



Mariposa Monarca
Michoacán
photo by John Chalmers



On the Road
Community
History and Mythology
RV Travel
Life and Times
Nature's Wonders
So Much to See
Recipe
Learn Spanish
Path to Citizenship

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- 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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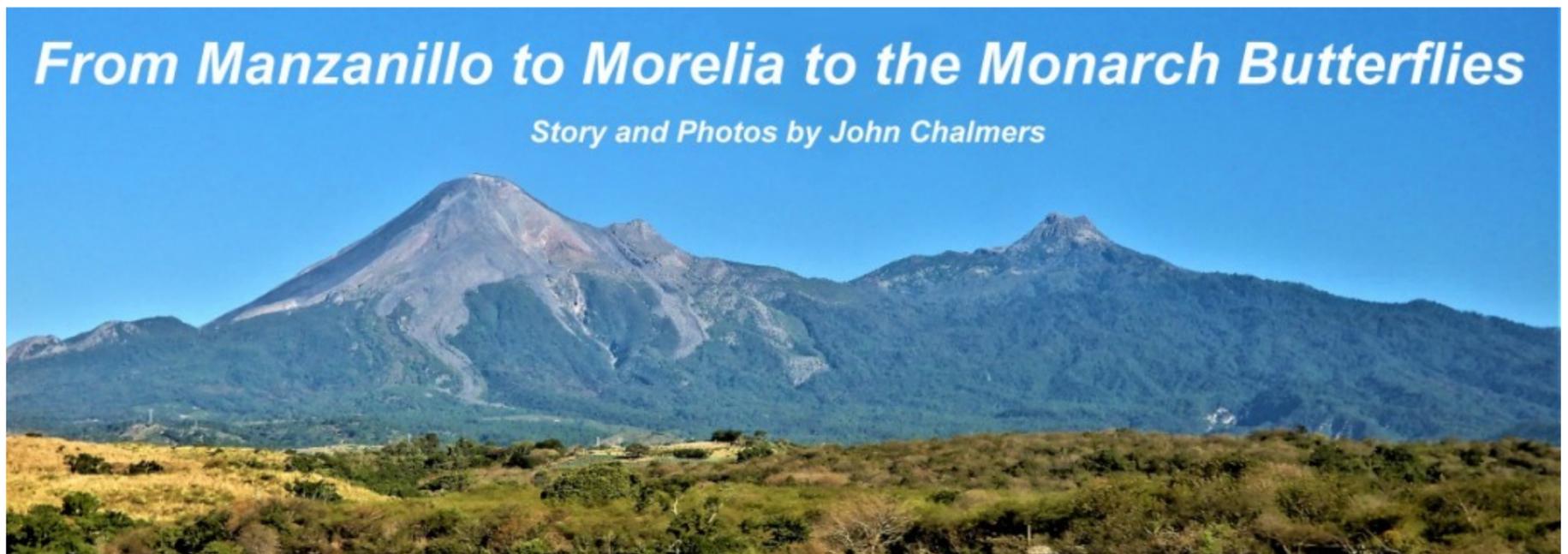
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From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies

story and photos by John Chalmers



On a tour to see the city of Morelia and Monarch butterflies, the twin volcanoes near Colima are a great sight, visible for several miles of travel.

Among the many wonders of Mexico are the Monarch butterflies which, like Canadian and American snowbirds, spend the winter in México. But the Monarchs don't fly to the resort towns and cities or locate themselves close to a beautiful golden beach to enjoy the ocean.

Instead, they fly 3,000 miles each year from southeast Canada and the northeast United States to reproduce at their home, over 9,000 feet above sea level in the Mexican state of Michoacán and adjacent areas, in the forests of the Sierra Madre mountains.

In February, a five-day/four-night tour took our group to see the butterflies at their winter quarters. It was a spectacle that

lived up to expectations, but the Monarchs were only part of the tour. In travelling through several hundred kilometers of great scenery, the itinerary included seeing colonial towns and cities, great architecture, monuments, an ancient archeological site and markets where it is impossible to resist buying the colorful products of Mexican art and culture.

However, it is the butterflies that are the feature attraction and the incentive to take the trip! Our journey from the Manzanillo area was in a luxury coach equipped with tv and a baño.

About an hour after leaving the coast, we drove past the twin volcanoes near the city of Colima, then continued on to Morelia for our first night on the road.



Our accommodation in Morelia was the Hotel Misión Catedral, located in the Centro Histórico, across the street from the park and the cathedral.



We had only to step out of the hotel to start enjoying the local color on this pedestrian walkway alongside the building.

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies

As well as a walking tour led by our guide, Ofelia, we had time on our own to browse the historic downtown area before meeting up for a fine dinner.

Prior to that, I wandered through the park right across the street from the hotel and had to marvel at the Catedral de Morelia, a massive cathedral with twin towers in a structure that took 84 years to build, from 1660-1744. The size and construction of the cathedral is similar to many I have seen in Europe.

The next morning, we eagerly boarded the bus for the four-hour drive in the very capable hands of our driver, Omar, to see the butterflies at the El Rosario Butterfly Sanctuary, the most popular of the sanctuaries in the state of Michoacán, two of which are open to the public.

Comfort stops along the way provided opportunity to get out of the bus, stretch our legs and buy a drink or snack at the convenience stores. From 6,400 feet above sea level at Morelia, a city of just under 700,000, the capital and largest city of Michoacán, we continued the climb through mountain scenery to our destination some 3,000 feet higher.

The beauty of the butterflies and the sight of millions of them are not the only amazing things that impress the visitor. I was amazed to learn that three generations of the Monarchs with a life span of about four weeks, and reproducing en route, are needed to fly from Mexico back to their northern habitats. That means that the Monarchs are born with the instinctive knowledge of the route, where and when to fly.



Our guide, Ofelia, with her back to the camera, led an afternoon walking tour in the heart of the city after our arrival in Morelia.

But then, on the return trip back to Mexico, arriving about the end of October, the long route is flown by only one generation of butterflies, with a lifespan about four times as long until it reproduces!

The mystery of how the butterflies know how to migrate has yet to be solved. My own unproven theory is that they hold dual Canadian-American citizenship and are born with Mexican passports. Or maybe they carry tiny maps! Studies have shown that when some butterflies are captured in the north and relocated away from the normal route, they still find their way to home in Mexico. Could they possibly be flying with miniature GPS units?

Upon arrival at the El Rosario Sanctuary, visitors have the option of either hiking for about an hour up the trail to see the butterflies or they can take a horse for 100 pesos on a 20-minute ride led or followed by its owner. An option is to hike one way and ride another. I hadn't been on a horse for more years than I can remember and get in lots of hiking around Manzanillo, so I rode both ways. Obviously, the horsemen on foot get plenty of hiking exercise in making multiple trips each day. They earn their tips!

The Monarchs have to be seen to be believed! They were everywhere – in the air, on the flowers, on the ground and clustered by the thousands in the fir trees. We had a perfect sunny day for this wonderful experience and great opportunities for photography. As the day warms up, the butterflies become active and we were fortunate in seeing them airborne all around us.



On a corner of the park, across the street from the hotel, is this clever sign with letters spelling AMOR MORELIA, popular for folks having their picture taken with it.

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies



Across the street, and only a block away from the hotel, is the magnificent and historic pink stone Catedral de Morelia, an impressive sight from any angle. The cathedral faces north. Its twin bell towers are 70 meters high. It is the seat of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Morelia and is regarded by some as the most beautiful cathedral in México.



A look at the impressive interior of the cathedral, dating back nearly 400 years when Morelia was first known as Valladolid, then renamed Morelia in honor of revolutionary leader, José María Morelos, after the Mexican War of Independence that ended in 1821. He was born in the city on September 30, 1765, and his face is on the \$50 peso Mexican bill.

Visitors are told to be quiet and not do anything to disturb those amazing insects. Mostly, we just watched in awe at something we had never seen before.

After spending time to enjoy the Monarchs, we returned by foot or horseback to the plaza at the sanctuary entrance where we had time to sit and enjoy a meal prepared for us at one of the little restaurants there. Shops in the plaza, as well as vendors on foot, offered diversion in selling butterfly-themed products. I knew about that in advance and brought a backpack so I would be sure to have something to carry anything I bought!

On the walk back to our bus, we passed several shops offering merchandise that ranged from hand-made items to manufactured products to take home as mementoes. My purchases included shawls of a butterfly theme for gifts, hand-painted coffee mugs and, of course, I had to have a spectacular Monarch butterfly T-shirt. Prices were all very reasonable and there is no need or reason to haggle over the cost. I was happy to pay the asking price.

During the tour, Ofelia kept us well informed and, as we drove from Morelia to see the butterflies, an excellent video was shown to help prepare us for the visit. Several companies offer tours to see the butterflies. If you plan on making your own trip by bus or car, you can brief yourself and help prepare by visiting a number of good sites on the internet. Recommendations for travel and accommodation, as well as tips to help you enjoy the experience, are easy to find.

In the Manzanillo area, two companies that offer very similar tours and itineraries are [Mex-Eco Tours](#), with which I took the tour, and [Flip Flop Nomad Tours](#), both with offices located in Melaque. My experience with operators of both has been totally satisfactory. Each company offers several tours to help you enjoy this fascinating country.

Our rewarding day of sight-seeing concluded with a return drive to Morelia, another evening to dine out, to walk the streets and to enjoy the sights. The next day, we would continue our tour of this beautiful, charming and amazing country. But that's another story! Meanwhile, you can see my 90-second video on YouTube about the butterflies when you [click here](#).

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... more pics follow

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies



The many small candy shops like this in the Mercado de Dulces y Artesanías are filled with temptations to satisfy anyone's sweet tooth.



As the name of the market implies, it houses artisan works as well as candy, as evidenced by this colorful area of clothing in traditional Mexican style.



Our walking tour included a stop at the library of the university and a chance to see the dramatic murals like this that portray aspects of Mexican history.



As a kid, the first biography I ever read was about Benito Juárez. I had this opportunity for a selfie with a statue of him. His face is on México's \$20 peso and \$500 peso bills.



The restaurant and bar at the top floor of our hotel provided a great location to view the cathedral and the park across the street and to see the mountains in the distance.

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies



Some places visited on the afternoon walking tour, like the Governor's Palace seen here, are worth seeing again at night, providing a chance for a different photo.



Illuminated at night, the Catedral de Morelia is as impressive as it is in daylight, dramatically lit against the black sky.



Many narrow streets in the older areas of Morelia are served by mini-buses like this that can go places which large buses cannot manage.



Rest stops on the tour afforded the chance to dismount from our coach, take a refreshment break and chat with fellow travelers.



Our excitement built as we arrived at the entrance to the Mariposa Monarca Santuario El Rosario, with the visit to the butterflies as the highlight of the day.



The entrance to begin the hike or a horse ride up the trail to the location of the butterflies is as colorful as the butterflies themselves.

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies



A horseback ride from the trail entrance leads farther up the mountain to the butterflies and, as we get closer to the end, we begin to see them.



At the end of the trail, a short walk takes visitors to be surrounded by butterflies. A different trail up is used by hikers, but has the same destination.



This is what we came to see – more butterflies than we could imagine, shown here in the branches of a fir tree.



The spectacular Monarch butterflies are here after flying some 3,000 miles from their starting points in Canada and the United States.



Constantly on the move while feeding, the Monarch butterflies are about four inches across and weigh only about one gram.

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies



There is no mistaking Monarchs with their distinctive orange and black coloring in panels like a stained glass work of art, punctuated with the white dots.



Although the Monarch butterfly is known for its two pairs of beautiful orange and black wings, the underside of the wings is much less colorful. The winter home of the Monarchs was discovered less than 50 years ago!



While the tourists visit the butterflies, the horses that brought them wait patiently for anyone who wants a ride back to the starting point.



My pinto horse, Leticia, and its owner, Carmelo, were at my service in providing a fine ride up and back down the butterfly trail.



Leticia was patient in posing with me to have our picture taken at the end of a great experience in seeing the butterflies, and the ride added a special touch to the tour.

...From Manzanillo to Morelia and the Monarch Butterflies



For many of us, the visit to the butterflies was followed by a break for lunch, and this woman at her little restaurant prepared a meal especially for me.

Traditional Mexican food washed down with a cold cerveza was another fine aspect of the tour. Note the blue corn tortillas, which are typical of the area.



After lunch, the walk back to the bus provided a chance to stop at shops offering colorful Mexican goods. The "Monarca" T-shirts were available in many colors.

My final purchase of the day, at a very reasonable cost, was this beautiful table runner for our condo at Vida del Mar, hand-made by the woman who sold it to me.



Stranded at Sea

by Suzanne A. Marshall

It isn't something we would normally think about, as we take the world for granted in so many ways. But on May 1, 2020, we received a call that morning from a local friend saying make sure you're on your terrace watching Manzanillo Bay at noon. And be prepared to record video. And so, we did!

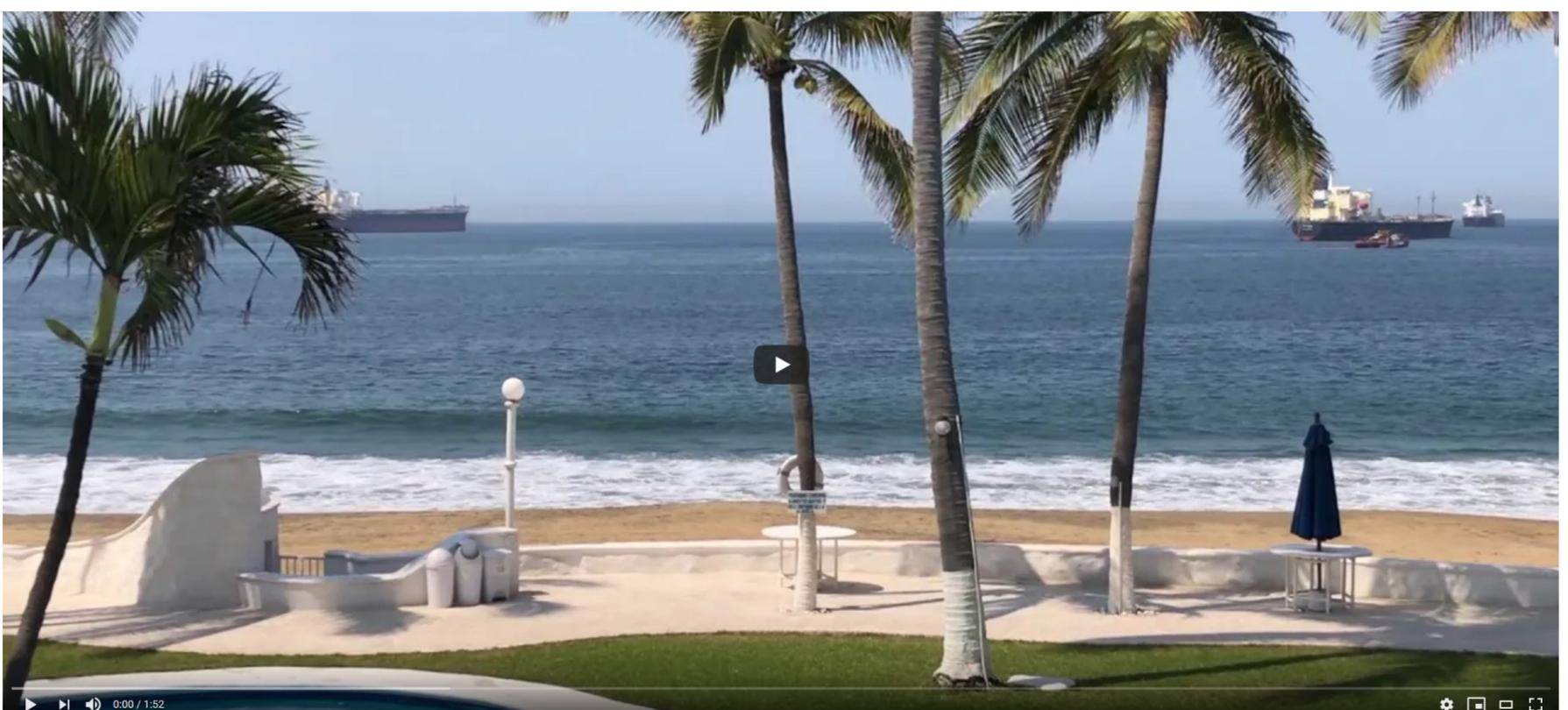
At exactly 12 noon, every ship in the bay began blowing their ship horns as we listened in wonder. This was an organized tribute for seafarers aboard ships around the world that are unable to return or disembark at ports due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Have you ever spent any time thinking about those huge vessels coming and going from port, loaded with immense piles of containers, bringing traded goods back and forth, from around the world? Even car carriers are a common site here in Manzanillo.

We certainly knew about the cruise ship tragedies around the world and so many cases of the disease that left many of them stranded at sea like floating incubators. Well, guess what? I have since learned that there are 1,647,500 seafarers working around the world to bring us about 90 percent of the world's trade. 90 percent!

As I have since come to learn, the ship horn demonstration was heard at ports all around the world. Synchronized to make the world aware that (as I am told) there are 150,000 sailors aboard these ships that are due for crew changes on May 15, 2020. It does not appear that that is going to happen. I have no information as to the presence of COVID-19 aboard these vessels. One can only ponder and make assumptions that there must be some, given their exposure in every port of call.

So, let's all salute these people sailing out there, helping get our needs met and pray that they will be able to come home to their family and loved ones soon.



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Rabbit and His Cap of Antlers

story by Kirby Vickery

[Many children's stories from the Aztecs are copied from the Toltec, Mayan, and other older civilizations within Mesoamerica. This is one of them, although somewhat cut down because of space constraints.]

Once when the rabbit, also known as 'The Mayor,' still had his antlers, he met a deer. At this time, in one of the Creation Worlds, they were of the same size and the rabbit didn't have his noteworthy ears—just his rack of antlers.

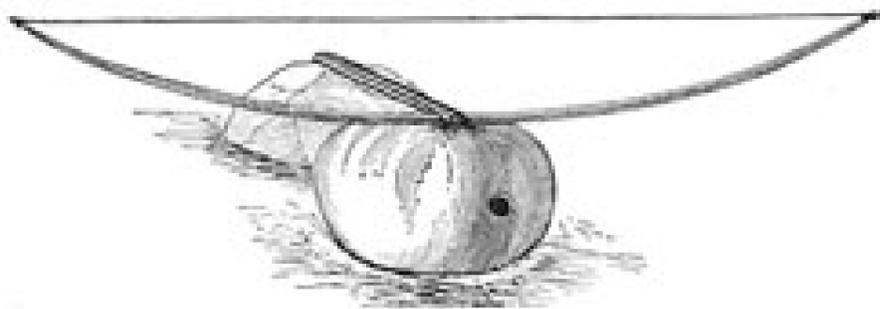
Wanting to show off and do a little bragging, the rabbit said to the deer: "Brother, look at the cap [antlers] our father gave me."

"Oh! Let me see. Wow! Can you lend it to me?" said the deer. "You're so small and it doesn't look right. I'm bigger and they would probably fit on my head."

The rabbit handed his cap to the deer and the deer put it on. "Look brother, how nice it looks. I'm going to dance so you can see. Then I'm going for a walk and afterwards I'll return and I'll give you your cap back," said the deer. The deer went off and didn't come back with the rabbit's cap.

The rabbit waited and waited while crying because he didn't have his cap any more. After a long while, he decided to tell his king, which he did, by saying, "father! My brother went off with the cap you gave me. My brother, the deer, told me he was just going to try it on and I gave him the cap you had given me, father. 'Why did our father give it to you?' the deer asked me. 'Our father should have given it to me, because I'm big. Your cap fits me well.' I thought he was my brother. So I gave it to him, and he just left. He didn't come back and I got tired of waiting for him so I've come to ask you, father, to give me another cap in place of the one my brother took, and also make me taller because my uncle, deer, said I was too little. 'That cap doesn't fit you,' he told me. That's why I want to grow as big as my uncle deer."

"All right, I'll make you taller, my son. I'll make your body grow. If you do what I say," said the king to the rabbit. "Now I'm telling you that if you want to be as big as your brother, the deer, I'm going to grant your wish. Now, go and bring me fifteen loads of skins. If you bring them to me, I'll make your body grow and I'll give you your cap back."



The Tawtiol

"All right," said the rabbit, and went off to the fields, to the mountains and to the sea. The rabbit bought himself a guitar [a Tawtiol, Chapareke or Quinojongo. Possibly. ed.] When he came to a plain, he sat down to rest. He had been playing music with his guitar for a while when an old snake came up to him.

"What are you doing, brother?" the snake asked brother rabbit. "I've come to play music for you, uncle," said the rabbit to the snake.

"May I dance a little?" the snake asked uncle rabbit.

The rabbit answered: "Of course you may dance. That's why I came to play a song for you. But, I would just like to ask you, uncle, where is your weak spot? Because my stick might reach your weak spot. Show it to me, so I can see where it is."

"Here's my weak spot, right at the end of my tail," said the snake.

"All right, brother, now that I've noticed where your weak spot is, you can dance without worrying. "Dance! Go ahead and dance. Enjoy your dance," said the rabbit to the snake, "because that's why I came to play near your house. Dance, enjoy, and don't be afraid. Here, come close to me."

"Bring your tail near," said the rabbit to the snake. The snake raised his tail near the rabbit. The rabbit saw that the snake was near him and he killed the snake. Then he skinned him and went off with his skin.

The rabbit came to a mountain and began to play his guitar once more. Shortly after he had come to the mountain, a big old lion approached uncle rabbit. He was playing his music when the lion arrived. "Hey, uncle, why have you come here to play?" the lion asked the rabbit.

...Rabbit and His Cap of Antlers



The Chapareke

"I've just have come to play, brother," the rabbit said. "Do you like music? "Do you like to dance?" the rabbit asked the lion.

"Yes, I like to," the lion answered. "If you'll play a song for me, I'll want to dance," said the lion.

"I'm going to play some music for you, because the reason I came to your house was to play music. Dance, enjoy your dance. Don't be afraid, good, dance, only tell me where your weak spot is. I'd just like to ask you where your weak spot is. Dance, enjoy your dance," said the rabbit to the lion.

"Here's my weak spot, right here, on the back of my neck."

"All right brother," said the rabbit. "Dance uncle, dance, dance. Don't be afraid, come closer, come here beside me. I know where your weak spot is, so I won't hit you there. I know where it is. Try to dance a little bent over."

The lion became careless while he was dancing, and the rabbit hit him on the head. The lion died, the rabbit skinned him and took away two more skins, two large skins.

The rabbit took his skins to a place on the beach, and played there once more. An alligator heard the rabbit playing a song and came up to him: "Is that you playing, uncle rabbit?" the alligator asked.

"Yes, I'm the one who is playing for you. I thought maybe uncle would like a song. So I came to play a song for you."

"Oh, is it true what you say? I like songs and I would like you to play one for me," said the alligator.

"All right, I'll play you a song, but you have to dance."

"Yes, I'll dance, for I really like to," the alligator told uncle rabbit.

"Show me where your weak spot is because, if my stick hits you, you could die," said uncle rabbit to the alligator.

"All right, brother, my weak spot is right at the end of my tail."

"All right, dance with all your might and stretch out your tail."

While he was dancing, the alligator became careless and the rabbit hit his weak spot. The alligator died and the rabbit skinned him.

The rabbit left the beach and came near a farm where there was sugar cane, bananas, papaya, and tzapotl. [Nahuatl for sapotes.] At this farm, there was a house with monkeys and coatis, as well as two other households. He came to one of the houses bringing bananas.

"Ah," the monkeys said to him "do you have bananas, uncle?"

"Here, have some." said the rabbit.

Then the monkey ate the bananas. Then the rabbit said: "Here you're just starving, but I have a farm nearby where there are a lot of good things to eat. There are bananas, there is sugar cane, there is papaya, there are sapotes," said the rabbit.

"All right, uncle, give us some," said the monkeys.

"There's a lot of food, and it's just going to waste, because there's no one to eat it. Tomorrow we'll all go to my farm, to include your families and, if there are some others, they can come with us too. "

...Rabbit and His Cap of Antlers

"Oh, if you please, there's another family of our friends that are hungry; they have no food," said the monkeys.

"Tomorrow you're all going to go with me," the rabbit said.

The next day, all the monkeys and all the coatis set off for the farm. "Eat, brothers, enjoy the food," said the rabbit to all of them.

"All right," they said and they were happy.

"So let's go. Each one of you can take something along," the rabbit said to them.

"All right, uncle," they said and set off. They came to a plain.

"We're going to rest," the rabbit said to them. While they rested, the monkeys were playing with the coatis and didn't know that the rabbit was plotting against their lives.

The rabbit said to them: "Bring two nets, brothers."

"What are you saying uncle, are we going to play?"

"I want you to make me two nets," the rabbit said to them.

"Why?" they asked.

"I'm going to weigh you, so we can see who weighs the most," said the rabbit.

"All right," they said, and got into the nets. "All you monkeys, get in there, and all you coatis get in over there. Push your snouts out through the net so you'll be able to breathe and won't suffocate."

"All right," the fools said.

The rabbit closed up the nets and went to look for a club, saying: "When I come back you'll get out of the nets." But, when the rabbit came back with the club he was ferocious, and struck them on their snouts:

"Now, uncles, you're going to pay for the bananas you ate." He killed the animals in the two nets and he skinned them all. He used an armadillo as a pack animal, the armadillo carrying the skins for him. He had collected them as the king had ordered, so that he would increase his height and give him back his cap. The king didn't believe the rabbit was going to succeed, and so he didn't realize he was bringing all those skins. When he came before the king with the skins, the rabbit said: "see, father, I have brought the skins."

The king was astonished. "Did you really go and get them?" he asked. "I don't believe you."

"Yes father, they're here."

"Let's see them," the king said.

"Here they are, father." He took them out of his net one at a time to show the king.

"Oh," said the king, getting angry, "What do you want in exchange for these skins?"

"I want you to make me taller and give me my cap back."

"Oh," said the king, "what a shameless rabbit you are. In spite of everything, you want to be big. You actually killed your own brothers. You're so small. If you were larger, if I made you bigger, you'd kill all your brothers.

"Well, now, you're going to have to forgive me, my son, but this is the punishment I've decreed: Bring me your ears so I can stretch them. You shameless thing, you already killed your brothers who are bigger than you. Now never come back here again. You're going once and for all, I'm just going to make your ears grow."

[I have doubts to the age and authenticity of this story because of some modern references I have edited. But I hope you enjoyed it anyway. - Kirby]

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Cataviña

by Dan and Lisa Goy

Cataviña is a small town on Highway 1, in the middle of the peninsula, on a high desert plateau, at 1800 ft., and is a popular stop for our tours and for many other Baja travelers. It is located in the state of Baja California, 118 km (74 mi) south of El Rosario, and 106 km (66 mi) north of the junction to Bahía de los Ángeles. The local economy is dependent on tourism, ranching (**Rancho Santa Inés or Ynez**), on the outskirts of the town, is an ejido held in common by the residents, and a couple of private vendors selling gasoline from 55-gallon barrels.

Cataviña has a first-rate hotel (**Hotel Mision Cataviña**), first developed as a chain of La Pinta Hotels across Baja following the completion of highway 1 in 1973. This was part of an initiative of the National Fund for the Promotion of Tourism (FONATUR) by the Mexican government. Next to the hotel is an old government RV park, also developed in 1973, long since operational (power, water, amenities), only the dump stations work. Nearby are cave paintings, thousands of acres of boulders as far as the eye can see, mixed with stunning desert vegetation such as boojums (cirios) and cardon cactus, all of which makes the area a popular place for lovers of ecotourism.

For years, the Cataviña Pemex gas station was the only place to fuel up between El Rosario (north) and Guerrero Negro (south), a significant gas gap. Often when the fuel tanks were empty, long lines formed awaiting fuel. That gas station closed years ago but you can still get gas from a couple of private vendors and their 55-gallon barrels, but it can be pricy. In the last couple of years, a Dos Pinos Mercado, including fuel pumps, has reoccupied the former gas station. Our February 2020 tour noted the market was open but the pumps were not yet operational. Our tours have dry camped at Rancho Santa Inés and there is also an option to day camp at **Parque Natural Deseierto Central Trailer Park** which is behind the hotel.

Rancho Santa Inés

A stay at Santa Inés comes with the opportunity to eat at the Cantina and meet Oscar and his family that now operate this ranch. If you are RVing, you will likely also meet Ralph, a fixture at Santa Inés, who arrives twice a day on his Honda 3-wheeler ATV. Ralph and his wife winter here in a house built into the mountain behind the ranch. Ralph has resided here for decades, first arriving by plane from New Mexico on the 3900' X 100' runway sitting just above the ranch that is still in use today. Ralph has helped many RVers and is always eager to get



Rancho Santa Ynez

his tools out. He is now in his mid-eighties and drives down each season. If you get a chance, make sure you say hello. He has stories that go back years and will be missed when that day comes. Star gazing is nothing less than spectacular in clear night skies and, at 1800', you can often wake up to frost and ice.



Rancho Santa Ynez RV parking

Señora Josefina Zuñiga Ramos

While the original owner of the land was a Señor González, it was Señora Josefina Zuñiga Ramos who developed the rancho. She was born in 1904 to an upper-class family in Sonora, Mexico that had fled to Arizona and Calexico, California during the revolution. At age 17, Josefina moved to San Diego where she went to work in a department store. Speaking good English by this time, she also became the US buyer for the Mexican Army stationed in the northern part of Baja California.

...Cataviña

According to an article in the Mexico West Newsletter by Marvin Patchen (September 1989), Josefina was shown home movies of Rancho Santa Inés in 1956 and bought it sight unseen. She also acquired the adjoining land creating a rancho of 854 acres. (Editorial note: Marvin and Aletha Patchen have been long-time Baja explorers who authored *Baja Adventures by Land, Sea and Air* (1981), and *Baja Outpost* (2003) which describes their hand-hewn cabin built on the other side of the Santa Inés runway.)

Josefina also helped develop Punta Final, a small, mostly gringo development on the Sea of Cortez. She was a true Baja pioneer and also established a clinic between the rancho and the highway - the only medical help for miles around. Patchen reported that the clinic was built by the famous off-road racers Bill Stroppe and Parnelli Jones in her honor. Josefina died in August, 1989 at the age of 86. Off-roader Brian Chuchua used his helicopter to erect a large cross on the mountain overlooking the rancho, as a tribute to her. Her nephew and other family members still own Rancho Santa Inés, but live in Ramona, California and have others as resident managers. Señor Oscar Valdez Romero and his wife, Matilda de Valdez, have been running Santa Inés for almost 40 years. If you eat at the Cantina, their daughter and granddaughter are often helping out these days.

Cataviña Boulder Fields

Part of Baja's ancient granite core is visible in the boulder field region around Cataviña. Erosion has carried away soils that were deposited in this region 100 million years ago. Subsequently, the exposed granite surface has weathered and decomposed to produce the odd-looking landscape of the boulder fields. In some instances, entire hills of solid granite have been reduced to boulders, which look as though they were placed in a pile. Some nearby mesas and hills are capped with erosion-resistant volcanic material, which protected the under-



Cerro Pedregoso



Cerro Pedregoso north of Cataviña

lying material from erosion. In these areas, the underlying granite is not exposed and the flat tops of the mesas and smooth surfaces of the hills bear witness to volcanic ash deposits that occurred after the formation of the underlying granite. Driving through this region of Baja is truly a magical experience.

Cerro El Pedregoso

Just north of Cataviña, on the west side of the highway, you will see a very large pile of rocks, Cerro Pedregoso (rocky hill), a Baja landmark for drivers. The base of this granite hill has been covered by volcanic and other debris so only the top stands out, like an iceberg, above the volcanic plain. The granite rocks have been weathered and rounded over millions of years similar to the boulder fields in Cataviña. What you are seeing is only about 15% of this granite monolith.

Cave Paintings

The Cave Paintings and pictographs nearby were created by the indigenous people living here several thousand years ago, predating the dominant Amerindian group of the Central Desert of Baja California in the 18th Century, the Cochimí who disappeared at the beginning of the 19th Century. There are several theories trying to explain these primitive art depictions. Some



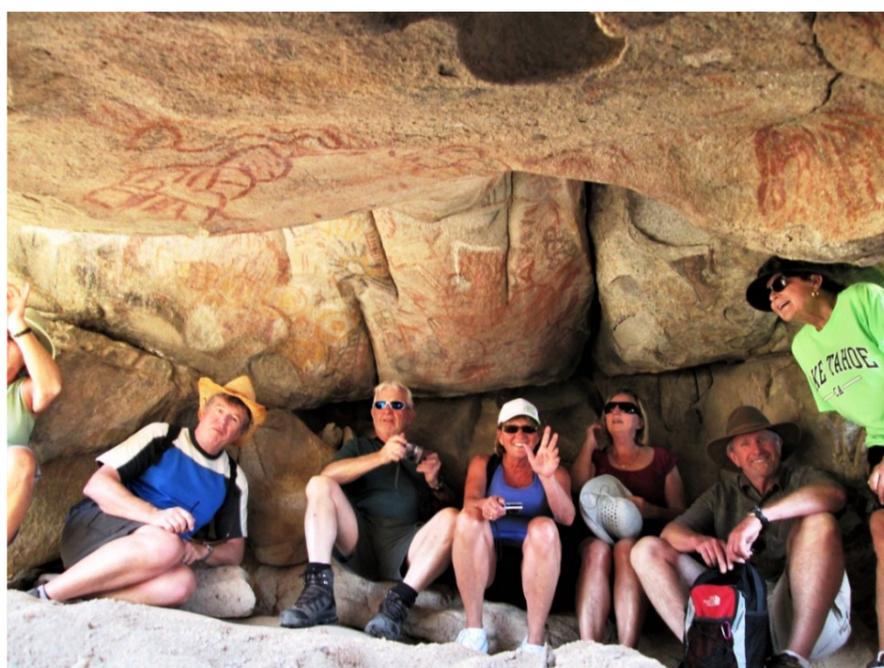
Entrance to cave paintings

...Cataviña



Cardon cactus and Cirio trees everywhere

of the colourful shapes, both geometric and organic in nature, look like human forms. Some appear to symbolize either witchery or perhaps something of religious purpose. Others say the pictographs simply recount important events. The fact is, as with most rock art, the meaning of the Baja paintings remains obscure. Radiocarbon dates have confirmed these petroglyphs are at least 7000 years old. These are always a popular excursion for our groups.



Cataviña cave paintings

Santa María Ruins

The ruins of Santa María, the last Jesuit Mission (1767), are 14 miles in the mountains behind Rancho Santa Inés. Perceptive Josefina also bought 47 acres surrounding the mission site to help protect and preserve the site. Today, a rugged, poorly maintained road goes to the site. If you are interested in making this journey, just ask Ralph.

Cirio or Boojum Trees

Another odd-looking tree, the Boojum (Cirio), is endemic to Mexico and exists only in Baja California and in one isolated colony on mainland Mexico, directly across the Gulf from the rest of the boojums. Cochimines called it Milapa and the Mexican name for the tree, Cirio, comes from this candle-like appearance. The plant's English name was given by Godfrey Sykes of the Desert Botanical Laboratory in Tucson, Arizona and is taken from Lewis Carroll's poem "The Hunting of the Snark".

The plants occupy the rocky hills and plains, growing as high as 50 feet or more, with a base diameter up to 18 inches. The Boojums start as a single stem, looking much like an inverted carrot, and usually split into two or more stems as they mature.

...Cataviña

These split trees often take on strange and twisted shapes, sometimes arching back to the ground, presenting irresistible subjects for the photographer. The trees can live up to 300 years and the gray-white stems leaf out with green, rounded leaves after rain. In late summer, the trees produce a yellow flower cluster at the tip of the stems.

Boojums also are found on the island Angel de la Guarda, which lies in the Sea of Cortez, offshore and north of the Bahía de los Ángeles. A much smaller population of Boojums also grow in the Sierra Bacha, on the mainland, directly across the Sea of Cortez from Isla Angel de la Guarda. For those curious about the plant, but unwilling to travel to Baja, several specimen trees can be found at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, in Tucson, Arizona, as well as at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum east of Phoenix.

Now fully protected by the Mexican government, boojums are only available in the US if they've been nursery-grown. Although their selling price can be nearly \$1000 per foot, in light of the recent interest, Tucson native plant nurseries have reported an increased interest in seedlings.

Cardon Cactus

"Cardo" means "thistle" in Spanish. It is said that when Hernán Cortés attempted to establish a settlement in Baja, in 1535, the many spiny cacti earned it the name "Isla de Cardón" because, at the time, they believed the peninsula was an island. In Latin, "pachy" means thick and "cereus" means waxy. One has only to see the thick arms of this pale gray-green, waxy-skinned cactus to understand what the traveling American botanist, Cyrus Pringle, meant when he named the species. There are about 1200 species of cactus, all of them native to the Americas. Many first-time visitors to Baja mistake this giant cactus for the ecologically similar saguaro cactus (*Carnegiea gigantea*), another inhabitant of the Sonoran Desert. However, the saguaro does not live in Baja and, while there are a few stands of cardón found across the Gulf of California on the Mexican mainland, they seldom occur near the saguaro.

The giant cardon cactus (*Pachycereus pringlei*) is the emblem of the Baja California peninsula. It is a majestic plant, widely distributed over the entire peninsula and often occurring in dense stands. It is difficult to visit Baja California without being exposed to scenic views framed by this tree-shaped cactus. Because the peninsula is sparsely populated, and many of its areas are remote and difficult to access, most populations of car-



Cardon cactus

don have remained intact through five centuries of European settlement. The first description (1768) of cardon was by the founder of Misión San Javier, the Jesuit priest, Miguel del Barco, near the town of Loreto.

The cardon cacti can be massive with an average mature cardon reaching a height of ten meters, with individuals as tall as 18 meters (60'). It is a slow-growing plant, with a life span measured in hundreds of years, but growth can be significantly enhanced in its initial stages by inoculation with plant growth-promoting bacteria such as Azospirillum.

Most adult cardon have several side branches that may be as massive as the trunk and the resulting tree may attain a weight of 25 tons. Adult cardon is well adapted to the harsh climate of Baja California, characterized by drought and high temperatures, but as a seedling and juvenile, it depends for survival on nurse plants, such as mesquite (*Prosopis articulata*). In alluvial soils in southern Baja California, the cardons, and other cacti, occupy an extensive area.

Dan and Lisa Goy own and operate Baja Amigos RV Caravan Tours and have been camping and touring in Mexico since 1985. <http://www.bajaamigos.net>

... more pics follow

...Cataviña



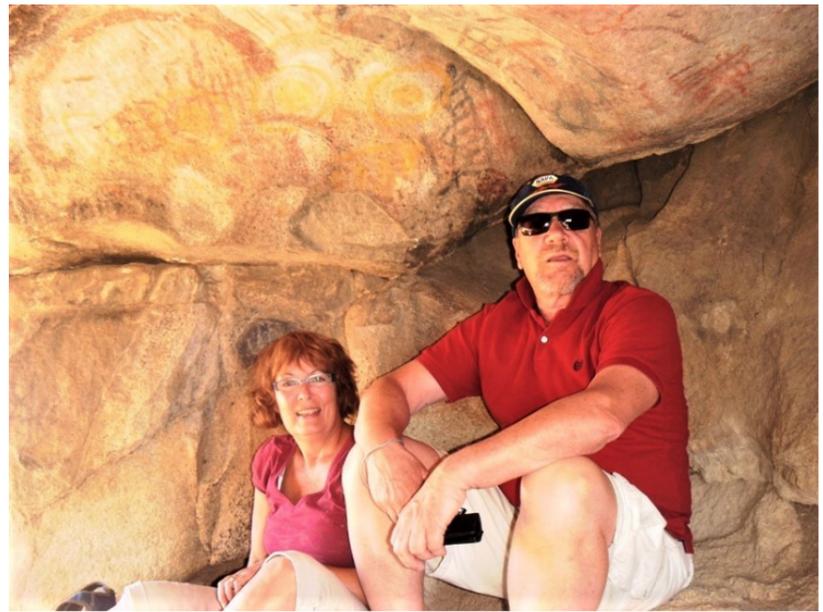
Hwy 1 to Cataviña
(above, left and below)



...Cataviña



6000 year old cave paintings



Bob and Melanie at the cave paintings



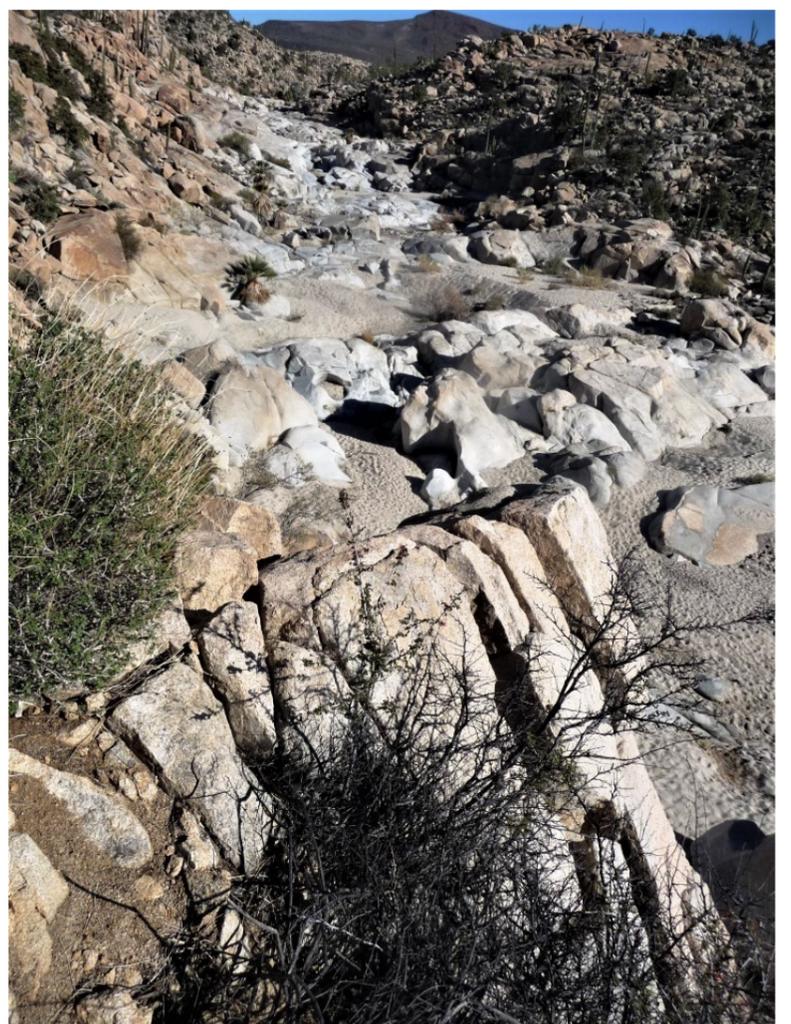
Group trip to the cave paintings



Main entrance to the cave paintings



Wagonmaster Dan at the riverbed (arroyo) that would be full during a hurricane



...Cataviña



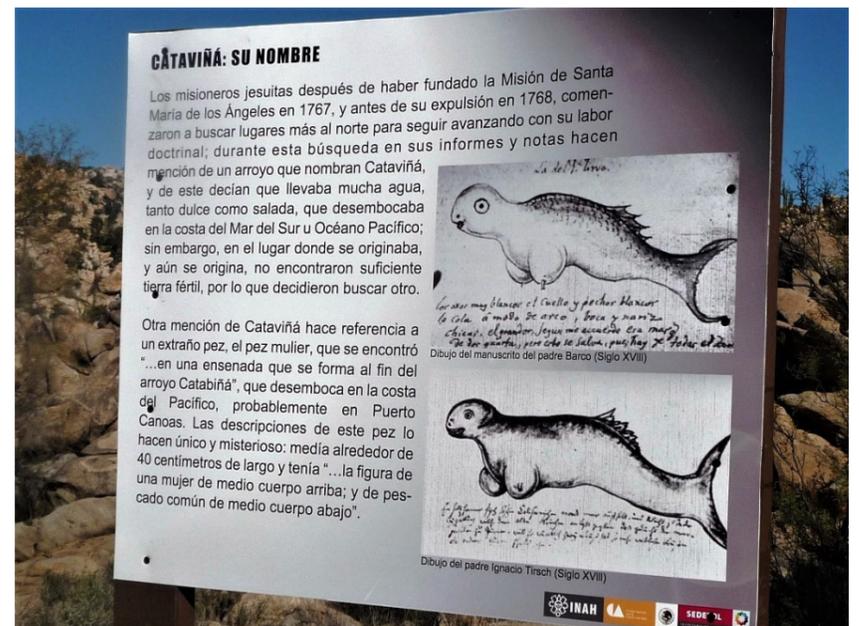
Ann, Dixie and Ralph in Cataviña



Excursion with the van



Cataviña is in the very center of Baja California



Left: Ralph and a Cirio tree



Dan and Lisa, set up for camp

...Cataviña



Above and right: Baja Amigos in Rancho Santa Ynez



Abandoned gas station



Cantina and rooms, Rancho Santa Ynez



Group walk in Cataviña

...Cataviña



Park entrance



RV parking Rancho Santa Ynez



Above: Gus the Cataviña ground squirrel
Left: Desert flowers



Horses at
Rancho Santa Ynez

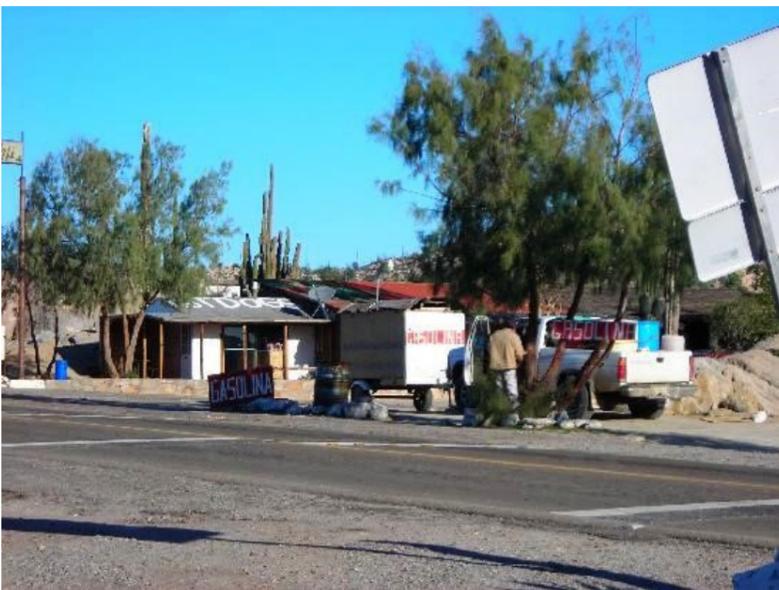
...Cataviña



Right: Lisa and the large Cordon cactus

Above: Narrow Hwy 1

Below: Selling gas from barrels



Left: Dan leading the walk in Cataviña

Below: Ralph's 1950s Olds custom camper



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

Isolation, A Time of Learning

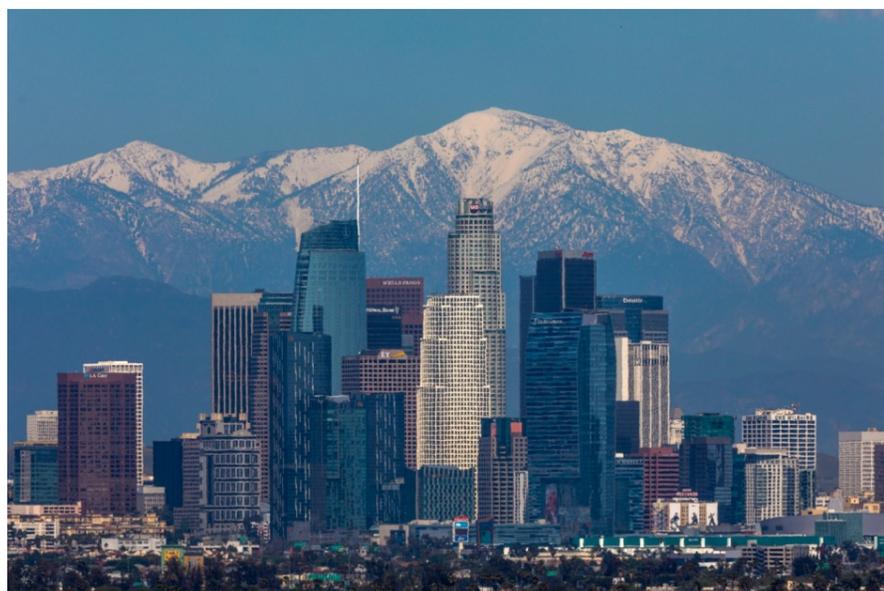
by Suzanne A. Marshall

We're in self isolation in Manzanillo, where we've made our life here, permanently. It's been 13 years in our sweet little condo, on the beach called Playa Azul, and we are approaching our fourth summer. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic was never in our plans. But that goes for everyone, I am certain. So, here we are, at day 62, with no end in sight.

We've found ways to have our groceries delivered to our door. I am doing yoga and exercising in the living room with Youtube and really want for nothing, in the practical sense. The beaches have all been closed, which curtailed our regular beach walks but it did keep people at home and Easter was not the riotous time of the past, when the hoards arrived from Guadalajara and other places. Thankfully, our grocery stores were not stripped of the food we locals need and all was quiet on the ocean front.

Responsibly, our owners agreed to send the cleaning staff home with pay (too many riding local transit) and we are responsible for keeping up our own cleaning. We sure do miss our sweet Elena. BUT, it keeps us busier before we fall back on our old habits; the internet, television and reading. In between, I've actually had time to ponder life in so many different ways.

Since I have researched some really stunning items, I will have to save some for the next article. The subject I have chosen to throw out there now is about our environment and messages we have all been receiving from Mother Earth. That is, if you've been watching and listening.



Los Angeles, mid-April 2020, almost pollution free



Mexican Marines keep the beaches closed in Manzanillo during the pandemic

As countries strive to contain the pandemic; pollution and greenhouse gases have decreased across the globe while the populations have been ordered to stay at home but for 'guarded' trips for essentials such as food and medicines. What no one knows is the long-term impact.

Since the outbreak in December 2019, businesses have closed, airlines have slashed services and more and more people are working from home, if they can. Schools have also closed but, here in Manzanillo, and likely in other parts of the country, many tiny businesses are still operating given their need to survive on very little, as well as oblique encouragement from Señor Obrador, the country's President. Throughout Mexico, the poorest keep going while the middle classes hunker down and close up shops as news feeds from outside the country keep them more informed. Auto factories and large manufacturers have closed and we expats are taking it very seriously. A number of 'snowbirds' have been unable to leave for summer in the USA or Canada as flights have been cancelled, one after the other.

So while this may be a huge inconvenience and we can't go out and 'play' with one another, Mother Earth is taking a huge breath of cleaner air as pollution leaves our skies, mountain vistas can be seen from afar and smog settles to the ground and expires. Not such a bad thing for now. The global shutdown has inadvertently become an experiment in the reduction of greenhouse gases. NASA has released satellite data of the Northeastern US, revealing a 30% drop in air pollution over densely populated metropolitan areas.

...Isolation, A Time of Learning



The canals of Venice have cleared, and fish can be seen swimming due to lack of tourism and boats

Nitrogen dioxide from transportation fossil fuels and electricity generation demonstrates that, as of March 2020, emissions are the lowest on record since 2005. Similar reductions can be found over Eastern China and Italy, and many others, to be sure. So, for the time being, this seems to be wonderful news. Except, what happens next when economies fire up their engines again?



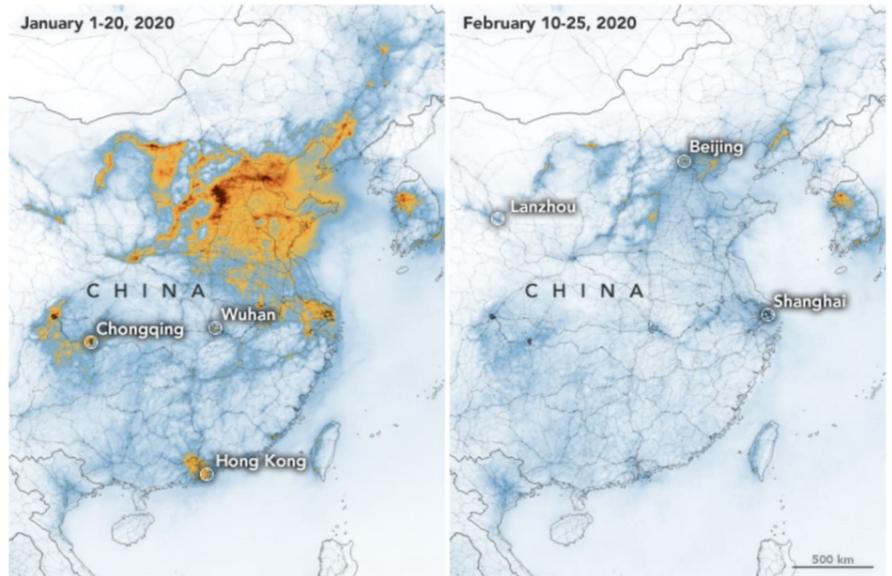
A New York worker deals with masses of cans and bottles, April 2020

An old issue has now become a greater one; plastic waste. Cities across the globe have halted recycling programs due to fears of spreading the virus in these centers. In Europe, waste disposal options have been reduced. In Italy, infected residents have been banned from sorting waste which certainly makes sense.



The peaks of the Himalayas can be seen in India after decades of time of being lost in pollution

Add to this, the increased demands for bottled water, face masks, medical gloves, sanitary wipes and hand sanitizer and one can see the mountains of refuse accumulating. In addition, where once food suppliers who had changed from single-use products, companies have since reverted to these products to curb contamination in spite of the fact that 'experts' warn that single use plastics can carry viruses and bacteria as well.



Aerial photos from space over-looking China as pollution disappears

With most of the world stuck at home, we have upped our household waste; started shopping online and ordering meals delivered; all requiring a lot more packaging. And then, of course, there is medical waste which has increased in Wuhan China for example, from pre-pandemic numbers of 50 tons a day to 200 tons.

The long-term impacts are unpredictable, and no one can foresee the duration of the pandemic. One thing is for sure, when it is over, the economies are going to be ramping up like they never have before. With economies in the toilet, so to speak, can we handle that and still find the means for cleaner transportation and cleaner power generation?

Can we handle things differently and do both? Can we ramp up the economies and still be cautious about increasing emissions. Its truly a worry for the post-pandemic world. The world must make better decisions.

To end this story, I would like to share a beautiful poem shared by Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand. You will find it on the next page.

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

For Papatūānuku – Mother Earth

by Nadine Anne Hura via Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand

shared by Suzanne A. Marshall



A poem for Papatūānuku – Mother Earth by Ngāti Hine/Ngāpuhi

Rest now, e Papatūānuku
Breathe easy and settle
Right here where you are
We'll not move upon you
For awhile

We'll stop, we'll cease
We'll slow down and stay home

Draw each other close and be kind
Kinder than we've ever been.
I wish we could say we were doing it for you
as much as ourselves

But hei aha

We're doing it anyway

It's right. It's time.
Time to return
Time to remember
Time to listen and forgive
Time to withhold judgment
Time to cry
Time to think

About others

Remove our shoes
Press hands to soil
Sift grains between fingers

Gentle palms

Time to plant
Time to wait
Time to notice
To whom we belong

For now it's just you
And the wind
And the forests and the oceans and the sky full of rain

Finally, its raining!

Ka turuturu te wai kamo o Rangi ki runga i a koe

Embrace it

This sacrifice of solitude we have carved out for you

He iti noaiho – a small offering
People always said it wasn't possible
To ground flights and stay home and stop our habits of consumption

But it was
It always was.

We were just afraid of how much it was going to hurt
– and it IS hurting and it will hurt and continue to hurt
But not as much as you have been hurt.

So be still now

Wrap your hills around our absence
Loosen the concrete belt cinched tight at your waist

Rest.
Breathe.
Recover.
Heal –

And we will do the same.



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by Tommy Clarkson

Morning Glory Hybrids

Family *Convolvulaceae*

Also known as Morning-Glory

(If ever there was a broad stroke, shotgun approach, rather than "rifling" in on one specific plant, the following is it. However, I thought folks might appreciate a brief discussion on the diversity of species that fall under the name of "Morning Glory.")

In simple, easy to understand and, generally accepted terms, we all would probably agree with the Farmer's Almanac which states, "Morning Glories are annual climbers with slender stems, heart-shaped leaves, and trumpet-shaped flowers of pink, purple-blue, magenta, or white. They have beautifully-shaped blooms that unfurl in the sun and romantic tendrils that lend old-fashioned charm."

In all actuality, there's a bit more. Within the *Convolvulaceae* plant family, there are over 1,000 species of flowering plants that are called Morning Glory! And, while many folks may not think of them as such, all are native to tropical America and Asia in subtropical and—yes, as well as - temperate regions. The totality of them are included in, perhaps, more than fifty different genera, including: *Argyreia*, *Astripomoea*, *Calystegia*, *Convolvulus*, *Lepistemon*, *Merremia*, *Operculina*, *Rivea*, *Stictocardia* and, if I recall correctly, the garden variety with which I grew up in Kansas, *Ipomoea*. (*Virtually all species blossom . . . you guess the time of day!*)



Ever have one of those mornings when you just can't decide what "look" you'd like for the day?

Species of this latter genus - one of the best hummingbird flowers we can easily grow - are native to Japan and here in Mexico. In North America, they are generally grown as an annual, but, in warmer regions, can be raised as perennials. While discussing species of this genus, the seeds of several varieties of *Ipomoea violacea* contain Lysergic Acid Amide (LSA), a naturally occurring tryptamine which is closely related to LSD! (*The bizarre, obscure and arcane nuggets of knowledge one can pick up in "The Civilized Jungle," are all but mind-boggling!*) But, seriously, beyond the potentially hallucinogenic properties observed in the preceding, and while eating Morning Glory flowers is not dangerous, I would encourage that we consider all Morning Glory seeds poisonous and, accordingly, keep them out of reach of children and pets.

As might be suspected, while each has slightly different leaf, floral and fruit characteristics, they all sport the delightfully attractive, recognizably shaped, somewhat "funneled" blossoms, coming in the solid or mixed colors in those cited earlier as well as red and yellow, in addition to pure blue and purple. These flowers often show marks where the corolla is neatly folded or rolled up in the bud. With these flowers grow to as much as eight inches (20.32 cm) across - though most are around four inches (10.16 cm) - they all prefer a full sun throughout the day.

...Morning Glory



Temperate, sub-tropical and tropical climates all sport species of Morning Glory.

Proper growing placement? While there are Morning Glory species that are shrubs, trees, and lianas, most of us are familiar with - and grow - the vining sorts with alternate simple or compound leaves. Outside, in the garden, plant them close to where they can climb – perhaps at the base of a pergola or arch. In a pot, planter or container, I encourage a trellis, near a fence or by a railing where – like that lazy nephew who flunked out of college - they want our support! Needing something around which their delicate little tendrils can twine (*Morning Glory, not nephew*), unlike ivy, they will not attach themselves to a wall. However, as fast growers – some exceeding fifteen feet (4.57 meters) per season - some gardeners employ them as groundcover. Not at all particular, they will grow just about anywhere.

Most species of Morning Glory bloom better in soil that is not too rich in organic matter, though I'd encourage application of a balanced liquid fertilizer after planting. But, do not over-fertilize as the plant may grow more foliage than flowers. Considering pests that might harm your plants, look for aphids, leaf miners, spider mites, caterpillars and leaf cutters. Disease and fungus problems can stem from rust, fungal leaf spots and fusarium wilt.



These flowers come in a variety of beautiful solid or combined colors.

A word (*actually, several*) of warning. Some mistake our subject Morning Glory plants with Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), its wild country cousin, an aggressive, invasive weed native to Europe and Asia. This undesirable weed - also called "Perennial Morning Glory" or "Creeping Jenny" - grows in a similar fashion to that of the annual Morning Glory, but sends out very deep roots that make it extremely difficult to eradicate. It tangles up farmers' field equipment and these roots allow it to overwinter where our more classy and cultivated species cannot.

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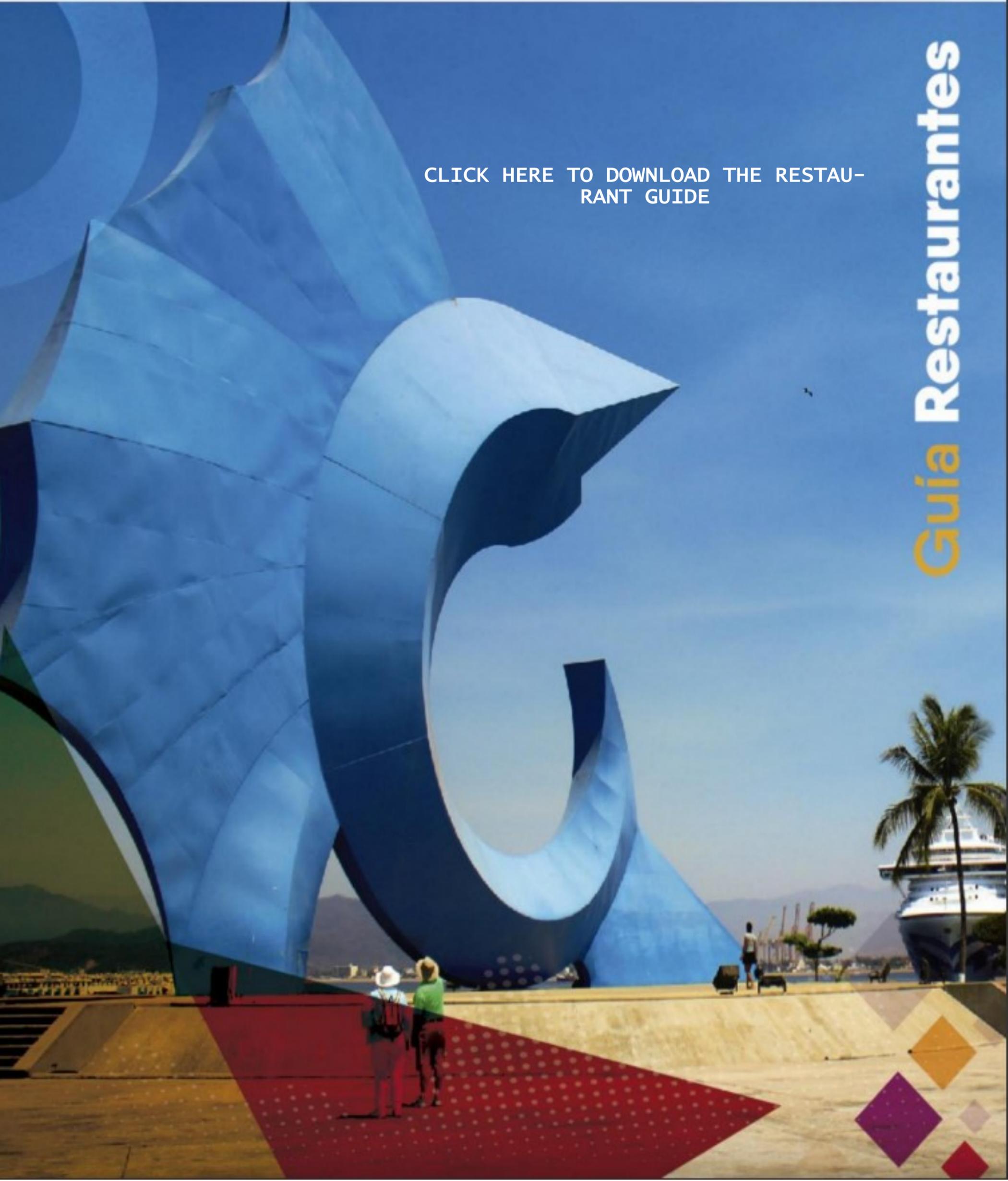
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El Oro de Hidalgo

places the editors have been and recommend you visit



El Teatro Hidalgo - photo by Octavio Maya, source TripAdvisor

The name El Oro de Hidalgo is not from Nahuatl, like most other municipality names in the state, but from Spanish, and simply means "the gold." It has subsequently been given an alternative Nahuatl name of "Teocuitlatl," meaning "sacred excrement," referring to gold. Its seal, in the form of an Aztec glyph, contains elements referring to gold and to caves, of which there are many in the municipality. The municipality is located in the northwest of the State of Mexico, 96 km from the state capital of Toluca, and is bounded by the municipalities of Temascalcingo to the north, Jocotitlán to the east, San Felipe del Progreso and San José del Rincón to the south, and by the state of Michoacán to the west. As of 2005, the municipal seat with the formal name of El Oro de Hidalgo had a population of 5,797, and the municipality of El Oro had a population of 31,847. While it made its name as a major gold and silver mining town from the 17th to the early 20th centuries, the mines have since been tapped out and the town is turning to tourism for economic development.

History

The Mazahua people first populated this area, migrating from the north. One of these migrations is documented in the Annals of Cuauhtitlán, which occurred in 538 AD, when five tribes headed by Ehécatl, Coahuatzin, Mazacóatl, Otzihuacoatl and Tlalpanhuitz y Huitz, with Mazacóatl leading them. The first populations settled in communities now known as Tapaxco, Endotejiare, Tultenango and Santiago Oxtimpan, all of which are in the current municipality of El Oro. Initially, the Mazahuas were hunter-gatherers but dedicated themselves to agriculture and fishing as well as hunting, as the Mazahua-populated region became dominated the Toltecs, the Chichimecas and then the Aztecs. The last group conquered this area in 1474 by Axayacatl.

...El Oro de Hidalgo



La Alcaldía (town hall) - photo by Octavio Maya, source TripAdvisor

Up until the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, there was no settlement in what is now the town of El Oro, nor was its gold deposit discovered. In nearby Tlalpujahua, gold was being mined and this brought the Spaniards to the area. Some traces of gold were found early in the colonial period, especially in nearby Tapaxco, but the traces were not investigated further. It was gold that brought about the settlement and one of the town's early names was El Real de El Oro, which was a mining community under the jurisdiction of Ixtlahuaca. There are conflicting stories as to how the town was founded. One version states that it was founded by the Mondragón family, guided by a child who showed them where he grazed his flock. Here someone in the family noticed something shiny among the rocks, which turned out to be quartz containing gold, indicating the vein that would be named after the family.

El Oro was founded in 1787 by miners who bought the land from the Hacienda of Tultenango. El Oro initially belonged to the territory of Ixtlahuaca, but upon discovery of gold, the land became Crown property. In 1793, the mining community was given municipality status and authority over the neighboring communities of Tapaxco, San Nicolás, Santiago Oxtempan, Santa Rosa, Hacienda La Jordana, Hacienda Venta del Aire and Hacienda Tultenango. It also gained rights to regulate all mineral extraction in this area.

Twenty two years after the discovery of gold here, the Count of Revillagigedo hired engineer Manuel Agustín Mascaró to plan out the community, which was centered just northeast of where the downtown is now. The town had become an im-

portant source of gold and silver in late colonial times, but there were problems with supplying food and other needs due to the rocky terrain. El Oro's first chapel was built in 1791, but the seat of ecclesiastical power in the area was established in Tapaxco, four years earlier.

Miguel Hidalgo's army passed through the municipality on its way to Mexico City. After independence, engineer Vicente Rivafola and Lucas Alamán worked to create mining companies here with investment funds from British sources. One such company, called the Tlalpuajuhua Company revitalized 86 mines in the area. Another important company was the United Mexican Mining Association. Before Independence, El Oro mines had been productive but they were mostly shut down during the war. By 1825, most mining here was in English hands. This led to a significant population of foreigners here, mostly English and French, who influenced the town's culture. This would eventually lead to the building of the municipal palace and the Juárez Theater with Neoclassic and Art Nouveau designs. Foreign investment here reached its peak near the end of the 19th century into the early 20th century, introducing new technologies, such as a rail line, and electricity. These were introduced primarily in the town of El Oro, which began to establish it as the primary center over Tapaxco. Furthering its importance was the discovery of the Esperanza vein, which greatly increased the town's population. El Oro was declared the head of the municipality by two decrees, one issued in 1901 and the other in 1902, giving it the town official name of El Oro de Hidalgo.

In 1926, a number of mines, including El Oro Mining and Railway Co., La Esperanza Mining and others, began to cut back production, stating that the deposits were tapped out. The situation worsened when the mining companies were expropriated from their English owners in 1937. Soon the only operating mine was one called Dos Estrellas, located between El Oro and Tlalpujahua, which subsequently closed in 1958. In the mid-20th century, El Oro was left with only 2,500 residents. Since that time, the town's economy has turned to commerce, light industry, and handcrafts.

Source: Wikimedia



by Tommy Clarkson

Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*

Family Labiatae

Also known as Compass Plant, Compass Weed, Old Man or Polar Plant

(Some may ask why this herb is included in "The Civilized Jungle." Well, because it thrives here, is much appreciated for its pungent, aromatic scent and is often used in preparation of my meals! Just last week, in fact, I baked fresh vegetables and chicken breasts with several sprigs atop.)

This wonderfully smelling – down here, perennial - has been used in Europe and Australia as a symbol for remembrance during war commemorations and funerals. The folks "Down Under" do so, particularly, in that it is found growing wild on the Gallipoli peninsula—where, during WWI, there were 26,111 Australian casualties, including 8,141 deaths.

From a culinary standpoint, the herb not only tastes good in such as my rosemary chicken, but it can be used in the preparation of pork, lamb or poultry stuffing, added to tomato sauce, carefully chopped and sprinkled on a pizza, laid on pan-fried salmon, roasted potatoes or baked artichokes, mixed with garlic in bread making, incorporated in lentil soup or in making scented oils and vinegars. But, do remember, because of its strong flavor, use sparingly.



Near some fourteen or more other herbs, ours grows not far from the kitchen next to the infinity pool.

Beyond adding flavor to our meals, it is a great source of calcium, iron and vitamin B-6. *Rosmarinus officinalis* was traditionally used to help with nervousness and headaches, alleviate muscle pain, improve memory, boost the immune and circulatory system, (after several days of soaking) be good for the kidneys, and even promote hair growth. *Like those blasted infomercials* - "But wait, there's more!" Recent studies indicate that, being that it has antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds, it may, enhance memory and concentration, improve digestion, provide neurological protection, prevent aging of our brains (*Bring it on!*), give protection against macular degeneration and even fight cancer!

However, as in all things, there is a good and bad. Some warn that Rosemary should not be consumed during pregnancy or if one has a history of epilepsy or high blood pressure. Additionally, others say that some of the side effects of ingestion of too much of this plant may result in stomach and intestinal irritation and kidney damage, cause seizures, induce vomiting – or worse – comas, create excessive fluid in the lungs (pulmonary edema), encourage menstrual bleeding and even cause miscarriage.

Do keep in mind that one should not consume Rosemary oil internally in that strong doses of it are considered toxic. I, for one, subscribe to the old cliché, "in all things, moderation." If you are grazing on it by the bale size, you might be overdoing a bit!

...Rosemary



Culinarily, Rosemary has numerous tasty applications.

Lastly, and I quote this verbatim from one of my earliest botanical books, "A Handbook of Herbs" by Richard Marshall and Charles J. Ziga. For "cosmetic use: Rosemary tea is a good astringent hair rinse for brunettes and redheads; combined with borax, the tea can also be used as a shampoo and is believed to cure dandruff. The herb is a traditional ingredient of eau de Cologne, and the fresh or dried leaves can be tied in a cloth bag and used to prepare a refreshing bath."

Now, technically speaking, Rosemary thrives best in quite dry conditions such as where it originated in the Mediterranean, with - usually - mild winters and hot summers. As a result, no few say it may struggle a bit in the semi-tropics and tropics when the humidity is high—though I've had little difficulty.



For some, Rosemary is a symbol for remembrance during war commemorations and funerals.

At the core: "Rosemary likes hot heads and hates wet feet!" Hence, they like lots of sunshine and disdain too much water. It is also sensitive to sudden environmental changes, hence it is important to find the perfect spot and leave it there permanently. Such location will afford that sought-after sunshine, be rooted in very well draining soil and provide protection from heavy rains. Never forget that too much water will cause its roots to rot.

"OK Tommy, too late, my Rosemary is already suffering from root rot. What do I do?" We may be able to save the patient! First, uproot it and thoroughly trim off the rotted roots, as affected ones will spread and, then, our efforts will have been for naught. Remove as much soil as possible from around the roots. Lay the plant on newspaper to fully dry it out. Then - perhaps best - repot it into a good cactus mix. But, note the amount of roots you removed as, later, you'll need to trim the same percentage off the leaves and stems as well.

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Churros



Ingredients

- ✓ 1/2 cup water
- ✓ 1/2 cup 2% milk
- ✓ 1 tablespoon canola oil
- ✓ 1/4 teaspoon salt
- ✓ 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ✓ 1 large egg, room temperature
- ✓ 1/4 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- ✓ Additional oil for frying
- ✓ 1/2 cup sugar
- ✓ 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

In a large saucepan, bring the water, milk, oil and salt to a boil. Add flour all at once and stir until a smooth ball forms. Transfer to a large bowl; let stand for 5 minutes.

Beat on medium-high speed for 1 minute or until the dough softens. Add egg and lemon zest; beat for 1-2 minutes. Set aside to cool.

In a deep cast-iron or heavy skillet, heat 1 in. oil to 375°. Insert a large star tip in a pastry bag; fill with dough. On a baking sheet, pipe dough into 4-in. strips.

Transfer strips to skillet and fry until golden brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels. Combine the sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over churros. Serve warm.

Image and article source: Taste of Home

House for Rent

Golfers, take note!

Beautiful furnished home for rent, well situated in Real del Country next to the golf course.



The home has 3 bedrooms (each with air conditioning), 2 full, large bathrooms. One of the bedrooms is on the main (lower) floor and adjoins the downstairs bathroom. It comes with a fully equipped kitchen, a washer and dryer.



In addition to 2 patios, and an amazing view of hole 3 of the golf course, a third terraced deck overlooks the social area of the complex that offers a pool, tennis court and a palapa for your enjoyment.

This home comes with 24-hour security, wifi, cable TV and includes water, maintenance fee and covered, off-street parking for 1 car.

Rates:

\$2,100 USD monthly (3-6 months)

\$1,800 USD per month (7-12 months)

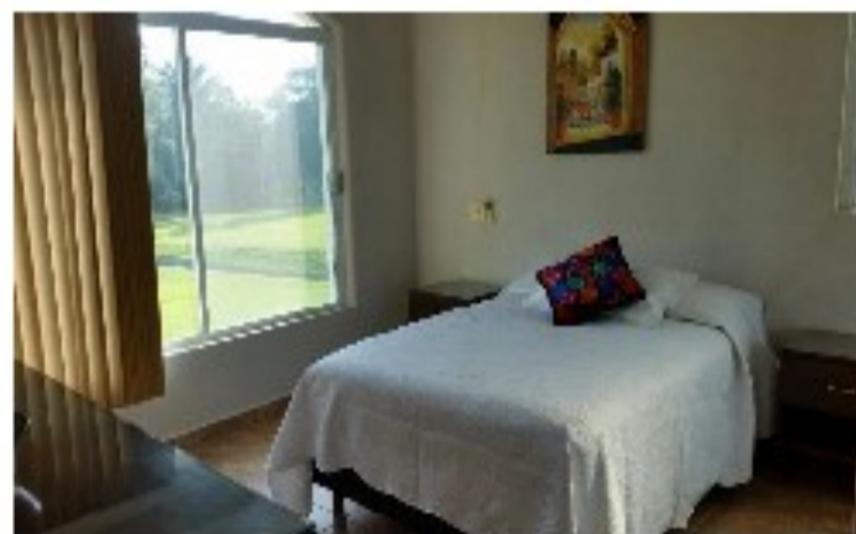
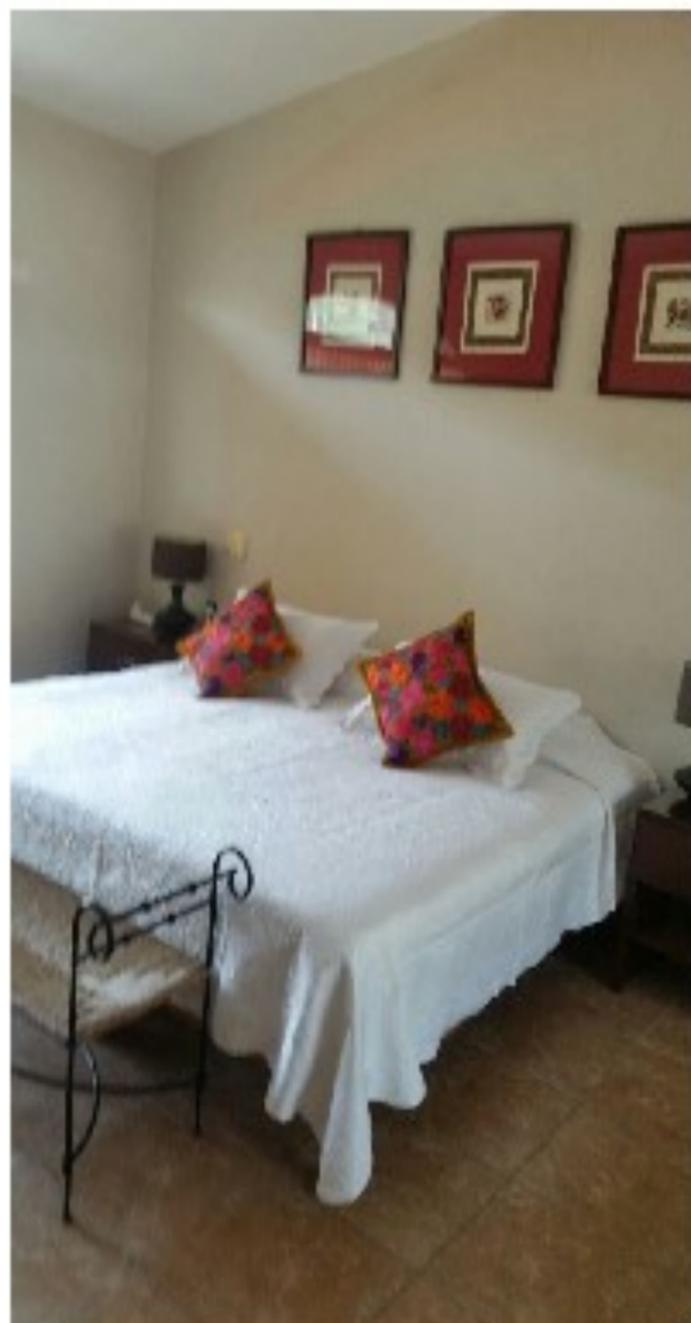
Ask about our rates for other lengths of stay.

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Crossword

solution posted in next month's edition

1		2			3	4		5
				6				
7				8				
	9					10		
11								12
13		14				15		
16					17			

Across

- 1 sum
- 3 country
- 7 (it) falls
- 8 to bring
- 9 (you/tú) dreamed
- 13 (you/tú) heard
- 15 (she) loved
- 16 other; another
- 17 zero

Down

- 1 dry
- 2 fear
- 4 wing
- 5 (I) will be
- 6 again, another time (4,3)
- 10 (I) brought
- 11 mud
- 12 how, to what degree
- 14 to be

Last month's crossword solution:

1	v	e	r		3	a	r	m	a	5	s
	u		e		i		e		i		
6	e	s	p	e	r	a	r	á	n		
	l		a		e		m				
7	a	b	r	í		8	r	e	í	9	a
			a		10	g		l		b	
11	r	e	s	p	i	r	a	b	a		
	í		t		r		d		j		
12	o	l	e	r	é		13	a	j	o	

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Mexico's Transition to Democracy



Transition to Democracy During the mid-1990s, an economic crisis stemming from an unsustainable current account deficit and mismanagement of the government bond market plunged Mexico into a severe recession. President Zedillo spent much of his sexenio restoring macroeconomic balance and responding to demands for greater accountability and transparency of public institutions. Zedillo also had to contend with the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, which highlighted the poverty and marginalization that characterized many of Mexico's indigenous communities.

In the political realm, the Zedillo administration advanced electoral system reforms that leveled the playing field for opposition parties and set the stage for a genuine transition to democracy. The July 1997 midterm elections left the PRI with a minority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Congress), expanded opposition control of state governorships, and gave the left-wing Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática-PRD) control of Mexico City's government.

The opposition's momentum carried over into the September 2000 general elections. The PAN candidate, Vicente Fox Quesada, won the historic presidential race, becoming the first opposition head of state since the consolidation of the revolution. President Fox promised a deepening of Mexico's economic and political reforms, declared "war" on organized crime, and planned to negotiate an immigrant "guest worker" program with the United States. Despite strong public support early in its term, the Fox administration was weakened by the PAN's loss of congressional seats during the 2003 midterm elections and the government's failure to craft a legislative coalition in support of its reform agenda. By the end of his term in 2006, much of President Fox's structural reform program remained unfulfilled.

On July 2, 2006, Mexico held general elections for president, all seats in Congress, and several state governorships. The presidential race was closely contested between the PAN candidate, former Fox administration energy minister Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, and the PRD candidate, populist former mayor of Mexi-

...Path to Citizenship, Mexico's Transition to Democracy

co City Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The PRI candidate, former Tabasco governor Roberto Madrazo Pintado, trailed in the race, as voters appeared wary of returning the PRI to the presidency. Opinion polls indicated that the election was largely a referendum on Mexico's two decades of market-oriented economic reforms. Calderón promised to continue the reform agenda by promoting greater foreign investment and increasing the competitiveness of Mexico's economy through structural reforms of the pension and labor laws. He also pledged to continue the government's fight against the drug cartels and to improve public safety.

By contrast, López Obrador vowed to focus on Mexico's domestic problems, such as poverty and social inequality, and to halt so-called "neo-liberal" reforms. He promised to create thousands of jobs by funding massive public works projects and affirmed that he would seek to renegotiate NAFTA in order to protect Mexican farmers from an influx of imported U.S. corn. Further, López Obrador vowed to break up the unpopular commercial oligopolies that emerged from the privatization of state assets during the 1990s.

Official tallies showed the results of the presidential election to be extremely close. Initial uncertainty about the accuracy of the preliminary vote count led both of the leading candidates to claim victory. However, subsequent official tabulations by the independent Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral-IFE) confirmed that Calderón had indeed won the election by a slim plurality of 35.89 percent versus López Obrador's 35.31 percent of the vote (a margin of victory of 244,000 votes out of 41.8 million cast).

The results of the 2006 congressional races saw both the PAN and the PRD gain seats at the expense of the formerly dominant PRI. For the first time in its history, the PRI lost its plurality of seats in both houses of Congress, an event observers interpreted as a further sign of the party's decline. Nonetheless, the

PRI retained a sufficiently large bloc of seats to remain an influential congressional force and was well positioned to become a coalition partner of any future Mexican government. The PRD retained control of the powerful mayoralty of Mexico City. All three major parties held state governorships.

During 2007, the Calderón administration made public safety and the fight against drug cartels its highest domestic priorities. In response to escalating drug violence, the federal government deployed 24,000 troops to various states and removed hundreds of corrupt police officials. Mexican public opinion strongly backed Calderón's aggressive tactics against the drug gangs.

Under Calderón's leadership, the center-right PAN government courted the center-left PRI in an effort to advance the president's legislative agenda. During the 2007 legislative session, Congress passed far-reaching fiscal and pension system reforms that had stalled during the Fox administration.

By mid-2008, successive Mexican governments had made progress in reforming the economy and reducing extreme poverty. However, significant disparities in wealth, high levels of crime, and corruption persisted. The less-developed states in the south continued to lag economically behind the more prosperous north and center, fueling illegal migration to the United States.

Mexico's economy was also lagging behind those of other middle-income countries, such as China, in terms of overall competitiveness. In addition to further consolidating Mexico's transition to democracy, the 2006 general elections presented an opportunity to overcome executive-legislative stalemate and move toward consensus on economic and public-sector reforms.

Article source: Library of Congress - Federal Research Division

Image source: PXFuel