to the consignee.

If you are interested in having commercial products sent to you in Mexico, and the value could exceed \$1,000 USD, you need to obtain an import permit from SAT/Hacienda (Mexican IRS).

Packages under \$300.00 USD do not get a great deal of inspection unless there is something in the contents that they are looking for or don't like. You will also benefit from the services of an import broker. You need to choose an honest and reliable broker. That isn't always easy! Trust me.

you can reach Terry Sovil at terry@manzanillosun.com



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Another Happy Client
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by Tommy Clarkson

Anthurium *Anthurium andreaeanum*

Family: *Araceae*

Also known as: *Flamingo Flower, Boy Flower, Painted Tongue, Flamingo Lily, Palette Flower, Spathe Flower, Patent Leather Flower or Tail Flower*

Many think of the uniquely shaped Anthurium as a Hawaiian flower. Sorry, but the genus is not native to "The Aloha State". They were first imported there, from London, in 1889, by Samuel Mills Damon, who was, at that time, the minister of finance for the Republic of Hawaii. (Oh, the multitude of mindless minutia one can glean from our writings!)

With somewhere approaching a thousand species in this unique plant genus, in the wild, these easily recognizable flowers range from Southern Mexico to northern Argentina and Uruguay. They can even flourish as an epiphyte (a non-parasitic plant that lives upon another plant - often a tree, for instance). This, the red *Anthurium andreaeanum*, is native to the wet forests of the western slopes of the Andes in southern Colombia and northern Ecuador.

Those suffering with a severe affliction for the amassing of trivia might be interested to know that they were discovered in Colombia in 1876 by Edouard André - those who are not so inclined can simply skip over those last twenty-five words!



Some of their species relations show a more burgundy coloration –

In the proper environs, it is rather easy to grow these striking, tropical plants year round. And, like some of the folks we've come across in our trek of life, there are all sorts: some that creep, others seeking to climb and those that simply spread out, taking up space! The middle kind – Anthuriums, not people – often naturally hangs from the jungle canopy, down to the floor of the rain forest.

The red, heart-shaped "flower" which we have all come to recognize and identify as an Anthurium, is actually a waxy, modified leaf (spathe) that flares out from the base of a fleshy spike (spadix) where the tiny, real flowers grow. The true flowers appear as that roughness a person feels running one's finger up and down the spadix. The color changes of the spathe - between the bud stage and anthesis, (when the flower expands) - can vary from pale green to white, rose, orange, reddish purple, reddish brown to shiny red.

Hermaphrodites, these flowers are often divided sexually with a sterile band separating male from female flowers. (*No, this is not gender apartheid in the plant world!*) The spadix can be club-shaped, tapered, spiraled, and globe-shaped in colors of red, white, green, purple, pink, burgundy or a combination.

...Anthurium

The stems are short-to-elongated, with a length between just under six inches to almost a foot (15-30 cm). At their ends, the actual, petiolate leaves (having a small stalk that attaches the leaf blade to the stem) may be spatulate, rounded or obtuse. These may be erect or spread in a rosette nearly forty inches (100 cm) long in the larger species. The upper surface of the leaf may be matte, dully or semi-glossy and the leaf texture may range from leathery to "paperesque" and fragile.



And let's not forget the attractive white ones!

They possess a structure called a geniculum that allows the plant to swivel its leaves towards the sun, like the state flower of Kansas (from whence I originated), the sunflower! But, unlike that many petalled, bright flower of the plains, some non-terrestrial Anthuriums are hemiepiphytic (capable of beginning life as a seed and sending roots to the soil or beginning as a terrestrial plant that climbs a tree and then sends roots back to the soil.)

Anthuriums grow best with day temperatures of 78° to 90° F (28.56°-32.22° C) with temperatures above that causing foliar burning, reduced flower life and faded color. They will not survive frost or freezing conditions and night temperatures between 40° to 50° F (4.44°-10° C) can result in slow growth and yellowing of lower leaves.



Generally, when we think of an Anthurium, this is what might come to mind.

They like filtered, indirect light, warmth and high humidity. Those that are soil planted require a combination of sand and high organic-matter content, and a sustained degree of moisture (water thoroughly and then allow to dry a bit – moist, but not drenched). Regular, slow release - 3:1:2 – fertilization, diluted up to one-quarter strength, is a good thing. Some Anthuriums grow aerial roots that will appreciate misting and thank you for pushing them back into the soil.

As concerns pests and diseases, one of the best ways to avoid the use of chemicals is by periodically wiping the foliage and gently spraying them with water. And just as you taught your small children when bathing, don't forget their undersides!

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Online Spanish Classes

by Señor Tech

My wife and I spend our winters in Manzanillo. This poses some problems when we try to speak with the locals because we are mostly English speaking. We are attempting to learn the language so we can better communicate without using hand gestures or adding "o" to the end of every word as we raise our voices.

There are many ways to learn how to speak Spanish. One of them is to go to one of the local language schools and attend classes. This is an effective method, but it can be expensive and the class hours may not be convenient. We have tried a private tutor which is more convenient but also expensive. Another method is to take the courses online at your convenience, either on your computer or on a mobile device. This method is the cheapest and easiest way to learn, at the speed you choose. I am writing about three different services that offer different methodologies to help the user learn a new language.

Fluencia has a free trial program (15 lessons), which must be upgraded to a monthly subscription after the trial. Fees are

\$6.95 USD per month on a 2-year plan, \$7.95 USD on a yearly plan, or \$14.95 USD on a monthly plan. The program can be used on the browser of your mobile devices or computer.

My wife has been using this program over a few years and is very happy with the overall ease of use. The program uses a repetitive algorithm to ensure the information sticks in your memory. As this service requires the internet, it is unavailable when there is no internet service.

Fluencia offers 9 levels, with 10 units per level. Each unit contains interactive lessons which cover conversation, grammar, vocabulary, culture, communication, as well as pronunciation. They claim the material is equivalent to more than a year's worth of college Spanish. Since the first 15 lessons are free, it is worthwhile to try to determine if this fits your learning style. Fluencia only offers Spanish as a language.

The direct link to the site is www.fluencia.com.

My preference for a Latin American Spanish learning program is **Rosetta Stone**.

Rosetta Stone has been in business for over 20 years and is typically known for their CD-ROM language programs. They offer over 30 different languages and have millions of users worldwide. In order to keep with the times, they now offer their language programs online.

The Latin American Spanish program has five levels and each level has four units. Each unit is made up of between 25 to 30 lessons. So, in total there are over 500 lessons available in the whole course. Each lesson takes between 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

The lessons have different types of input. For instance, you may be asked to speak, in Spanish, into the microphone, what you see on screen. Or you may have to type, in Spanish, what the displayed picture means to you. I have been practicing and have noticed an improvement in the proper use of vowels and in my pronunciation. Rosetta Stone also offers apps for Android



...Online Spanish Classes



and Apple phones and tablets. If you use one of these devices, the microphone is built in.

Rosetta Stone also offers live tutoring, either one-on-one or in groups of up to four. There is a fee for this service. However, if you purchase the computer version, you get a 3-month trial with 4 sessions/month. The online version offers 1 per month when you hit specific milestones.

The direct link is www.rosettastone.com.

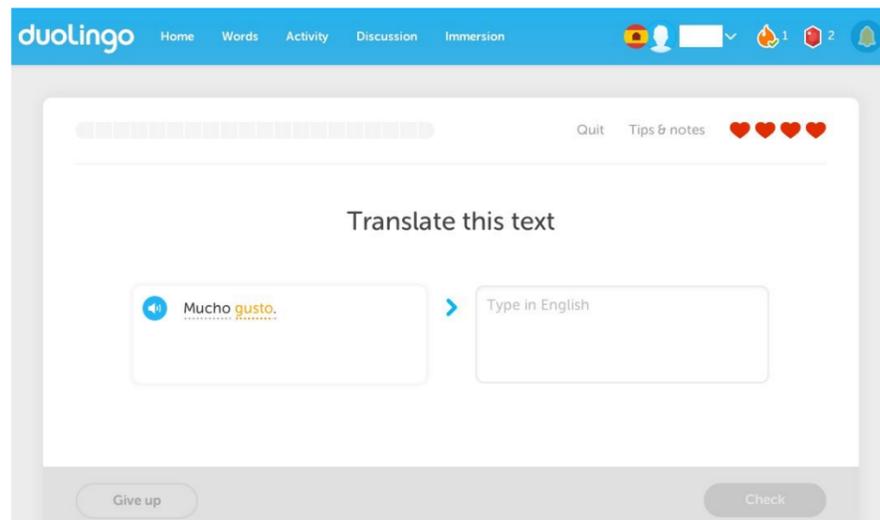
We have friends that use a program called **DuoLingo**. DuoLingo is completely free and can be used on mobile devices or your computer browser. DuoLingo is able to offer this service for free because they use crowd sourcing to translate documents for a fee. The reviews of this service are mixed; who doesn't want to get something for free? The detractors claim that the program content does not teach the users to speak the language. DuoLingo has 343 lessons within 63 units.

If you look at the graphic, Immersion is listed on the top menu of the DuoLingo page. Their interpretation of Immersion is to have their users translate written documents for their paying customers. To some, this may be a small price to pay for using the service.

The direct link is www.duolingo.com.

All three programs use repetition and quizzes to burn the information into our brains.

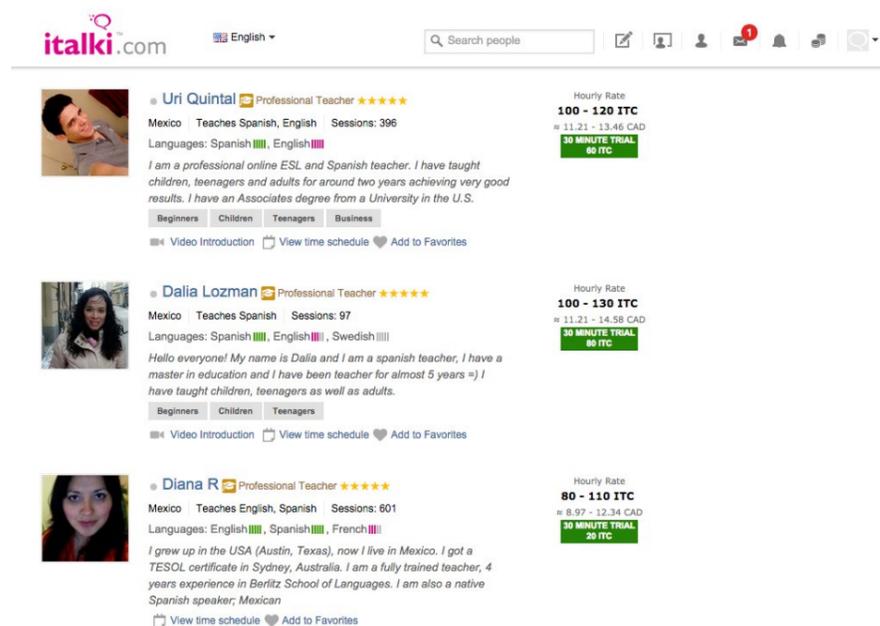
One other option is live online tutoring. I found a service called **italki**. With this service, you can find a teacher to provide one-on-one tutoring. The site has a list of language instructors, based on the following qualifications:



- Professional and Certified - Professional Teachers teach as a job, or possess a degree or certificate in education.
- Experienced - Trained to teach a foreign language to non-native speakers.
- Structured Learning - Can teach using structured lesson plans and academic materials.

Students rate the instructors, and the number of sessions and ratings are displayed. The hourly rates vary but range from \$9.00 to \$30.00.

The direct link is www.italki.com.



If you are interested in communicating in Spanish, any of the above will help you. But, if none of these appeal to you, talk to your friends. There are numerous other language apps out there.

If you don't want to learn the language, you can cheat by using Google Translate on your phone. Check the Manzanillo Sun archives for the article I wrote a few months back, found [here](#).

If you have questions or suggestions about future Technology topics, email seniortech@manzanillosun.com



by Tommy Clarkson



The genus of *Gardenia* consists of somewhere around two hundred and fifty species.

Gardenias, *Gardenia jasminoides*

Family: *Rubiaceae*

Also known as: *Common Gardenia, Cape Gardenia, Cape Jasminem or Cape Jessamine*

For some, the scent – some say, intoxicating fragrance - of this beauty, is the very essence of all that consists “the smell of the tropics!”

The, reasonably large-sized, genus of *Gardenia* consists of somewhere around two hundred and fifty species of Asian and African, tropical and sub-tropical, trees and shrubs. For those already familiar with the Gardenia, Robert Lee Riffle’s comment in his book, *The Tropical Look*, is somewhat a mere statement of the obvious, “Some of the most beautiful plants in the world are included here. Rare is it that a group like this has so many representatives that are beautiful both in leaf and flower.”

The *Gardenia jasminoides* is an evergreen, dark-leaved, medium-sized shrub – five to six feet (1.52-1.83 meters), both tall and wide - with strongly scented, broadly funnel-shaped flowers. It originated in eastern China, Taiwan and the southern Japanese islands and is, quite probably, the most widely planted species of this genus – with good reason!

It has long, glossy, dark-green elliptic leaves of three to five inches (7.52-12.70 cm). With its – usually double – pure white, two to three inches (5.08-7.62 cm) in diameter, flowers, it is a

great addition to one’s outdoor plants. In temperate climates, they are often used as houseplants.

These beauties require full sun – more filtered if in the hotter environs. To grow its best, it likes sandy, yet fertile, humus-rich, well-draining soil. It, most definitely, needs to be watered regularly and does not like its roots disturbed. The Missouri Botanical Garden advises, “Place [them] in light to moderate shade, preferably with minimum competition from tree roots [as] Gardenias resent root disturbance. Use fertilizer [with] iron compounds. Add plenty of organic matter, such as compost or ground bark to as large an area as possible. Mulch plants instead of cultivating . . . Prune shrubs after they have finished flowering to remove straggly branches and faded flowers.”

Ellen Zachos, in her book *Tempting Tropicals*, states, the Gardenias have “a reputation for bud blast, which is usually the result of inadequate light and humidity. Make sure your plant gets enough of both, as well as nighttime temperatures of approximately 70° F (24° C).” That temperature issue is probably the foremost key to attaining successful Gardenia blooming!

Beyond that, keep a watchful eye out, as they are sometimes plagued by mealy bugs, aphids, nematodes, spider mites, scale, white flies and other pesky insects. Should you notice the black leaf tips or loss of buds, these are usually due to changes in temperature or incorrect amounts of water.

...Gardenias

Now, all those warnings about temperature and sunlight aside, I noted the following post, from Plantladylin, on the National Gardening Association's Plants Database site. "*Gardenia jasminoides* is a common and popular shrub here in the south, and the fragrant blooms are a favorite of many. I have two Gardenia shrubs in my yard that I planted 30+ years ago.



The fragrant blooms are a favorite of many.

They've been pretty much neglected when it comes to fertilization and pruning, as I rarely do either, and they are both about six feet high and wide. I've read that Gardenia requires a location of mostly shade with dappled sunlight, yet one of mine grows in full sun, the other in full shade, and they both thrive, blooming during May and June each year." So, that having been noted, take all of my earlier advice and counsel for simply that!

Its uses are many: placed as a background, incorporated as a hedge, used as a foundation plant, and if cut, are wonderful in floral arrangements or leis. As to cultivars and variant species, suffice it to say that there are several that are larger bloomed, have bigger leaves and/or which are single flower forms.

Interestingly, the Gardenia has medicinal applications, with the entirety of the plant being antispasmodic, antiperiodic, cathartic, anthelmintic and external-antiseptic. And now, for all my trivia buffs and trainees for Jeopardy, this plant's Genus name honors the Scottish physician, botanist and zoologist, Alexander



It's rare to find a genus with so many species that are beautiful both in leaf and flower.

Garden, who lived from 1730 to 1791 and settled in Charleston, South Carolina in 1752.

Let's wrap this up with something else the earlier-mentioned Ms. Zachos said, "Nothing beats the fragrance of a fresh gardenia flower. It's a complex scent and a beautiful flower with heavy, silky, creamy petals. This is a lush, sensuous plant when in bloom, and even without flowers the highly glossy foliage is very attractive." (Interestingly, however, ours has little smell.)

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Tax Tips for Newly Widowed Individuals

by Yann Kostic and Tom Zachystal

Our tax situation changes as our life stages change, and losing a spouse is no exception. You may not want to consider taxes at such a difficult time, but when you're ready, here are some tips that will help keep your tax bill to the legal minimum:

Joint returns: First, if your spouse passed away in the current year, you can still file a joint return for the year. This may provide you with the best tax rates and the largest standard deductions, assuming you do not itemize. Regardless of when during the year your spouse died, you may also claim a full exemption for him or her.

Dependent children: In addition, if you have a child living with you and that child qualifies as your dependent, for the first two years after your spouse's death you may file as a so-called qualifying widow or widower - a filing status that provides you with the benefit of joint - return tax rates.

However, you will not receive an exemption for your late spouse. In the third year after your spouse's death, if you have a child living with you and that child qualifies as your dependent, you can claim head-of-household status on your tax return. The advantage of doing so is that tax rates are better than they are for single taxpayers (although they are less favorable than they are for joint returns and qualifying widow and widower returns.)

Life insurance: Finally, remember that any proceeds you receive from a life insurance policy are tax-free (regardless of who paid the premiums); you should not report those proceeds as income.

You also may get breaks in other areas, such as individual retirement accounts and rental property inherited from a spouse. Your financial advisor can clarify.

It goes without saying that no suggestions can ever begin to compensate for the loss of your spouse, but they may make your life easier during this trying time.

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

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



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Isla Aguada

by Dan and Lisa Goy, exclusive to Manzanillo Sun



Hwy 180 to Isla Aguada

January 19 and 20, 2016 (Day 13 - 14) Isla Aguada, Campeche

We headed out early, led by Rafael and Eileen. Our 6:37 am departure was our attempt to avoid Villahermosa road construction in rush hour traffic. This strategy worked well as we whistled through town on our way to Hwy 180 and Isla Aguada. On the road, we first encountered Frontera, Tabasco, then crossed the border to the much larger Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche. The GPS took the caravan through an urban route in Ciudad del Carmen that gave us real insight into local Mexican life, always interesting. The two bridges en route were very impressive, first **Puente Zacatal** southbound into Ciudad del Carmen, then **Puente Unidad** before we arrived in Isla Aguada. The Freedom Shores Resort and RV Park was a short distance from the Hwy 180 and easy to find. We were set up by noon.

Two Class A motorhomes from Quebec were in the campground when we arrived. We all had spaces on the lagoon. We met with the owner, Thelma, who informed us that the rate was now \$30 USD although everything we had read said \$20 USD. This was a harbinger of things to come. The park advertised full services including Wi-Fi. Although we asked multiple times for an access code, we were never provided one, just lame excuses. Access to Thelma was also an issue. In the 60 hours of so we were there, we saw her 3 times for maybe 30 minutes, otherwise the cleaning staff told us she was out. We

were told we could fill our RV tanks with water but could not actually hook up. To add insult to injury, there was a very annoying alarm next to the park apparently to keep birds off a hydro tower. This started a dusk and went on until about mid-morning each day.

Late on the second day, I sat down with Thelma and attempted to negotiate a better rate for an extra day given our litany of complaints. That did not go well and, after two nights, we departed. Having said all that, we made the best of our stay on the beach, swimming, on the SUP and working on our tans. The Quebecers left for Ciudad Campeche the second day and we went for walk in town, such as it is. Some went to the Lighthouse Museo and all of us headed off to the Zazil-Ha Restaurante for dinner, tasty and priced right. We even tried a 3-wheel taxi, at 8 pesos per person, around town, very practical



Waterfront at Isla Aguada RV Park

...Isla Aguada



and fun...another new experience. I do not think we will be returning to Isla Aguada. The folks were very friendly, however the town really was not much and the campground was expensive.

The full name of **Isla Aguada** is **La Villa de Aguada Island**, located at the western end of the Peninsula del Palmar, in front of the coastline of Ciudad Del Carmen. Originally known by **Chontal Maya**, this small island was called **Isla Value** by the Spaniards. At the time the island was largely uninhabited, used occasionally as a place of shelter for boaters in hurricane season. Following persistent pirate attacks in 1762, the governor, Bernardo Sáenz Montero, sent a detachment of well-armed men in two ships, which took the thieves by surprise, recovered goods and took prisoners. Later, the governor built a small fort



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and a watchtower, and the first permanent residents of Isla Aguada came. In 1824, shortly after independence from Spain, José María Castro was appointed to Isla Aguada as an auxiliary judge. During the Caste War of Yucatan, the population increased dramatically, as many families found sanctuary in Isla Aguada. On October 25, 1923, the President of Mexico established an Ejido for the local population.



Downtown Isla Aguada

Isla Aguada Lighthouse

The old lighthouse is an architectural gem, dating from the times of Porfirio Diaz, circa 1907. On orders of Porfirio Diaz, the lighthouse was designed by French architects and was part of a series of seven lighthouses that were distributed in the states of Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Campeche and Yucatan. The masonry construction building is of architectural French neoclassical style and known as Punta del Tigre (named after local Ocelots and Jaguars).

The bronze dome on the lighthouse was manufactured in the 'City of Light', by the Barbieri Bernard and Torenne Company, in Paris, France, transported by boat from the old continent to Mexico. Unfortunately, the bronze structure disappeared in 1978, as did the last lighthouse keeper Eleazar Fuentes Sergio Arce. The restoration of the lighthouse by the Government of the State of Campeche and by the Port Authority in 2010 ex-

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...Isla Aguada

ceeded over nine million pesos. The old lighthouse of Aguada Island has now become a Community Cultural Center, where the first-floor rooms are now the Community Museum. Here, the first room hosts exhibitions and the second-floor is dedicated to the exhibition of rescued wrecks sponsored by the Underwater Archaeology Program, in collaboration with the National Institute of Anthropology and History.



Entrance gate, Freedom Shores, Isla Aguada

Laguna de Términos was discovered during Juan de Grijalva's expedition in 1518 and is the largest, and one of the biologically richest tidal lagoons located entirely on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Exchanging water with several rivers and lagoons, the Laguna is part of the most important hydrographic river basin in Mexico. It is important commercially, as well as ecologically, by serving as a refuge for an extensive number of flora and fauna; its mangroves provide an important role as a refuge for migratory birds.

Términos Lagoon is made up of a series of rich, sediment-laden lagoons and tidal estuaries connected by two channels to the Bay of Campeche in the southern part of Gulf of Mexico, in Carmen Municipality in the southwestern part of the Mexican state of Campeche. Its shores are swampy and support mangroves. It is fed by several freshwater rivers, including the Mezcapala, Grijalva and Usumacinta Rivers, and includes several lagoons such as Pom, Atasta, Puerto Rico, Este and Panlau. It is 72 km (45 mi) long, 24 km (15 mi) wide, and covers an area of 1,550 km² (600 sq mi). Every nine days, approximately 50% of the lagoon's water volume is renewed, primarily through the effect of ocean tides. On the surrounding barrier islands, beach ridges and mangrove coastline, there are several Late Postclassic Maya sites. The city of Ciudad del Carmen is located on Isla del Carmen, between the lagoon and the Bay of Campeche.

Twenty-nine percent of the lagoon is covered with seagrass. The lagoon was designated as a federally protected area for flora and fauna in 1994 by the Mexican government because of



Happy hour at Freedom Shores, Isla Aguada

the importance of the biological ecosystems provided by its estuaries. There have been 1,468 identified fauna species found within the protected area of Laguna de Términos; 30 species are endemic to Mexico and 89 are threatened; 132 species are considered to be commercially important. There are 279 bird, 74 insect (considered an incomplete listing) and 34 mammal species identified and at least 367 species of fish. Of about 134 mammalian species from 27 families present in the area, rare and endangered species include felines (Jaguar, Ocelot, Margay), primates (Geoffroy's Spider Monkey), and marine mammals including Cetaceans and the West Indian Manatee.



Beachfront, Freedom Shores, Isla Aguada

Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are known to visit the lagoon regularly, but their safety could be endangered due to several artificial factors. A conservation group called Instituto Via Delphi, which is specially designed for protection of local dolphins along Mexican gulf regions, were founded to focus understanding of biology of these dolphins and to strengthen their protection. The biggest influence on the area, and a possible threat, are the operations of state-owned oil company, Pemex, operating within the protected area. The drilling of oil wells and the construction of pipelines can destroy habitat. Additionally, oil spills are a continual threat. Other possible threats

...Isla Aguada



Fishing is a staple for the locals

include habitat change through population growth in the surrounding area. Laguna de Términos Flora and Fauna Protection Area as a whole is considered to be critically threatened. Local populations of crocodiles and sea turtles in the areas are in serious danger due to their value for commercial industries.

The Zacatal Bridge is located southwest of Ciudad del Carmen, in the state of Campeche in Mexico. It connects the Atasta peninsula and the Isla del Carmen, was the longest bridge in the state and, at the time of opening, the longest in Mexico with a length of 3,861 m and a width of 9.00 m. It is a two-lane road bridge for the Federal Highway 180. It is one of the busiest in the country since it is the gateway to the Yucatán Peninsula. The superstructure is composed entirely of prefabricated elements to base being: 121 heads of precast concrete, 496 Type IV girders Aastha amended and 8 box girders as well as 124 post-tensioned concrete slabs. It was completed in October 1994.

The **La Unidad Bridge** connects the village of Isla Aguada with Ciudad del Carmen and is vital to the wellbeing and economy of these two towns, as well as to the entire Yucatán peninsula. Nearly 2 miles (3.2 km) long, and built in 1982, the 30-year-old bridge is subjected to an aggressive marine environment and is part of a major highway that runs along the coastline from Texas to the tip of the Yucatán peninsula.

A visual inspection of the structure revealed that cracks had penetrated the concrete matrix and corrosion of the reinforcement was present and active. Because the bridge is essential for the community, and any detour would be lengthy, the Mexican federal and local transportation authorities elected to repair it.



Beach time!

... more pics follow

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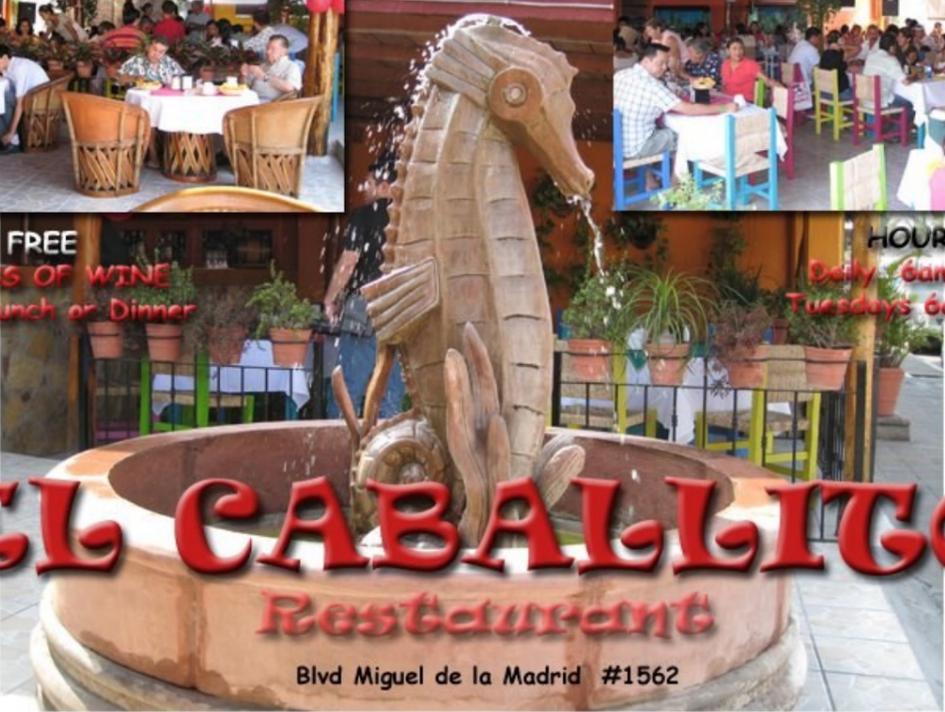
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The oil industry is a large employer



Lulu drying off



On the road, Hwy 180



Leaving Villahermosa



On the bridge to Isla Aguada



Heading to work



Marian is good at the SUP



Puente El Zacatal, constructed in 1994, is one of the longest in Latin America

...Isla Aguada



Agricultural checkpoint on Hwy 180



RV Caravan on a break



Slow down and move over



Shoreline of Isla Aguada



Working on the high tower



View from the bridge at Campeche



Riverfront

...Isla Aguada



Restaurant Zazil Ha



Zazil Ha camarones



They must have fish



That's a lot of wires!



Rafael and Grant show the way



Our spot at Freedom Shores



Hard at work

...Isla Aguada



Rafael on the SUP



Zazil Ha Restaurant



Cheap and handy scooters



Driving through the 'burbs

...Isla Aguada



Historic lighthouse



Setting up for the day



Shrimp dish was good



The square at Isla Aguada



Crabs for sale



Bags and purses, roadside stand

Submitted by Dan and Lisa Goy
Owners of Baja Amigos RV Caravan Tours
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Huevos Rancheros

Ingredients

For the Huevos Rancheros:

- ✓ 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ✓ 1 onion, chopped
- ✓ 1 tsp. cumin
- ✓ 1 tsp. chili powder
- ✓ Kosher salt
- ✓ 1 c. black beans, drained and rinsed
- ✓ 1 c. salsa
- ✓ 1 c. Shredded Monterey Jack
- ✓ 4 large eggs

For serving:

- ✓ 4 corn tostadas
- ✓ 1 avocado, sliced
- ✓ 1 tbsp. freshly chopped cilantro
- ✓ hot sauce
- ✓ sour cream

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. In a large skillet, over medium heat, heat oil.
3. Add onions and cook until soft, 5 minutes.
4. Season with cumin, chili powder, and salt.
5. Add black beans and salsa to skillet and stir to combine.
6. Sprinkle all over with cheese, then create four wells with a spoon and crack in eggs. Season with salt.
7. Bake until egg whites are set and yolks still runny, 8 to 10 minutes.
8. Plate on top of tostada.
9. Garnish with avocado and cilantro, then drizzle with hot sauce and sour cream.

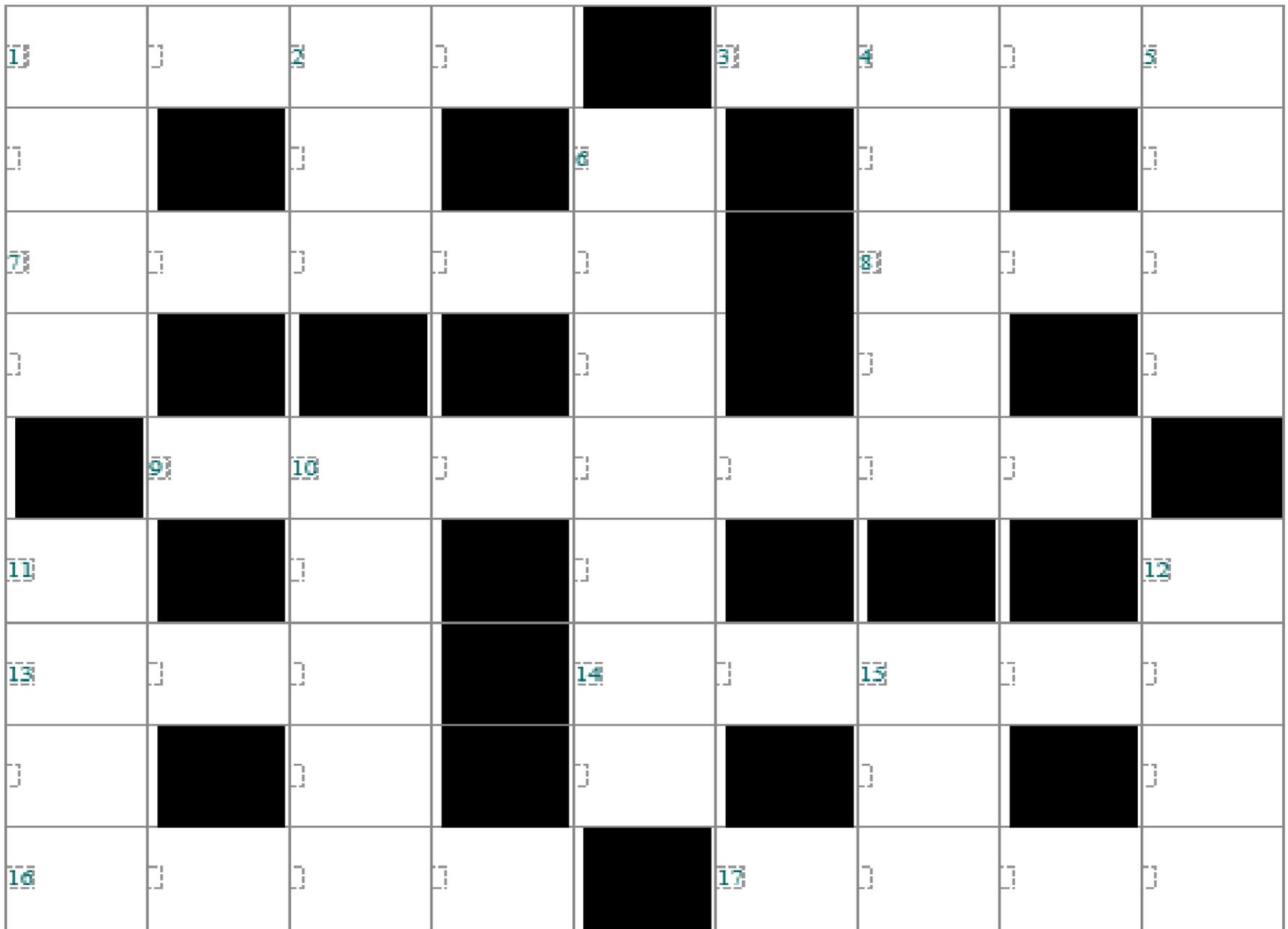
Note: This brunch classic works great in a skillet!

Recipe source: delish.com



Crossword

solution posted in next month's edition



Across

- 1 car
- 3 (he, she) ought to, owes
- 7 (he, she) used to have, possess, (I) used to have, possess
- 8 thousand
- 9 even, including
- 13 without
- 14 edge, border
- 16 wings
- 17 mouth

Down

- 1 tall, high
- 2 so, as
- 4 furthermore (2,3)
- 5 she
- 6 (he, she) was finding, (I) was finding
- 10 never, ever
- 11 island
- 12 silk
- 15 river

Last month's crossword solution:



lexisrex.com

Toltec Empire

from the Path to Citizenship series

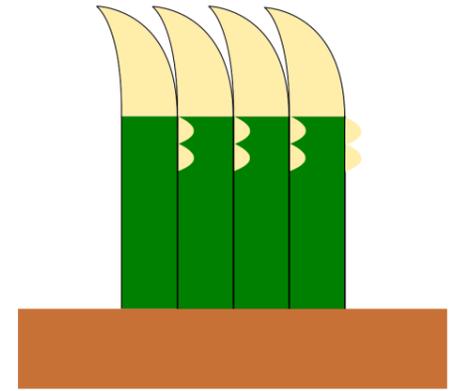
According to Mesoamerican historiography, the Toltec Empire, Toltec Kingdom or Altepetl Tollan was a political entity in Mexico. It existed through the classic and post-classic periods of Mesoamerican chronology, but gained most of its power in the post-classic. During this time, its sphere of influence reached as far away as the Yucatan Peninsula.

The capital city of this empire was Tollan-Xicotitlan, while other important cities included Tulancingo, and Huapalcalco, although some more distant cities like Chupícuaro, Chichén Itzá, and Coba seem to have been under Toltec control or influence at some point.

Oral traditions about the origin of Toltecs were collected by historians like Mariano de Veytia and Carlos María de Bustamante in the early 19th century. According to said accounts, there was a city named Tlachicatzin, in a country ruled by the city of Huehuetlapallan, whose inhabitants called the people of Tlachicatzin "Toltecah", for their fame as dexterous artisans.

In 583, led by two notables named Chalcatzin and Tlaca-mihtzin, the Toltecah rebelled against their overlords in Huehuetlapallan and, after thirteen years of resistance, they ended up fleeing Tlachicatzin. Some of the Toltecah later

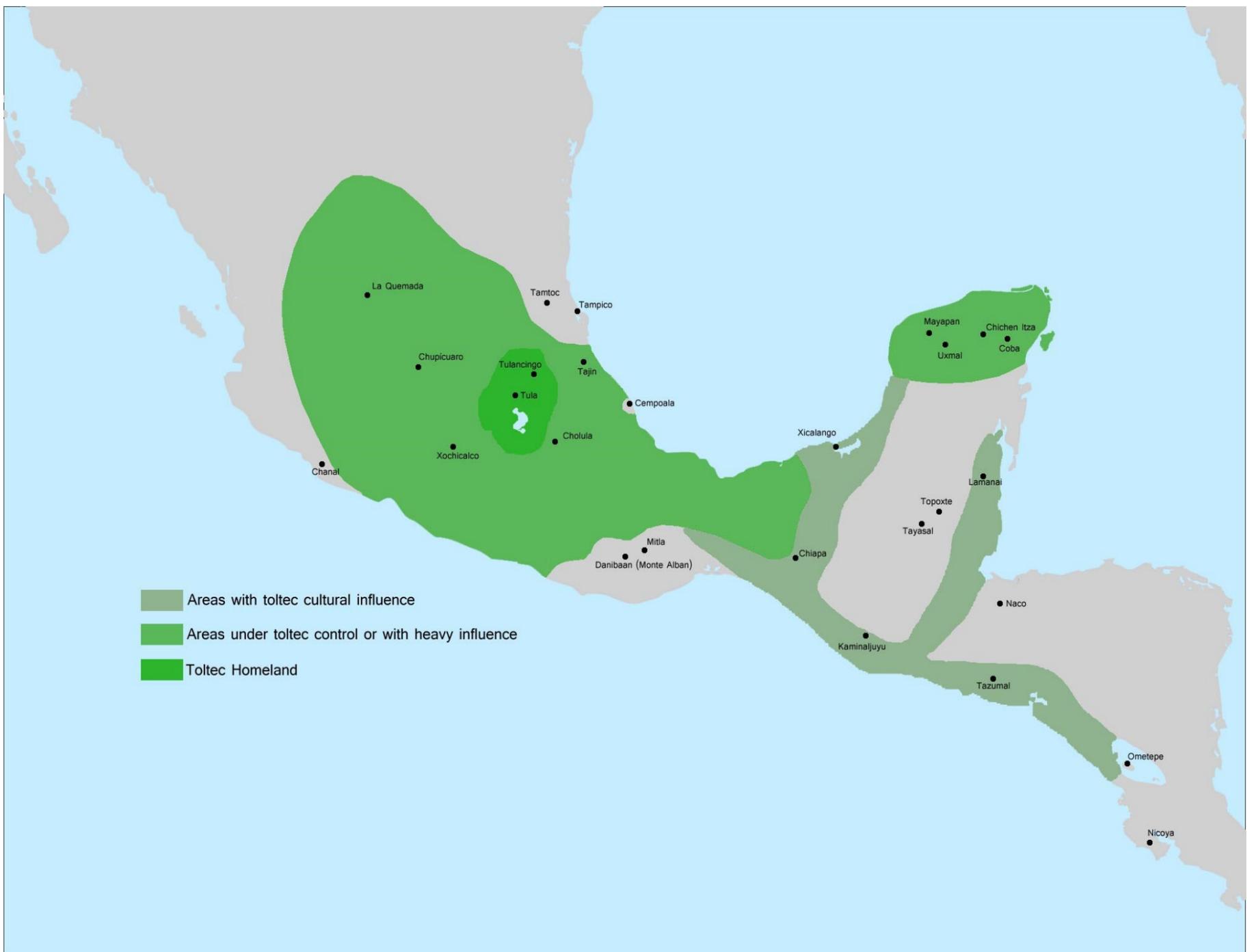
Toltec emblem



founded a new settlement called Tlapallanconco in 604, but others continued their migration.

These narrations about the origin of the Toltecs have been disputed by archaeologists and historians like Manuel Gamio, Enrique Florescano and Laurette Séjourné; who had identified the Toltec city of Tollan with Teotihuacan, although this hypothesis has been criticized by many scholars, most notably historian Miguel León Portilla.

Source: Wikipedia.com Image source: Wikimedia Commons
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