

Hi Expat

INSPIRING & INFORMING EXPATS

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Tourism in Manta and Manabi Province

As the Admin for a Coastal Facebook group here in Manta, I have seen so many requests from people wanting to know what the area has to offer as far as tourism attractions go. It makes me crazy when someone from the group says “Oh, there’s nothing to do in Manta.” It sets off the invisible fireworks in my head!

There are so many tourism options available here in the greater Manta area, and so many more all over Manabi Province. I am going to talk about some of the things to do here in Manta, and then I will touch on some of the other sites throughout the province.

The first, and most obvious, attraction is the number of beaches and waterfront everywhere along the Coast. The Canton of Manta has twelve beaches just within its borders, and there are over

350 kilometers of oceanfront in Manabi, starting down south in Ayampe, and stretching north past Pedernales and Jama. Certainly, there is a beach that will suit your needs somewhere along the Pacific coastline if you cannot find one inside the confines of Manta and its suburbs.

Water sports? What would you like to do? You can start with surfing; Manta's main beach, Playa Murciélago, is a hotspot for surfers from all over South America. There are several major competitions held here every year because of the quality of the waves. If Playa Murciélago is too much for you, you can go south to Playa La Tiñosa, where you will find a smaller beach with a good break, more than suitable for what you need. Ayampe, three hours south of Manta, is also a surfer's paradise, as is Canoa, an hour and a half north of Manta. You can find great waves to surf in Manta and Manabi, with several great options!

Do you want to try something different? How about kiteboarding? Santa Marianita, on the southern edge of the Canton, is known across the country as the "Kiteboarding Capital of Ecuador!" Last time I checked, there are at least three schools for learning this amazing sport based right along the beach. On a clear, windy day during kiteboarding season, you might see ten to twenty kites spread out along the beach, in full color and speeding across the tops of the waves! It is a blast watching these people flying around even if you don't want to participate.

Do you like to get underwater for a little sightseeing? There are several options available here for scuba diving, snorkeling, and some other adventures! There is one company

that has underwater sleds that they tow while you hold on and get a terrific ride.

There are boats on the beaches in various places that will take you out for some sightseeing, including harbor tours, whale watching (in season), and there is a big inflatable banana that you can ride, with full expectations of getting wet. There is also a boat at Murcielago Beach that will strap you into a parachute and get you airborne over the beach. There are also some local companies that will take you out for some reef fishing close to shore, or out deep for the big boys! Nothing to do? I don't think so!

Let's get off the beaches and out of the water. Like the watersports side of things, the land-based opportunities are abundant if you would like to do in-city or quick day trips from Manta. There are many possibilities to explore our great city by car or by bus if you would like to see the area.

South of Manta, on the Ruta del Spondylus, National Highway E15, there are some great tourist spots. One of the most popular for visitors to our region is the Pacoche Rainforest tour. Pacoche is a jewel that holds many wonders, including two species of monkeys, a wide variety of birds, tiny miniature frogs, big hairy tarantulas, and a myriad of jungle plants and palms. It is a special treat to do the hike through the forest but be warned; you will get wet and muddy in there, so dress appropriately!

Just a few miles down the road is San Lorenzo, both the town and the beach. San Lorenzo Beach faces west and sometimes gets some big surf, too. Situated on the small mountain at the north end of the

beach is El Faro, the red and white lighthouse that has become a landmark along our coast. El Faro has a trail that is quite challenging, but once at the top it offers you some incredible scenery in every direction. For those that make it to the top, the mountain rewards you with unforgettable views!

You can stay at one of the hotels along the beach in San Lorenzo, and after having a hearty breakfast, you can continue your southern swing with a trip to the village of Liguíqui, home to an ancient Ecuadorian civilization that built fish corrals with the rocks on the beach. At low tide, these corrals still trap all sorts of sea life, functioning today as they have for 1500 years and helping the local people with food and products to sell. Octopus is one of the most common treats found in the tide pools inside the rocks.

Are you into history? There are several great museums with some terrific artifacts from the different civilizations that have made our province their home for the past few thousand years. There are two in the City of Manta; The National Bank Museum and the Cancebi Museum. The Bank Museum is across the street from Playa Murcielago and offers some of the best artifacts that you will see in the province. They have a collection of several distinct cultures, with ceramic and stone relics abundant. They also have a few metal pieces, as well.

The Cancebi Museum is in the El Centro area, a block in from the Central Park along Malecon Avenue, along the water. Central Park is easy to find, and you just need to ask someone where the

Cancebi is. If you go east along the water, there is a pedestrian footbridge that goes over the Malecon; get off there and the park will be right in front of you. The Cancebi has just been remodeled and is currently hosting the photography of a well-known local artist. It is quite different from the Bank Museum; both are worth visiting.

There is another museum that I have heard good things about, but it is not always open. It is in the village of Pacoche, close to the Rainforest. I have not been able to catch them when they have been open, but some of the local guides may be able to help you if you want to visit. Please let us know if you get to visit and tell us how!

Portoviejo is the capital city of our province and the city, and the surrounding area, has a few cool spots to check out. These can be done in a day trip from Manta, or you could stay in the city for a couple of days. Portoviejo has some nice municipal parks; my favorite (and many others) is Parque Las Vegas. Las Vegas is a big, sprawling park with lots to offer, but one of my favorites was the mural wall, featuring quite a few local artists, many of whom painted scenes from the April 2016 Earthquake, a 7.8 monster that did an awful lot of damage in Portoviejo and Manta. Both cities have done an excellent job of rebuilding and reactivation. La Rotunda is another very nice park in Portoviejo.

I took part in a bus tour three years ago that went to an incredibly interesting archaeological site and museum about 15 minutes from downtown Portoviejo. It is Cerro Hojas – Jaboncillo, and it is said that this is a lost city that may be the largest ancient settlement in South America, larger even than



Machu Picchu in Peru. They have a first-class museum, with some great displays, and you can go to the top of the mountain to visit the actual location of the city itself. Archaeologists have since discovered that this city is spread out over several small mountains that formed the nucleus of the Mantegña Culture, which was the dominant civilization in this region for about 1500-2000 years. If you are into discovery, this is a place you will want to visit.

Speaking of small mountains, there is one that has some pretty cool elements! It is also about 15-20 minutes outside of Portoviejo. It is called El Tigre, and it has some adventurous attractions like a swing that goes out over the edge of the mountain, like the famous one in Baños de Agua Santo, in the Sierra. There is a deck that is suspended over the edge, and lots of photo ops in every direction. It is a very scenic area, especially in the rainier months, when everything is green.

Manabi is a large province. It has a wide variety of sights to see, from coastal beaches and rock formations to the scenic coastal mountains that run throughout the region. There are farms of every kind, some of which can be visited for the day, with tours and activities to enjoy. There are longboat canoe rides on Poza Honda, Manta's biggest reservoir, and scenic tours of another large lake, Esperanza. Birdwatching tours and kayak trips into the mangrove swamps to quiet pockets of nature, where you will feel that you just stepped out of the real world into a world of yesteryear

are also available.

Birdwatching is a great pastime here in Manabi. Birds of every shape, size, and color live here or migrate through here on their way to somewhere else. Shorebirds are everywhere along the Coast, even the famous blue-footed boobies of Galapagos legend. Just recently, Chilean flamingos have been spotted by several people right here in Manta, in the La Poza marsh area, along the waterfront. I have hummingbird feeders, and we see several species of hummers right on my balcony. The amount of bird species right here in my city neighborhood in Manta always amazes me. Bring your binoculars and logbooks! You are going to need them!

So please don't listen to those who would have you think there is nothing to do here! Manta and Manabi Province have enough to keep you busy for weeks! And don't get me started on how great the food options are here. Manabi Province is famous all over the country for having the best food, and I can tell you that the rumor is true. You can spend 30 days and nights here and go to dinner in a different restaurant every night and have something delicious every time! Just the icing on our cake, I would say!

So, if you haven't started packing your bags yet, what are you waiting for? Manta is getting better every day, and we are waiting for you!



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A light blue silhouette of Ecuador is shown on the left side of the page. Three orange dots are connected by curved lines, representing flight routes between the Galápagos Islands, Quito, and Guayaquil.

galápagos
quito
guayaquil

by Roosevelt Rojas



Ecuador, The South American Hub of Health

Nowadays, it's common for people to have grown up in large cities and towns that were built for business and industry, for traffic, or for daily commuting. Many people have been worn down by this reality, and their bodies have started to feel sick and exhausted.

In order to recuperate or, at the very least, live the best life possible for the remainder of their days, a lot of people need to transition to a much healthier atmosphere. If there is any country that has a privileged combination of elements that enhance the health and vitality of those that live there, it would be Ecuador.

The experience of living in Ecuador will lead you to see all of its landscapes. There are landscapes for every taste, jungle, coast, mountain, caverns, rivers, lakes, and more. The country has numerous natural places that are grand and beautiful. Ecuador is among the top 20 countries with the most biodiversity on the planet. It also has a lot of small old towns, preserved throughout time, as well as more modern cities and towns, adapted to today's world. Among its tourism attractions are the Galápagos Islands, Cotacachi, Cuicocha, Quilotoa, Chimborazo, and on the more urban side, there is the city of Cuenca.

The tourism sector has started to become more and more important to Ecuador's economy and development. According to figures from the World Bank, Ecuador reached its historic record of tourists in 2018, getting around 2.4 million visitors that year. This figure dropped in 2019, due to reasons we already know, but it barely went down to 2 million, which is still a high number. Furthermore, the immigrants known as "expats," mostly from developed countries, have also been growing in the last 10 years. Cities like Cuenca promise an excellent place for retirement, with many amenities and affordable prices in comparison with the same lifestyle in developed countries.

In the magazine *International Living*, Ecuador and the city of Cuenca in particular, have already been in the top 10 countries to retire for four years straight. The magazine conducted a thorough study of people from the US living overseas, and it was evident that Cuenca was the greatest candidate due to its affordable cost of living, safety, and healthcare options.

Additionally, many networks of specialists and service providers in the field of health and wellness have been forming a large number of therapy, treatment, and rehabilitation centers accessible to tourists and expats, something that is intended to be extremely beneficial to them. There are regions with a higher concentration of these wellness centers but, in general, they are throughout the country. The regions with more thermal baths, spas, retreats and "ecolodges" are Tungurahua, Imbabura, Azuay, Napo, and Pichincha.

In Cuenca, there are numerous facilities that are devoted to various activities, including yoga, chi gung, and even martial arts. There are centers for cutting-edge therapies including apitherapy, Rolwing, several types of massages, energy, and magnetic therapies, among others. Centers for nutrition and meditation retreats are becoming more popular near the outskirts of the city. You can also find these types of centers in Yunguilla and Vilcabamba.

Unquestionably, Ecuador's abundance of sources of high-quality food and water is one of its wonders. This fact supports one of the fundamental pillars of health and wellness. Certainly, this is one of the best places to start making the dietary changes you've always wanted to but haven't been able to due to the challenges of obtaining fresh, organic vegetables. Ecuador has one of the most stable and widespread traditions for organic agriculture in the region because it is inexpensive to produce without toxic chemicals. Not only that, but there are more farmers every day exploring new growing methods, soil enrichment techniques, and business models to reach the final consumer more effectively. If that doesn't impress you yet, Ecuador also has an abundance of plants, seeds and fruit that are considered highly nutritious and medicinal.



"There are so many people around the world choosing Ecuador, out of so many countries there are to choose. It's very interesting," commented Roosevelt Rojas, professional Rolfer and member of the World Spa Organization. "I have seen how many expats arrive here drained and worn, and with the networks of wellness and health centers growing, they end up living longer than they expected here in Ecuador, and with a very high quality of life," he finished his idea.

The local market has also been receiving a number of product lines for health-related products like vitamins, super-nutrients, and supplements. For instance, you may purchase Saviloe, a beverage made with real aloe vera plant, available in the store with other beverages. You may also buy a bottled horchata infusion, which is a concoction of local flowers and herbal essences.

"We have had the great privilege of bringing more life and health to many expats that have come, both as temporary visitors and permanent residents," said Jissy Hernandez, another therapist and member of the committee of the World Spa Organization. "We know what it is to arrive from other countries, tired, drained and with the wish to recover our energy and vitality. This country has made that possible for a lot of people," she ended.

So, without a doubt, you should look at Ecuador if you're seeking a comfortable retirement and want to make the most of your remaining golden years.

Hi Expat

Baños de Agua Santa

by Amanda Vilorio



Baños de Agua Santa is the perfect location for a modern fairytale: a small town with colorful streets surrounded by magical mountains and a beautiful waterfall that you can see from almost every place in town. But also, in this magical place, it's easy to find a modern restaurant or enjoy an amazing and fun party.

The Ecuadorian highlands are a region with lots of beautiful cities and small towns, and in Tungurahua Province lies Baños de Agua Santa, a very touristic city that stands 1,820 m above sea level, between the end of the mountain area and the beginning of the jungle region.

Even though the urban part of Baños is a nice and entertaining town to be in, the magic, the fun and the main attraction of this place is its nature, the places that you can see in nature, and the amount of activities you can do.

Similar to many cities in Ecuador, Baños de Agua Santa is located close to a volcano called Tungurahua, which is also known as “Mama Tungurahua”. This location protects the city against strong winds, but because of the convergence of the jungle and the mountains, the temperature in the city tends to be low (15° to 25°C), but at the same time it's a subtropical rainy weather zone.

It's not a difficult task to get to Baños. You can take a Cooperativa Baños's bus from one of the 56 agencies across the country. And once you're there, the adventure starts! If you're someone that likes to enjoy the wonders that Mother Nature brings, Baños de Agua Santa is the place for you. Some of the main natural attractions in Baños are waterfalls, and there's one that stands over any other: Pailón del Diablo. Before you're able to see this spot, you have to walk through a footpath surrounded by trees, and once you finish, you'll

be standing on a path of curvy stairs watching an 80 meter waterfall whose water runs with a really powerful force. Warning, be prepared for the chance that your clothes get wet.

One of the greatest things about being in the mountains is watching things from high up, and you can do that in La Casa del Árbol. As its name says, there's a beautiful treehouse whose tree firmly stands in front of a cliff, and you can have the chance to “fly” above it. Yes, fly, or at least do something that feels like flying, be in a swing like in your childhood days. One of the branches of the tree is the “Columpio del Fin del Mundo”, and there, once you decide to jump, you can take a seat, give some steps back, let yourself go and see the beautiful landscape in front of you every time the swing lifts you up. And if this calls your attention but you want more of a rush, you can go to the “Columpio Fantasías de Volar”, the highest swing in Latin America.

And speaking about a rush, Baños de Agua Santa is perfect for those who love extreme activities. There, you can do puenting (bungee jumping), rafting, canopying, canyoning, rock climbing, horseback riding, paragliding and walking through hanging bridges. Or, you can go to the Amazon region, do more fun and adventurous things there, and go back to Baños when the day ends.

But being in touch with adrenaline is not the only way to have fun here. Whether you're religious, or not, you should visit “Santuario y Basílica Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Agua Santa de Baños,” a 78-year-old semi-gothic church in which you can appreciate its architecture and murals, give a prayer to the Virgen de Agua Santa and visit the Fray Enrique Mideros

Museum that is right next to the Basílica. There, you'll see all the offerings and gifts people gave to the Virgen de Agua Santa, a part dedicated to the anthropological history of Ecuador, colonial art expositions, and also, as a curious and contrasting fact, there's an exposition of embalmed animals that you should see with your own eyes.

There's also a not so popular, but totally worth it place to go called El Refugio del Viento Art Gallery. In this lovely place you can delight your eyes with many beautiful paintings that have different techniques, made by the artist Edguin Barrera. After that, you can drink a delicious coffee or hot chocolate to warm your body. And, if you still have energy and want to hang out at the end of the day, you can be part of Baños's night-life by going out for some drinks in a bar or pub, or dancing in a club.

Baños gives the impression of being a small town, but once you're there it's hard to decide where to go or how to organize your schedule (and maybe your budget, lol) so you can have enough time everyday to visit as many places or do as many activities as you can. Something that I'm really sure of is that it doesn't matter the reason for your trip or who you're going with, Baños de Agua Santa is always the perfect destination. In Baños you can have a good time with your younger and older family members, your kids, your partner, your friends, yourself or even your pet! Make Baños de Agua Santa your next destination in Ecuador!





by Marcos Chiluisa

T3 Visa:
Ecuador's 90 day
Tourist visa
and **Extensions**

Ecuador has a lot to offer as being one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world for the past decade. Over the years, Ecuador's government has gone to great lengths and considered many avenues to facilitate its various visa processes to help ensure that all tourists have an easy time obtaining any form of visa - especially a tourist visa.

In a nutshell, a tourist visa grants any visitor, from their initial date of entry, an accumulation of 90 days to visit Ecuador. Those 90 days do not have to be used consecutively - you have one year from your initial date of entry to use them, and when you reach your one year anniversary, from your date of entry, those 90 days reset. One common misconception is that the 90 days reset whenever you re-enter the country - this couldn't be farther from the truth. Think of your 90 days as your bank of 'vacation days' from your employer - you don't have to use them all up right away, but you only have one year from the date you got 'hired' (in this case, your initial date of entry) to use them all up.

But what can you do if you want to stay more than 90 days in one year? Luckily, Ecuador also offers extensions for tourist visas. To get an extension, the fee is equivalent to a third of Ecuador's Monthly Minimum Wage - which is, as of 2022, \$425 USD. With an extension, you will be granted another 90 days to reside in Ecuador as a tourist but unlike your first 90 days, this extension is for consecutive use only and expires exactly 90 days after being first granted. You must apply for your tourist visa extension within 30 days of its expiration date, as well as understand that if your initial date of entry anniversary is coming up soon, the extension will only cover the days you will need to meet your anniversary date, which will then reset your tourist visa.

Tourist visas and extensions are pretty simple to follow, but if you happen to lose track of your days while visiting Ecuador, there are certain fines and consequences you need to be aware of. If you happen to overstay past your granted 90 days from your tourist visa, or your extension, you will be subject to a fine equivalent to half of Ecuador's monthly minimum wage and will have to leave the country. If you want to return to Ecuador before your initial date of entry anniversary resets your tourist visa, you will need to pay the fine and apply for a consulate visa through your country's Ecuadorian embassy or consulate. If you're not keen on paying that fine, then you can wait one year from the fine's issuance to have it cleared and

then you can re-enter the country. The worst case scenario would be if you never applied for a tourist visa extension past the 30 day grace period granted to you after your tourist visa expires. In this scenario, you would not only receive a fine equivalent to half of Ecuador's monthly minimum wage, but you will also receive a Notice of Voluntary Exit. If you receive this notice, you will unfortunately no longer be able to apply for an extension or any kind of visa to extend your stay.

Ecuador does its best to be an attractive and welcoming destination for all kinds of tourists and even offers extensions if they would like to extend their visit. To ensure you have a hassle free experience while getting to know our country, we always recommend consulting legal professionals experienced with immigration to avoid any headaches in the future.



by Inés Arcentales



by Inés Arcentales

by Carlos Ramirez



Business Innovation: New goals for the Insurance Market in Ecuador

The pandemic that hit the world in 2020 forced all economic sectors to be innovative and implement new ways to sell their products. In Ecuador, micro and macro companies struggled to adjust to these new technological requirements. These companies had been handling physical forms, premiums, contracts and doing face to face sales, things that neighboring countries were already carrying out digitally. Technological development in Ecuador is less than in other countries and there were a number of technical failures during this process that prevented us from providing the service that the community expected. It was during this time that the insurance industry had to make the decision to pivot in order to keep up with the demands of the world, and that's exactly what it did.

Innovation almost always requires us to explore unknown territories. In 2019, Ecuador remained stable according to government reports, but in reality things were different. The changes that Ecuador had suffered in recent years, before the pandemic, in terms of education, health and social security, would begin to take their toll during the pandemic. The changes to academics exponentially affected the preparation of our professionals and education declined in many

aspects. In terms of healthcare, Ecuador has high rates of malnutrition and this does not help the overall health of the population. Additionally, safety had been affected by the idea of opening our borders, this being mainly the reason why insecurity is currently one of the most sensitive issues in the country. This micro-analysis of the state of Ecuador in 2019 tells a lot about the aspects of a developing society and with this information one can easily see what we were experiencing before the pandemic even began.

In March 2019, the digital and economic divide was heavily accentuated for the general population. According to INEC, the unemployment rate in 2019 was 3.9%, a figure that would not vary for 2021, in which the INEC reported the following data, "In 2021, the gross employment rate at the national level was 62.5%, at the urban level it was 58.4%, while in the rural area it was 71.7%." (INEC, 2021) Additionally, "the adequate employment rate at the national level was 32.5%, at the urban level 39.8% and at the rural level 18.7%." (INEC, 2021) Most people are not satisfied with this data since notoriously the pandemic left a much higher percentage of people without work, people who today live from informal work, or who are on the streets. In Ecuador, the measurement of official data does not always adhere to

the truth when there is still an unemployment rate of 3.6% in 2022. Although considered lower than previous years, it still shows economic shortcomings that impede development and progress post-pandemic.

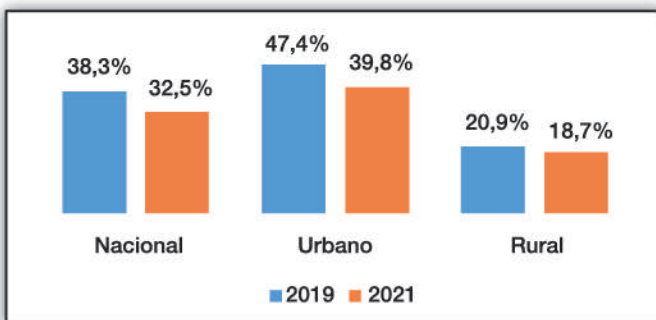


Figure 1 ADEQUATE EMPLOYMENT (INEC, 2022)

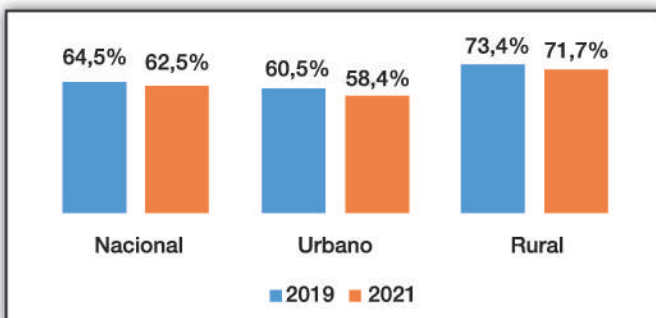


Figure 2 GROSS EMPLOYMENT (INEC, 2022)

This economic deficit made it difficult for people to pay insurance premiums. Vehicle insurance was hit first once the drop in sales began. Since people were not using their vehicles for work or transportation, many wanted to cancel their policies and request refunds for already paid premiums. In the field of health, the reality was no different. There was a lack of medicine, operating rooms, ICUs, missing people, full morgues, and bodies in garbage bags. Additionally, students were without schools or colleges and Ecuador was in complete chaos due to a virus. This destabilization accentuated the gap between those who had private and public health insurance. Many contracts began to be canceled due to non-payment, but the policies that remained were being used for unthinkable accidents. The insurance companies were receiving very low profits but were required to pay high rates of payment to medical providers.

In regards to travel insurance, these companies were obligated to implement coverage for flights lost due to COVID-19. In countries such as the United Arab Emirates the airlines covered hotels and flights in the case a flight was canceled due to COVID 19. Under health plans in life insurance

policies, COVID, and death due to COVID, was covered under endemic diseases. The automation of services and products became a necessity in Ecuador and many companies adopted telework and used online platforms in order to continue working.

The situation in the country was alarming and this led the population to a state of considerable stress and anxiety. Some of the foreigners living in Ecuador chose to return to their countries of origin, hoping to find relief in a stable medical system. The pandemic left us with 458,504 confirmed cases of infection and 15,900 confirmed deaths, plus an additional 5,660 cases of probable deaths from its contagion.

The technological changes that businesses were forced to undergo due to the pandemic were largely unseen by the mainstream media. Ecuadorian businesses were forced to innovate and improve their web pages, add easy-to-use digital options for consumers, and fully digitize the delivery of policies, the entry of claims, payments, accounts, and signatures. It is probable that these automated processes have existed for many years in the countries where many of our readers come from, but the reality is that today these are still new processes for many businesses in Ecuador. Additionally, technological advancement and digital learning can be complex and the problems we encounter while trying to automate our processes are largely due to the lack of technological infrastructure available in Ecuador, such as a lack of bandwidth. This is the reason for our overall slow transition and common delays in functioning.

The pandemic brought us together and separated us in different ways, but above all it forced us to understand that the future lies in innovation. The creation of marketing strategies that allow you to connect with your buyer and show your product on a large scale are part of the future. Ecuador, and other developing countries, must implement the complete digitalization of their processes as soon as possible. The road is long and we still have to learn a lot from other countries. We must learn from others such as Lloyd's, pioneers in the insurance market and a leader in products and sales systems. We must also evaluate and change our health, travel and vehicle insurance models so that they include greater benefits and better coverage, with consumer-friendly reimbursement systems. We also need to establish systems that connect doctors, clinics and affiliates directly so that communication is simplified and the needs of the consumer are met efficiently. These changes will ensure that Ecuador is known as a destination not only for tourism, but also for technology and innovation.



The honey hunters of Manabí

by Peter Stromberg

When he walked to the edge of the manicured lawn I could tell that something had caught his attention. At first I assumed he spotted an exotic bird or a sun bathing iguana as he stared intently into the bushes. I stared with him. “What are we looking at?” I was wondering. Was it the plants? After some time I asked and he said that there’s honey in those bushes, he pointed about 20 meters away. “Could he smell the sweet nectar?” I wondered. He said, “Look at all the bees.” At first glance as I looked a little closer I could see a random insect fly by here and there. As I looked longer I could see a faint pattern form. The bees were consistently flying through the same opening in the dense bush, like a bee highway. It took me about five minutes to really focus and see what Jair was seeing. He explained that at the end of that “road” is their hive, and that’s where the honey stash would be. Little did I know that he planned on climbing down there and getting that honey.

After the venom started entering my blood stream I could feel my face start swelling up immediately. Like after you get punched in the nose hard and your whole face feels bigger. My chin, neck and cheek had been stung. I was hit. I counted four stings and I knew that I was about to be in trouble if I panicked. The urge to run was overwhelming only superseded by the urge to smash the vicious creatures that were stuck in my beard and repeatedly injecting their poison in me, but you can’t smash ‘em. A brief childhood memory flashed in my mind, my brother and I always had a rule of no face punches while fighting. No punching in the face! I thought to the bees.

My body was about to start betraying my orders, involuntary action was the next step. Time was running out. I could feel my feet getting ready to run whether I wanted them to or not, my legs vibrating, twitching like a race-horse in the starting gates. “Focus”, I thought, “It’s just a little sting.”

Jair had told me, “Whatever happens, do NOT smash the bees, they release a chemical that the other bees can smell and then the whole hive comes after you.” Being attacked and choosing not to defend yourself or react is not an easy task. Each sting seemed to be stronger than the last as the venom compounded in my system. Previous stings had always landed on my hand or arm, this was my first face sting of many face stings and I don’t find them as pleasant as getting stung on other “tougher” parts of the body.

The laughter from the honey hunters broke my singular focus on the pain of the stings; a smile crossed my face. I realized that I had my eyes closed for longer than just a blink. I opened my eyes to see Jair’s shirtless back with a hand size patch of bees crawling on him. He was laughing in earnest as he stuck his head into the hole in the ground where the bees had their honey factory set up. The other fellas blew smoke in my face to help the bees move on in a calm manner, reluctantly they stopped stinging but were still having a hard time making their way out of my beard. I could feel them crawling around, feeling helpless as I couldn’t help them along. “Don’t panic”, I thought, “It’s almost over.” Just then my lungs rejected the smoke that I was breathing and I exploded into an uncontrolled coughing fit.

They laughed harder and my coughing turned into laughing, eventually.

As the pain subsided in my neck and chin area, I was treated with a parting gift from the last bee at the fiesta. The bee hit me with his stinger on the eyebrow just to help me even out the swelling and make it more dramatic. My rapidly swelling forehead slid over my left eye and within 3 minutes I could have been that handsome guy from the Goonies twin brother. The guys finished digging out the hive and pumping smoke into the hole to subdue the colony. One unified buzz, 1,000's of insects panicking and flying around filled the smoky atmosphere. Bzzzz. Comb after honeycomb was extracted from the enormous crater that had been hollowed out by the bees.

Whenever I picture people harvesting honey, the bee keepers always seem to be dressed in those stark white bee suits and big spacious helmets with screens for easy vision and breathing. They look like with a couple minor adjustments they could be used to go with NASA astronauts to the moon. I fully imagined these new friends of mine to have those types of suits when they said they'd come back with "equipment" to harvest the honey. As they walked up with simple t-shirts wrapped around their face like a couple ninjas and shorts I knew I was in for a treat. The "equipment" consisted of a t-shirt wrapped around their head, only exposing their eyes; in addition to another t-shirt that they were actually wearing as a shirt and shorts. Not Jair. He took the shirt off that he was wearing to wrap around his head. "The bees must not have stingers," I remember thinking to myself. Normally my encounters with

this bee were very relaxed, I didn't bother them and they stuck to themselves. However, now our intention was not to just watch them fly by, we were going into their homes to commit an armed robbery; like a group of sweet toothed thugs robbing a 7/11 in some greasy city.

The people that live in Manabí and work the land or fish the oceans are my favorite people on earth. They are hearty and generous, kind and quick to smile; much like any peoples that live off of the sweat of their brow and in rhythm with the elements. The central coast of Ecuador is a very special place where significant traces of ancient civilizations and structures that rival Machu Picchu have recently been discovered. There is an old history of living with the land and harvesting the fruits of the forest and ocean. From extensive terracing and irrigation marvels to constructing tidal fishing traps that still function today, the pre-Colombian civilization of the central coast of Ecuador thrived in their natural environment. Although much time has passed between the ancient Mantenos and today's current civilization their spirit lives on through the symbiotic relationship that exists between the "gente del campo" and mother nature.

Jair and his group of buddies live off a typical middle class income in Manabí. Jair owns a plant nursery/landscaping company in San Jacinto here on the coast of Manabí. Minimum wage in Ecuador is around \$450 a month and most people that don't have a title make around that or less. That keeps the older "food" traditions alive and well; like using the entire animal as nothing goes to waste. The first time you get an entire chicken foot in your soup you'll know what I mean. Fishing to put food on

the table is different than going out with a case of Budweiser and some worms; no catch...no dinner. It seems to me that the best food I've ever eaten is always prepared by the people that are part of their own food process. From growing pigs to growing fruit, people that produce food have a special way of preparing their craft. Whether it's spear fishing in the rivers around central Manabí, to exploring/gathering from the dry forest around Jaramijó, these guys are looking for food. Honey is a commodity that doesn't spoil and wild honey can fetch a very lucrative price if it can make it to the right markets.

During the recent economic downturn due to the pandemic Jair has had to turn to some creative ways to bring home the bacon, so to speak. Honey hunting has been a steady source of supplemental income during the more challenging times, not to mention these guys would rather be nowhere else than romping around the forest looking for their treasure, talking shit the entire time. I knew from past experiences that it was going to be interesting watching these guys harvest the honey with their low-tech gear, I didn't realize that I'd be there up close and personal. Although the harvest didn't produce as much as I thought my stings were worth, it was some of the best tasting honey I've tried. Eating fresh honey and smashing the wax honey comb up in your teeth, that must be one of the oldest pleasures known to humans. That flavor and texture is something that connects with our DNA and pulls on our smile muscles. Think about tasting honey

and you feel warm and memories start popping up, it triggers familiarity. It's a primal sensation, the taste of honey. The rich flavor heightened maybe when you have no less than 8 fresh bee stings from your neck to your scalp.

If you get the chance to try some wild honey from the markets in Ecuador I highly recommend it. It's not easy to come by for the people that harvest it and is worth a bit more due to the physical effort and stings that it takes to acquire. The unique flavors are something that you can't find in the honey from the grocery store. A lot of times honey vendors just happen to be selling their product at local markets on the weekends in recycled liquor bottles. Although at first sight the presentation can be a little different than what you're used to, it is usually from the immediate area and will taste like the dominant blooms at the time. Bees that are harvested around avocado trees have different flavored honey than bees that produce honey in the eucalyptus forest.

Because of the uniqueness of this dry tropical rainforest, the flavors that come out of the honey here can't be replicated. The flavor comes from the forest and most of the plants that are found here are not found on other parts of the globe because of the merging of two climates and ocean currents.

But remember; if you get invited on a honey hunt, stay by the smoke.





**It`s
Something
Different**

[@canoasuites](https://www.instagram.com/canoasuites)

by Carolina Segarra

Quito: Leading Tourist Destination in South America

Quito, known as San Francisco de Quito, was formerly known as Quito, named after the Quitu-Cara indigenous population who were the original inhabitants of the Pichincha area in Ecuador. The word “Quitu” means place or space in the center of the world. Quito was founded with the name “Quitu” on December 6, 1534, by Sebastián de Benalcázar, a Spanish conqueror who arrived in America in 1514 on one of Columbus' ships. Benalcázar, like other conquerors, committed genocide to an indigenous population to obtain a new colony. The Spanish, with the blood of the Incas still on their hands, took Quito and implemented the policies of the Spanish crown. It should be noted that before December 6, 1534, there had already been two confrontations to take Quito. In the first confrontation, the Cañaris, an indigenous population, allied themselves with the Spaniards, which cost them their lives at the hands of the Inca leader Rumiñahui. In the second encounter, the few Incas who still remained faithful to the Incan throne engaged the Spaniards in battle after Rumiñahui ordered the execution of the deserters and traitors. The Spaniards outnumbered them both in numbers and in artillery, and Rumiñahui had to flee in the direction of Pucará de los Sigchos, in Cotopaxi. The Spaniards located him there, severely injured, in the region that today bears his name. After that, he was imprisoned and subjected to torture in order for the Spaniards to learn more about Atahualpa's tremendous wealth. Rumiñahui was burned in a makeshift bonfire after being tortured

at the hands of the Spanish to learn the whereabouts of the treasure of Atahualpa that remains a mystery today as well as the location of his grave.

The history of Ecuador is marked by the red stains of the blood of our indigenous who were killed by the Spanish crown in its eagerness to enrich itself with our gold and establish Catholicism as the only religion. The punishment of a polytheistic people in the name of a single god allowed Spain to detain many of our treasures in its museums until today. They tell stories of the salvation of a people that, according to history, had been discovered by the Spanish. But Quito already existed and was part of the great Inca empire. This city is one of the oldest capitals in all of Latin America. It's also the first city declared by UNESCO as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The city is surrounded by twelve volcanoes, among them: Pichincha, Cotopaxi, Antisana and Cayambe, which make up a majestic Andean mountain range that has allowed Quito to win countless prizes and awards for its beauty.

Quito has majestic landscapes only a few minutes from the city, and is surrounded by valleys that highlight its beauty. Due to its expanding population, Quito has been able to revitalize its economy and expand its commercial and tourist sectors, setting new standards for tourism in Ecuador. For this reason, the WTA named Quito the Leading City Destination of South America for the current year.

This leading city has tourist attractions that you will love. Here is a list of the tourist attractions that, in Hi Expat's opinion, you must not miss.

1. Mitad del Mundo
2. Basílica del Voto Nacional
3. Iglesia de la compañía de Jesús



4. Iglesia San Francisco
5. Centro Histórico
6. Plaza Foch
7. Teleférico de Quito
8. El Panecillo
9. Volcán Pichincha
10. Parque la Carolina

This short list of the tourist attractions of Quito will allow you to see its architecture and the importance of Catholicism in the capital. Its churches, covered with gold leaf, with great saints and majestic domes, will leave you amazed at its architectural beauty. As for the Mitad del Mundo, it is a magical and ancient place where you can do small experiments such as making an egg stand on a nail, or being in two hemispheres at the same time. If you like amazing photographs, the Panecillo can provide you with the best postcards for your memories.

As for Quito's gastronomy, it is very diverse and delicious. Being a metropolis, the list of restaurants is quite extensive and you can find every style of food from traditional food such as caldo de patas, to Indian food. Some of our recommendations for a complete culinary visit are these restaurants:

1. Anker by URKO- Gourmet Traditional Food
2. Nuema- Gourmet Traditional Food
3. Chez Jérôme- French Cuisine made with local products
4. Ciré- Progressive Ecuadorian Food
5. Shibumi- Sushi
6. ZFood- Seafood

7. SOMOS- Ecuadorian Food
8. El Sálnes Gastro Picantería
9. De La Llama
10. Pims
11. IKARO- Michelin Star Winner

In these restaurants you can try the finest Ecuadorian cuisine, in its most elegant version, and some of the leading dishes of international cuisine. We take these restaurants for our recommendations since they have won the 50 Best Discovery Award in 2021. One of them even won a coveted Michelin star which, in gastronomy, would be the closest thing to an Oscar.

You have to check out the wonderful gastronomy in Quito, but the list of tourist attractions is very extensive and there is something to do for everyone. Included in this list are the magical volcanoes. If you are more adventurous you can opt for climbing the Pichincha volcano, or the Chimborazo. If you want a more relaxed plan while in the mountains, you can visit Cabañas del Lago in Otavalo, which is known for its beautiful landscapes next to Lake San Pablo. Without a doubt it will be one of your most magical stays in Ecuador. Enjoying the country in which you live or visit should always be a doctrine of life, whether in an expensive place or in a low-cost one. The prices of lodging, food and tours vary and will always depend on the budget you plan for your trip. You will also find many places for which you do not require a budget, such as visiting parks in Quito or touring the historic center, in addition to being able to enjoy sweets and snacks while you get to know the city for less than \$5. It all depends on your itinerary and your desire to know Ecuador.



Aeroman Sprint Triathlon

by Sarah Canez



On Saturday, 16 of September, two Cuencano expats, Daniel Canez & Bob Cox, competed in the 60+ age division of the 23rd Aeroman Sprint Triathlon in Manta.

With lovely and cool overcast skies, the race began at 07:00 at Playa Murciélago. Organized and hosted by the Ecuadorian Air Force, participants began the competition by swimming 750 meters in the ocean in four separate groupings. Swimmers then transitioned to their bicycles riding towards the Air Force base in Manta for a total of 20 kilometers, bicycling on roads and on the airport runways near the base. Participants finished the race by running five kilometers with the sun beginning to break through the clouds back to the base.

Both Bob and Daniel have raced over the last few years in Cuenca, Guayaquil, Salinas, Crucita, and Manta, competing in Half Ironman triathlon races, GFNY bicycle competitions, and various bicycle or running only races. Daniel and Bob, both 69 years old, are veterans of numerous running

marathons, triathlons and bicycle competitions in Texas and Arizona as well as other states and Canada, before moving to Cuenca 11 years ago (Bob) and 9 years ago (Daniel).

Bob and Dan train in and around Cuenca and along the coast roads before competing. The high altitude in Cuenca helps to increase heart and lung capacity, while bicycling along the Ruta Spondylus with minimal traffic allows for faster cycling.

As the Aeroman Sprint Triathlon was organized by the Ecuadorian Air Force, the majority of the competitors were young members of the military, both men and women, although no less than 5 men over 60 participated. The full race winner, a 21 year old young man, finished the race at 56 minutes 15 seconds.

Nevertheless, Daniel and Bob enjoyed the pre-race training and the competition itself, coming in with excellent race times on Saturday with an 1 hour 50 minutes for Bob and 1 hour 59 minutes for Daniel.





BilDev Tours Travel Agency

by Luis Velasquez

Do travel agencies still exist? This is a question that many of the readers of this article may have, especially in this era in which almost everything can be found on the Internet through social media and travel apps. And contrary to what one may think, travel agencies have actually been increasing in the last few years, except for 2020 due to the pandemic, at least in the US (IBIS-World, 2021). It is a fact that if you would like to travel you can find almost all the required information on the internet by yourself, on travel blogs, in YouTube videos, or on websites specialized in traveling. However, many people still use travel agencies and there are many reasons why hiring the services of one when you travel could be the most convenient thing to do. In this article, I'll explain some of the most important things about them.

Before the existence of the internet for public use, one had to go to a travel agency or call their travel agent to purchase a ticket and perhaps also buy tour packages. Nowadays, you can do this same thing in a matter of minutes with a connection to the internet and a credit card. However, there are still things that are not so easy to deal with if you do it all by yourself.

If you are a person who does not have a lot of time to keep an eye out for deals on flight fares every day, to check the travel requirements, and to read all the details about the destination, you may consider hiring a travel agent.

They will take care not only of looking for the best flight fares according to your needs, but they will also have the most up to date information on travel restrictions and requirements (which has become even more important with the COVID restrictions).

Hiring the services of a travel agent can save you from last-minute surprises, a big headache and actually hundreds of dollars. For example, if you are new to purchasing flight tickets online, you may forget to add luggage or do the web check-in. A good travel agent will inform you about all that you need to know at the moment of the purchase. Many of them also include web check-in service, so that when you are at the airport you may simply check your luggage and you don't need to worry about extra processes at the last minute, for which some carriers will actually charge very high fees.

If you purchase your ticket via any carrier or travel website and find yourself in an emergency, hardly ever will you find the immediate and personalized assistance that you will need. You may end up on a chat with a chatbot who will not understand the urgency of the situation, or worse, being on hold listening to a "relaxing" melody for more than 30 minutes until someone answers your call. On the other hand, when you purchase the ticket through a travel agent, you know you will be dealing with a human who knows you and will treat you as a human as well. Someone that you will be able to turn to in the case of needing assistance. Travel

agents usually have better methods to get a hold of the airline customer service channels or they have the capacity of solving your needs by themselves.

Many people prefer purchasing tickets online because they say that fares are cheaper online, but this is not always true. Travel agencies, on many occasions, have access to special offers or can add tour packages with discounts to your travel itinerary. Even though travel agencies may charge you for extra services like travel consultancy and assistance during your trip, in most occasions the extra costs are worth it, mainly for peace of mind as previously mentioned.

In Ecuador, in order to exist, all travel agencies must first register with the Ministry of Tourism and receive authorization from the municipality in which they are located. These documents must always be in a visible area when visiting a tourist agency. This ensures that the agency completed a series of processes to be authorized to offer tour and travel services. The registry of the Ministry of Tourism will show the type of agency they are authorized to work as.

According to the Ecuadorian Law there are four types of tourist service agencies, which are as follows:

1) Travel Wholesalers: Travel Wholesalers do not sell directly to people. They only sell to Interna-

tional Travel Agencies and Dual Travel Agencies. They sell tour packages negotiated with tour service providers in different destinations to offer the best prices to travel agencies that will sell directly to travelers.

2) International Travel Agencies: The classic travel agency that sells tickets and assists with travel consultancy for destinations all around the world. In Ecuador it is very common for travel agencies to also provide assistance with obtaining tourist visas. The most in-demand are the USA Tourist Visa (type B1/B2) and the Schengen Visa (short-stay).

3) Tour Operators: The companies that take care of creating, developing and operating tours within Ecuador. They are focused on domestic and inbound tourism. They do not sell flight tickets directly, but can sell tour packages in Ecuador that include flight tickets.

4) Dual Travel Agencies: These are agencies that have the faculties of International Travel Agencies and Tour operators at the same time.

In conclusion, if you are a traveler with experience and have the time for researching and preparing your trip in detail, you might not need a travel agency. However, if, for assurance, you prefer the old-school style of going to a physical travel agency and speaking with a person that you know will be able to take care of you in case of any issue, purchasing through a travel agency will be worth it.



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Natural Reserves

by Nefi Lara

Breathing a breath of fresh air is wonderful. Nature has a range of colors, smells, and textures to offer us. In all its immensity, it is capable of sheltering more than a million life forms and birthing the existence of these animal and floral species. However, with the evolution of humans, the work of mother nature has been destroyed. Replaced by cement, plastic and other systems, we have built artifacts that improve the way of life of humanity. It's amazing how nature can react to its destruction. Although it seems illogical, it is as if mother earth had to develop a deadly virus that would paralyze humanity in order to heal itself.

In 2019, no encouraging news was reported regarding the environment, and everything pointed to an inevitable extinction. However, by the beginning of 2020 a virus unexpectedly paralyzed the world. The agony, the pain, and the suffering that we felt took center stage in the world while we were locked up. From one moment to another, the big cities, and the small ones, were all desolate as if people never existed. For the first time one could hear the birds flying and singing. They were always there, but noise pollution prevented us from hearing them. A near three months without going out, and little or no use of cars, was enough for nature to rest from the mistreatment we had given it. This is the exact reason why we need more nature reserves in our world.

The environmental sector has made an effort to combat the problems we face and this effort has not been in vain. Natural reserves have been created all over the planet and they exist in order

to protect the specific area and species that coexist in it. “According to scientists from the IUCN and the UNEP Environmental Conservation Monitoring Center, there are currently 202,467 protected areas in the world, covering almost 20 million km² or 14.7% of the planet's land, excluding Antarctica. We are not far from the 17% target set for 2020 by the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.”

(IUCN, 2016) In Ecuador there are eleven national parks for the conservation of the environment.

These are:

- Cayambe Coca
- Cotopaxi
- Galápagos
- Llanganates
- Machalilla
- Podocarpus
- Sangay
- Sumaco
- Yasuni
- Yacuri
- El Cajas

The official government website of Ecuador (Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition) states that, “National Parks in Ecuador aims to accomplish the following conservation objectives”:

- 1: Ecosystem protection
- 2: Species protection
- 3: Natural resource management
- 4: Management of cultural resources
- 5: Research Facilitation
- 6: Provide tourism alternatives



It is of utmost importance to establish habits that are aligned with environmental objectives. These include replacing disposable utensils with reusable ones, reducing the use of disposable plastic, recycling our garbage and becoming more familiar with the color codes that environmental professionals use to avoid contamination. Nobody is perfect, but small acts make a big difference. Loving nature and enjoying its beauty has a cost that cannot be bought with money. Rather, it requires us to examine and change our behaviors in order to reap the benefits

Climate change has impacted our lives significantly in many ways. We experience times of intense heat and others of extreme cold, and these weather phenomena cannot be controlled. This is a clear example that nature is demanding that we make a change if we want to continue

existing as a species. The pandemic, infernal heat, disasters and more have shown us what nature is capable of continuing to do, with or without us. Imagining our earth as someone to take care of is a good way to immerse ourselves in reflection and rise up to take small steps with a big impact.

In Manta there are a few youth organizations such as JCI, Mingas por el Mar, and Jóvenes de Otro Planeta who raise awareness about the environment. They organize cleaning and training days in order to educate and get the community involved. It is safe to say that the actions and intentions of these guys are convincing Mother Earth to give up the idea of completely eradicating us as a species. Without a doubt, this generation gives me hope because no other in the past has done what these youth are doing today.



Hi Expat

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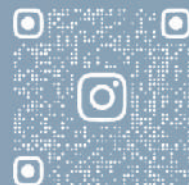
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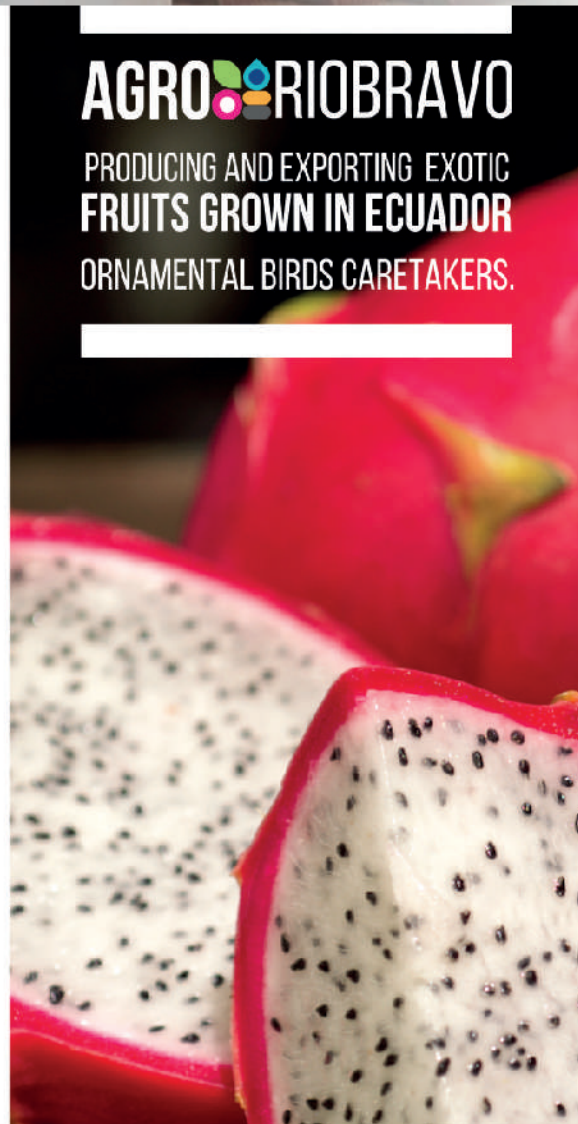
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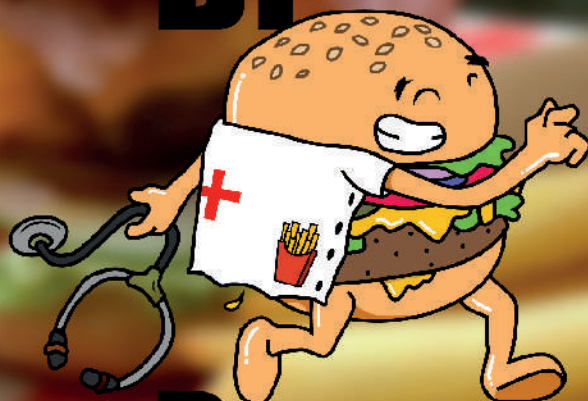
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by Franklin Heredia G

The Magic of the Southern Ecuadorian Coast



If living in Ecuador is comparable to living in paradise, then living on the coast is an even greater blessing, and here's a few reasons why.

From Ecuadorian parents and nationality, I grew up in the city of Manta but it was not until my teenage years, thanks to surfing, that I ventured to explore the southern part of the coast for the first time. I headed towards the renowned destination of Montañita, a place of great fame worldwide for its particular "freedom lovers" lifestyle.

Today, 20 years later and after hundreds of waves surfed, I have witnessed the development, not only of the highway and roads, but also of the communities established along the way.

With a rustic but majestic landscape, a rural way of living, and the tranquility and joy of the people who inhabit it, paradise is around every corner. These "underrated" destinations grow peacefully in harmony and respect for nature, almost at a different rate from the rest of the "modern" world.

For proof of this you may see children playing peacefully on the streets and paths in the area or adults and the elderly practicing old traditions. Surfing has also become an emblematic sport and local merchants have prospered thanks to the

dynamic economy generated by local and international tourism that is present, with some tourists even having the desire to settle here full time. This is the essence and peculiarity of the "south coast."

Getting to the area is relatively easy, whether you are approaching from the cities of Manta or Guayaquil, from both points with a trek of approximately 300km, the journey is full of exuberant vegetation, native communities, and more than one attraction that will leave you breathless.

Why is it a dream destination?

The focus of this article goes beyond the description of a single place on the 'south coast.' We could focus on the youth and attractive day/night life of Montañita as an example, but as a regular visitor and resident of these locations for almost two decades, it is timely and even transcendent to focus on the elevated feeling that we all experience when we travel to places that enchant us.

It is remarkable how we are able to find ourselves in places where the perfect adventure and activities are waiting for us. These activities allow us to reconnect with our inner self and reignite the adventurous spirit inside us. It is not only

adventure that ignites us, but also environment, the food and people. And the food down here will never cease to satisfy, as it practically comes right off the tree.

The ocean view ranches, the forests with specific flora and fauna of the region, hidden waterfalls, horseback riding, and beach tours are just some of the many reasons why this part of the world will amaze you.

But if we had to mention one outstanding feature of the 'south coast' or any of its stops, it would definitely be the extraordinary diversity of personalities that you will meet. Wonderful souls from all over the world, including the local people who have similar values, seek to share life with people who are interested in a more united world without judgment.

The art of knowing and exploring, always being open to new things, a sense of wonder, the joy of learning something new at every moment, and sharing and enjoying the here and now (which, after all, is all we have) are not utopian ideas. It is the essential creed to fully enjoy the magic that this Ecuadorian life has to offer.

Touring the south coast of Ecuador is healing, it is living in love.







Harper's Bizarre

by Julie Harper

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I just had perhaps the most bizarre, out of control, craziest birthday of my life! I did something so ridiculous, so outrageous, so out of character, and so out of my “age range” that I am still mentally recovering from it.

I RENTED A CHIVA, also known as a party bus.

Now I have to preface this a little bit. There’s a reason that something this ridiculous happened and I’m not going to take total blame. *No way!* This is the sequence of events. You can make up your own mind. But I’m sure you’ll side with me in *clearly* seeing I wasn’t at fault.

Earlier in the month, I was at a birthday celebration with some Ecuadorian friends. We went out for breakfast to Casa Rosada in Manta. By 10 a.m. we were back at the birthday girl’s home, drinking Baileys Salted Caramel Liquor, and eating birthday cake with extremely thick, sugary aqua and purple colored icing. (Breakfast of champions, indeed.)

Anyway, I happened to mention my birthday was coming up and immediately I think I fell into some sort of sugar crazed *outofmyhead* syndrome. Without anyone noticing, I slipped out of normal ‘me’ and became ‘alternate me.’ Now folks, ‘alternate me’ isn’t very smart and she certainly isn’t a good decision maker, but she is more fun than a barrel of monkeys and makes really *super fast* decisions, albeit not well thought out.

I *never* celebrate my birthday. I don’t even acknowledge it. And people around me know that. As an adult, I think I have had one birthday party which my sister threw for me when I was in my 20s. Anyway, when my Ecuadorian friends heard I had a birthday coming up, they became giddy, *gleeful* (like *crazy* gleeful, certainly high on sugar icing and Bailey’s) at the thought of another

reason to celebrate something, *anything*. They began pressuring me.....”You must have a party!” They wouldn’t let up! Finally, I mentioned that *perhaps* I would have a little cocktail party on my patio, but I just said that to shut them down. I had no intention at all of doing that. But these “chicas” got a hold of my birthday and flat out *hijacked* it.

Further and helplessly, I continued on the sugary icing, Bailey’s Sip, Slip and Slide...

Well, the next thing I know I’ve got phone numbers for these chivas (party buses) stuffed in my purse, and later, like a *crazy* woman, I’m *actually* contacting the chivas, making arrangements for them to bring the bus by so that I can ‘*approve*’ of it (like I’m some fancy person), and pay a deposit. It happened so quickly. And my Gringo friends weren’t helping at all. One of my friends even said, “It’s my birthday too and I want to do something special, I’ll go in half with you.” Now what was I going to do? I couldn’t disappoint Marcela. I watched in horror as my ‘so called’ good friends were cooperating in my demise, egging me on, even translating and reviewing contracts, and picking songs for the playlist!

Not a single one of them ever said,

“Julie, stop! You need to think about this. This is crazy. This is for young people!”

I was trapped! I felt myself losing all control. And in no time at all, I was posting the event on the local WhatsApp thread for Gringos and Amigos. The response was immediate and overwhelming. Everyone wanted in, like party animal addicts, none of them were looking out after my welfare! Again, *‘not helping here!’*

If you have ever seen a chiva party bus, you can understand the immediate interest. The *pull*. They are big, extremely colorful, and beautifully lit with dozens of tethered balloons and music blaring. It is a sight to behold. And knowing that you're going to be getting on that bus and dancing and singing with up to 50 of your closest friends is intoxicating!

"I went on a chiva and hated it," said NO ONE, EVER!

The night of the party was finally here. I was full of dread and excitement. I wondered aloud if I would be able to make it until 1:00 a.m. My friend and I made sure we had cab fare in case we had to bail and go home early, unable to hang. And like a good Girl Scout, I encouraged others to do the same. We all gathered and waited.....and then....there it was, in all its glory of party balloons and lights, as "I've Got a Feeling" by The Black Eyed Peas, my all time favorite party song, played loudly. She was **BEAUTIFUL!** A feeling of excitement rushed over all of us as we screamed in delight! Everyone wanted to be us, we just knew it! And who wouldn't? We were the 'cool kids.' We clambered on the chiva, other friends already boarded from a previous pickup point, and they already had the party going strong! Everyone immediately poured a drink into cups draped by a cord around our necks. I passed out whistles to everyone and we started down the road, slowly and loudly singing, dancing, blowing whistles and making complete idiots of ourselves! It was *fabulous!* We were *fabulous!*

Passengers in passing cars waved frantically and fist pumped our party cries. The bus snaked through town by busy restaurants, clubs, and the malecón. Cars followed us, blowing their horns, troops of teens on bicycles followed behind us, popping wheelies, flashing big smiles and laughing. We had ourselves a convoy! The DJ played our preselected music but always obliged when someone wanted to dedicate a song. The fog machine would send out its cloudy haze as revelers grabbed hold of the dance pole in the middle of the bus and shimmied down it, the pole sometimes accommodating as many as six dancers at a time. Partiers hung from the back of the bus and overhead straps, waving wildly at cheering onlookers. I shot glitter bombs off the back of the bus, in the bus, and one right in Jenny's face while her mouth was agape. It was a total accident but OMG, you should have seen the horrified look on her face! Her face and tongue, completely coated!

There were benches along both sides of the bus but no one sat down. The DJ tried several times to get people to participate in Karaoke or games but everyone was caught up in the music, dancing, hugs and kisses, well wishing, and so many *'I love yous'* etc. The bus was full of so much merriment and pure fun! It was incredibly infectious.

In the morning when I woke up, I laid in bed, trying to coax myself out of my slumber. I felt something in my mouth....what *is* that?.....ah...glitter. Can't imagine how Jenny felt! My years of *not* celebrating or acknowledging my birthdays are over. It's a hell of a lot more fun to party with my friends and be surrounded by their love. Every day of every year is special and everyone should have the pleasure and privilege of recognizing how special *I am* at least once a year! If you want to feel special, you have to treat yourself special. Happy birthday to me!



by Inés Arceñales



by Inés Arcentales



by Inés Arcentales

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TACU TACU

by Rolanda Stinson-Smiley

Tacu Tacu, Peruvian Fusion

We all know that on the coast seafood is king and local Ecuadorian classics like ceviche and encebollado are staples here in Manta. But I hope that if my food articles are showing you anything, it's that Manta has a little more to offer when it comes to international food. Over the last few months, I've written about Argentinian, Mexican, and Italian food here in Manta. With this issue, I will continue with the international food theme and introduce you to Peruvian food. Yes, there's a Peruvian restaurant here in Manta, **Tacu Tacu**.

Tacu Tacu is located on the famous Restaurant Row, on the corner of Avenida Umiña 2 and Calle 32. Tacu Tacu boasts itself as a Peruvian fusion restaurant and has been in Manta for around four years. It is a favorite here and is enjoyed by locals and expats. Their classic flavors of Peru are rooted in indigenous traditions and reflect Peru's multicultural history. Peruvian culture is definitely on display when walking up to the restaurant. Tacu Tacu proudly displays the red and white flag of Peru in front of the restaurant and the outdoor seating area. I love that the weather in Manta allows many restaurants to have outdoor seating and Tacu Tacu takes full advantage of that with a large outdoor space. Inside is very cozy and nicely decorated, with a largely stocked bar in the center of the restaurant. The staff are all dressed nicely in white shirts and black slacks and are ready to serve you.

The menu at Tacu Tacu is expansive and upon first looking at it, I definitely saw some Peruvian dishes that I love. And I was not at all surprised to see coastal Ecuadorian dishes that have come to be favorites as well. The restaurant name, Tacu Tacu, is actually the name of a Peruvian dish. It's on the menu in several varieties. Tacu Tacu, the dish, is red beans and rice

mashed together like a casserole. The restaurant offers the tacu tacu dish with either seafood or lomo salteado (another famous Peruvian dish). Lomo salteado is sirloin steak chopped into pieces and sauteed with onions, bell peppers, and tomatoes. Traditionally it is served in a gravy with white rice and fries and is definitely a menu option to try at this restaurant. However, on this visit, I decided to try their version of rice and beans (tacu tacu) with the lomo salteado because I couldn't resist two delicious Peruvian dishes in one hearty meal. This dish had the sirloin served with the veggies and gravy, the rice and bean mash on the side, and a fried egg on top. It was delicious with so many wonderful flavors and textures.

Other notable Peruvian dishes on the menu are causa and ceviche. Yes, Peru has their own version of ceviche and it's not much different than Ecuadorian ceviche. Their ceviche is just a little spicier because they add aji. Also, there's a little crunch because maiz tostada (toasted corn) is also added to the bowl. Of course, it's served with chifles and aji on the side. Causa is an interesting dish because Peruvians think of it as a potato casserole. To me, it seems more like a potato stack. The dish consists of a thick layer of mashed potatoes on the bottom, topped with a mixture of seafood, and the top layer is more mashed potatoes. It's usually accompanied with a sauce and a nice garnish on top. It is a really pretty dish and is a must-try for potato lovers.

The Tacu Tacu chefs definitely gain inspiration from flavors all over the world. The menu has a little bit of Italian with some spaghetti, fettucini, and risotto dishes. I have tried the lomo con spaghetti al pesto. The lomo steak was grilled to perfection and served alongside a heaping portion of

pesto spaghetti. Very good! There's also inspiration from Ecuador, Manta specifically, with chicharron de pescado (fried fish nuggets) and camotillo (whole fried fish). The camotillo was cooked the same way as they cook it in most restaurants in Manta, breaded and fried whole. They added an array of seafood around it, covered it in a yellow sauce and served it with white rice on the side. Peruvian aji is usually yellow and I'm pretty sure this sauce was an aji and garlic sauce. It was very rich in flavor and complimented the

textures of the dish. The final dish I tried was the chicharron de pescado, which was fried fish nuggets served with yuca fries and a salad. French fried potatoes are preferred by most here, but if you ask me, yuca fries are a strong contender.

Tacu Tacu is an excellent and unassuming treasure amongst the local restaurants here. With great food, international flavors, and a relaxing atmosphere, Tacu Tacu is definitely a go-to place for when you are in Manta.





by Inés Arcentales

KONTIKI WAYRA

by Carlos Nuñez



Kontiki Huiracocha is known as the God of creation for the Incas and as legend has it, he arrived in the north of Ecuador (now the coasts of Manta and Portoviejo), got lost, and never appeared again.

In 1948 Thor Heyerdahl, a Norwegian, arrived and wanted to prove that there was once trade between Polynesia and the Incas. So, he built a small boat made out of balsa, an Ecuadorian wood, and he named that boat La Kontiki. This story inspired our idea, but we are carrying it out aboard a catamaran, which is a little bit more enjoyable. Given that my family owns and operates tuna boats, I saw an opportunity in a shipyard, in the shape of an old, abandoned hull. This was where I got the idea for oceanic journeys up Ecuador's coast.

I went to Guayaquil in search of a spare part for a tuna boat and the owner of the boat told me, "You see that yacht, I'll sell it to you!" He told me the story of the yacht. Before buying, I decided to spend some time in the Galapagos, to see what they charged per person and per trip on a yacht like this. My first thought was that it was unlikely to find another yacht that offered the same experience as this one.

In the world of the sea we have two very important days, the day we buy the boat and the day we sell it. Boats demand a lot of attention, a lot of maintenance, but in order to avoid the second day (selling it), I came up with an idea. I kitesurf, so if I have a catamaran for 6 people, I can take kitesurfers from all over the world on my boat. This way, I will have money for its maintenance and thus the Kontiki Experience company was born.

We could say that Kontiki is being created from the ground up, starting with the demand. There is no demand for this product. We have to look for it, which is the most difficult part. But with the help of social networks, advertisements, and testimonials, we will surely go viral in no time. Therefore, now is the time to spread the word with the local residents and with the expat community, because in a year or a year and a half we will

undoubtedly be fully booked. At least we hope so.

One of the good things that the pandemic has taught us is that we don't need to be sitting at a desk from 8 to 5 every day in order to work. There are new ways of doing things. You can be working in Puerto Cayo, in the middle of nowhere, with good wifi, and be productive. We know we can always do better. We built Kontiki on the idea that one day we can be known as the "Monaco of South America".

We are proud to finally introduce Kontiki as a new brand. We are aware that Kontiki is meant for a specific market and we are interested in working with the readers of HiExpat as one of those markets. Since we value the expats who have decided to call Ecuador home, we will be offering promotions to those who come to us from HiExpat.

We started in August 2019, then the pandemic came and slowed us down a bit. Finally, as of March 2022, we are 100% operational and we are happy to have made this dream a reality. When people think of the Ecuadorian coast, they only think about the beaches. But the Ecuadorian coast is not only the beaches, it is so much more than that. We are introducing the world to a special place that is not very well known. We have essentially created experiences that follow the customs, culture, and cuisine of the Ecuadorian coast, in an itinerary-driven, all-inclusive package where you go onboard a luxury boat to get to know the coast of our country in a way that has never been done before.

For more information, you can contact us at bookings@kontikiexpedition.com and we will provide you with additional information. We have 3 options:

- 3 nights and 4 days
- 4 nights and 5 days
- 7 nights and 8 days

There is no minimum requirement for how many guests you can book on your trip. Our cabins are for 2 people, either two separate beds or one bed for couples.

We have 9 cabins on the boat. We think it would be ideal for a large group of friends or family to book together, but you can also book fewer people and enjoy new company. Just like in a hotel, we offer an all inclusive package (without alcoholic drinks) that includes breakfast, snacks, lunch, dinner, soft drinks, expeditions, tickets to parks, transfers and more.

Visit any of our social media sites to find out more about us. Our Facebook page and Instagram can

be found at Kontiki Expeditions and we also have an Instagram for the ship at @mykontikiwayra. You can also go directly to our website at www.kontikiexpeditions.com.

We are super excited to tell you more about Kontiki Expeditions and we are happy to lead you in this experience that takes you down the Ecuadorian coast in a never before seen way. We can't wait to welcome you so you can learn about and take advantage of this experience that is unique to our coasts.



by Inés Arcentales



by Inés Arcentales



by Inés Arcentrales





by Inés Arcentales





Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home

by Paola Bardellini

Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home is a pioneer company with its first crematorium located in the province of Manabí. We are a company that values trust and we are characterized by the support we provide to our clients, executing our protocols with the greatest possible transparency, and allowing family members to designate a trusted third party to verify all of the process's procedures.

Hi Expat: Thank you very much, Paola, for your time and collaboration in carrying out this interview. We have heard so much about the remarkable development of the Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home. HiExpat is a magazine dedicated to the foreign expats who live in Ecuador. Most of our readers are North American retirees who come to enjoy their golden years in paradise, in Ecuador. That is why we find it very important to publicize the services that Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home has to offer to this community. Could you tell us a little bit about the process to prepare a funeral or a cremation with Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home? What other services does your company offer when it comes to procedures with embassies, transportation, viewing, and financing?

Santa Marianita: Thanks to you for allowing us to inform the expat community about our funeral services. It's true that there are a lot of retirees from the US and other countries living out their golden years in our country. Thanks to the diverse landscapes, gastronomy, and regions, along with the hospitality of our people, Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home has observed the need to make our funeral services available to the expat community. Whether it is for a wake and burial, wake and cremation, or just cremation, we also offer the service of repatriation of the whole body or repatriation of ashes to any part of the world. We have extensive expertise in this area and have always taken pride in offering support throughout the duration of every service we offer. We understand that when a client doesn't know Spanish, it can be extremely difficult and frustrating for them to complete all the necessary procedures for cremation or repatriation, with either the whole body or ashes. For those who don't speak Spanish, our business employs bilingual staff who have been trained to speak your language.

Our clients merely need to give us a call to get us to start working for them. In doing so, we can help them through the pain of losing a loved one without the client feeling disoriented with the legal procedures that must be carried out. We take care of all the procedures in the embassies and consulates of your country of origin, such as the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia.



HiExpat: We know that you are experts in the field, and this is a topic of great interest to our readers. How does the cremation process work? How long does it last? What should be done if a person wants to be cremated at the time of death? Also, is there cremation for pets?

Santa Marianita: As I mentioned before, simply give us a call, and we'll start the necessary protocol that our trained personnel are required to follow. There are two ways one can request a cremation service. It can be requested in advance by the person through a preventative contract that is paid in full prior to the death of that person. Or, in the case of an emergency, it can be requested immediately when the person dies. The cremation process takes 1 hour and 30 minutes. Then, we estimate 3 hours to have the optimum temperature after cooling and gathering the remains. If a person is interested in having their cremation service paid in advance, they can do so. They just go to our office which is located in the City of Manta, Vía Manta – Rocafuerte in the Ciudadela Villamarina, diagonal to the electrical substation. There, we will show you the different forms of payment and terms that exist.

At Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home, we constantly strive to be innovative, which is why we have evolved into animal lovers. We treat our pets as an extension of our family because they are constantly willing to show us all of their love and care. For this reason, we have implemented the Pet Cremation Area which we

call "San Francisco de Asís Pet Cremation Area." San Francisco de Asís is considered the Saint of Pets, thanks to the love he had for animals. Pet cremation service is another way of keeping our pets close. We also have payment plans for this service, and we invite the general public to visit our facilities and find out more about these services.

HiExpat: Regarding costs, do you have pre-paid packages? How much is the cost of a funeral? And, in comparison, what is the cost of a cremation? What is the amount covered by IESS?

Santa Marianita: We have payment plans for both wakes and burials for either humans or pets. Since all services are individualized, the fees vary depending on the service that the client wishes to contract. The cost of the cremation service is \$1500.00. In addition, as Santa Marianita Crematorium and Funeral Home, we are external providers of IESS, and we also work with 99% of the private insurance companies and financial institutions in the country. That is, if the person has private or state insurance, they are not going to incur expenses since their service will be paid by their insurer with prior authorization from the insurer, of course. Currently, the IESS pays a value of \$1,359.73. This price may vary as the years go by, but the most important thing to know is that we will provide the service at the cost the insurer will cover, and thus the user does not incur additional expenses. This includes the services of wake and burial, wake and cremation or only the cremation process.

HiExpat: Could you tell us a bit more about cremation of pets? How does this process work? How can someone hire you?

Santa Marianita: The Pet Cremation service begins after we receive the client's call. We then travel to the location where the animal is, either in a veterinary clinic or at home in the province of Manabí. After the removal of the pet, which we carry out in our transport that is exclusively for the removal of pets, we proceed to our facilities to carry out the respective cremation process. We follow protocol by allowing a relative to enter so they can see the start of the cremation process. We also keep a video on file in which the cremation process is recorded in order to foster confidence and transparency. The cremation process takes approximately 1 hour, and the cooling process 2 hours, since we have equipment with state-of-the-art technology. Then the ashes are placed in an airtight bag to later be weighed for our records. Then, they are put in a pet cremation urn, previously chosen by the relative, with the name of the pet and its date of birth and date of death. They are delivered to their respective owners together with a Certificate of Cremation. We want to give them the most professional service in the process.

HiExpat: Finally, does Santa Marianita have an exclusive discount

count for expats? How can clients who are interested get a hold of you or where can our readers who are interested in learning more about your services visit you?

Santa Marianita: Indeed, there is a special discount for subscribers of this magazine! We are located in the City of Manta on Vía Manta-Rocafuerte, Ciudadela Villamarina, diagonal to the electrical substation, with the sign stating "CREMATORIO SANTA MARIANITA." You can also visit the office of our subsidiary, Grupo Funerario de Elite Santa Marianita, which is located in Manta, Portoviejo, Chone and Bahía de Caráquez. Additionally, you can communicate with us through our Facebook and social networks with the name "Crematorio y Funeraria Santa Marianita." Our telephone number is 0997441194 and our email is: paobarde@hotmail.com. It should also be noted that we only work in the province of Manabí and our services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Why should people use the services of the Santa Marianita Crematorium?

Because of our expertise, dedication, and commitment to our clients. Our bilingual staff has been trained in communication and excellent client relations.





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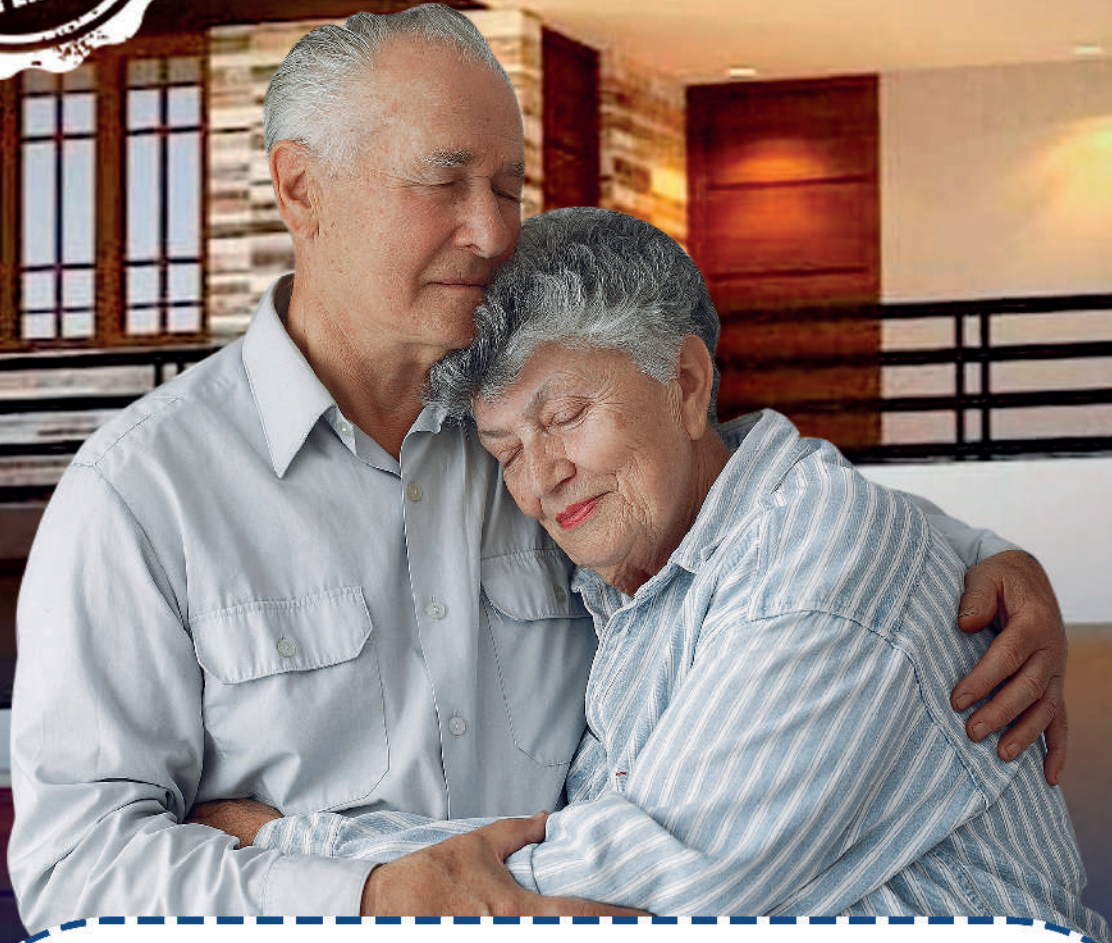
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