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by Mark Bradbury

Manabí beaches and the Bell Being Rung

This month's issue addresses environmental ocean conditions here on the Ecuadorian Coast. It is a big ocean that welcomes us all, but she constantly needs our help. For me, coming to Ecuador meant being able to live near the Pacific Ocean, and I have been living my dream since I arrived over six years ago. She is something I stare at every day of my seven-day week, and I love it! But there are things that we all need to address.

The world's oceans receive the debris of the people who live on land. They are the garbage collectors for so many countries who do not care where their sewage and trash go, and it has been catching up with us all over the years. The world has looked the other way for centuries, millenniums actually, but now we all need to take a harder look at what we have allowed to happen.

Most of you who are reading this are aware that there are floating islands of plastic trash in various parts of the world; this has been well-documented for quite a few years. But one of the biggest lives here in the Pacific Ocean, moved around by the prevailing currents and winds, and that could end up here in Ecuador someday. Imagine the Galapagos Islands choking with plastic debris everywhere; birds, turtles, iguanas and all the other endemic species dying on the beaches because they are ingesting plastic. Not a pretty vision!

Ecuador has been caught in the throes of a La Niña phenomena this winter. We have been experiencing heavy rains throughout the country. Seeing photos and videos of rivers overflowing their banks, taking homes, people, cars, and anything else in their way with them has been far too common. Landslides and floods throughout the Sierras have killed over forty people this year and have closed several highways necessary for movement in the cities of the Andes.

We have had more than our share along the Coast, also. We have experienced the wettest season that I have seen in my time in Ecuador. Very heavy rain, along with thunder and lightning, has become quite common, and several places have had incidences of flooding in low areas. I am fortunate to be living on a hill, high above the beach and the rivers, but others have not been as lucky.

I said earlier that the ocean receives the detritus of the world, and that is a sad truth. Trash that goes into a dry riverbed ends up on the beaches when the heavy rains come and wash everything out to sea. We are seeing this sort of activity along our Coast lately, and it is disgusting!

When it rains in the mountains, the water looks for the lowest level, and that means the rivers that lead to the Amazon in the east, and to the Pacific, in the west. The heavy rains flood the upland areas and move downhill, carrying everything in their path. By the time they reach the Ocean here in Manabí, they have collected all sorts of things!

I have heard stories of dead cows, burros, dogs, and other things washing up at the river mouths. Mother Nature is not kind to anyone or anything that challenges her natural order, that is a fact. There is so much debris showing up on the beaches near the rivers that it is staggering! But most of it is natural; trees, plants, wood, and things like that.

What does not belong in these debris fields is plastic, and there is plenty of that! The custom for many years has been to throw the trash in the dry riverbed and let the rains wash it away. That was the plan! But that needs to stop!

Manta Mayor Agustin Intriago Quijano is one of the people standing up to this age-old practice. He is trying to change the way the people of Manta act, and how they respond could change the way Manta looks in the near future. He and his administration have been targeting the trash dumpers, both commercial and private, that use the riverbeds of Manta's three rivers as their personal dump.

They are monitoring well-known areas that are susceptible to the dumpers and are arresting and fining the culprits. They have cameras all over the canton that can spot this illegal activity, and they have shown that they will prosecute the offenders.



They have also instituted a program of beach cleanings that are staffed by local volunteers. These are called “mingas,” and are held periodically on all the city beaches. There is also a cleaning staff made up of people who clean the beaches daily, part of a city workforce. Unfortunately, all this is just a band aid until the bigger picture comes into play.

In my opinion, Ecuador needs a national program to eliminate littering and wholesale dumping of trash in its rivers. This needs to be a strong mandate, with severe penalties for those guilty of doing so. This must start at the top, like the rains that bring our Coast its trash. President Lasso needs to step up and implement something that will change the way things are done here in this regard. Cleaning the beaches when the rainy season comes is like washing your floor when your roof is caving in!

Many of you who are older will remember the American beautification programs to stop littering back in the sixties, under the direction of President Johnson's wife, Lady Bird Johnson. One of my most powerful memories of that period was the television ad depicting a Native American chief crying because the earth was littered with trash. It was a very moving testimonial to man's abuse of nature.

That is the sort of program that Ecuador needs to implement. Ecuador, with its "Four Worlds," is one of the most special places on Earth, and we need to do everything possible to correct the injustices done to its environment.

The government needs to address this issue, and the people of Ecuador need to get behind it and support it the way they do their fútbol team! With strength and pride for Ecuador!

Writer's note:

The Manabí Coast has over 200 miles of coastline, and I do not want readers to think that every inch of it has been overwhelmed with

debris. The major problem areas have been with the main rivers going through the area, and in the beach area that they empty into. Here in Manta, that includes the Burro River, the Dead River, and the Manta River, but the City of Manta has done an exceptionally good job of containing the problem by cleaning the river beds before it rains.

The Portoviejo River and its tributaries have brought tons of debris to the area known as La Boca (the river mouth), which separates Crucita and the beaches to the north. The tides have been moving much of the flotsam out to sea, including the plastics.

The Chone River, which meets the ocean at Bahía de Caráquez and San Vicente, is another that has gifted the Bay with heavy debris. The tide has been moving much of this out, also.

A word of caution to any of you going to the beach. Be careful of floating debris in the water, especially in the areas mentioned above. Most of this will be gone by the time the magazine comes out on April 15th, but it will still be a problem in the future until it is dealt with by the government. The next heavy rains, whenever they come, will continue the cycle, and that cycle needs to stop.

Manabí has so many beautiful beaches! Go out and enjoy them! This is not meant to scare you away; it is just a bell being rung.



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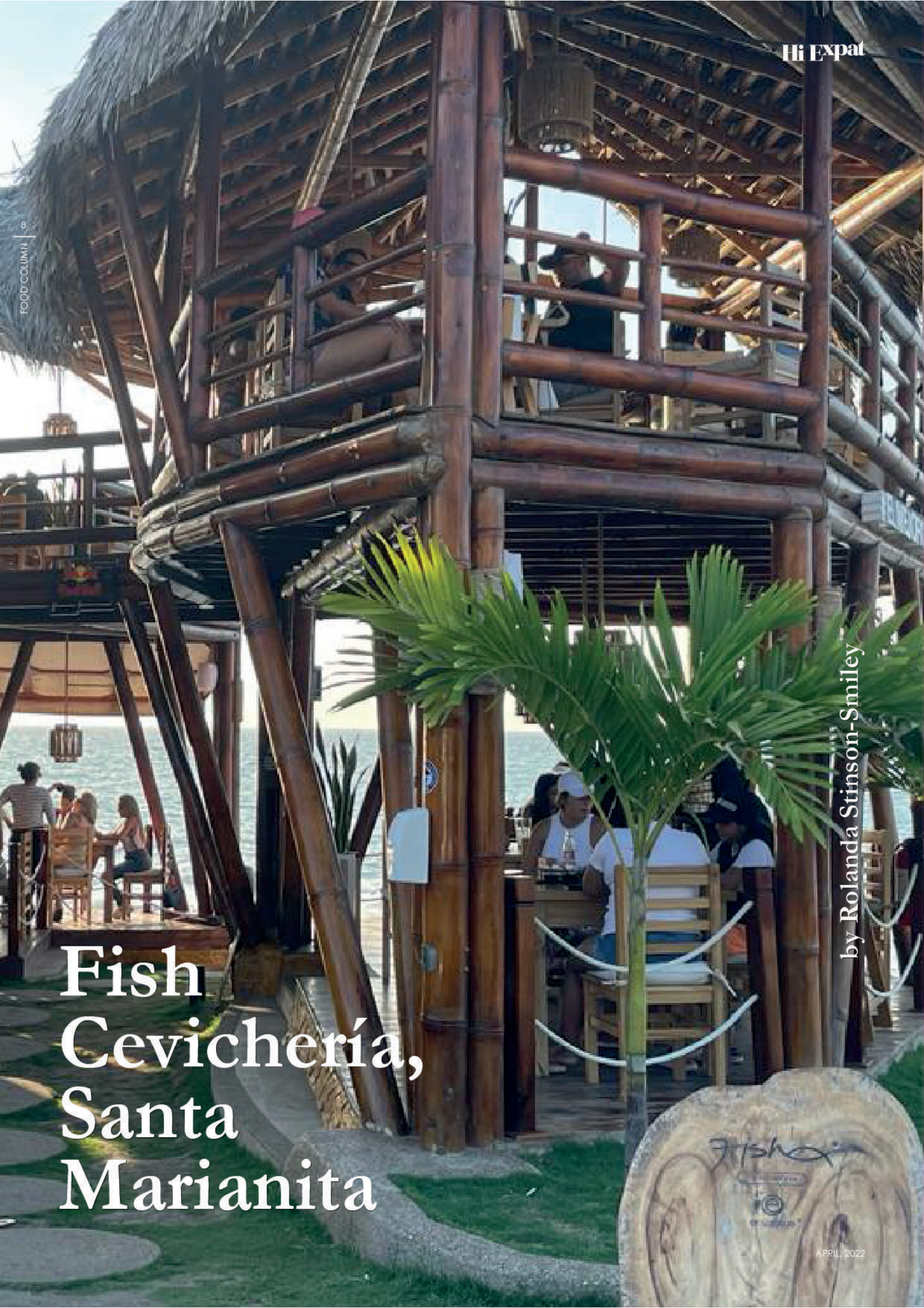
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Fish Cevichería, Santa Marianita

by Rolanda Stinson-Smiley



On the coast of Ecuador, a popular food staple is ceviche. In North America, we think of ceviche as raw seafood cooked in lime juices and served cold with salsa-like toppings. Since living in South America, I've seen that ceviche is so much more than that. In Manta specifically, Fish Cevichería is highly recommended as the go-to restaurant for ceviche. The main location in town is located at the corner of Calle 17 and Avenida 7. To the excitement of many, in October 2021, Fish opened a sister restaurant in Santa Marianita. I had the pleasure of visiting Fish in Santa Marianita recently and even enjoyed a beach day with my family and friends.

Santa Marianita is located just 20 minutes south of Manta. The town is best known for its long, beautiful strip of beach and for kitesurfing. It is definitely a place you will want to spend a day. On the weekends, the atmosphere is turned up a notch because so many people flock to this beach with their families. If you're not into crowds, then it is better to visit during the week to experience a more peaceful and "tranquilo" vibe. The Santa Marianita Malecón has many restaurants and vendors to choose from. Fish Cevichería is such a new restaurant here that most cab drivers are unaware of the name. If you tell the taxi that you are going to Ecuablue, they should get you there no problem. Fish is relatively easy to spot as it sits to the right of the main entrance and is two stories of gorgeous bamboo.

The views from this restaurant are picturesque! It is nice to be able to come off the beach, walk straight into a restaurant, but still feel like you're sitting on the ocean. The atmosphere is chill and cool, and the staff is really friendly. The music is playing, people are laughing, and the whole vibe



is exactly what you want in a seaside bar. They serve some specialty cocktails, but also have a full bar. They have a list of local and imported beers to choose from as well. For those who do not indulge they also offer freshly squeezed juices and some unique lemonade combinations like Apple Limonada or Hawaiian Limonada. I had the Hawaiian Limonada and it was superb. It reminded me of a Piña Colada with lots of lime juice.

The food is wonderful, with lots of seafood options, and the prices are reasonable. I like the variety in the menu, there's tacos, ceviches, sandwiches, soups, and grilled seafood. Every table is given a bowl of chifles along with three dipping sauces: sweet ají, spicy ají, and a creamy peanut sauce. My favorite being the spicy ají, of course. Let's start with the ceviche. I tried both the shrimp and fish ceviche. The shrimp ceviche is prepared with a tomato-based sauce along with lime juice and cilantro throughout.

The shrimp had been cooked and were large and very fresh. The fish ceviche was made from wahoo, which is a very firm white fish. The fish had also been cooked, cut into bite-size cubes, and sat in a lime juice base with onion, cilantro, cucumber, and tomato. It was very light and refreshing. Each ceviche was served with crunchy chifles and sauces on the side. On the menu, there were many varieties of ceviche to choose from, some very unique. I've never seen clam, calamari, caracol (conch), or octopus offered as a ceviche. So next time I return, I will be sure to try some of them.

Another Fish favorite is their fried fish and shrimp (apanados), both of which I've tasted and loved. This time, I wanted to try the shrimp apanado sandwich. It was delicious! It really reminded me of a shrimp po'boy from Louisiana in the U.S. The fried shrimp was served on a toasted roll with shredded lettuce, purple cabbage, grilled pineapple, and a creamy tangy sauce. This is now one of my new favorite foods.

The shrimp were seasoned and battered to perfection. And for those seeking something other than seafood, there's only one option on the menu, a beef sandwich (sanduche de lomo). My son is not a seafood-eater, so of course he ordered this. I was very surprised though because the sandwich looked, smelled, and tasted amazing. The meat was super tender and very flavorful. The sandwich was served on the same toasted roll as the shrimp, but was accompanied with grilled onions, a pesto sauce, and shredded lettuce. Both sandwiches came with a side of fries, which were also pretty tasty.

I really enjoyed my time at Fish. The food was great and was made even more special by having the ability to watch the sunset and enjoy the ocean breeze. This waterfront restaurant offers a memorable experience that you won't soon forget.



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Ocean Health Index of the Provinces of Santa Elena and Manabí

by MGTs Patricio Tamariz

In 2019, a friend of mine who is a biologist, Mario Hurtado from the consulting firm Biotica, contracted me to work on a project for Conservation International. This project was called “Estimation of the Ocean Health Index for the Marine and Coastal Zone of the Provinces of Santa Elena and Manabí.”

The Ocean Health Index (OHI) is a tailorable marine assessment framework to comprehensively and quantitatively evaluate ocean health. The OHI is refined to quantitatively measure and monitor ocean health by combining existing data and indicators from biological, physical, economic, and social disciplines to comprehensively assess ocean health. The fundamental spatial units for the OHI analysis are framed by the coastal profile of the provinces of Santa Elena and Manabí, from three nautical miles offshore to one km inland and with a 25 km area of influence. The 10 goals for the development of this index are as follows:

- Goal 01: Food Provision (Fisheries and Aquaculture)
- Goal 02: Artisanal Fishing Opportunities
- Goal 03: Natural Products
- Goal 04: Carbon Storage
- Goal 05: Coastal Protection
- Goal 06: Tourism and Recreation
- Goal 07: Subsistence and Economy
- Goal 08: Sense of Place (Iconic Species and Enduring Special Places)
- Goal 09: Clean Waters
- Goal 10: Biodiversity (Habitats and Species)

The OHI measures progress towards these key societal ‘goals’ representing the benefits and services people expect healthy oceans to provide. By analyzing these goals together and scoring them from 0-100, OHI assessments provide an

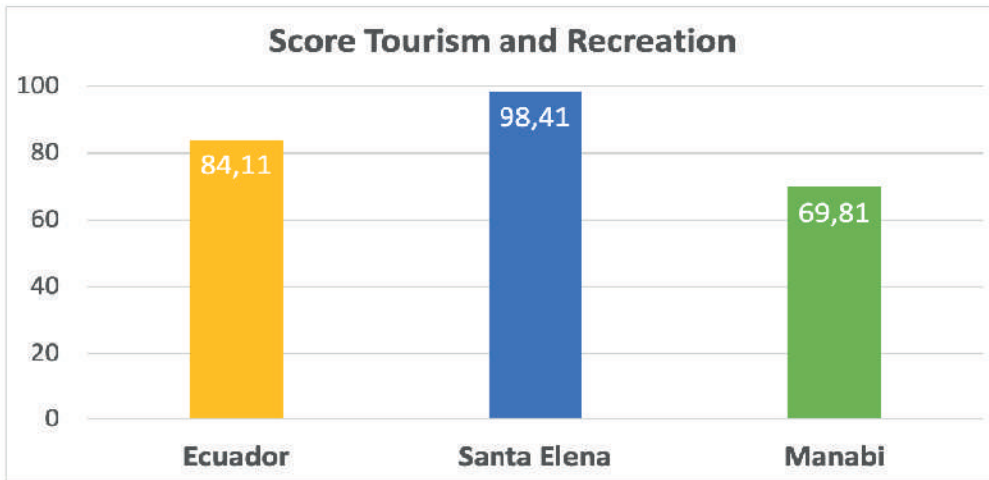
integrated picture of the state of the ecosystem and this can be communicated to a wide range of audiences.

The specific component of the consultancy for which I was contracted for was Goal No. 06, regarding the area of tourism and recreation. The destinations, their characterization, and measurable parameters that directly influence specific indexes of the area of the two provinces were discussed. The Tourism and Recreation goal provides us with the value that people attribute to experience and enjoyment in coastal areas. The objective of the Tourism and Recreation goal seeks to measure the responsible use of activity in the coastal profile. Where the specific objectives are defined based on the categories of management and load capacity or acceptable load limits.

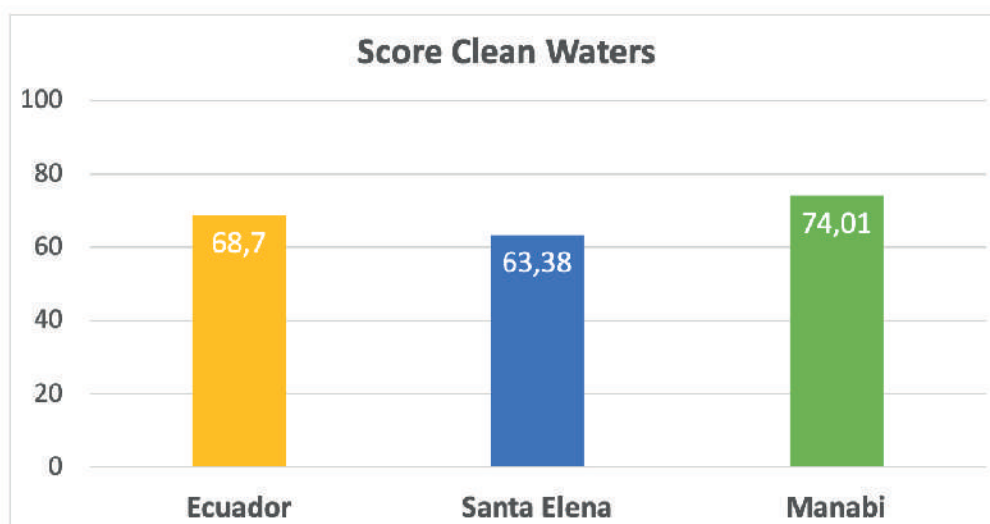
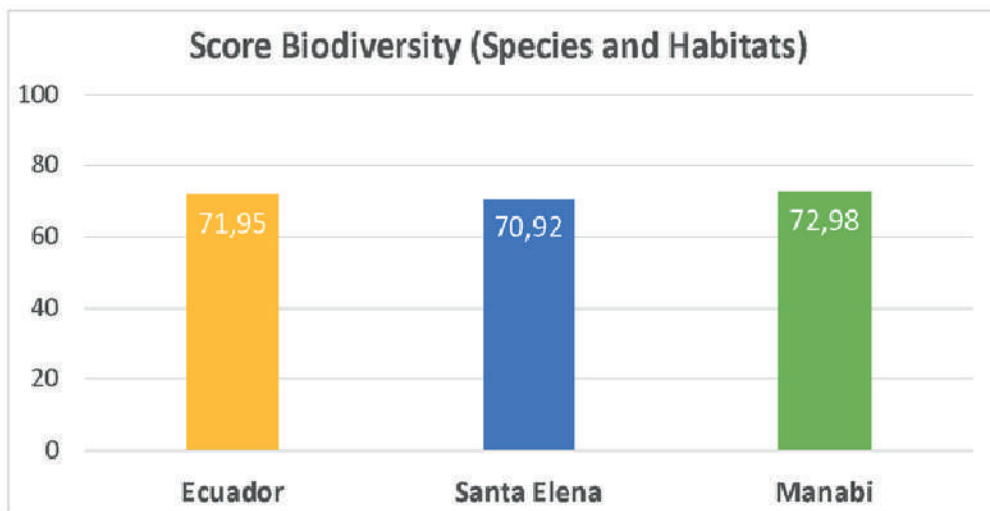
Being that we could only use certain information available on the destinations that we analyzed for both provinces, we diagnosed that the potential of these to have sustainable tourism indicators and intelligence data were hindered by the level of development that they were at. This was due to the lack of consensus and priority surrounding sustainable tourism development by the key stakeholders. The specific destinations of the province of Santa Elena and Manabí have achieved little progress in planning throughout the last 20 years. The consensus processes between their respective stakeholders from the private and public sectors reflect little interest on the part of many to achieve the proposed goals. The local, provincial, and national tourism authorities have managed to launch these plans and start them with budget allocations that are commonly placed for the first year.

The problem is that in most of these plans the integral execution sequence of the programs and projects has had bad performance. This is due to the lack of an entity that could be a center for dialogue, consensus, strategic orientation, and

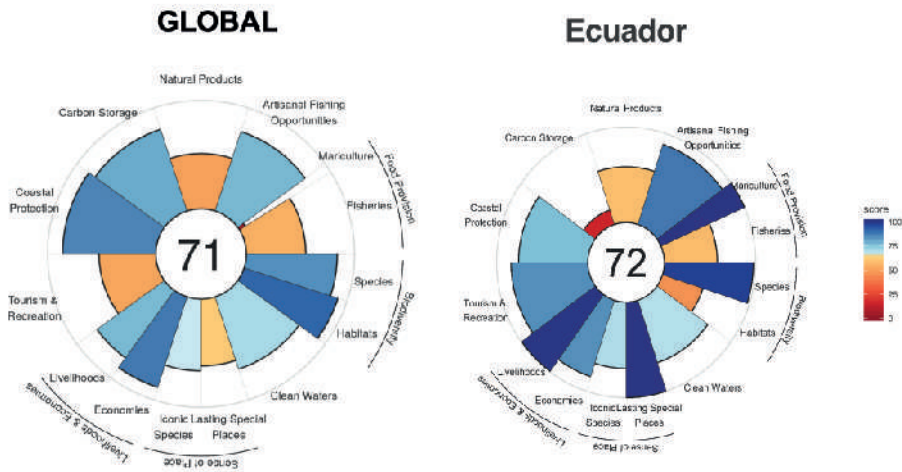
implementation for the projects that a tourism development and marketing plan needs. Although, an important viewpoint on the province's overall scores was the number of visitors.



More complete information was available when calculating the other scores of the OHI detailed below.



And in a general overview with the scores of all ten goals, this is how Ecuador compared globally:

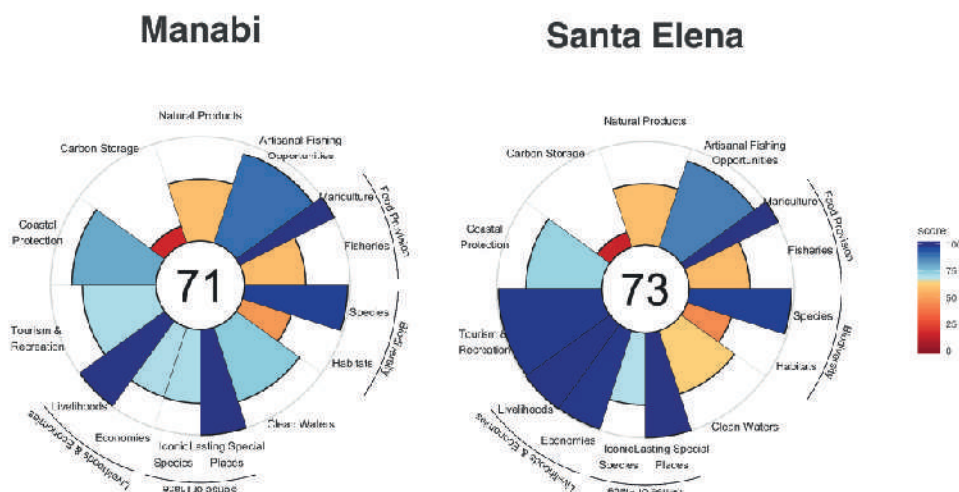


My friend, Mario Hurtado, who is a biologist and the technical director of Biotica, said in an interview with El Comercio that Ecuador is located in the middle, with 72 points. "With that score we just scraped by, we almost failed," says Hurtado, when graphically showing the impact of the above figure. Mario summarizes that the low score for Ecuador is mainly due to the low

scores in Clean Waters due to contamination, insufficient carbon storage capacity, and the endangerment of certain species.

Mangrove plants capture carbon, but for these specific coastal zones it is scarce due to deforestation. Manabí, for example, has gone from 143.5 km² of mangrove forest in 1969 to only 28 km² in 2016.

And this is how Santa Elena compares with Manabí:



It is our hope that this article helps the general public to get a better understanding of the environmental state of Ecuador. It is important that the full study be read and analyzed by local authorities, and that this information is shared

with the provincial and central governments. This is the first ever Ocean Health Index study for the coastal zone of Santa Elena and Manabí and is helping lead us to a more sustainable future.

by Marcos Chiluiza

Interview with the Ministry of the Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition

Marcos: Thank you so much Minister for your time. HiExpat magazine seeks to inspire and inform North American expatriates who have chosen our country as a destination to spend their golden years. As a leader in your field, you have more than 21 years of experience in environmental issues. Likewise, you are recognized for being a successful entrepreneur and faithful pioneer for Ecuador when it comes to the environment. In this new position as head of the Ministry of the Environment of Ecuador, in which you have served for almost a year, how has your experience in the private sector contributed to the implementation of public policies that are in accordance with reality and the current needs of Ecuador? We are specifically curious to know how you have balanced the conservation of marine life and fishing, knowing that this economic reality is the livelihood for many Ecuadorian families.

Minister: My experience in sustainability issues, as well as my vocation in the environmental field, have allowed me to put my knowledge to the service of Ecuador. In this service, the government has begun focusing on objectives which prioritize the sustainable use of nature and water capital, restoration of ecosystem gradients, implementation of financial sustainability mechanisms for protected areas, creation of water recharge zones, and an inclusive and participatory strategy for the reduction of deforestation.

Thus, one of the most important milestones of this government has been the prioritization of public policy which has focused on finding solutions to environmental issues from various productive sectors in Ecuador. A good example of this is the creation of our National Transition Plan Towards Decarbonization. Rolled out from the national government, and still prioritizing economic growth, the plan creates a roadmap to reduce and neutralize greenhouse gas emissions until at least 2050. This roadmap will allow technological innovation to be incorporated in the different productive sectors and promote the generation of

new inclusive economic models based on bio-economies, circular economies, knowledge management, renewable energies, and others.

Regarding marine life, Ecuador is currently developing tools for the study of Ecuadorian marine systems. These tools will generate a historical analysis of the physical-chemical make-up of the Ecuadorian ocean, from the coastal strip to the Galapagos Islands. Unfortunately though, we still only retain a basic understanding of the effects of climate change, and this information is required to prepare adaptation measures in the coastal zone and the Galapagos Islands.

Ecuador has created the new Hermandad Reserve which serves as an example to the world about the importance of the conservation of vulnerable or threatened migratory species. This reserve features state-of-the-art protection mechanisms for much more effective control, derives more benefits for citizens, and prioritizes sustainable development in the Galapagos Islands by:

- Encouraging cooperation, investment, and mobilization of international private financial resources dedicated to the Islands conservation
- Boosting sustainable tourism, including diving tourism, among others
- Working as a living laboratory for the development of scientific research
- Compiling with Agenda 2030

Marcos: With the creation of the new Marine Reserve in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador will add 60,000 square kilometers to the Galapagos marine protection zone. 30,000 of these kilometers will not allow fishing activity and 30,000 will not allow longlining either. This area is located northeast of the archipelago and protects the biological corridor that exists between the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, Cocos Island in Costa Rica and other oceanic islands of neighboring countries such as Coiba in Panama and Malpelo

in Colombia. Can you tell us a little more about this new reserve, how it benefits Ecuador, and how this will be reflected in the country's economy long term?

Minister: Executive Decree 319 establishes the creation of a new protected area, the Hermandad Marine Reserve, on the northeast side of the Galapagos Marine Reserve, with an area of 60,000 kilometers. The decision of the Ecuadorian State to create this new reserve was announced at COP 26, in Glasgow, as an opportunity to showcase the need to protect our oceans in the eyes of the world. Although it was just recently announced, the proposal has been worked on for several years by scientists. These scientists have been investigating the use of the submarine mountain ranges by threatened migratory species who travel these migration routes between the Galapagos and Cocos Island.

The new Hermandad Marine Reserve is a biological corridor for more than 20 endangered migratory species such as sharks, sea turtles, and manta rays. These species travel between two protected areas, the Galapagos and Cocos Island (Costa Rica), following the underwater mountain range that provides food for them. Some Galapagos species have also been found in these areas, such as sea lions, albatrosses and Galapagos sharks that leave the archipelago to feed.

Thus, the reserve will be expanded to this important biological corridor through which several vulnerable species transit during their migratory routes. Human activities will no longer be able to affect these species' habitats.

On March 14, 2022, the Hermandad Marine Reserve area was incorporated into the National System of Protected Areas of Ecuador, increasing the national marine area under conservation by 5.5%, from 13.3 to 19.3 million hectares. In the new reserve, all those activities that are not compatible with the provisions of the Organic Code of the Environment and its regulations are prohibited. Additionally, work is being done on the Management Plan of the protected area for its

efficient management, in coordination with the Ministries of Production, Foreign Trade, Investments and Fishing, Foreign Relations and Human Mobility, Economy and Finance, and Defense.

Below are just a few of the benefits that the Hermandad Reserve will generate for the country:

- It will stimulate the investment of international private financial resources to contribute to marine conservation.
- It will consolidate the image of the country as a Biosphere Reserve and the first Natural Heritage of the world.
- It will function as a living laboratory for the development of scientific research.
- It will expand knowledge about marine biodiversity of the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Marcos: Many North Americans choose Ecuador because it reminds them of the 50s and 60s in the United States, due to the abundance of nature that can be found here. Although Ecuador is considered a developing country, we have been the frontrunners in promoting sustainable development. Based on your experience in the environmental sector, how do you project Ecuador's protection of the environment will grow over the next 10 years?

Minister: Ecuador is positioned as an important leader in the environmental field worldwide. We have generated a public policy to strengthen the Ecological Transition, which allows us to continue creating opportunities to improve the quality of life of citizens, without neglecting the conservation of our natural resources. We promote cross-cutting public policies to together move towards a low-carbon development model, create resilience to climate change, and are an example of how to coexist with biodiversity. We will continue with our commitment to work on the five fundamental pillars of Ecological Transition: emissions, energy, biodiversity, water, and materials. Additionally, we will be creating opportunities for innovation, development of bio-enterprises, new jobs, and investments within the framework of green growth. From this, we will be able to show that Ecuador has the currency that the world needs to get ahead: biodiversity.

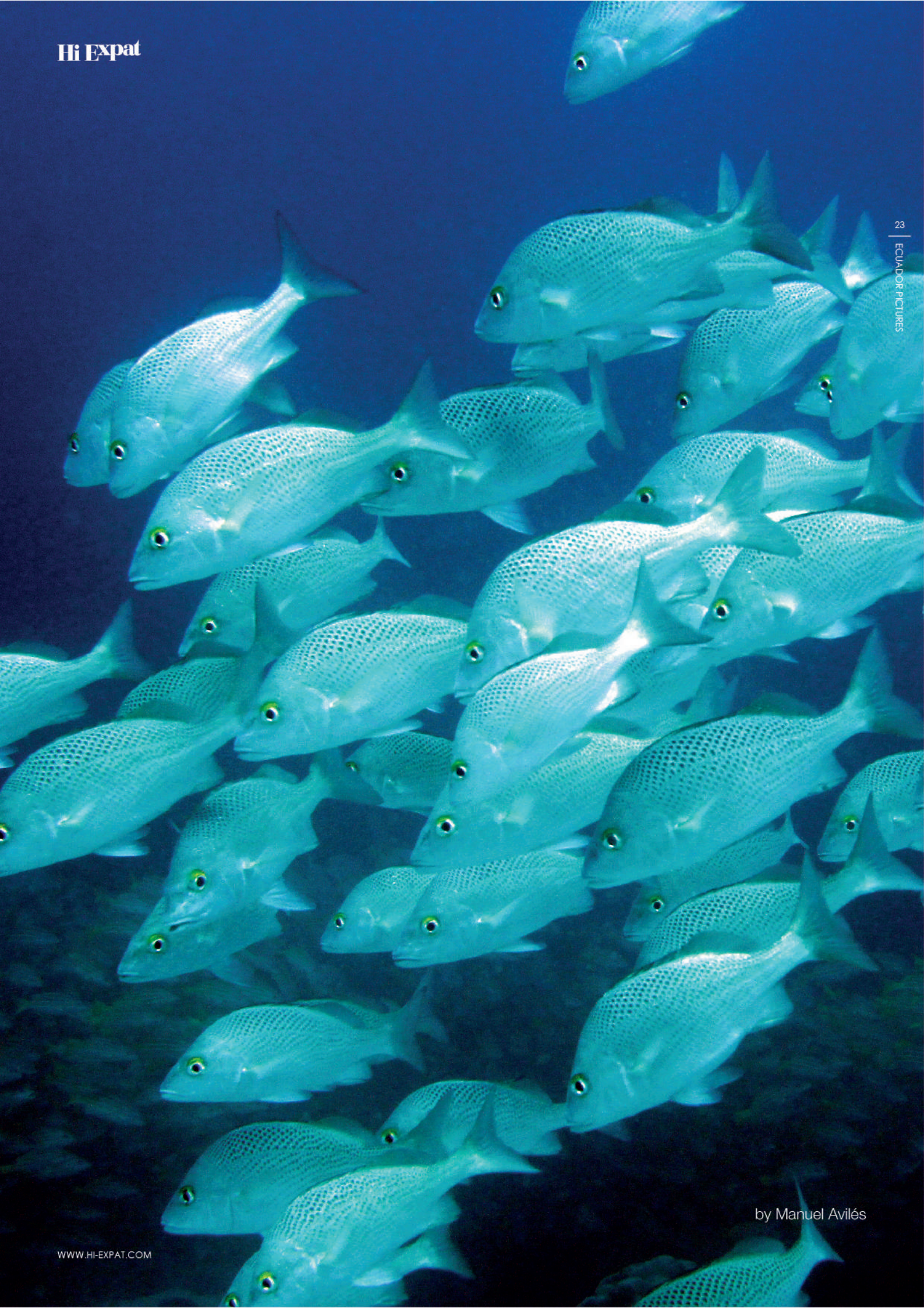


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Hi Expat

by Francisco Dousebebes

The Natural Observation of Evolution

The Unique Beauty of
the Galapagos Islands

The Galapagos Islands, a remarkably unusual volcanic archipelago in the eastern Pacific Ocean, harbor some of the most spectacular plants and animals of the world. Española, Santa Fe and San Cristobal, bear some of the oldest rocks in the archipelago, and these were formed about five million years ago; whereas the younger islands, Isabela and Fernandina, are still in the process of formation through stunning eruptions. The archipelago's volcanic origins produced various islands overtime, but the current makeup of the islands includes over 25 main islands, and dozens of smaller islands and rocks. These islands are scattered over an area in the Pacific Ocean covering about 138,000 Km² (53,000 mi²), which means there's not only isolation from the mainland, but also enough interisland isolation.

The islands are placed at the confluence of a series of oceanic currents that have created diverse conditions and singular evolutionary opportunities for the multitude of organisms that reached the islands over millions of years. Cold, nutrient rich waters coming from the south east, carried by the Humboldt Current, bring vital nutrients to the islands. From the west, the Cromwell current generates upwelling jets that play a critical role in the survival of many marine species; from the northeast the Panama current arrives bringing warm waters from Central America. The intensity and importance of these currents varies during the year, changing dramatically

every few years when extreme disruptive weather events occur, just like El Niño or La Niña. While much negative commentary is added for El Niño events, it's exactly those extreme unusual conditions that are connected to the underlying fabric of natural selection. All of this is what makes the Galapagos a fascinating, bizarre, and unique destination on our planet.

Many of the plants and animals that live on the Galapagos Islands came from the mainland by traveling at least 1000km (600 miles), the distance that separates the islands from the continent. Some, such as sea lions, birds, and reptiles, probably swam or flew from the continent, while others came attached to floating rafts of vegetation. The dispersal of plants and some insects is highly connected to other organisms, such as birds' feathers, whereas spores and very small flying insects probably got blown off by super strong winds.

By far, Charles Darwin has been the naturalist/scientist perhaps most connected to the islands' evolutionary framework. Books like Voyage of the HMS Beagle (1839) and Origin of Species (1859), not only showcase the remarkable power of observation Darwin had, but allow us to understand how the Galapagos became a fascinating location and continuous source of inspiration and amazement for him. In modern times, any studies and findings regarding evolution and natural selection will surely look back at Darwin, and that will likely bounce back to the islands. The connection between the Galapagos and evolution is undeniable.


Amongst the species that make the Galapagos a wonder for wildlife encounters, giant tortoises, and iguanas are probably the best representatives. Marine iguanas, for example, are the only sea-going lizards of the planet, and forage exclusively on algae found near the volcanic shores. Land iguanas, snakes, geckos, and lizards complete the list of reptiles, and many of these have diversified into different species. Sea lions are probably a mammal species that visitors thoroughly enjoy seeing above and below water. Two endemic species inhabit the islands, and the most frequently seen is the Galápagos sea lion (*Zalophus wollebaeki*). Its closest ancestors are California sea lions, while the other species came

from the cool southern waters of South America, and they are called Galapagos Fur sea lions (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*).

The avian fauna of the archipelago includes an array of endemic and native species, from which probably the Galapagos penguins and Darwin's finches, hold great attention, but others like flightless cormorants, mockingbirds, albatrosses, doves, boobies, and more add to the list of remarkable examples of island adaptation. A delicate balance to maintain, humans now have the responsibility to show our best effort at protecting this natural wilderness. These challenging times, the post-pandemic months, will be very critical for creating awareness and resilience amongst all stakeholders related to tourism. Local authorities, fishermen, visitors, scientists, and the population living on the archipelago, have a responsibility to not only minimize the environmental footprint on the Galapagos, but to lower such footprint in every possible way. All efforts will make a difference.

Creating awareness of the importance of conservation is critical to the Galapagos. 97% of the islands are declared a national park and enclose an immense marine reserve to prevent industrial fishing in the waters surrounding. Moreover, last month the final decree creating the expansion of the marine reserve became official, and this will allow the islands to enter an era of a new line of thinking. A sustainable way of living will continue to foster an example for everyone that gets to experience the islands of the Galapagos Archipelago. Future generations have the right of experiencing the islands as we see them today, and better yet, in more pristine conditions. A collection of responsible tour operators, hotels, and even restaurants have invested in clean energy, sustainable technologies, and even carbon neutrality with programs in biodiverse tropical forests of Ecuador. Hope is certainly there.





If we do things right in the Galapagos Islands, we will get to understand that the survival of the wildlife of the world, and indeed the survival of humankind itself, is in our hands. One cannot help but to fervently hope that the word sapiens (meaning wise) becomes a justly earned part of the name *Homo sapiens*.

Rio Curaray

by Peter Strongberg

It all started when I was day-dreaming on Google Earth, looking for a jungle river to float down on a multi-day adventure. I've always wanted to explore Yasuni Park; arguably the most biodiverse place on Earth. I stumbled upon the Curaray River that marks the southern border of Yasuni Park. The park boundary is marked by the north side of the river. These waters that begin as snow at the peaks of sky-kissing Andean volcanoes make their way down and east; eventually draining into the mighty Amazon on its flat and windy journey to meet up with the Atlantic Ocean in Brazil.

As I was “computer scouting” the river, zooming in and out when a little “blip” on the map appeared, it read “Comunidad Sisa.” A quick cut-and-paste and a little bit of internet sleuthing, I was able to start a Facebook conversation with a community member from the Sisa Community deep in the Amazon. “In the actual middle of nowhere.”

The young lady that corresponded with was extremely polite but she was quickly running out of patience for my dull adventure questions. She luckily passed me the number of a lady named Nancy. She referred to Nancy as one of the leaders of the communities so I was excited to be getting closer to an authority in the area.

I called Nancy and started rapid-firing questions about the potential float trip. She said repeatedly, “It’s really far,” and explained that Sisa can only be reached by plane or by boat descending the chocolate colored river. The local craft of river navigation is a 15-foot long dugout canoe with an outboard motor. Nancy said that it’s a two to

three day trip motoring downstream depending on the water level of the river. Perfect, I thought.

We calculated that the descent would be at least a 10 day float or more likely two full weeks. A daunting timeline but not impossible.

Nancy was really helpful and mentioned that if I wanted to go down the river with her help that I had to hurry because she was leaving Puyo (a gateway city to the jungle) to go back into her community.

After hearing that she was heading in, I immediately asked if we could join her. There was a 30 second silence on the phone.....after what seemed like an eternity; she said "Sí Peter." We briefly spoke about the logistics of driving to Puyo and then flying into her riverside village. She passed her bank account information and said that she would buy the tickets for us and that we could stay with her family. We set up some tentative dates and we hung up....we were in. Committed.

As I put my phone down, it dawned on me that I didn't know who Nancy was, really where we were going, or any other detail that you might think important on a journey like that. I'm sure Maija, my wife and travel companion, wouldn't want to know any of that stuff anyway..."What are we going to do for food?" she would ask, I thought. The honest answer was "I have no idea," so it's probably better just to not speculate as we would find out very soon.

Upon flying into the community, we were greeted by the president of the Sisa Community, Milton. He took us to the "hut" structure in the middle of the community and asked us where our tents were. We didn't have any tents. He looked perplexed. He then asked what we wanted to do for the next seven days. I said, "Whatever you guys do." He looked perplexed. After digesting our predicament he literally ran over to his hut, found a (Spiderman) mattress, and ran it to our hut. After some impressive rope work we set up a bug net over the mattress, on the floor. Home sweet home for the next seven nights; "house" sorted.

After we had our living arrangement settled, Milton started to explain that they hunt and fish everyday to sustain themselves. There's no roads in or out, no stores, running water, or refrigeration. A supply plane comes once a week and only if the weather cooperates. The feeling of isolation in an extremely foreign environment began to set in, panic attack-ish maybe. Naked and afraid episodes flashing through my mind. Just as I was about to get carried away in my thoughts, my amazing wife smiled at me with a wink. We jumped in with both feet. We went to work, fishing, hunting, sweating, and laughing. We became a part of their rhythm.

The first couple of days were a little rough to be honest. The question of what we are going to eat was quickly answered at our first breakfast. On the plate in front of us was a chunk of animal. I say animal and not meat because it still had the skin and hair on it. The wild boar was accompanied by a couple patacones and a bit of rice. To drink we had lemongrass tea that was prepared on the open fire so it had that smoky flavor to it, always.

Through the efforts of a government project the community was provided with small scale solar panels that can power lights and small electronics. The solar system does not produce enough energy to run a refrigerator however. To preserve their kill they build smoke racks over the fires in their homes. This smoke helps to preserve the meat and keep the maggots and bugs off of the precious cuisine. Imagine a BBQ bore slow cooking over the living room fire complete with little hooves. It's a scene that's hard to forget, it touched all the senses.

People might have figured out how to live amongst mosquitos but I don't think one can ever get used to biting sand flies, they are relentless little devils. In the Amazon basin the air is so hot, jungle hot, you have to stay completely covered up from head to toe or they bite you. Mud boots and long sleeve shirts tucked in is the preferred jungle uniform. The sand fly bites itch badly, and they bleed. It's much worse than a mosquito and worse than you're imagining right now. Scratchy...

Despite these new realities, we were feeling lucky to be in the Amazon, the raw beauty is hard to describe. Everything is alive and connected; there are not many places on the planet where you can really feel and see that oneness with your whole soul. The forest has a spirit complete with an array of emotions that you can see reflected in her weather. If she's not happy, it rains.

One day we were miles deep on a hike to a “saladero” hunting for animals to shoot with the camera. Saladeros are spots in the jungle, usually in a dry river bed, that have an abundance of minerals coming out of the ground in the water. Animals gather there to drink the water and absorb the vital nutrients. They make for fertile hunting locations, secret spots. We had been hiking for hours, several miles of dense Amazon. We would later find out that Maija was the first woman invited there and we were certainly the first foreigners allowed to go with the hunters to this zone.

Upon reaching the saladero and completing a quick inspection of the little caves and mini canyons that are about head high we concluded that the pack of bore had moved on. All around in the mud we could see the tracks of animals, you could tell by the sheer numbers of tracks that the animals must number in the hundreds.

Just as our guide was explaining that bore drink the water from the saladero, we heard an incredibly awful noise coming from a little cave. In a flash the two guides were swinging machetes and cutting down “wrist-sized” trees. One guide said, “Grab Maija and get out of here,” so we jumped up on an embankment that was basically on top of the “cave” that the noise was coming from. Heart racing, tunnel vision, heavy breathing, and adrenaline pumping through the body, fight or flight? What kind of monster could be making such a noise?

Within 90 seconds the guide had cut down and shaped 20 trees of a specific type of wood. They shaved them down into pointed tipped poles with their expert machete work. As quickly as a pole was finished it was slammed into the mud at the entrance of the cave making a fence covering the exit and trapping the drunken bore inside. The speed of their work was incredible, so fast that I couldn't figure out what they were doing at first. With the fence complete and the danger passed, huge smiles came over their faces...and ours.

We now had a 150 pound wild boar trapped in a cave and the atmosphere could not have been more electric. The sound of something snapping a four inch bamboo stick echoed through the forest. SNAP. It was so loud that my mind couldn't imagine that the sound could be coming from the bore. It was too loud. It sounded like a tree that gave way under its own weight. As Maija and I sat there confused as to what could be making that sound, I realized that the noise was coming from the animal in the cave. How could something make a noise like that?

As if he was reading my mind, or he could see the confusion on our faces, our guide said, "It's his teeth." That made me more confused as I wasn't that familiar with the anatomy of a bore. With some hand signals I was finally able to understand that the incredible noise echoing through the jungle was the sound of the bore slamming its giant tusks together. I'll never forget that sound and it makes the hair on my neck stand up typing this now. SNAP SNAP SNAP.

One technique for harvesting the bore is to trap the animal in the cave with the "pole fence," leaving just enough space so that the animal can pop its head out of the cave but gets stopped by the fence. The hunter positions himself on top of the cave with a freshly carved spear that is about 10 feet in length, a sharpened tip. When the animal eventually comes out of the cave to inspect the obstruction the kill shot is made by plunging the spear into the back of the neck of the animal. I'm not sure if it was because Maija was there or that it started raining but our guides decided not to bring the bacon home that day. They removed the fence and the drunken bore stumbled off into the jungle. Just then I realized that I had been holding my breath for about 15 minutes; what a special experience.

As we made our way back to the village driving the boat home through the rain I couldn't help but feel how lucky we were to have experienced that whole process. The boat pulled up to shore and I could see Nancy hastily pulling her laundry off of the dry line to get it out of the rain. She asked where we had been and I told her the saladero. She sharply replied, "Why didn't you tell me you were going there, I wouldn't have put my clothes out to dry. The forest always rains on foreigners when they go to sacred spots." She said it with so much conviction and matter-of-factness. It was after hearing that statement that I truly realized the connectivity that the people feel with the spirit of the forest.

Despite the unmatched beauty of the Amazon the real treasure in the jungle is the people. They are code breakers of that mystical world. They speak to the animals, read the trees, and know the plants. It's like going back in time to a place when people were connected to our food and the circle of life. The people are united by hard work, pain, sweat, and tears all while laughing about it with a smile, together.



The men are stone cold killers, snipers, that's how they feed their families and they are good at it. They still hunt with three meter long, wooden blow dart guns complete with poison tip darts. In addition to spears and blow dart guns they use fire-arms as well. They are tactical fishermen and deploy all manners of technique ranging from tossing a baited hook to strategically placing nets in the muddy waters. They are becoming more aware of the importance of conservation and realize that tourism can be a source of income, but they are in the business of putting food on the table, meat is on the menu.

The women are warriors. They do most of the work besides hunting, however they do fish. They take charge in the farms and grow the "yuca" and "platano." They take care of the home chores and rear the kids. Their craft is making amazing pottery with local clays, natural paints, and dyes harvested from different parts of the river. They sell their pottery in Puyo and it is usually the main source of income for a family. The women are constantly preparing "chicha," a labor of love, and an integral part of the Amazonian culture.

It is truly amazing to see the different ways people have adapted to their perspective little pockets on earth. The culture of the Amazonian people is shaped by the harsh realities of the forest and the pulse of the river. Homesteading in the Amazon takes a special kind of love and commitment to living in tune with the earth. A toughness that is hard to find these days and a commitment to sacrifice of convenience for the absolute freedom you can only find by living off the land.

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by Juan Francisco Carrasco



Interview With the Minister of Culture and Heritage, María Elena Machuca Quito Art, Tradition, and Culture

Today we have the honor of interviewing María Elena Machuca, Minister of Culture and Heritage of Ecuador. María Elena is an artist and holds a degree in Human Relations. She was previously Director of the Itchimbía Cultural Center, Director of the Metropolitan Cultural Center, and Executive Director of the City Museums Foundation. María Elena brings years of experience in the arts and if anybody knows about the traditions, art, and culture of Quito, it's her. We thank Minister María Elena Machuca for sharing her knowledge with us and the expat community in this edition of HiExpat Magazine.

JF: Quito was the first city in Latin America to be declared a Cultural Heritage of Humanity site by UNESCO. Why did Quito receive this recognition?

On September 8, 1987, UNESCO declared Quito a Cultural Heritage of Humanity site for having the best preserved and least altered historic center in Latin America. In addition to this, its status as a living historic center, adequately preserved urban design, and the exceptional value of its space and the conservation of its property heritage have made it stand out among other cities.

The historic center of Quito has stood out for its monumental religious architecture and for the value of its material heritage such as the sculptures and representative paintings of the "Escuela Quiteña." This work from the 17th and 18th centuries expresses the dialogue between European and Indigenous culture. For these attributes, aesthetics, and symbolic cultural characteristics, Quito was granted with this recognition. The Ministry of Culture and Heritage seeks to sustain and preserve this heritage over time for new generations through its policies. The Ministry strongly believes that this heritage constitutes the identity of the city and country.

JF: I love to walk in the historic center and I really enjoy visiting its churches. Has any church in the historic center been declared material heritage?

The declaration of Quito as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity site is due to the fact that its entire architectural complex is representative. All the structures that make up the Historic Center of Quito, whether they are houses, churches, or plazas, are patrimonial and inventoried by the Institute of Cultural Heritage, which is managed by the Metropolitan Institute of Heritage. Their consideration as patrimonial property is given due to all the historical, aesthetic, architectural, social, and cultural value with which these buildings contribute to the identity of the people of Quito and of the country.

The churches of the Historic Center of Quito do not require specific declarations as they are already part of this heritage architectural complex. They have undoubtedly exceptional characteristics that differentiate them from one another. Visiting them is a unique experience to learn about how we practice our religion, customs, and especially to learn about our identity.

JF: My favorite church in the historic center of Quito is "Iglesia San Francisco." I would like to know what your favorite church is and why?

My favorite church is the "Compañía de Jesús." I really like its architecture which is entirely carved out of volcanic stone. It is considered one of the most important expressions of baroque architecture on the American continent and in the world. The inside of the church is totally covered with gold sheets which makes it invaluable.

JF: What does the Ministry of Culture and Heritage do to conserve the material heritage of Quito?

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage contributes with public policies focused on the conservation, safeguarding, and enhancement of Quito's cultural heritage. As part of them, the Ministry has a fund for research projects, promotion, and dissemination of Cultural Heritage. This fund has approximately \$170,000 for research and \$28,000 for promotion and diffusion of resources. These resources are delivered with the aim of supporting the development and implementation of citizen proposals in the different heritages of Quito, among them material heritage.

Additionally, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage provides technical advice to local governments regarding the issuance of municipal ordinances for the protection of cultural heritage. Each canton has a heritage management plan specific to its heritage density and the specific needs of its territory.

JF: Is there any event or activity that you particularly like during Holy Week in Quito?

An event that I really like is the "Arrastre de Caudas," which is a religious celebration that takes place on Holy Wednesday in Quito's Cathedral. This is a religious funeral commemoration in tribute to Christ. Previously, it was held in three cities, Lima, Sevilla, and Quito, but currently it is only performed in Quito, making it the only one in the world.

On the other hand, I also enjoy spending time with my family by preparing the traditional "Fanesca", which is a typical dish eaten during Holy Week, not only in Quito, but throughout Ecuador.

JF: What activities would you recommend for the expat community during Holy Week in Quito?

During Holy Week there are many activities in the historic center of Quito. I recommend attending the procession of "Jesús del Gran Poder" and the "Arrastre de Caudas." The sacred music concerts that take place in the churches and plazas of the historic center are also outstanding. Additionally, you can visit the wonderful churches, the Street of the Seven Crosses and the religious, recreational, and educational museums.

JF: The procession of "Jesús del Gran Poder" is one of Quito's most well known events. I love Holy Week in Quito and seeing the mysterious "Cucuruchos." Why hasn't the procession of "Jesus del Gran Poder" or the "Cucurucho" been declared in Quito's intangible heritage?

The declarations of cultural manifestations as cultural heritage arise from the citizens, who in coordination with the municipal governments, request the incorporation of their manifestations in the representative list of the national intangible heritage. At the moment their inclusion has not been requested, but it could occur in the future.

JF: Does the Ministry of Culture have a cultural agenda to promote Quito during Holy Week?

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage prepares and publishes a Cultural and Heritage Agenda in which all activities related to the festivities and cultural dates of each month are compiled and shared biweekly. The agenda that contains the activities related to Holy Week will be promoted at the end of March when we present a special edition about "Fanesca."



Juan Francisco Carrasco

María Elena Machuca
Minister of Culture and Heritage



by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés

El Cajas: A Magical Place Awaits You

In 2013, UNESCO established the El Cajas Massif Biosphere Reserve which is situated directly in Cajas National Park, located just west of the city of Cuenca. It is a humid woodland made up of around 786 bodies of water with various sizes, flora, fauna, and a picturesque landscape surrounded by mountains in every direction.



The lake-filled woodland of Cajas is a unique site to see and explore, which is why it is one of the most highly recommended places to visit in Ecuador. There are so many things to do including hiking through the pre-drawn passages, sharing a cup of warm coffee while gazing at the frost-tipped mountains, or even fishing for your dinner in the man-made lakes and enjoying it on the spot! Before we get to that though, I want to tell you a bit more about this beautiful place.

Cajas has an area of 28,544 hectares, and is located in the province of Azuay just outside of Cuenca. It sits at a height of 3,160 to 4,450 meters above sea level and is characterized as cold but humid with unpredictable rains, there are also days when a dim sun will keep you warm. Cajas fauna is varied, including over 600 species of vascular plants, 43 mammals, and 157 birds, which include 24 species of hummingbirds, 17 different amphibians, and 4 species of reptiles. Its vegetation is extensive and covers the entire forest, you can find straw, romerillo, chuquiragua, achupallas, club-mosses, ferns, tulips, paper or quinoa trees, puma maqui, valerian, and orchids, among other species.

Entrance to the park is free and just requires that you fill out an entry form provided by a park ranger. Normally rangers will provide a short tour of the park where they provide you with historical facts and show you how to identify different types of flora and fauna. There is also a small restaurant and museum that is free to check out and space to camp in the park overnight, for a cost between \$4 and \$10. If you do plan to camp in the park make sure you bring your own tent, warm clothes and a semi-heavy sleeping bag. Night time can get a bit chilly!

Among the many attractions in Cajas, the Llaviuco Lagoon is a must see! The lagoon can be accessed by vehicle up until the entrance to the ranger's cabin, from here you will have to walk a short distance, on fairly easy terrain, to the lagoon. Once you reach the lagoon you can enjoy bird watching, and if you are lucky you may even see some deer.

Another essential place to visit in Cajas is Hosteria Dos Chorreras. This restaurant and cozy hotel is well-known and offers a unique dining experience. In the man-made lagoons located just outside the restaurant, guests are invited to fish for trout and then hand their catch off to chefs who will prepare it for dinner. If you're feeling adventurous you can book a night or two in the hotel, try out horseback riding, go on an excursion, ride bikes and more! Prices for these activities range from \$8 to \$24 and all come with an experience guide. As for the rooms, you can choose between cabins, single rooms, or even a room with a jacuzzi, from \$80 per person, per night. The rooms have a rustic feel and the hotel features a cozy living room with a warm fireplace, perfect for enjoying a delicious hot chocolate.

Another traditional food option would undoubtedly be Casa Vieja, this restaurant is located a few meters past the entrance to Cajas. At this restaurant you can find typical food such as garlic trout, fried trout, fried corn with cheese, chicken broth, and a good Canelazo for the cold. Plates start from \$6 and the food is usually delivered in a timely manner, although it can get a bit busy at times because it is so popular! Driving a few minutes past Casa Vieja, you will find the sanctuary of the Virgen del Cajas. This religious landmark is a peaceful sanctuary located among the hills of Cajas. Before reaching the sanctuary there are small food stands featuring typical food from the Ecuadorian highlands. Additionally, if you are up for an adventure you can hike up the nearby mountain, taking in the beauty of the lagoons, and appreciating the extensive countryside full of streams.

Visiting Cajas is a mandatory stop in Ecuador. There are various hiking paths for all levels of hikers, lagoons to fish in, and endless areas to explore. We do highly recommend that you explore the area with an experienced hiker though because it is easy to get lost and turned around in the vastness of the park. We also suggest dressing warmly, especially if you decide to camp there.



by Carolina Segarra

Cajas National Park will undoubtedly envelop you in its beauty, in its soft chirping of the birds, in the sweet sound caused by the water colliding on stones, in the reddish soil that forms when the skin of the paper tree is shed, Cajas is a national emblem. We hope that you enjoy all that it has to offer you.



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The Importance of Getting a Second Doctor's Opinion in Ecuador

A few months ago I received a call in the middle of the night from one of our clients who was suffering from severe knee pain. His doctor had suggested immediate surgery on both of his knees at a price of \$9,000, which immediately alarmed me. I contacted one of our other client's doctors and got an appointment set for the next day. The other doctor concluded that physical therapy and medication would solve the issue, and for less than \$2,000, without a painful surgery. This is just one of the many cases that I have seen in which the treating physician proposes an invasive procedure without considering the client's specific situation or exploring other options first.

In Ecuador we have doctors who are highly trained to treat your health conditions at affordable costs, whether they be new or pre-existing. For this reason, we recommend that you consult with at least two doctors before making a final decision when it comes to large-scale medical procedures.

Getting a second medical opinion is crucial in order to verify the cost of procedures and treatment that your doctor is proposing. Medical prices vary extensively throughout Ecuador, especially in doctors offices that serve foreigners. Some doctors may suggest unneeded surgeries, ineffective treatments, or even incorrect treatments if you are wrongly diagnosed due to a language barrier, for example.

Below are some of the most important things to consider when looking for or receiving healthcare in Ecuador:

- Contact a doctor who speaks your language or attend your medical appointment with a translator. This will ensure that your provider understands your medical needs and proposes the correct treatment.
- Verify that the cost of the services you are receiving are fair and average for the quality and type of treatment. A medical appointment ranges from \$20 to \$50, although specialists could charge up to \$80 per appointment.
- If your doctor proposes surgery for specific conditions or problems, seek a second opinion. Verify that the cost of the proposed surgery is comparable with the average cost and that the procedure proposed by your original doctor is supported by the second doctor's opinion.
- Check that your doctor is registered in the SENEYCYT system. You can learn about your doctor's qualifications through this online database by inputting the name and surnames of your doctor.

- Ask your provider if he would be willing to help you with the required documentation for your reimbursement. Remember that in Ecuador the reimbursement process is the responsibility of the client.
- If you have private medical insurance you can book your appointments through the available network and the costs will be within the permitted and regulated parameters of your plan. This is the best way to schedule a pre-authorized surgery.
- It is important to know that insurance may not cover some medical appointments or procedures such as alternative therapies (ozone therapy), natural medicine, or orthopedic care.

The cost of medical treatment in Ecuador is not regulated by any control entity, which means it is the doctor who decides the cost for the medical procedures they perform. The only regulated medical costs and compliance with health standards are those regulated by ACESS in Ecuador. These reference price tables detail the average suggested prices from the Ministry of Public Health and McGraw Hill, but no doctor is obliged to charge these proposed costs.

Although there is no control entity for medical costs in Ecuador, there are rules and laws that regulate the doctors and health services you receive in our country. It is important that you verify that your doctor has a medical license registered in the SENECYT system and that the clinic you attend has permits issued by ACESS. Ensure that the cost that your doctors are charging for your treatment is fair and average compared to other providers. Lastly, remember that recommendations from friends who reside in Ecuador could be of great help in finding a doctor that meets your specific needs.

by Carlos Ramírez





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2022 Immigration Update

Ecuador is a developing country, and because of this it is a country that is constantly looking for changes, improvements, and updates to its laws. No country has perfect laws, but at least in Ecuador it is evident that we are dedicated to improving. Ecuador has ranked as the second most popular country for North American retirees according to the latest edition of International Living magazine. This recognition is beginning to signal to local authorities that being a destination country for retirees brings with it many benefits, but also many challenges, especially regarding immigration.

Since 2008, Ecuador has presented itself to the world as a country with open borders and free mobility. At the same time though, it has been adapting to the reality that we have been experiencing in recent years. This is why in 2017, for the first time, Ecuador published a Human Mobility Law that regulated all types of visas and gave a complete description of the migratory requirements for each type.

It is truly amazing to see the different ways people have adapted to their perspective little pockets on earth. The culture of the Amazonian people is shaped by the harsh realities of the forest and the pulse of the river. Homesteading in the Amazon takes a special kind of love and commitment to living in tune with the earth. A toughness that is hard to find these days and a commitment to sacrifice of convenience for the absolute freedom you can only find by living off the land.

On February 18, the regulations for the Organic Law on Human Mobility were updated again, which brought some interesting changes such as the temporary residence visa for self-employed workers (services) and the digital nomad visa. The latter being an invitation to those people who can do their work from home, so that they can come live in Ecuador.

Although sudden changes to the immigration laws in Ecuador can be deterring to North American expats, we can say with full confidence that the Ecuadorian government, even with limited resources, is always prioritizing the increase and retention of this community in our country. It is with the utmost importance that the government both prioritizes the invitation of North American expats, while also complying with internal security protocols which ensure the safety of all.

Below you will find a description and the requirements for each of the visas that are most popular within the North American expatriate community:

Visa Type	Specific Requirements	Amparo Requirements	Additional Notes
Work Visa	a. Work contract or personnel action		*This visa is restricted to the protocol issued by the authority of human mobility and the Ministry of Labor *For renewal, a certificate of affiliation to IESS is required
	b. Proof of official, registered employment contract		
	c. Employer certificate that has no pending obligations the Internal Revenue Service (SRI), Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security (IESS), and Superintendence of Companies		
Autonomous Work Visa	a. Must hold a tourist, residence, or acts of commerce visa		
	b. Recognition of contract signatures		
	c. RUC (applicable only to those who are already residences)		
	d. Operating permit granted by the GAD (Local Municipality)		
	e. Sworn statement with photos of the activity to be carried out, or Property Registry Certificate of the property, or rental registration presented before the GAD (Local Municipality)		
	f. If the company is foreign, it must present an apostilled sponsorship letter		
Rentier Visa	a. Apostilled document that certifies lawful income equal to 3 basic salaries. Base salary in 2022 is \$425	Certified additional monthly income of \$250 USD for each covered person	
	b. Health insurance		
Digital Nomad Visa	a. Provide proof of income from a foreign source equal to 3 monthly basic salaries for at least 3 months prior to the application OR provide proof of income equal to 36 basic salaries for each year (Attach a copy of account statements). Base salary in 2022 is \$425		*The documents will be physically sent in one month.
	b. Documents verifying that you work or provide services remotely for an employer		
	c. Applicable only to residents of countries approved by the Ministry of Tourism**		
	d. Health Insurance		
Retirement Visa	a. Proof of a pension equal to 3 basic salaries. The basic salary in 2022 is \$425	Certified additional monthly income of \$250 USD for each covered person	
	b. Health Insurance		
Investment Visa	a. Investment of 100 basic salaries in bonds or real estate. Base salary in 2022 is \$425		
	b. Issuance of the visa after the title search reveals no liens		
Professional Visa Amparo Visa (children/spouse or de facto partner)	a. Apostilled degree		
	b. Registration of degree in Senescyt		
	a. Present proof of monthly income of \$250 USD for each child of legal age who is covered		
	b. Birth or marriage certificate, as applicable		

**It should be noted that the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador has not yet issued a list of countries approved for the digital nomad visa and no visa may be issued until these countries are released.



by Marcos Chiluiza

The Dilemma of Two Worlds

by Kimberly James

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A whirlwind of emotions, a flurry of activity, like for many, 2021 was a year to be remembered. It won't be one that I will fondly reminisce about, but one that will be recorded in history books, family albums, and sadly for many of us, marked with loss. My year started with a long-overdue return trip to see my family who had been spread between three countries and two closed borders, for far too long.

Although seeing my family was my dearest motivation for heading back to the United States, I also looked forward to getting caught up on healthcare, finishing my taxes, and doing some banking. With guilt, I too dreamed of lazy afternoons becoming reacquainted with my old friend Amazon, enjoying a bite of P.F. Chang's famously delicious Bang Bang Shrimp, and sharing a full-bodied bottle of Californian Cabernet with my sister. However it was 2021 and to have things go smoothly would have been a major misstep for a year that had consistently delivered surprises, challenges, and disappointments.

I landed in Miami, excited, and entered the long queue for immigration knowing that my family was finally within reach. However, after approaching the haggard immigration officer that gruffly called me forward, I knew things were about to change. After a cursory review of my Canadian passport, and a series of background checks appropriate only for a new resident of Sing Sing, I was abruptly informed that I needed to spend more physical time in the U.S. to maintain my

permanent residency. I was shocked, even if I shouldn't have been. Never before had this been an issue despite decades of overseas travel including to my second home. I had immigrated as a child and lived in the U.S.; surely there was a 'workaround.' Unfortunately, it seemed that there was no leniency for those who had stayed out of the U.S. more than the allowed 365 days, despite closed borders. I had been gone 370 days.

I cried when I found out that my stay in the US would need to be extended. To be honest, I more than cried, I deeply grieved the thought of an unexpected loss of my life as I had known it for the last eight years in Ecuador. As emotions spilled out and my tears flowed over, I mentally detailed everything that I would miss, and everything I would need to leave behind. My animals first and foremost, six of the silliest and most loving rescues one could ever hope to meet, with an abundance of love that only a pet owner knows. The kindest of friends, the most beautiful of sunsets, the abundance of fresh seafood, the indescribably gentle people; I suddenly remembered all that made me love Ecuador. But, I needed to pull myself together and come to terms with the fact that I was back in the U.S., to stay.

I tried to comfort myself that despite the sterile environment of North America, it was convenient, it was familiar and in many ways, it was much easier than the last almost decade of my life. I consoled myself that now I had time to curl up on the couch and find useless gadgets on Amazon, to watch all the new binge-worthy series that had been unavailable to me, and to shop in stores that had a dizzying array of sparkling clean products, all appropriately marked with proper price tags. I had live performances by some of the world's top musicians at my fingertips, all the new fashion, new styles, and even newly coined colloquialisms to my avail. There were so many new restaurants including ones with outdoor dining and "to die for" avocado margaritas. There were self-driving cars, robots that made deliveries, and drones hovering above head, searching for land ripe for development. I could enjoy the delicate flavors of the most exotic foods all delivered to my door with just a few taps of the keyboard. I was intrigued but underwhelmed. It was vanilla, it was interesting, but it wasn't mind-expanding or soul swelling. Nonetheless, I had to face the fact that I had to go about the business of loosening my grip on Ecuador and building a new life back with my family tucked amongst all the creature comforts.

In the following months, I re-discovered so many things that had almost faded from memory. The familiar crunch of the fall leaves below my feet, which made a kaleidoscope carpet of the yard; the bite of the first blast of cold air, bundling up in impossibly soft fleece to enjoy the first flakes of snow I had seen in years, and Sundays, especially football

Sundays with friends. I felt luxuriously comfortable speaking with every clerk, on every phone call, to every person who cared to chat. My language skills soared from 'meh' to absolutely, wonderfully fluent. No more tilted heads or requests to repeat my words. I wasn't the tallest person in the room and I was strangely, wonderfully invisible. Oh, and a mailbox! A quick stop at the bank! One-stop shopping! And dear Lord, everything was paid for with the swipe of a finger or the push of a button! I had Venmo and GrubHub! I reveled in everything good and simple and delicious in North America.

Then as quickly as I knew I had to stay grounded in the USA, I knew I had to get back to Ecuador and to my business, which had experienced a strong influx of travelers, as anxious city dwellers flooded the beaches. My small boutique hotel celebrated the sun and sand, as the gloom of the pandemic began to lift. I booked tickets and told my family of my imminent departure. We had a hurried last night of board games and Thai food, and I was reminded of the thing I loved most about returning home, my family.

The next day, I landed in Quito, and spent a lovely decadent and inexpensive few nights in a five-star hotel in the city dubbed one of National Geographic's, "10 Cities You Must See Before You Die." The volcanos soared, and so did my heart. I rode through the mountains to Otavalo, passing miles of roses of all different colors, as if I was viewing the rolling hills for the first time. I went to the town center and sat on a bench where tiny beautiful women with babies bundled on their backs passed me at a brisk pace, their felt skirts and starched white embroidered blouses flowing behind them. I lingered in one of the largest craft markets in South America and was in wonder at the beautiful textiles, purses, artwork, and handi-crafts. The merchants, all steeped in ancient traditions, were both humble and majestic at the same time. The children, as beautiful as dolls, held hands with their younger siblings ensuring safe passage to their next adventure. The older men and women, so heavily respected by those younger, reclined peacefully watching the same scene they had watched for decades,

somehow finding a new fascination each day. I wound through the Andes mountain range and was amazed at what seemed to be suspended waterfalls dropping hundreds of feet out of the canopy. I was taken aback at the leaves, larger than the car, adorning the roadside. I took more pictures in an hour than I had taken in a year. I stopped for a simple meal on the side of the road with a gracious and grateful family, who wished me blessings and safe travels as I left. And then we turned around the next bend in the twisting mountain road, and I saw the overwhelming beauty of the expanse of ocean in front of me.

At that moment, I knew that Ecuador had changed my values, had changed me as a person, and for that, I am eternally grateful. 2021 was a good year after all.



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Prevention of Cardiovascular Diseases

by Dr. Cristhian Vallejo



Cardiovascular disease ranks first in mortality and morbidity around the world. Older patients are more susceptible to developing cardiovascular diseases because age plays a key role in the functionality of the body.

Older people are defined as a person aged 65 years or older. In 2019, a study from the American Heart Association reported that 78% of patients aged 60 to 80 years old were affected by cardiovascular diseases. The most frequent risk factors were hypertension, diabetes mellitus, obesity, smoking and age. These factors are highly associated with atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

In Ecuador, especially in the coastal region, there are a number of diseases that affect the cardiovascular system, in fact, Manabí is the province with the most cases of diabetes mellitus in Ecuador.

In most cases, cardiovascular diseases are associated with a sedentary lifestyle. On the other hand, due to poor nutrition, people have become accustomed to eating at an unhealthy pace and consuming excessive amounts of salt and sugar.

Hypertension

Chronic disease, such as high blood pressure, is one of the major risk factors that we often look for because it can cause endothelial damage to the blood vessels. When blood pressure is measured at 140/90 or higher, it is considered high blood pressure.

Diabetes Mellitus (DM)

Diabetes mellitus is a silent and multifactorial condition. In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that an average of 422 million adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, an increase from previous years. The most frequent form is Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM).

Chronic hyperglycemia is associated with other metabolic changes related to DM and predisposes patients to several possible injuries, which could cause life-threatening complications.

Obesity

Obesity is a global health issue and patients with obesity are at major risk for developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, gastrointestinal disorders and respiratory problems.

Obesity is measured by Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is calculated by dividing your body weight by the square root of your height. It is measured in kg/m². A healthy weight as defined by the BMI scale is 18.5 – 24.9 kg/m².

Smoking

Smoking is another risk factor for cardiovascular diseases, lung diseases, and cancer. It is one of the major causes of mortality and morbidity, every year thousands of people die because of smoking.

How can you prevent cardiovascular disease?

1.- Diet

- Mediterranean diets
- Dietary Approaches to Stop hypertension (DASH)
- Vegetarian diets

2.- Exercise

30 min/day or 150 min/week of moderate to intense exercise is recommended. Physical exercise in older patients helps with cardiovascular risk and general quality of life.

Types of physical activities:

- Walking
- Aerobics
- Balance
- Strengthening
- Flexibility

Influence on Cardiovascular risk:

- Improves blood pressure control
- Decrease risk of coronary and peripheral artery disease
- Improves cardiac output
- Improves symptoms (angina pectoris, palpitations, exertional dyspnea)
- Improves walking distance
- Lowers BMI
- Glycemic control

Influence on the general quality of life:

- Improves cognitive function
- Improves sleep quality
- Decreases pain and improves function in osteoarthritis

3- Hypertension control

- Goal 130/80 mm/hg or fewer
- Lifestyle + pharmacotherapy

4.- Diabetes management

- Goal HbA1c of <7% if it can be achieved without hypoglycaemia
- Consider SGLT2 inhibitor and GLP1-RA for CVD prevention

5.- Cholesterol

- High dose or maximally tolerated statin for LDL reduction of +50%
- Goal LDL <1.81 mmol/l per AHA/ACC guidelines


6.- Ways to stop smoking

- Counseling
- Pharmacotherapy

7.- Routine check-ins with your general practitioner

Conclusion

In conclusion, cardiovascular diseases are a major reason for disability or mortality among older people. Therefore, it is important to make the necessary changes to prevent these diseases. One could consider making a schedule of daily activities, which includes physical activities for at least 30 minutes a day. Dietary changes could also be made such as avoiding excessive consumption of salt, sugar, and highly seasoned foods.



A typical meal should include fruit, protein, carbohydrates, and vegetables. Additionally, by reducing body mass index, we contribute to a significant reduction in cardiovascular risk and may prevent a disease that can affect our quality of life. Lastly, it is important to carry out routine medical check-ups with your trusted doctor so that he can guide you through treatment

*The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only and is NOT medical advice. Please contact your doctor or physician for qualified medical advice, diagnosis, and treatment specific to you and your needs.



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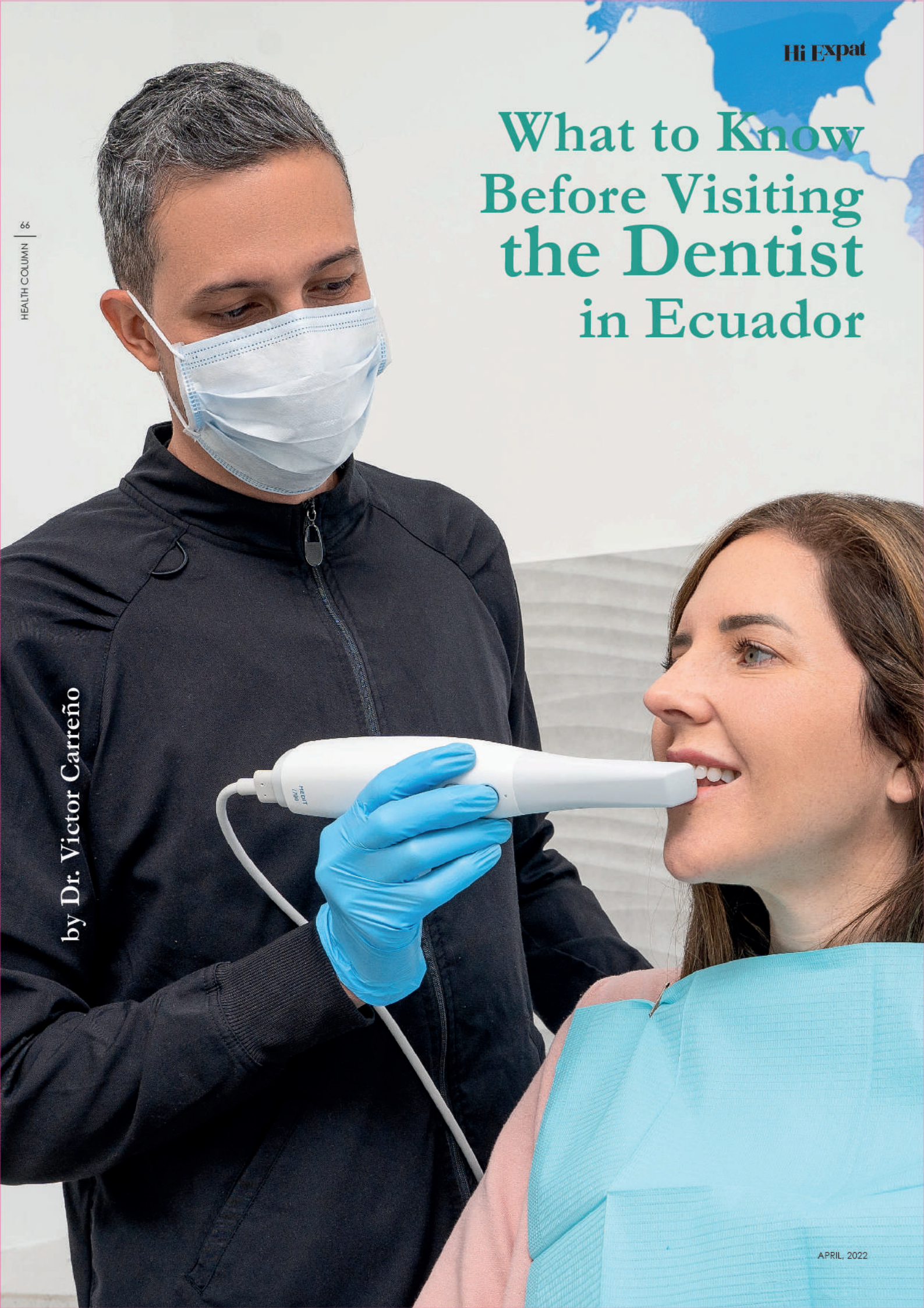


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What to Know Before Visiting the Dentist in Ecuador

66 HEALTH COLUMN

by Dr. Victor Carreño



In the January issue of HiExpat magazine, I wrote about a few of the factors that have brought about the transformation of the medical landscape in Ecuador, and the growing opportunities for modern, excellent quality health-care here. However, patients still report a wide range of experiences in our healthcare system, and as a newcomer to Ecuador, it is important to do some research to make sure you are receiving a level of care that meets your expectations.

Understandably, many new expats have concerns before their first visit to the dentist in Ecuador. We have developed a Q&A guide below to help patients know what to look for when selecting a dentist, and what to expect at a dental appointment in Ecuador.

- **How will I communicate with my dentist?** Fortunately for English-speaking expats, there are many bilingual dentists in Ecuador. If your dentist of choice does not speak your language, you also have the option of bringing along a trusted translator to your appointments.
- **What are the dentist's qualifications?** In the Ecuadorian education system, primary school is referred to as *primer nivel*, or the "first level", and high school is the "second level", *segundo nivel*. In order to become a licensed dentist, high school graduates complete five years of

study to earn a dentist degree at the *tercer nivel* or "third level" (similar to a bachelor's degree in North America). Then they complete a one year residency. Additionally, some Ecuadorian dentists choose to supplement their education with postgraduate degrees at the "fourth level" in a dental specialty program, either in Ecuador or abroad.

- **Where can I verify professionals' credentials?** If you are looking for excellent care from an experienced dentist, you may want to choose a professional with fourth level training. *Tercer* and *cuarto nivel* degrees are registered in the public, online SENESCYT system, which patients can access at <https://www.senescyt.gob.ec/web/guest/consultas>. Patients will need to know the professional's full name including both *apellidos* (surnames) in order to verify their credentials. For example, you may search "Carreño Alava" and click on "Victor Hugo Carreño Alava" to see my SENESCYT profile.
- **Are dental offices in Ecuador hygienic? Do they follow sanitation protocols?** There are several things to look out for at your dentist's office to make sure they are complying with international standards. Are the waiting room, office, and restrooms clean and brightly lit? Your dentist should open a separately packaged set of instruments for each patient. You may ask your dentist if their tools are sterilized using autoclave technology.

Dentists must have an up-to-date registration with ACESS, the government agency regulating healthcare providers and their offices, as well as municipal permits and hazardous waste subscriptions.

- **Do dentists in Ecuador use the same technology as those in the U.S.?** Many dental practices in North America and Europe have “gone digital”, and the leaders of the dental field in Ecuador are doing the same. Our dental practice in Manta uses a cutting-edge intraoral scanner to ensure precision and quick turnaround time for all of our crowns, bridges, veneers, and 3D-printed dental implant guides and restorations, which are designed and fabricated using CAD/CAM technology. If you are interested in dental implants in Ecuador, make sure to ask if your dental surgeon will use a CT scan for proper digital 3D planning and to reduce the risk of complications.
- **What type of materials do dentists use?** There is a wide range of types, brands, and quality of dental materials available in Ecuador, so make sure to ask your dentist what they will use in your mouth! Most dentists use metal-free tooth-colored resin composite for fillings, and there are some excellent dental labs in Ecuador that use top quality zirconia, porcelain, and ceramic for permanent crowns, bridges, and veneers. If you don't know what type of

questions to ask in order to ensure you are receiving dental treatment with top-of-the-line materials, I have written several blog articles on the subject at www.ecuadordentistry.com.

- **Will a dental hygienist perform my cleaning?** Surprisingly, in Ecuador the profession of dental hygienist doesn't exist, so a qualified dentist will perform your cleaning, polish, and give you a comprehensive oral health examination! In Ecuador it is common to find a practice with a team of specialists working together. This includes a dentist, oral surgeon, implantologist, endodontist, orthodontist, periodontist and more. A well-equipped team will be able to solve any dental issue or complication that arises.
- **How much should I expect to pay? Is insurance accepted?** Prices for high quality dental care in Ecuador are just a fraction of those in North America. They are so affordable that both locals and expats usually pay out of pocket for care. Some health insurance plans reimburse for certain dental procedures, such as preventive care, fillings, extractions, and root canals. Below, you will find some examples of prices at Ecuadorian dental practices like my own, with the latest technology and expert teams of specialists with *cuarto nivel* training, vs. average U.S. pricing.

Treatment type	Ecuador	U.S.
Oral health examination	\$20-\$30	\$50-\$200
Complete dental cleaning, polish and oral health exam	\$40-\$60	\$120-\$300
Panoramic dental x-ray	\$15	\$60-150
Dental implant placement by oral surgeon	\$700-800	\$1,400-\$3,000
Implant crown and abutment	\$500-600	\$1,100-\$2,500
Fillings (Resin composite restorations)	\$30-\$50	\$100-300
Complete set of dentures	\$700-800	\$1,200-3,000
Root canal with endodontist	\$250-300	\$700-1,500
Zirconia or emax porcelain crowns/veneers (metal-free)	\$400-500	\$1,000-\$2,500

If you are looking for a high standard of dental care in your native language, you will find that Ecuador offers skilled and highly trained professionals, modern and hygienic facilities, and cutting-edge technology and equipment, at an excellent price.



TOPDENTAL

BY DR. VICTOR CARREÑO



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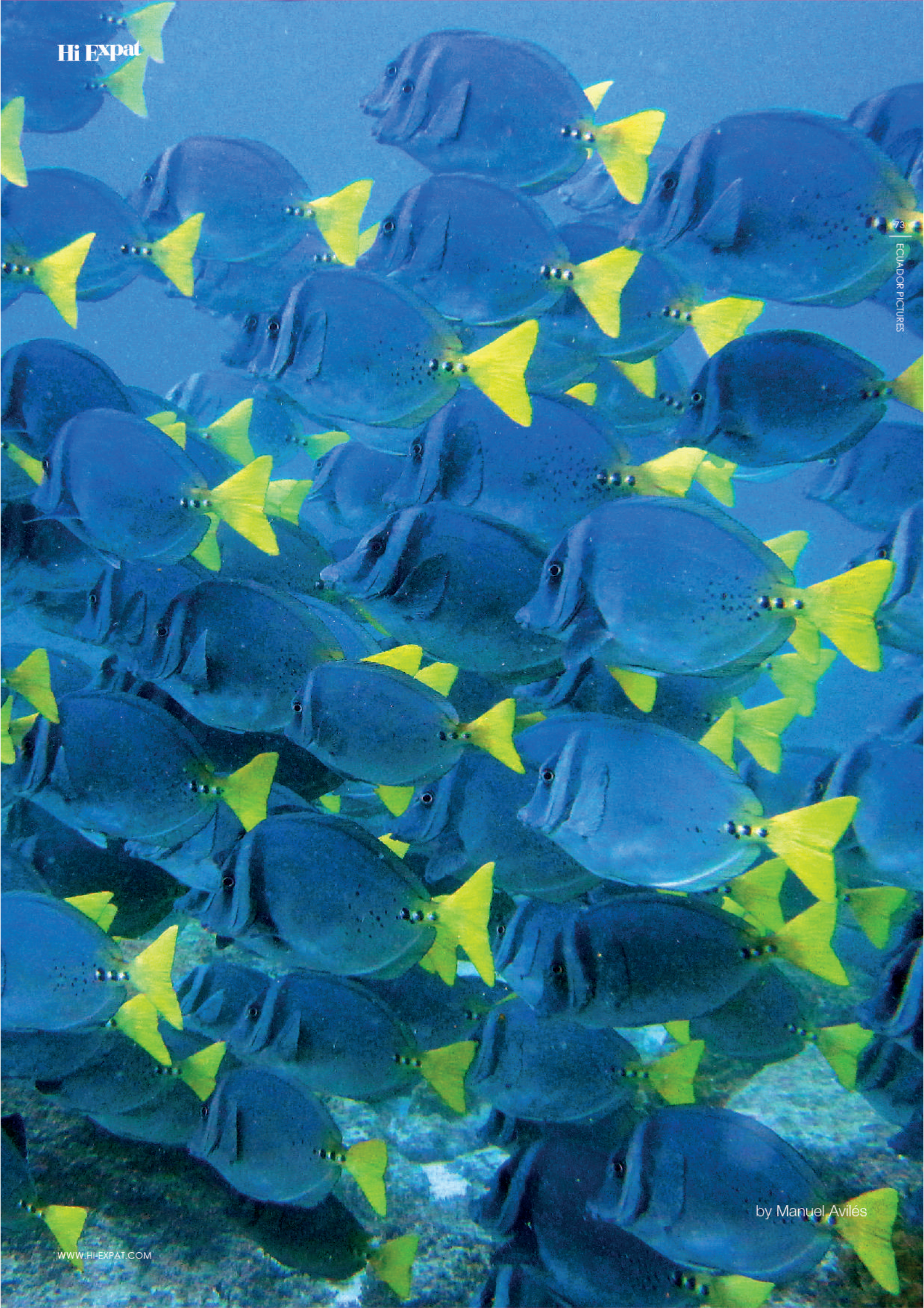




by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés

A Lineage From Another World



by Diana Fernandez de Cordoba

India and Ecuador have in common the fact that they are both located on the equator. “Ecuador” even gets its name from its location in the equatorial zone. But in addition to this coincidence, despite being thousands of kilometers away, its biodiversity, its colorful landscapes, and its people, are also elements of similar encounter.

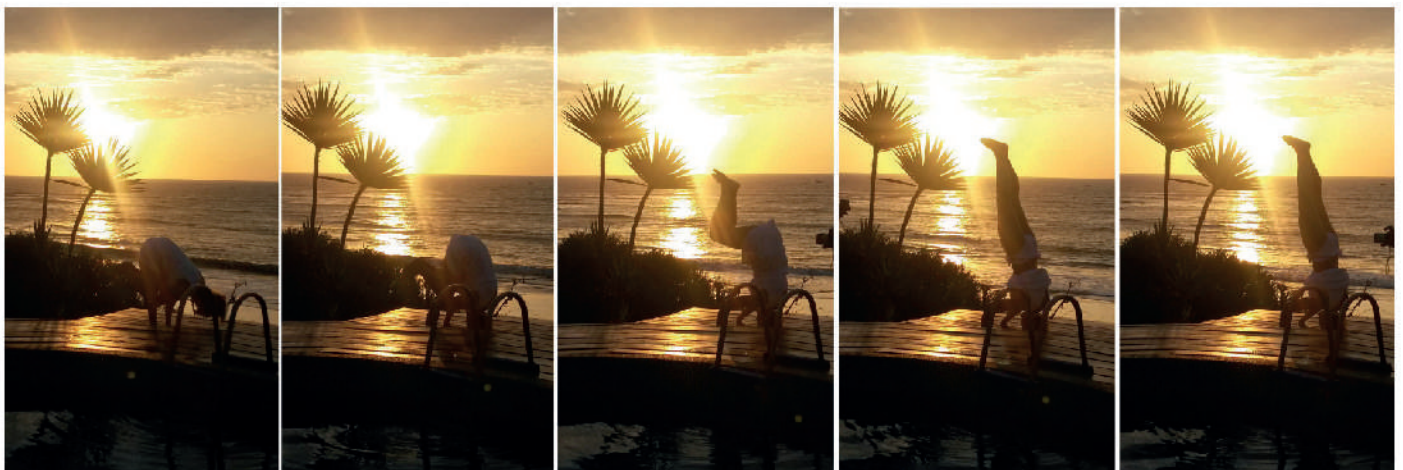
In 2015 I was preparing to travel to Rishikesh, India after planning my second yoga teacher training. After three days of travel, passing through the United States, I arrived in Rishikesh at 10 p.m. It was a very dark night, and even more so because the street lights were only as bright as weak candles. In the shadows I tried to get around and find the address of the hotel, but either my English was not good enough, or I had been misled by those who I asked.

Overwhelmed, I tried to think about what I could do in the middle of that gloom. I had bought a chip for my cell phone when exiting the airport in

New Delhi, but on the way to Rishikesh there was no signal. When I was finally able to contact the hotel it was already past 7 p.m. They told me they no longer had my reserved room because they did not hear from me in time, so they gave it to another guest. They only had one room left, next to the kitchen, which was used as a place to rest for the employees, that was all they could offer me. I originally thought that as soon as I arrived in Rishikesh, I would look for another hotel, but I did

not expect to be so late. I had planned to leave at noon and arrive at my destination no later than 5 p.m. But, since India is such a densely populated country, full of festivities, getting trapped on the road without being able to move is unfortunately very common.

So I arrived five hours later than expected, in a country that I am not the most familiar with, and have nowhere to go. Everything felt like it was moving in slow motion. In an attempt not to despair, I made a few more calls to the hotel, during which I tried to communicate with Arun, the receptionist. In this coming and going of calls, there was a pause, a silence, which was interrupted by the sound of a motorcycle. Between the light and the shadows, a thin man, with a strong



accent, told me, "I'm the one from the hotel and I came to pick you up"... For a few seconds I thought it was a joke, someone on a motorcycle was coming to pick me up. I am truly terrified of motorcycles! Nevertheless, it was my only option, unless I wanted to sleep on the streets. I glanced quickly at my luggage and shyly asked, "What about my suitcases?" To which Arun replied, "You will have to leave it, I don't have room for your suitcases and it's already too late!" At that moment I had to make a decision between going to a hotel or staying there alone with the suitcases on the street. I chose the hotel! I boarded the motorcycle and embraced my purse, the only thing that really mattered to me, because of the documents and the little money I carried.

When I traveled to India I was looking for spiritual lessons, and life-changing experiences. In addition to giving me better tools to

work on what I was passionate about, teaching yoga classes.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, India and Ecuador are very similar in many ways. Although Ecuador, because it is located in the Western part of the planet, has not been directly influenced by yoga or its manifestations. It has only been exposed to it since the visit of the first gurus to the United States, such as Paramajansa Yogananda (1920), or Sri Patabi Jois (1978), among others. Yoga has been undergoing adaptations since its exposure to the Western world, but yoga in its purest form has been reserved for its country of origin. Being a devotee of the origins, where wisdom, knowledge, experience and science prevail, I firmly believe that this practice must be rescued and treated with all respect and devotion, sourced from which its true benefits emerge, not as fitness but as a therapy of conscious life in modern times.





by Daniela Norris

The Conservation Project of Santa Marianita

As you walk through cities, beaches, and towns, what problems do you see? What are the problems that we ignore and turn a blind eye to? For me, and many others, it is waste and pollution.

We live in a throwaway society. I have noticed it back home in Canada and here on my favorite beach in Santa Marianita, Ecuador. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Society once revered the sentiment that says “one person's

trash is another person's treasure,” but people collectively have become more and more wasteful. We have cultivated a throwaway culture where humans overindulge, waste in droves, and use a plethora of single use plastics. We then turn a blind eye to this ever-growing problem.

Research suggests that the blame for the mass amount of garbage consuming our streets, rivers, lakes, and oceans is because of corporations in manufacturing. These companies use a “planned obsolescence” system that enables their consumer to be brainwashed into buying into this flawed design. Planned obsolescence is making products that are designed to be used once, or for a limited time, and then thrown away. This trend of disposable products is leading to climate change, atmospheric pollution, resource depletion and subpar waste treatment projects which impact our sustainability on earth.

Although companies and government policies on environmental issues need to take their own accountability, what is our own? To answer this, I talked to Davo Hidalgo and Carina Schaefer at Ocean Freaks Watersports in Santa Marianita. Santa Marianita is a beach town that is a 15-minute drive away from Manta, and unfortunately it has its fair share of problems when it comes to the sustainability of our shared environments.

Ocean Freaks is a water sport company that is run by Davo and Carina, Davo's brother Santiago Hidalgo, and their talented instructors, however it is not simply about catching a wave. This company also has a non-profit organization called "Ocean Freaks Marine and Wildlife Protection." They are small but mighty and with their other founder Daniela Delgado, they are doing everything they can. For over 10 years Davo, along with many volunteers, have been doing their part to clean up the beach, educate visitors and locals on the problem surrounding the environment, and make a committed effort to protect and preserve their community. In fact, at least 10% of the revenue from their water sport classes goes directly into their non-profit to help the cause.

Davo's partner Carina is also very passionate about this. Since moving to Santa Marianita

almost four years ago, she has seen positive changes, but also has been heartbroken.

"One day I was walking on the beach and saw sea turtles hatching. Many people were around. Some were apathetic to what was happening, some had no idea what the significance of this event meant, and others thought they were just trying to help, but

what they were doing was actually very detrimental... I remember running home very emotional because although I knew this was wrong, I didn't have any power to change it."



From that day forward it has been Davo and Carina’s mission to start connecting people with the daily practice of environmental intelligence. Their belief is that we do have the power to make a difference. One person picking up trash while walking on the beach with their family or their dog can lead to 10 people, which can then inspire 10 more and so on.

Through my interview, I asked what positive changes they have noticed since starting their organization, and a warmth took over their faces. Proudly, they said, “we now have 40 turtle nests this season but four years ago we only had 14... things are definitely getting better.”

Year	Nesting	Year % Change with previous year	% Groth compare to 2014
2014	14		
2015	28	100.00%	100.00%
2016	10	-64.29%	-28.57%
2017	21	110.00%	50.00%
2018	14	-33.33%	0.00%
2019	19	35.71%	35.71%
2020	33	73.68%	135.71%
2021	36	9.09%	157.14%

Let's face it, the environment isn't a very glamorous topic to get into, and it can be easy to turn a blind eye, but we need to take off our rose-colored glasses. More education

is required for all inhabitants. School curriculum must include teachings for our future generations, and policies from the Ministry of Environment need to be not only implemented, but also followed through on. As a whole, our collective mentalities need an overhaul.

If we do not make these changes now, what will this country look like in 10 years? How about 20? Without us all doing our part, pollutants will destroy the air and masks won't help us, wildlife will perish, and we will not be able to sustain ourselves.

However, there are simple things that you can do every day to become a champion and save not only the oceans and animals, but also you and your family. These three simple little things can make a huge impact:

1. Stop using single use plastics... buy reusable containers.
2. Reduce water consumption and reuse collected rain water.
3. Pick up garbage and never throw garbage on the ground.

Hi Expat

Imagine what could happen if more people joined in this effort. In 10-20 years, we would see a remarkable difference. We could take off those rose-coloured glasses for good. I have made my

own pledge to change my habits to help my habitat... will you be courageous and join me? Let's all be the change that we want to see in the world!



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Uncle Ned Comes to Ecuador

by Ned Meisner

In 2018, I was invited down to Ecuador by Rotarian Mark Backlin, to work with him on one of his medical missions.

I fell in love with Ecuador and also participated in a Rotary International project outside of Quito, Ecuador.

As a financial planner, Rotarian, and a Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy, I thought I could make a significant impact through the various projects which I could design and implement.

My children and grandchildren were all too busy to spend much time with me, so I didn't feel I was leaving much behind, although I miss my family desperately. As an alternative, I have been adopting families here, who now call me Uncle Ned (Tío Ned).



My first stop was in Quito for a couple of months. I was mugged three times and quickly decided to move to Cuenca. In my opinion, Cuenca is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Relative to other cities in South America it is very safe. The water is clean, the mountains are nearby, and there is a developing cultural community which is superb.

It became obvious to me that Cuenca and Ecuador could both benefit from an English-speaking Rotary club. There are 69 Rotary clubs in Ecuador and most do not speak English. When a Rotary club can develop a partnership with a club in another country, Rotary International can provide a Global Grant matching three dollars to every dollar raised. I did this with a Quito Rotary club raising \$184,000 for an organic farming project. This was the largest single Rotary project in Ecuador.

The English-speaking Rotary Club could've helped the other 69 clubs create these relationships with other countries. This could have created an influx of millions of carefully placed dollars which would have had a substantial impact on the economy of this country. Personally, I found it was too difficult to deal with the local culture. I realized that I could get more done working alone and networking with other people. I worked with many of the charities in Cuenca. I quickly learned how to vet individuals and foundations, and to work with those who could work with me, effectively.

I joined the English-speaking Lions club in Cuenca because I felt I could lend some ideas and resources.

I bought a new motorcycle and created Motorcycle Charities. This is a growing group of philanthropists who like to have fun. We support other charities and projects by helping to raise funds and become workers when needed. We are good at developing resources and beneficiaries and putting them together to create great synergy. For me, it was figuring out how to best invest my time and resources so as to get the best yield on my investment. Yield, to me, is improving people's lives.



I have assessed that Ecuador, although rich in natural resources, also has many poor and sick people. In my opinion, the best way to help this economy is to help those two layers. The best way to help those two layers is to work with the people who are already working with those layers. These are the good foundations.

I have been using Facebook as a marketing tool so that people, here, and in North America can see the fun I am having, contributing to this country. I am always marketing the good work that the foundations are doing.

I am also promoting culture here, and developed the Cultural Club of Cuenca, with a few others. I am attempting to entice those in North America to come on down and bring their resources. If they don't want to come down, perhaps they can just send their resources. There are people in North America who are giving millions of dollars to universities or other charities who do not need the money. In Ecuador, \$1 million can resuscitate an entire village and permanently improve the lives of 10,000 people.

My dream is to continue to connect philanthropy with fun. I want to visit all of the countries in South America, on my perfectly outfitted motorcycle. The plan is to return to beautiful Cuenca after each motorcycle journey. Cuenca is paradise. I love the consistently moderate climate and the option to visit other climates which are only 15 minutes away. The restaurants are incredible and everything is moderately priced. I wake up, grateful, every day.



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by Manuel Avilés