

Hi Expat

INSPIRING & INFORMING EXPATS

EDITORIAL

Time to Party!

by Mark Bradbury

The Tricolores go to the World Cup: Ecuador's fourth World Cup adventure is drawing near

by Carolina Segarra

Galápagos: The Enchanted Islands

by Juan Francisco Carrasco

A "Plein Air" Painting Paradise in Ecuador

by Victor Rexach



EDITORIAL

Mark Bradbury

FOOD COLUMN

Rolanda Stinson-Smiley

IMMIGRATION NEWS

Marcos Chiluisa

INSURANCE NEWS

Carlos Ramírez

ECUADOR LIVING COLUMN

Carolina Segarra

ECUADOR LIVING COLUMN

Juan Francisco Carrasco

ECUADOR LIVING COLUMN

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ECUADOR ADVENTURE

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Editorial

Time to Party!

We are talking about *fiestas*, or parties, here in Ecuador this month. With some major holidays coming up, it's a good time to tell you all what might be happening over the next couple of months. So, put on your costumes, buy a turkey, trim your tree, and buy the champagne! It is officially **Party Season** in Ecuador!

Every expat that I have met since coming here always wants to know about the holidays and their celebrations. Ecuador has quite a few holidays, called *feriados* in Spanish, that North Americans do not know anything about. They are usually National days, commemorated for their historical significance to Ecuador's evolution as a country. We recently had a 3-day weekend here to celebrate the **Independence of Guayaquil**, Ecuador's largest city. For our local neighbors, it was a big tourist weekend, but for the expats it was just another weekend.

No disrespect intended, but sadly, too many who come here to live do

not embrace the culture and the history of our great host country. Go back in time a couple hundred years, and all of South and Central America were colonized by Spain, Portugal, and a handful of other European countries. These European countries came here to take whatever they could from the land and its people; it was not an enjoyable time in the history of what would become Ecuador.

So, when the people here celebrate a day like the Independence of Guayaquil from Spain, it is a very big deal. Very shortly we will be celebrating the **Independence of Cuenca**, another key battle in the fight for Ecuadorian independence. Anyone coming here to live should learn some of the history that makes Ecuador what it is today, so that you can at least understand the significance of those long weekends.

For most of us living here one of the questions I see all the time concerns Halloween. People want to know if the holiday is celebrated here, and it is, it's simply different than what you might be used to. The streets aren't full of kids in costumes going door-to-door, that is not done here. Not that thousands of kids would not like to go out and get a bag full of candy, but that is not the custom here.

Halloween is more of an adult thing here. Because of the American influence, there are parties and social gatherings in most cities and towns, especially where there is an

expat presence. Here in Manta, there are several parties happening and most of them involve adult beverages. Like *Cinco de Mayo* in the US, Halloween has become a reason for a party, so that is something you can look forward to if dressing up and partying is something you like!

On October 31, Ecuador celebrates its National Coat of Arms; called **El Día del Escudo Nacional**. It is a day of national pride; Halloween is but a whisper. Although Halloween plays a very minor role here, the Day of the Dead, or **El Día de los Difuntos** in Spanish, is a huge event across the country. Celebrated on November 2, it is a day of remembrance and respect for the people who have passed on. Thousands of people go to the cemeteries to visit the graves of their loved ones, and some spend the entire day there, meeting and mingling with other family members and friends.

It is this day, along with the **Cuenca Independence** celebration, that makes up a long 4-day weekend across the country. Traveling can become exceedingly difficult, but millions of Ecuadorians make the trip back to visit family and thousands of people come to the coast to enjoy the beaches of Manta and other towns along the Manabi Province coastline. It is a very busy time in all the tourist areas of Ecuador, and for the Ecuadorians, it is the last holiday before Christmas.

Wait! What do you mean, the last holiday until Christmas? What about Thanksgiving? Well, turkey day is not a holiday in Ecuador. If you remember your history lessons, the Pilgrims were from Plymouth,



by Manuel Avilés

Massachusetts, and what they did has no meaning here.

But that doesn't mean there are not any Thanksgiving Day dinners and parties! Again, because of the expat presence, there are usually quite a few opportunities for us all to go out and celebrate the day. I have gone to a Thanksgiving dinner somewhere in each of the seven years I have lived here. There is a large expat group in Manta that hosts a dinner at one of the beachside restaurants, and the restaurant does an excellent job of cooking a traditional meal, complete with cranberry sauce! It is an event I look forward to every year, as do many friends here in Manta.

If you love Christmas, you will discover that most people here do, also. Just like the United States (and everywhere else probably), the stores and malls start decorating and selling Christmas things in August and September. It is crazy, but it is Christmas! Our beautiful mall here in Manta, the Mall del Pacifico, does a spectacular job decorating each year, and thousands of people come to Manta just to see it!

Santa Claus doesn't live here; in Ecuador, he is called Papa Noel, and his presence is nothing like what Santa is in the US, but he is still representative of Christmas. As a country where 95% of the population is Roman Catholic, there is much more attention to celebrating the religious aspect of the holiday.

People still shop for gifts during December, but there never seems to be the pressure of gift buying. *Black Friday*, although promoted in a few places, has not taken off like it has in the United States. Generally, we could all learn a lot from our Ecuadorian neighbors; they are a much more laid-back society and take the time to enjoy their special moments.

There are many restaurants offering special Christmas dinners and many expats host Christmas dinners for friends. You will have multiple choices for your menu, as well. In Manta, we are surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, so great seafood is part of the celebration in many restaurants and homes.

No matter where you are in this world, New Year's Eve is a terrific celebration, and Ecuador is no different. I have spent time at parties on the beach, where much of the action happens along the coast, and to say it was exciting does not scratch the surface! Something new to me on my first New Year's Eve was the burning of paper mache effigies. They are called "monigotes" in Spanish and they are sold on the streets of the cities and towns everywhere.

Some of the monigotes I have seen are huge, but most of them are 2-3 feet high. They are usually cartoon characters or politicians, but I have seen so many different things. The custom here is to burn a monigote to wash away the bad memories and experiences of the previous year. It is a ritual purging of bad vibes and helps you to start the new year off on a good foot.

The burning of the monigotes is done just before midnight. People will start bonfires on the beach, or even in the street, and they will toss their monigote into the fire, hooting and hollering as the effigy catches fire. I was on a beach one time where the flames of the bonfires lit up the beach for at least ten miles. It was amazing!

But when the clock strikes twelve, watch out! The firework displays in every direction are incredible! I lived in a condominium tower for a few years and going up on the roof to watch the fireworks was a fun event! Most of the people in my building

who weren't out partying somewhere else were on the roof celebrating with us. It was a very enjoyable night!

New Year's Day is normally a day for family dinners and quiet conversation. Most of the businesses close for the day, including the mall. It is a time when the local people just relax and catch their breath.

So, if you are contemplating a move to Ecuador, you'll have plenty to celebrate! Things might be a little different than what you are used to, but you can still have all the fun you want. Come to Manta! It's a wonderful place to celebrate!



by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés



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MAIDO

FUSION JAPONESA

FOOD COLUMN | 10

Maido, The Art of Sushi

by Rolanda Stinson-Smiley

Bienvenido

DOMINGO - JUEVES

13:00 - 21:00

VIERNES - SÁBADO

13:00 - 22:00

MAIDO

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098749

When you think of sushi, Manta, Ecuador does not immediately come to mind. However, La Quadra shopping center in Manta has just about anything you're looking for, including sushi. Maido is a Japanese fusion restaurant in La Quadra with some of the best food in the city.

The outside of the restaurant is sleek and modern-looking and when you walk in, you are immediately greeted by the entire staff. Just to the right, you will see the sushi chefs all adorned in black uniforms, including chef hats, creating fresh sushi rolls. It is definitely an art form for the customer's delight and viewing. The interior decor consists of beautiful Asian murals, dim lighting covered in rattan, and bamboo accents on the walls.

Maido is located on the first floor of the shopping center, right next door to Dulce & Cremosa, and is open seven days a week, 1pm - 9:30 pm. They have a large seating area inside and ample seating outside. There are other sushi restaurants in Manta that I've tried, but Maido stands out as one of the best sushi places I've ever been to. I eat at Maido at least twice a month and have even had food delivered to my home. It doesn't matter if it's in-person or delivery, the food is always amazingly fresh and tasty.

The menu is like a visual piece of art, as it is all black with beautiful brightly colored pictures of the cuisine. Maido's vast menu consists of not only traditional sushi and sashimi, but also a large variety of salads, soups, vegetarian dishes, asian-inspired mains, fried rice, as well as desserts. You can order sushi rolls in a full or half size and even in family platters, so they have quantities to suit all needs. The staff are super friendly and very knowledgeable when it comes to the menu. Also, if you are unsure of what

to order, the menu has an indicator next to Maido's recommended dishes.

Some of my favorite appetizers to order at Maido would be the edamame picante, spring rolls, tuna tartar, and tempura vegetables. I always order the edamame picante because I have not been able to find edamame beans at any of the grocery stores here in Manta. It's one of my favorite treats and it's a legume that's really good for you. Maido serves the edamame covered in a salty spicy seasoning called togarashi. It's such a good mix of salty and mildly spicy flavors on top of the nutty flavor of the roasted edamame. Maido has an extensive vegetarian menu. The spring rolls can be ordered as vegetarian, which consists of four rice paper rolls filled with veggies and noodles in a soy-based sauce. The other spring roll option comes with three different types of rice paper spring rolls on the plate - fresh tuna, fresh salmon, and crab. Each rolled with fresh vegetables and placed in a sesame soy sauce. The Tartar De Atun (tuna tartar) is a wonderful appetizer to highlight Manta's most popular fish, tuna. The tuna is served raw and stacked with avocado, seaweed salad, and topped with crispy thin strips of tempura carrots and settled in a ponzu sauce. It is one of the most eye-catching dishes on the menu and it's just as delicious as it is beautiful.

For entrees, I always recommend starting with Maido's fresh sushi rolls and they have a large variety to choose from. My favorite is the Acevichado roll which consists of shrimp, avocado, and cream cheese, wrapped in seaweed and rice, with fresh slices of tuna laid across the top. What makes this roll special is the toppings. It's topped with crispy camote strips (purple sweet potato) and a ceviche-inspired mayo sauce. Another one of my favorites is the Manaba Fusion roll because it includes a Manabi favorite - maduro. I love maduro and to see it on a sushi roll definitely caught my attention

because of how unique the concept is. Inside the roll is tempura shrimp, avocado, and green onion. It is wrapped in rice and seaweed, with slices of maduro set on top and a drizzle of sweet eel sauce. This dish should not work, and yet it magically does. The great part about the Manaba roll is that it also comes in a vegetarian version and is just as delicious. As a former vegetarian, I am very happy that Maido puts the same care and incredible flavors into their vegetarian dishes as they do into their other sushi rolls.

Maido doesn't just have the best sushi, they also have pretty great main dishes. I have tried many

dishes on the menu and some that I highly recommend are Bao Buns, Ramen, Nanban Udon which is another delicious chicken noodle soup, the Maido seafood fried rice, Yakimeshi vegetable fried rice, and finally the Katsu, which is either fried chicken or pork with a bbq-like sauce.

Maido is one of my absolute favorite restaurants in Manta. The food is always fantastic and fresh and no matter what I order I am always happy with my meal. The servers are great, always efficient and polite. The decor and ambiance is welcoming and the attention to detail is impeccable. I would recommend Maido time and time again and quite frankly already have. It is definitely a treasure in Manta, and worthy of all the hype.









**It`s
Something
Different**

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Driving
in Ecuador.
Do I need
an Ecuadorian
driver
license?

by Marcos Chiluisa

While visas can be a headache for tourists in Ecuador, a driver's license is not a problem, at least not for the first six months of their stay. Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to go through the process of getting a license or passing a driving test. We have good news; an international driver's license is good to drive in Ecuador for a limited period of time.

According to Article 37 from the Terrestrial Transportation transit and Road Safety regulations,

foreigners who enter Ecuador under any nonimmigrant and immigrant visas can drive using a license issued in their home country during the entire stay up to a maximum of 6 months. This means that you can use your own license no matter if you are a resident or a tourist, but only for 6 months.

Residents who have an Ecuadorian ID known as the "cedula" have the opportunity to obtain a driver license if it is their intention to drive in Ecuador regularly.

by Carlos Ramírez



What Should
I Do If
I Get Into a
Car Accident
in Ecuador?

What Should I Do If I Get Into a Car Accident in Ecuador? Understanding SPATT Insurance

In Ecuador only 23% of Ecuadorians who own a vehicle are privately insured. Due to this, the SPATT (Transit Accident Payment Services) was created in order to provide protection for people in accidents who do not have the economic resources available to cover related health costs.

"The creation of SPATT corresponds to a policy designed to guarantee public health and above all dignify citizens, especially the most vulnerable who do not have any type of protection against unforeseen accidents throughout the national territory" (Romel Castro, Executive Director SPATT).

The SPATT is required insurance at a reduced cost that is paid together with the vehicle registration cost. The cost is subject to variations depending on the model and year of your vehicle and is only paid once a year. This insurance covers emergencies up to \$3,000, ambulance expenses up to \$200, funeral expenses up to \$400, and in the event of death a family member of the victim can obtain economic relief at a maximum of \$5,000. Once SPATT is applied, your

private vehicle insurance may cover some additional health expenses, although it is important to remember that not all private vehicle policies have civil liability insurance. This is something to verify when buying a policy for your vehicle. In Ecuador, the policies cover not only the contracting party but also civil liability of any kind, as long as you have contracted this service within your policy. If you opt for a very low cost policy you could only obtain coverage in cases of total loss which could give you larger legal and economic problems than expected. You would be required to cover the expenses of the affected party in its entirety on your own.

The use of SPATT is mandatory and even if one of the parties of the accident has private vehicle or health insurance. The national transit agency must first be notified so that a police report is issued and afterwards any injured parties should seek medical attention. In serious accidents, SPATT will not be able to cover the use of ICUs, respirators, or other expenses greater than \$3,000. It is recommended that you take out low cost medical insurance for major expenses which will cover up to half a million dollars and will protect you in case of an unexpected event.

In the event of a traffic accident, whether or not you have health insurance, you must first use your SPATT coverage. When you enter any clinic for emergencies, your record sheet will detail that you were in a traffic accident and your health insurance will deny you coverage if you have not first submitted a claim through SPATT. The claim must be submitted at the offices or through the SPATT website (www.gob.ec). These claims are straightforward and you will not need a lawyer to represent you. Simply follow the requirements listed below for your reimbursement:

HOSPITAL CARE

- Original and updated bank certificate of the patient or third parties legally designated by an affidavit
- Breakdown or detail of medical expenses, medicines and supplies, values of medical fees and detail of hospital services
- Annex 002 or pre-hospital care (ambulance) if applicable

In case the accident did not require hospitalization but you still incurred medical expenses, you can still request a refund. The documents to present in the case of outpatient medical care are:

- Form 053
- Form 006 Epicrisis
- Form 008 or emergency sheet
- Original service delivery certificate
- Copy of the Operative Protocol, in case of surgeries, with signature and seal of professional responsibility
- Copy of the Anesthetic Protocol, in case of

surgeries, with signature and seal of professional responsibility

- Copy of Nursing Kardex and/or Intensive Care Log
- Daily clinical, medical and nursing progress notes with the results of laboratory and imaging tests.
- Original invoices for medical expenses, medicines and medical supplies resulting from the traffic accident (medical fees, laboratory, imaging, rehabilitation), in the name of the patient or third parties legally designated by affidavit. Attach the medical prescription signed and stamped by the professional.

The documentation that you must present is very similar to the reimbursement documentation that you would normally present to your health insurance provider. This process is pre-established by law for health reimbursements in general, the difference is that you will not have a broker in this process. In the case that you do not find the help you are looking for, your specialized insurance advisors also know the claim processes of each insurance company in the country including SPATT.

Each process in Ecuador varies depending on your need and the event you have experienced. If you were the victim or the cause of a traffic accident, remember to call your insurance advisor immediately. Do not try to reach verbal agreements with the accident parties without verifiable witnesses. If there are injuries, report it as soon as possible so that you can go to a medical care center and have your condition treated in a timely manner. If you require legal assistance, SPATT will not meet this need. If you have a vehicle it is recommended that you take out insurance that provides you with legal coverage and can assist you immediately at the event location. If you already have a vehicle policy check with your insurance company or broker to ensure that your policy includes legal protection and

civil liability coverage. If you are covered, verify the amount of coverage in case of medical necessity and coverage for the affected vehicle. Remember that electric vehicles in Ecuador that exceed a speed of 45 km/h are considered motorized vehicles and if they are not registered as such, the insurer could deny coverage or if this vehicle is driven by a minor, the penalties may be higher. SPATT coverage is specifically for medical care that does not exceed \$3,000 and provides a benefit up to \$5,000 to the family in the event of a death. It is the first insurance that must be applied in the event of a traffic accident that includes motorized and non-motorized vehicles such as bicycles. If you do not have a vehicle but you are a cyclist, it is best to take out health insurance in the case of an unplanned event.



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A photograph of two men embracing on a balcony overlooking the ocean. The man on the left is older with white hair and glasses, wearing a light blue sweater. The man on the right is younger with dark hair, glasses, and a beard, wearing a denim shirt. They are both smiling warmly. The background shows a clear blue sky, a body of water with a few boats, and a tree with sparse leaves.

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Salud para todos



by Carolina Segarra



The Tricolores
go to the World Cup:
Ecuador's
fourth World Cup
adventure is drawing near

More than a sport, football has become embedded in a nation that is moved by every goal, every match played, and every second that the players of the national team step onto the field. Ecuador has had the opportunity to be in three World Cups throughout their history, dating back to 1930. For the fourth time, Ecuador will send the best players from the national team to represent them during the matches scheduled in Qatar during the month of November. Ecuador's coach, Gustavo Alfaro, has selected players who have debuted in international and national leagues with impeccable performances. The shirts are ready, the players are chosen, and our hearts are already in Qatar.

Soccer is in the air just days before Ecuador debuts in its fourth World Cup. The expectations of the national team have begun to be felt around every corner while fans prepare for the big event. Ecuador is getting ready for their last match in Madrid, against Iraq, before they arrive in Qatar. Unfortunately though, the news hasn't been all positive surrounding Ecuador's fourth World Cup. Controversies surrounding Ecuadorian soccer player Bryan Castillo reported that he was involved in a legal complaint filed by the Chilean

Football Federation (FFCH) and the Peruvian Football Federation (FPF), teams that were left out of the 2022 World Cup. In their multiple attempts to qualify, they decided to present alleged evidence before the Court of Sports Arbitration that affected the credibility of Castillo and Ecuador as a national team. He was reportedly accused of having a false Ecuadorian identity and altering his birthplace and year. The data was verified by FIFA, who ruled in favor of Castillo, which shut down the controversy and demonstrated that Castillo is an Ecuadorian citizen and not Colombian as was presumed.

Every citizen of the countries who participate in the World Cup are filled with passion and that passion is felt within each Ecuadorian this year. The achievement of being selected once again to represent a country on the field is a weight with varied emotions. Our team is undergoing intense training, physically and mentally, in order to prepare each player to leave their all on the field. On November 20, Ecuador will have their first match with Qatar and this has raised some concern with fans due to the fact that they will be playing them on their home turf. Luckily though, the climate of Ecuador in terms of temperature at that time will be very similar, so the high temperatures will





not be an inconvenience in the physical preparation of our players. Other rumors are being reported that Qatar is equally concerned with Ecuador being their first match which just goes to show that Ecuador deserves to be on the field more than ever due to the skill they bring.

When a developing country qualifies for a World Cup the emotion of ecstasy is intangible, especially in the midst of economic and social turbulence. These emotions bring light and joy to our people as we go into our fourth World Cup. Ecuador qualifies for the Qatar 2022 World Cup with 27 goals for and 19 goals against, a favorable score but not the best. The lack of goals for The Tri is an issue that worries Alfaro but he has been preparing his lineup accordingly. His forward lineup is full of scoring prodigies like Enner Valencia and possibly Leonardo Campana, who is rumored to be included as a last-minute decision due to an injury the player suffered while finishing a match with MLS. The participation of Enner Valencia was recently confirmed because of his national and international spotlight, truly coming from nothing and today is recognized as one of our star scorers. In addition, he also participated in the 2014 Brazil World Cup with notorious skill on the field, obtaining international recognition and leaving behind the shadow of Antonio Valencia, another name that is commonly heard within the team for his skill with the ball and international participation on teams like Manchester United for

more than a decade. He is currently retired from professional soccer due to a knee injury, which has led him to form his own soccer team called AV 25, whose mission is to prepare young prospects in Ecuadorian soccer. His participation in this World Cup is not confirmed but his name and image have been used in World Cup advertisements for Qatar. The 26 official players for the Ecuadorian team for Qatar 2022 will be announced on November 11, which is the final deadline to choose players from the 32 countries that will compete for the World Cup.

A look at our participation in previous World Cups gives us certainty that the team is ready to reach the second round like in the Germany 2006 World Cup, where we had one of our best years in the World Cups played. Expectations are high, and Alfaro is not prepared for a loss. The first World Cup that we debuted in, 2002 Korea - Japan, we lost 2-0 against Italy in our first game, despite the fact that we entered strong with a 1-0 win against Uruguay. Thanks to Aguinaga's cross and Caviedes' header, these players knew how to win the hearts of an entire country for more than a decade. In our second match in the World Cup, against Mexico, the scoreboard did not favor us

and we said goodbye to the World Cup in the third match against Croatia in which Ecuador lost 1-0. Although it was not a landslide, the participation and priority of The Tri could have been better. In our second World Cup in Germany 2006, we got lucky winning 2-0 against Poland, later 3-0 against Germany, and we closed against England in the 16th round with a 1-0 defeat. It was a World Cup in which we showed the potential of our team with players who had remained among the best and were selected once again for this match. Although our participation in Brazil 2014 was not one of the worst, it did not stand out either. In our first match against Switzerland we got a 1-0 win thanks to Valencia, in our second game against the Swiss we lost 2-1 in Brasilia, and in our third game

Enner Valencia once again showed his skill against Honduras, but we lost the last game and the Ecuadorian team tied against France 0-0 which left us out once again.

The history of the three World Cups played by Ecuador is brief and has been characterized by the actions of Enner Valencia in the last two World Cups. The expectation for this fourth World Cup is that Enner leads the lineup and gives us our first wins. The pressure on Enner's head is intangible and it is well known that his performance on the field can unleash the fury of the fans, or their total devotion. Our passion will be felt on the field, the team is almost ready, and the fervor is building.

Each match that Ecuador stars in will undoubtedly be supported by each of its fans and soccer enthusiasts alike. Ecuador has arrived at the World Cup once again, and we are ready.



Hi Expat

HiExpat is a magazine that specializes in informing and inspiring the North American community residing in Ecuador, which currently contributes approximately 600M USD to the local economy.

For this reason, we are working to promote hard-working local businesses, who provide excellent service and dedication, in the interest of this community.

We invite all of our readers to invest in the local economy by supporting the businesses that appear below.

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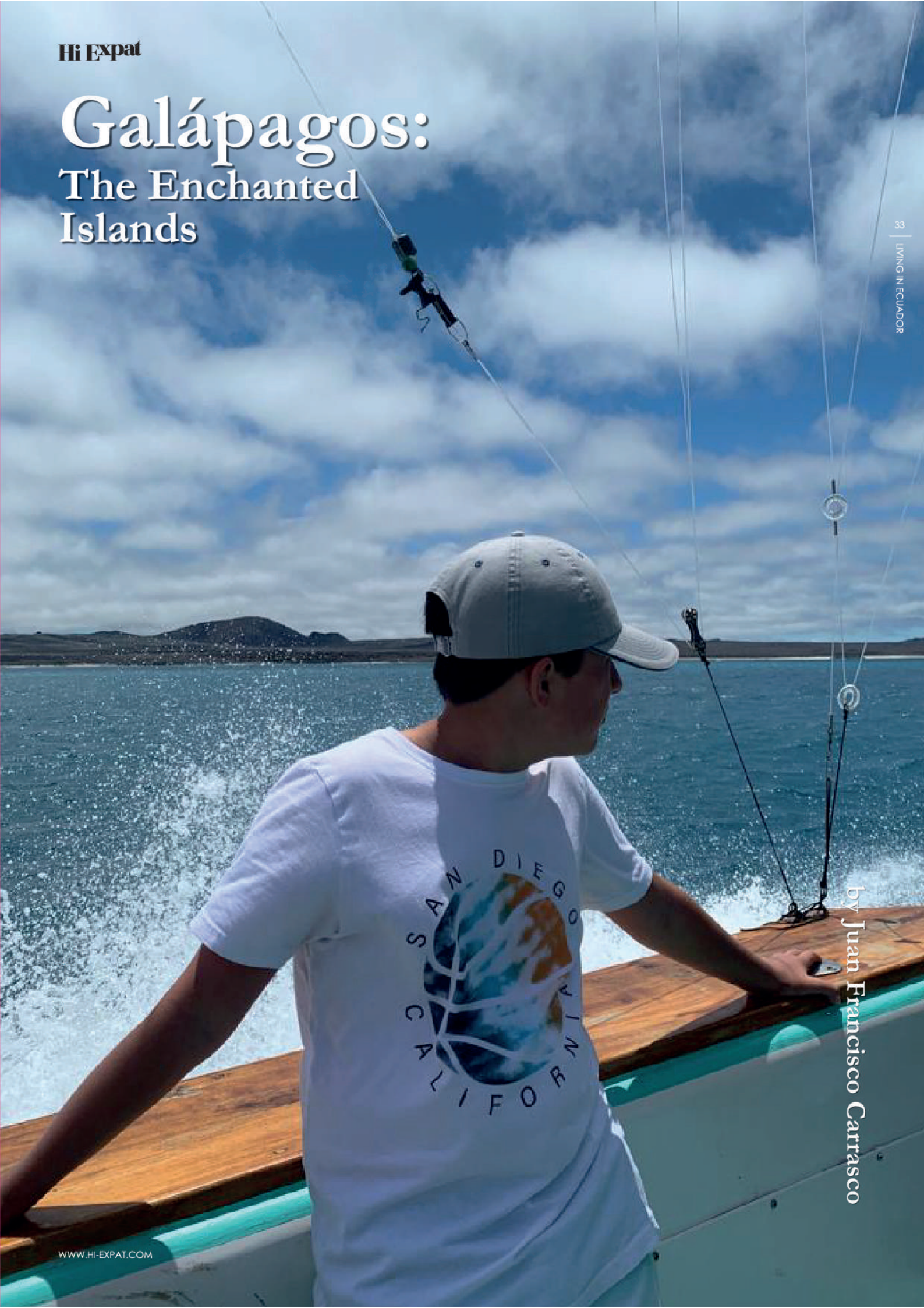
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Galápagos: The Enchanted Islands



by Juan Francisco Carrasco

The Galápagos archipelago, located in the Pacific Ocean at the level of the equator, has an area of 7,970 square kilometers and is made up of more than 233 islands, islets and rocks that were created from many submarine volcanic eruptions a few million years ago.

After many years of evolution, Galápagos has become a unique ecosystem. The main attraction of the islands is the great variety of native and endemic reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals that inhabit only this place in the world. Thousands of tourists visit the islands to admire the natural habitat of some animals such as blue and red-footed boobies, albatrosses, marine and land iguanas, penguins, sea lions, hammerhead sharks, and giant land tortoises.

The Galápagos Islands give shelter to more than 7 thousand species of plants and animals, which have made Galápagos the capital of biodiversity in the world. Because of this, in 1959 the Ecuadorian State declared the archipelago as a National Park. The Galápagos are conformed by two protected areas: the Galápagos National Park that covers 97% of the land surface, and the Galápagos Marine Reserve that covers the ocean territories. According to the official website of the Galápagos

National Park, 95% of the original biodiversity of the islands is still conserved today thanks to the joint work between the Ecuadorian State and many private organizations that seek its protection and conservation.

The biodiversity of unique flora and fauna of Galápagos is very famous in the world thanks to the English naturalist, Charles Darwin. The animals and plants of the islands inspired and helped him to develop his theory of evolution by natural selection of species. Now, some birds, ecological reserves, and even an island are named after him to honor his work and affection for the island. Also, the Galápagos National Park was declared a Natural Heritage of Humanity on September 8, 1978, and is one of the few places in the world that meet all the criteria established by the organization for its inclusion in this prestigious list.

I feel very lucky to live in Ecuador and have a place of this importance only two hours away by plane. I have had the opportunity to visit these magical islands twice and each one of the trips were a unique experience that I will remember for the rest of my life. These islands are out of this world and visiting them transports you to a whole new reality full of unmatched animals and plants you can only see there. The first time



I visited Galápagos, I went to the island of Santa Cruz, the second biggest island, and visited many beaches such as the beach “Garrapateros” and “Tortuga Bay”, which is my favorite one because of the beautiful manglers and iguanas.

In Galápagos, I snorkeled for the first time and I can't think of a better place to do it. I had the opportunity to swim with marine turtles, sea lions and tons of fish of rare colors and shapes. One of my favorite places to snorkel there was “Las Grietas” where you can swim in a natural sea strait created by a volcanic fracture where sea and rain water mix creating a beautiful landscape. Even though the beaches of Santa Cruz are incredible, there are many more things you can do such as visiting the Charles Darwin Research Center to learn about the creation of islands, the conservation methods for the different species, and the tortoise hatchery.

Also, walking away from the shores in the northern part of the island there are many ranches where you can see the land tortoises live in the wild. In addition, you can visit “Los Gemelos” which are two giant craters formed by volcanic eruptions in the middle of Santa Cruz that will give you a very different perspective and view of the island. When I was at the northern part of the island, I also

visited the “Tunel de Lava”, a tunnel created by a lava flow which you can cross to have an underground adventure.

Besides Santa Cruz, on my first trip to Galápagos, I took a one-day trip to Isabella, the biggest island, by boat. During that day, we visited the lagoons of the flamingos, snorkeled in the natural pools of “Conche Perla”, went to a “Playa Larga” beach and made a tour to see the Galápagos penguins, an animal that I love and saw in its habitat for the first and only time in my life.

The second time I went to Galápagos, I went to a new island, San Cristóbal. I never imagined that my experience on the other island would be so different from the first one. It was surprising to me to see how biodiverse the islands were and how none of them looked alike. This proves how vast and diverse the archipelago really is and how remarkable the ecosystem works. My favorite thing about this island were the sea lions because, although I saw them in my first trip too, there were many more of them. All around the island the sea lions shared the beaches with the humans by sleeping on benches, sunbathing, and even approaching us out of curiosity and for me that was amazing.





The best way to get to know San Cristóbal is by taking the tour 360, a tour that in one day takes you to the most touristic places of the island. This tour took me to beautiful beaches such as “Isla Lobos” and “Punta Carola” to enjoy the sun and the beach accompanied by different animals on each point. This tour allows you to observe birds in “Punta Pitt”, a rock where many diverse birds such as the three different species of boobies (blue footed, red footed and Nazca), pelicans, and frigate birds rest. Throughout the tour you will visit many snorkeling points where you can swim with many fish and even marine turtles. The most famous of these places is Kickerock where you can snorkel or dive in the middle of the ocean and admire the most magnificent secrets of it. In there you can even see hammerhead sharks!

While we were on the boat during the tour we were lucky to see a pod of dolphins pass through.

I can't even explain how shocked I was to see more than 50 dolphins in the wild jumping and swimming by our boat, and I am sure that I could only see that because I was in Galápagos. Apart from the tour, you can also visit places like La Loberia, Cerro Tijeretas, Playa Mann, Puerto Chino and Playa Baquerizo to admire how Galápagos isn't like any other place in this world.

Ecuador is a country with an immense biodiversity and I have been lucky to see every region of it, but there is no place in Ecuador that compares to Galápagos and its diversity. Galápagos and its natural beauty is beyond comparison and I am glad that we have this place in Ecuador.





Hi Expat

Ópera Eloy Alfaro

by Ángel Muentes

4 | LIVING IN ECUADOR



Good afternoon Ángel, it's a pleasure to be able to speak with you and get to know a little more about your work. Opera has its roots in the Greek theater and today we know that a promising path is opening for this type of art in our country. Could you tell us a little about how the Eloy Alfaro Opera was born? What is the history of this great cast?

The Eloy Alfaro Opera was born in 2011 when Ecuador was getting ready to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Eloy Alfaro's death on January 28, 2012. During a visit to Ciudad Alfaro I was asked to compose a recital based on the writings of Eloy Alfaro. This recital was performed on the anniversary of Eloy Alfaro's death and was viewed widely on the Cadena Nacional. For this event, the Montecristi Lyric Choir was created, which is the basis of the Le Voci Company. Since their creation they have been contributing to the growth of opera and lyric singing in Manabí, being the first Choir of this type.

How exciting! Would you tell our readers, who are mostly foreigners from the US, about who Eloy Alfaro is and why his story is so important and relevant in Ecuadorian culture?

(Eloy Alfaro was twice President of Ecuador and is considered the "Best Ecuadorian" for the struggles he faced and accomplishments he had during

his terms. He was the businessman that popularized the Fine Toquilla Straw Hat (Panama Hats) by taking his product to Panama and he was also a leader who fought against injustice using his fortune for revolutionary struggle. As president, he carried out many works of great importance, including development of the railway, conservatories, secular education, freedom of worship, voting and education for women, separation of church and state, and leading the liberation of lands for indigenous peoples, among other things. His contributions marked a milestone in the development of freedoms in Ecuador. People know about Alfaro from literature, but the Opera manages to highlight the human and family side of him, since being a man of strong character, he showed in his writings a deep love for his family and friends. The Opera is based on original writings by Alfaro that are performed in the play.

At HiExpat we find the work you are carrying out very interesting and we would love for the expatriate community to be able to participate in this great event! Can you give us more details about where we can see the play?

The Eloy Alfaro Opera opens in the city of Manta on Thursday, October 27, 2022 in Plaza Centenario at the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro, at 7:30 p.m. We will have a cast of 100 artists on stage including the Symphony Orchestra, choirs, soloists, actors, and dancers. We can't wait to see you there!









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GEORGE CARASITI

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A portrait of Don Shader, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a black t-shirt, with his arms crossed. He is standing in front of a landscape with mountains and a cloudy sky.

DON SHADER

THIS IS THE START OF A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS I WILL CONDUCT THAT COVERS LEGAL
ISSUES THAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT AS A RETIREE IN ECUADOR.

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Cotopaxi Summit

by Adriana Hidalgo

48
ADVENTURE COLUMN



So, there I was, standing at 5893 meters above sea level, at the top of the highest active volcano in the world. While the first sun beams started warming my face, I glanced at the most impressive scenery I had ever seen. I could barely feel my toes and I was extremely exhausted. But standing there with a crater full of ashes in front of my face, dozens of Andean peaks surrounding me, and a white snow valley underneath my feet, I wondered, “Was this worth it?”

I started this “vertical journey” 10 years ago, when I decided that I couldn’t live in fear of too many things anymore. My fear of spiders and stray dogs were a lot harder to get rid of, but I could do something about the heights. Mountains and climbing were not only the solution to my fear, but they also gave my life a new direction as I started to get more adventurous in my own country and later, around the world.

It was 12:00 am when the summit attempt started. I took my first step outside of the REFUGIO DEL COTOPAXI and the cold air made me realize that the three pairs of pants, socks and four jackets I was wearing were just

enough for what was ahead. I looked up to see a clear, full moon and the summit that appeared to be much closer than it was. I was the personification of motivation at that point. I was happily carrying in my backpack, my ice equipment, warm water and lots of sweets. In front of me, our guide, The Wolf, was celebrating his birthday and my friend Maria Emilia was behind me. We were one of the first groups to start our attempt that night.

To reach the top, you need to go through a lot. First, about three hours of walking on dry lava dust. Once you get to the glacier, the real challenge begins. In October, the ice is hard and thick, so every step requires a lot of energy. However, seeing the gigantic and unusual formations that the snow has been sculpting on the snowy slopes for centuries made up for all the effort.

It was 3:30 am. We were silently walking one of the easiest parts of the way when I looked down. It was clear enough to see the landscapes the lava had painted over multiple eruptions, the smaller neighboring mountains, and far away my hometown, Quito,

which was illuminated in the distance. I suddenly felt I needed to go home. I was cold, tired, and in urgent need of a shower and a warm bed. Nonetheless, my team had other plans. And since my two months of preparation for this climb were well planned, I was in good physical shape. So, they decided to ignore my complaints and we kept going. We were at 5500 meters above the sea level and we had already crossed the most dangerous area of cracks on the mountain. We were only 400 meters away from the top.

Those 400 meters were honestly the most challenging couple hours of my life. With me, unstopably asking myself, "Why?" I was thirsty, hungry, and dragging my body the best I could through the rocks and ice. The last couple of meters took a lot of motivation from strangers, caffeine, chocolate, and pride. And then, I was there. Seven

hours later, we were standing at the top of the volcano I had been seeing every day on my way to school since I was five years old. The one that felt unreachable and impossible, and I was standing at the top of it. I felt so many things at that moment, that I couldn't even cry.

The way back was just as hard. I was the last one to reach the top and the last one to leave the mountain that day. And then, as soon as I reached the car, it all hit me. The unmeasurable beauty of nature, the city lights, the uncountable shooting stars, the conversations while freezing, the promises of not doing it again, the laughs and tears with strangers, the sound of the ice breaking underneath my feet, the labyrinths of giant stalagmites, the crater, the weight of my bag... Was it worth it? It absolutely was, and I can't wait to do it all again.







by Yves Bechard

My Second and Beloved Home, Ecuador

My name is Yves René Béchard (picture of myself) and I was born into a family of 10 children. We were raised in Hearst, Canada, a little city otherwise known as the "Moose Capital of Canada," located in the deep north of the province of Ontario where we can have -50 degree winters and high 40's in the summer. (picture of moose monument at the entrance of the city)

Our mom and dad raised us to live by three main principles, loving, sharing, and helping each other. So all my life I have helped, and still do.

January 2011, at the age of 55, I came to visit Ecuador and it only took me two weeks to decide that I was going to live here permanently.

The hospitality of the local people that I met made me fall in love with this country. (see picture of my ecuadorian friends)

I have been able to travel and discover the beauty in my country of Canada, but now I admire the landscapes and the gastronomy that I get to discover in my beautiful host country. Apart from missing my family and friends from Canada, on the gastronomy side, I miss my regular "POUTINE." (picture of the poutine) If you do not know what that meal is, well it is a very simple dish...- fresh french fries, good fresh cheese curds that

make the noise... queesh queesh, and chicken gravy. It's greasy but delicious for the belly...lol. It's too bad that the grocery stores in Ecuador don't sell that kind of cheese.

I have had some memorable days in Ecuador. The days after the big earthquake of 2016, it was impossible to not get involved, and I soon was participating in the organized help for the people of the communities that surround the urbanization of Mirador San Jose. We provided them food, and I was part of the team that visited all the houses in the small communities to see who needed repairs. Some houses were completely destroyed and rebuilt with the money that was donated by Canadians.

It was very gratifying for all, to be able to help them as best as we could.

December 19, 2019, was a memorable date for me as well, accompanied by the great Ecuaassist team. (picture of Fernando of Ecuaassist) Fernando was always there with me when completing paperwork or when I had to go to the immigration office. Using the services of the EcuaAssist team, I can tell you all that they saved me from a lot of headaches.

That special day, I received my dual citizenship in Ecuador.

I was very excited because that morning I received the official document in a ceremony where I was able to sing the beautiful national anthem of my new country.

Throughout my studies, in my hometown, the subject that interested me the most was geography.

I knew all the continents, the countries, their capital and most of the big cities around the globe.

What intrigued me a lot was this small country where the equatorial line passed: "Ecuador."

Throughout my life, I said to myself:

"One day I will be there."

I worked 26 years for the Federal Government of Canada and finally retired in December 2015. Since then I have not been able to stay idle.

Today, I spend my time at the Santa Marianita Crematorium where I enjoy time with the people around me. *(picture of Paola and myself)* If I'm not working, well I walk all over the city of Manta and do a little workout at the gym where I live.

I find the city of Manta more and more beautiful, thanks to the young mayor Agustin Intriago Quijano and his employees.

Thanks also to this beautiful and interesting magazine "Hi Expat," which I read religiously every month. I have discovered a lot of new information and places to explore.

Thank you so much **ECUADOR** for accepting me as one of yours.







Crematorio Santa Marianita





by Victor Rexach

A “Plein Air” Painting Paradise in Ecuador

The colonial charm of its architecture.
 The refreshing sound of the four rivers criss-crossing the landscape.
 The constant flight of colorful hummingbirds flitting around the precious mountain surroundings.
 The bright equatorial sun lighting up the pleasant climate.
 These are some of the characteristics that make this place so unique.
 But perhaps the main reason why people instantly feel love and infatuation for this city, is because of the beautiful sky-blue domes of the New Cathedral in Centro Histórico.

This is just the beginning of why so many foreigners are traveling here and deciding to stay. By now you've probably guessed that I'm referring to the cultural capital of Ecuador - the city of Cuenca.

Love at First Sight - Again

In 1980, after graduating from college, I had the opportunity to leave Puerto Rico and live in Florence, Italy for a year.
 I was so drawn to its dramatic beauty, the liveliness of the art scene, the depth of its history, and the abundance of nature all around. I instantly fell in love, and it became my first choice as a place for retirement.
 In 2018, I came to Cuenca, finding that not only did it possess many of the things that had captured my heart in Florence, but also the benefits that would make my life more pleasant, such as housing, health, climate, cost and quality

of life.
 It was then that I realized that this cultural city was the place to start my retirement journey in life. Four years later, I'm still in love.

There is so much cultural and artistic expression here. Its artisans are friendly and hard-working people. Increased recognition and support from the local community and the scores of visitors and new residents, like me, could help expand and enhance the cultural landscape.

I always knew that after retiring I wanted to do something productive and enjoyable related to art, especially painting, which is my favorite visual expression. So, I decided to make a personal commitment to become a volunteer ambassador to help promote and support the Cuencano art scene in my own way.

Immediately after arriving in Cuenca, I joined a group of amateur painters—the Vino and Van Gogh group, directed by talented teacher Amelia Earl—that was gathering every month in “Parque San Sebastián.”

This was the beginning of improving my creative skills, meeting new friends and professional artists, and affirming



my passion for painting.

In 2019, a year after I made Cuenca my new home, the unexpected pandemic hit.

Like most places in the world, it wreaked havoc on our plans, dramatically affecting tourism, the hospitality industry, restaurants, and businesses in general.

But despite the uncertainty of when it would end, the enthusiasm and desire to continue expressing ourselves through art was never lost. The passion and resilience in the city made me realize my desire to find an even greater way to encourage painting and support Cuenca's local talent.

The Joy of "Plein Air"

"Plein Air" is a French expression meaning "in the open air." It was coined centuries ago but brought into the mainstream art world by French Impressionist painters like Claude Monet, my favorite famous French artist.

In fact, much of Monet's work was done "plein air" in the diffuse light of a large white umbrella.

Inspired by this artistic discipline and motivated by possibility in the wake of the pandemic, the idea for "PaintourArt" was born.

I immediately started looking for countryside places of cultural tourism interest that would also offer inspiration for outdoor painting.

In May of 2021, PaintourArt team set out on

its first excursion to the town of Biblián about a 40 minute drive north of Cuenca, where Trebol Roses Farm would serve as the stunning backdrop for our plein air expression.

It turned out to be an incredible all-day experience!

We began with a delicious breakfast, followed by an educational tour of the greenhouses where we learned about the planting, cultivating, and harvesting process for more than 30 different rose varieties.

A gourmet lunch followed, and then we began our open-air creations with wine and relaxing music under the direction of well-known Cuencano artist Cristian León, "Cleon," my best friend and business partner. After an inspiring day of creativity and companionship, we each went home with our own works of art and great memories.

PaintourArt is still Blooming

I'm very blessed and grateful that interest in PaintourArt continues to grow. I, along with Cristian, continue to seek out unique venues that will provide the perfect plein air settings for our tours.

To date we have painted at Ecuagenera Orquideas del Ecuador in Gualaquero, in Cajas National Park, and at the Inti-Kamari resort in Yunguilla, among



other sites.

No matter the location, the participants feel a deep sense of relief from stress on the mind, which in turn relaxes the body. Studies show that relaxation minimizes muscle soreness, joint pain, headaches, and other physical ailments, resulting in a freer expression of our human senses.

I've learned that the act of painting, particularly in inspiring environments, releases endorphins (the "feel-good" hormones) which open the pathways for a sense of joy and fulfillment. Painting can, indeed, transform us into more positive, well-rounded human beings.

PaintourArt offers a fun, interactive, and educational way to accomplish it. And that's what makes our tours so attractive.

Another artistic outlet I've been blessed to create as well is called "Tullpuna Nights Wine and Art," a monthly painting gathering presented in collaboration with Cuenca cultural center idiomART.

If you're interested in painting for the first time, or desire to enhance your skills, it can be the perfect place to start exploring and discovering the artistic creativity within you. You don't have to be a Pablo Picasso or Salvador Dali to

express yourself artistically. Painting, in my opinion, is an experience that cannot be compared to anything else. You just have to try it, to feel it.

As 2022 is coming to a close let us look back, not just at the many challenges and difficult situations in the world that may have uprooted or delayed our dreams, but also at the many things we've learned and how we've grown that will carry us forward in a positive direction into the new year.

PaintourArt is committed to helping showcase Cuenca as an important tourist destination for art and painting lovers from all over the world. "Plein Air" will continue to be our primary focus and we look forward to welcoming the first group of international painters. They just might be from France! So, join us and let's paint.

For more information about PaintourArt, Tullpuna Nights Wine and Art, and Victor Rexach's other entity, "Let's Meet Again in Cuenca and Florence," and "PaintourArt" pages, look for them on Facebook, or write to paintourart@gmail.com





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