

15th Edition

# Hi Expat

INSPIRING & INFORMING EXPATS



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Dreaming

Peter Stromberg

## LAS AGUAS DE CUENCA

CLAUDIA ACOSTA

## *Peace Corps* IN ECUADOR

Lauren Phelps

## INTEGRITY

John Williams



COVER PICTURE: Manuel Avilés



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Sara Moore

**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Manuel Avilés

**EDITOR**

Kaitlin Comfort

**DESIGN**

Marcos Chiluisa

**MAGAZINE ASSISTANT**

Jamie Muentes

[hiexpat@gmail.com](mailto:hiexpat@gmail.com)

[WWW.HI-EXPAT.COM](http://WWW.HI-EXPAT.COM)



MADE IN ECUADOR

Dear HiExpat Magazine Readers,

We hope this message finds you in good health and high spirits. It is with a heavy heart that we inform you that our esteemed editor, Mark Bradbury, is currently on the path to recovery. Mark's dedication to bringing you the best content about the beauty of Ecuador for our fellow expat readers has been unwavering, and we want to take a moment to extend our warmest wishes for his speedy recovery.

During this time, the entire HiExpat Magazine team is working tirelessly to continue delivering the high-quality information and captivating articles that you've come to expect from us. We understand the importance of staying connected with the expat community and sharing the wonders of Ecuador that make it such a unique and enchanting destination.

Ecuador's beauty knows no bounds, from its stunning landscapes to its rich culture and warm-hearted people. Our commitment to showcasing the very best that Ecuador has to offer remains resolute, and we look forward to continuing to inspire and inform you through our magazine.

We invite you to explore our upcoming issues as we delve deeper into the intricate tapestry of Ecuador's beauty. Whether you're seeking travel tips, cultural insights, or stories of expat experiences, we're here to bring you the information that matters most to you.

Thank you for your unwavering support of HiExpat Magazine. As we eagerly anticipate Mark's return, we promise to uphold the standard of excellence that he has helped us establish over the years. We are all in this together, and we can't wait to embark on this exciting journey of discovery with you.


Warm regards,

Marcos Chiluisa  
HiExpat Magazine



# AMERICAN Dreaming...

By PETER STROMBERG



As I stood on the beach last weekend, I found myself engaged in a conversation with an Ecuadorian businessman who had been involved in international affairs for the past two decades. Having lived in Canada, the United States, Korea, and Japan, he had spent his adult life immersed in various cultures and ways of life across the globe. I was taken aback by his candid assessment of the United States, especially considering the recent assassination of a prominent presidential candidate in Ecuador, just a week before their federal elections and a few days prior to our conversation.

He declared, "America isn't what it used to be. Today, I wouldn't aspire to live there as I once did. When I was growing up, it was everyone's dream to go to America and become American. But it's different now. I'd prefer to be in Ecuador."

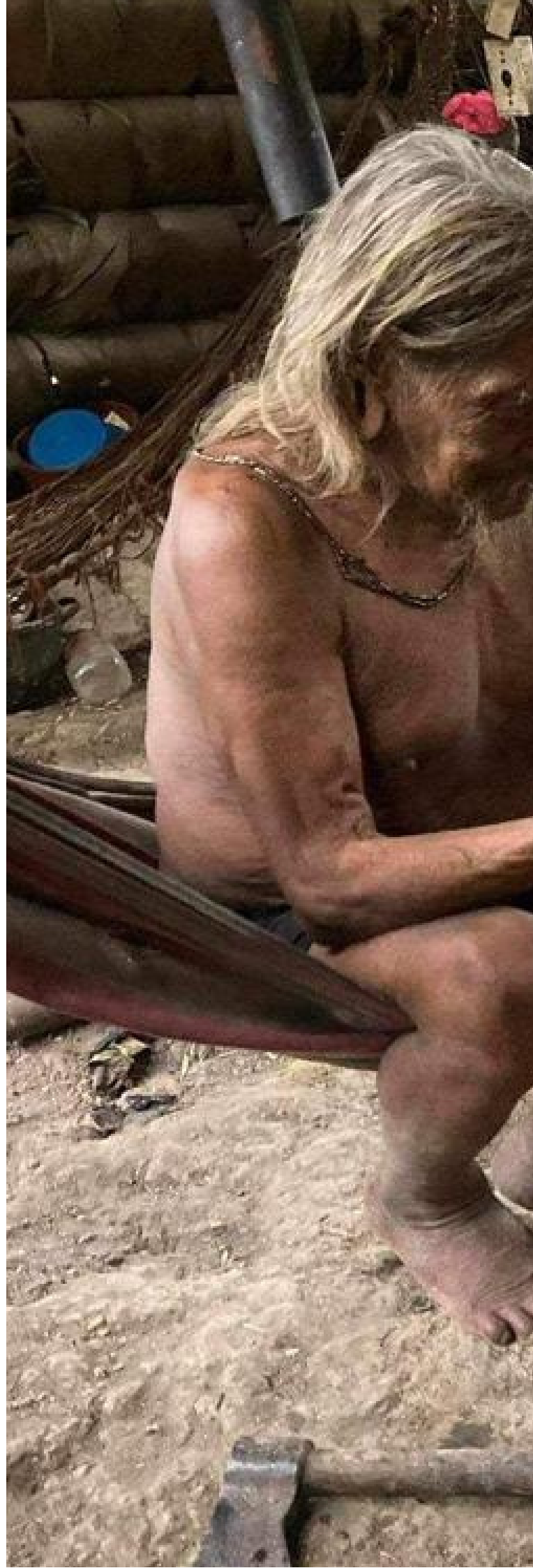
As I gazed out over the Pacific Ocean and contemplated his words, it felt like hearing something I had recently sensed but had never heard articulated so clearly. Although our backgrounds couldn't be more distinct, we had reached the same conclusions despite taking vastly different paths.

As an American, it's one thing for me to willingly relinquish the so-called "privileged" lifestyle of comfort and opportunity. It's acceptable for me to question American exceptionalism. Yet, hearing this perspective from someone from a developing part of the world was astonishing. I found myself feeling a sense of shame at the judgmental thought that crossed my mind: who is this Ecuadorian to criticize? Is he genuinely suggesting that he'd rather reside in Ecuador than in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave? I appreciate statements that jolt you, that strike you in the gut. They're usually indicators that one of your fundamental beliefs is being challenged—a gut punch of sorts.

His words prompted me to consider a crucial question: **what does America appear to be when viewed from outside its borders?** When you zoom out to take in the bigger picture, it's not a flattering sight. Let me provide a couple of examples...

One of the most glaring instances of America's influence causing upheaval is the proxy war against Russia unfolding in Ukraine, the poorest country in Europe. Despite which version of events you trust, the casualties resulting from this war are staggering. Estimates put the number of soldiers killed on the Ukrainian side at over 400,000 in this conflict, making it difficult to justify once the dust settles and the anticipated outcome of a smaller Ukrainian territory materializes.

In a misstep, the U.S. attempted to weaken Russia with financial sanctions that ultimately lacked the potency to destabilize the Ruble as intended. This strategic error will have far-reaching consequences for the world economy. The act of weaponizing the U.S. dollar and eroding international confidence in its stability has already altered the financial landscape. The established notion that the U.S. dollar would remain the world's reserve currency, which has held since the 1960s, is shifting as a multipolar world emerges. With the increasing membership of BRICS nations, this tectonic shift in the global economic order appears increasingly inevitable, further underscored by each billion-dollar "aid" package thoughtlessly dispatched to Europe's glaringly corrupt NATO hopeful.





# AMERICA

ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

Even following a global pandemic that claimed countless lives and caused unimaginable hardship, the citizens of the United States are still without proper healthcare. It stands as the sole developed nation that fails to provide a safety net proportionate to its wealth. The incredulity of not being able to afford basic healthcare in the world's largest economy is confounding.

As the people of Hawaii witness their homes and businesses reduced to ashes, the government has tethered aid to a condition: they demand the simultaneous approval of an additional multi billion-dollar Ukrainian aid package.

According to a Newsweek article, approximately \$46 billion in non-military aid flowed to Ukraine in the past year alone. The same article boasts about allocating a mere \$700 per American household affected by recent fires.

As the article unfolds, this pattern continues, culminating in the introduction of a "charitable" loan package for fire victims. The article states:

"Homeowners and renters in Maui can secure loans up to \$500,000 at 2.5% interest for home repairs or reconstruction, or up to \$100,000 for repairing or replacing personal property. Businesses can claim loans up to \$2 million at 4% interest."

Impressively favorable interest rates, indeed—for the victims of a natural disaster that was arguably caused by an incompetent state owned power grid that failed due to an acknowledged lack of maintenance.

It's rather unbelievable that the U.S. government is attempting to profit from loans extended to disaster victims as they rebuild their lives and communities, while handing over aid to the Ukrainian government without any strings attached. I'm not naive;

I understand that there will likely be returns for the U.S. in the form of reconstruction scams and resource extraction. Nevertheless, when you're a taxpayer who has spent your entire life in Hawaii, it's a tough pill to swallow watching aid pour into a country most Americans struggle to locate on a map, while aid for your own citizens in dire straits pales in comparison.







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# It's Paradise...

Take a picture of this Ad and bring it to the bar for a free cocktail with a purchase of a pizza.

It's a challenge to take pride in this situation, and the list goes on.

Our American opioid crisis is another stark example of what not to do. According to data from USAFACTS, "In 2021, the U.S. witnessed 70,601 fatalities due to fentanyl overdoses. This represents a 25% increase from 2020 and nearly a twofold surge from the number of fentanyl-related deaths in 2019. Fentanyl-related deaths in 2021 were over 26 times higher than a decade ago."

In major cities on the East and West coasts, open-air drug markets create scenes reminiscent of a zombie apocalypse movie. Needles protruding from people's arms in public spaces, alongside heaps of human waste strewn across landscapes. From San Francisco to Philadelphia, the confluence of the opioid epidemic with the homelessness crisis paints a grim picture.

One can also consider the crime rates. A quick Wikipedia search reveals that as of July 31, 2023, there have been 427 shootings resulting in at least 492 deaths and 1,708 injuries. These statistics are unparalleled worldwide. Nowhere else on the planet experiences the magnitude of gun violence that we do.

School shootings have become an American pastime, consuming our thoughts and prayers as a nation. As our nation lacks sufficient mental health care facilities, contends with a mounting addiction crisis, and faces a shrinking middle class grappling with an unsteady economy, we're unlikely to witness a significant drop in these numbers unless sweeping cultural and legislative reforms transpire. Yet, don't hold your breath.

And what about ordinary citizens? A Pew Research Center article highlights, "The middle class, once comprising a clear majority of American adults, has steadily dwindled over the past five decades. The share of adults residing in middle-class households has dropped from 61% in 1971 to 50% in 2021, based on a new Pew Research Center analysis of government data."

The article goes on to elucidate that as the middle class recedes, the wealth disparity between the two ends of the spectrum grows more pronounced. The age-old adage of "the rich get richer, the poor get poorer" rings true. As the middle class bears the brunt of economic policies driven by our shortsighted and avaricious leaders, their plight is compounded by the blank checks written to the industrial war complex—funding perpetual wars that stoke inflation and impact everyday Americans at the grocery store.

So, you may wonder where I'm headed with this extensive catalog of grievances concerning my homeland. Over the past two years, Ecuador has grappled with its own growing pains and political unrest, grappling with rising crime and heightened political instability. As previously mentioned, the murder of a prominent presidential candidate cast a shadow over the presidential elections. While recent times have been marked by increased violence, including shockingly surreal reports of Mexican gang-style atrocities in urban centers, Ecuador is currently navigating an uncertain period.

# BUT...

As crazy as it might seem from the perspective of Vice News in this little South American paradise, and as I field calls from friends and family residing in the U.S., inquiring about our well-being in such a perilous country... I can't help but smile at their lack of concern for their own supposedly "safe" or civilized country.

I suppose it boils down to the nature of danger itself. Is it the danger of living in the world's most heavily propagandized nation, unaware of the world beyond your borders? Is it the peril of recognizing that you're being manipulated and misled by authorities? Is it the risk of walking through the streets of any major American city after dark? Is it the peril of homelessness? The danger of being unable to afford nourishing, genuine, organic food free of contaminants? The threat of falling ill and being unable to afford medical treatment?

Ultimately, as the sun sets over the Pacific Ocean and I wiggle my toes in the warm sand, I can't help but feel that I've defied the odds. I've escaped the confines of the matrix. Perhaps there are dangers here, but name a place on Earth free from them. Nonetheless, when I compare a life in the U.S. to the life one can craft in Ecuador, it's challenging to explain the certainty in my heart that Ecuador is where I belong—despite the genuine or perceived dangers.

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# 5 Things I Learned from Peace Corps Ecuador

By LAUREN PHELPS

Ever since I can remember, I have had two goals in my life: join the Peace Corps and participate in the reality TV show "Big Brother". I remember thinking that maybe these goals were too big for me, pipe dreams that would never be attained. I have since let go of my aspirations to become a reality TV star, but I was, however, able to complete my goal of joining the Peace Corps.

In June of 2018 I found out that my Peace Corps application was accepted and I would be moving to Ecuador in January of 2019. I was beyond excited and so ready for my new life in a new country. Little did I know just how much I would learn in my experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador. Here are 5 things I learned that pretty much changed my life.

### 1. Adaptability is Key

Being adaptable to new environments is key to a successful life abroad. As a Peace Corps volunteer, I lived with a host family and was quickly immersed in the beautiful Ecuadorian culture. My host family couldn't be nicer and more welcoming. However, day to day life was different. Sometimes the water wouldn't turn on or sometimes the weather would be so cold that my clothes wouldn't dry no matter how long they hung out to dry. But these things are part of adapting to the new lifestyle that I would have in Ecuador, and I just had to embrace it all!

### 1. Live Life More Slowly

The second I stepped foot in Ecuador, I noticed that time warped into a new, slower way of doing things. At first, this might annoy you as it did me. But after months and months of living as the Ecuadorians did, I learned to live life more slowly and enjoy each passing moment. Something as simple as the speed at which I walked changed and I was no longer in a rush to get everywhere. La hora ecuatoriana started to creep its way into my habits, and I think it actually had a positive impact on my mental health. I learned that it is okay to take your time and enjoy life as it comes.

# LIVE LIFE MORE SLOWLY

It wasn't until I lived in another country that I realized just how capable and strong I am. Traveling will make you an instantly better problem solver and communicator. When you commit to being in the Peace Corps or to living in a foreign country for a long period of time, you learn what being alone is. And being alone is not necessarily a bad thing, in fact, sometimes it is a great thing! But you have to be okay with being by yourself, figuring out the solutions to day to day problems on your own, and learn to become a stronger person in the process.

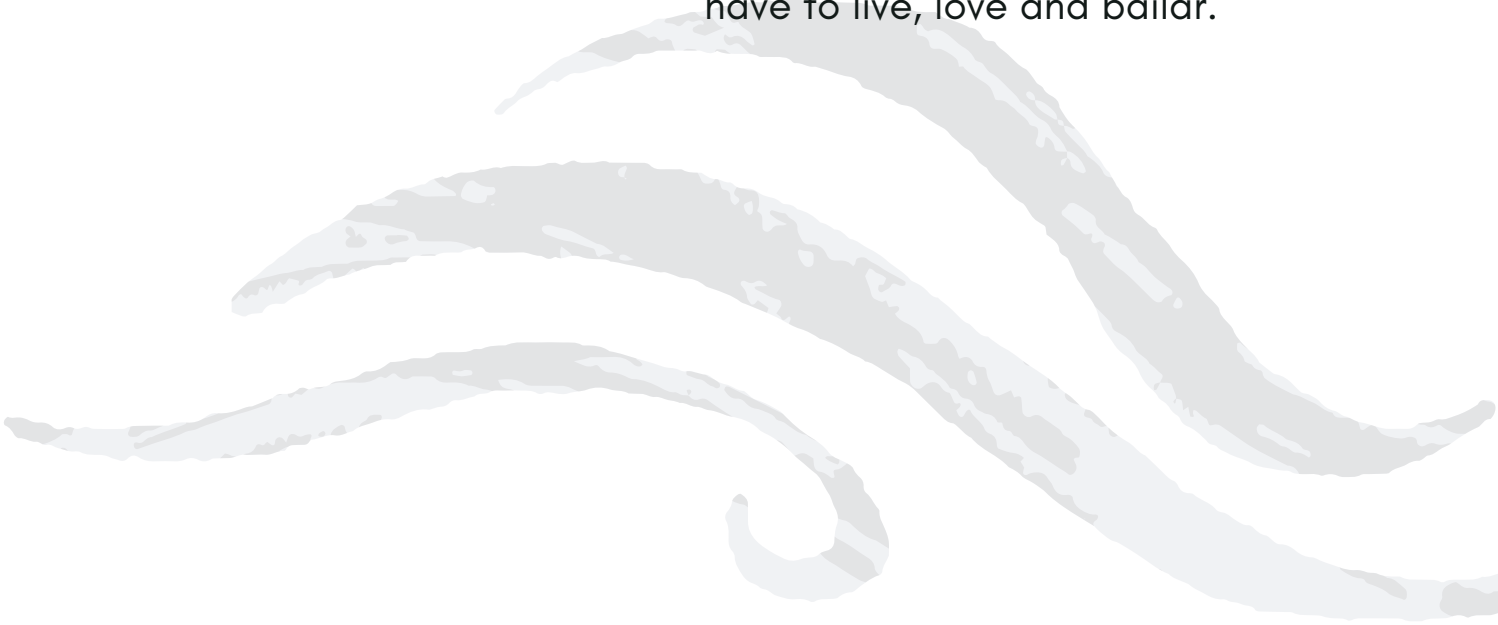
The second I stepped foot in Ecuador, I noticed that time warped into a new, slower way of doing things. At first, this might annoy you as it did me. But after months and months of living as the Ecuadorians did, I learned to live life more slowly and enjoy each passing moment. Something as simple as the speed at which I walked changed and I was no longer in a rush to get everywhere. La hora ecuatoriana started to creep its way into my habits, and I think it actually had a positive impact on my mental health. I learned that it is okay to take your time and enjoy life as it comes.

# TRAVEL MAKES YOU STRONGER



# LIVE, LOVE AND BAILAR

The fifth and most important thing I learned is to live each day to the fullest. I don't know what it is about Ecuadorian culture, but the people that I met were living, loving and dancing their way through all of life's struggles. I found the attitudes of so many Ecuadorians to be extremely inspirational. To this day, I want to be around people who have that same mindset, of enjoying friends and family and living life to the fullest to the best of your ability. So despite what problems you have or how the situation in the world might be affecting you, you have to live, love and bailar.




# Riobamba

## City at the Feet of the Giant

By JUAN FRANCISCO CARRASCO



A llama with light brown woolly fur stands in a rocky, high-altitude landscape. The background is a soft-focus view of a mountain range under a hazy sky. The llama is facing right, looking towards the camera.

It is no secret that one of the most important natural icons that Ecuador possesses is the Chimborazo. This volcano that imposingly rises 6,263 meters above the sea level has become a national icon creating admiration in tourists, photographers and climbers all around the world, remaining as the highest point on Earth and the nearest one to the sun when measured from the center of the planet. Beside this colossal volcano, you can find the city of Riobamba, also called the Sultan of the Andes, because this beautiful city is not only next to the Chimborazo but is also surrounded by the volcanoes Carihuairazo, Altar and Tungurahua, giving the Ciudad Bonita a privileged location in between beautiful snowy mountains.

Since it is the capital of the Chimborazo province, Riobamba is full of history, culture and traditions. Riobamba means "wide plain" and gives tribute to the huge esplanade where it was settled in the middle of enormous mountains. What we now know as Ecuadorian society was first established in Riobamba. Not only was the first Catholic Church and Olympic stadium founded here, but also the first constituent assembly took place in this city. Contrary to popular belief, the capital city of San Francisco de Quito wasn't originally founded where it is located nowadays, but near the Colta Lagoon which is just 40 minutes away from Riobamba by car. Also, Riobamba played a critical role in the economic growth of the country due to the commerce it allowed by train between the coast and the mountains, thanks to its perfect location in the middle of the country, which also granted it the title of the Railway Capital of Ecuador. I personally love traveling by train, and riding one is a mandatory activity for me when going to the province of Chimborazo, where not only Riobamba, but other cities as well offer incredible tours and adventures by train. Sadly, the entire railway system in Ecuador has shut down but I hope it will be restarted soon by the authorities who are already working on it.

My favorite tour departed from the lovely city of Alausí, which is only two and a half hours from Riobamba by car. Since I can remember, my family has always designated one of the days of our visits to Chimborazo to going to Alausí where colonial houses and a scenic landscape govern the little town amidst the mountains.

There, the main attraction is the trip to the Nariz del Diablo, an amazing path that navigates through the Andes mountains that will take you through sinuous rails next to hills and valleys on board a totally restored wagon that dates back to the middle of the past century.

**THIS ROUTE COVERS JUST A SHORT SECTION OF THE RUTA TRANSANDINA, A ROUTE THAT ONCE CONNECTED QUITO AND GUAYAQUIL, AND THAT HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS THE MOST DIFFICULT RAILWAY IN THE WORLD DUE TO ITS DEVIOUS CONSTRUCTION ON THE CLIFF OF THE MOUNTAINS**

The final destination is the station of Sibambe where you will take a short rest watching a sample of the life of the Andes, where people are dressed traditionally and there are songs, dances, food and objects that share the immense culture of our country. Finally, the train will take you back to Alausí where its unique heritage center will offer you delicious food and a great place to rest.

If you already find yourself in Alausí, you can't leave before visiting the Hacienda Abraspungo. This farm has beautiful gardens all over the place where you will find polylepis trees, found only in the high Andes that seem to be made of pieces of paper that are falling off. Inside the farm house there is an exhibition of objects and art pieces from the past century and the colonial, not to mention the famous horse saddles called "galápagos", which gave the name to the famous turtles and the islands.

Apart from the railways, Riobamba also offers many experiences within the city.

One of my favorites is going to the market La Merced. There you will find lots of little shops that not only offer Riobamba's signature dish, hornado, but also llapingachos, and the famous rompenucas juices which are made with ice extracted from the Chimborazo by the hands of Baltazar Ushca, the last ice-maker of the Chimborazo who carries all the history and knowledge of the now extinct craft. Buying in La Merced is not like buying anywhere else. Here the sellers yell piropos and all kinds of names like, mi rey, guapo and lindo, just so you will buy in their specific tent. Last time I went there with my family, all the sellers thought my father wasn't Ecuadorian and different sellers started talking to him in English in order to convince him to buy their hornado. That made our hornado unforgettable aside from delicious.

Moving away from the city and more into nature, the province of Chimborazo has two main protected areas, the Sangay National Park and the Chimborazo Fauna Production Reserve. These two areas have amazing biodiversity that shows both the paramo andino and the transition from the mountains to the coast.

The Sangay National Park is highly invested in the conservation of different ecosystems such as the paramo, the subtropical forest, and the andino high forest, which the UNESCO recognized as a Natural Heritage of Humanity in 1983, making it one of the two natural heritages found in Ecuador, the first one being the Galápagos Islands. In the high mountains of this park you can find the successors of the Shuar people, giving it an immeasurable value for Ecuadorian culture. Additionally, the reserve of fauna production in Chimborazo works for the preservation of many native animals such as rabbits, wolves, deer, pumas, llamas, alpacas and even vicuñas, who were introduced only in this part of Ecuador and now have a big and stable population. This vast reserve that occupies the lands of three provinces and includes within its limits the volcanoes Chimborazo and Charihuayrazo is the one you should enter to climb or visit the famous volcano.

Finally, the province of Chimborazo is a must-go for everyone that lives here, the astounding landscapes ruled by mountains, railways, valleys and beautiful cities at the feet of Ecuador's highest volcano and the earth's highest point is an opportunity you should not miss.

# HEALTHY WHITE SMILES



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# Integrity

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By JHON WILLIAMS



Along with much of the rest of the world, recent upticks in crime in parts of Ecuador have caused many residents, including many expats and those considering joining us here in Ecuador as a destination, to ask questions about personal safety. My answers to these questions will reflect on the basic character, integrity and honesty of the general citizenry. My adult daughter and I have been residing in the Santa Marianita beach area near Manta since 2017. During that time I experienced petty theft crimes twice. Both of those events occurred in the City of Quito, Ecuador. With a population of 1.6 million, it is second only to Guayaquil, which is home to about 2.0 million people. The "next biggest" city drops down to a population of about 276,000.

A couple of years ago when a friend was visiting from the USA and left his backpack sitting on a bench in a busy public square in Quito, we turned around to retrieve it, and it was gone. The second instance was when my girlfriend, Amy, and I were in Quito sightseeing earlier this year.

area and a young man grabbed her phone. "Amy the Great" yelled a bunch of profanities and chased the perpetrator on foot. Being chased by the crazy blonde lady, he eventually threw down her phone case that contained a couple of credit cards and her personal identification, but he got away with the phone.

Both of these incidents were caused by carelessness and a lack of personal awareness. So yes.....petty theft is here, and the aftermath of the pandemic has made more people more desperate. And you can't stop desperate people from doing desperate things....anywhere! That is true the world over, and there are many years of increasing desperation facing the inhabitants of this "rock in space" that we all inhabit, as the effects of global climate change increase droughts, floods, fires, and hurricanes/typhoons. As an expat from the USA, I always laughed at the folly of trying to build a wall to keep out desperate people. When someone is desperate to feed themselves and their family and willing to endanger their life to try to do so, no amount of threats, walls, oceans, police brutality, rivers, or moats will stop them.

When one is facing starvation, death, or enslavement for themselves and/or their family, they are coming. That is a discussion for another time. But the phrase “desperate times call for desperate measures” rings very true. I say this not to excuse such behavior. It is simply a factor that is increasing theft and increasing personal insecurity in most places around the globe.

But this article is about Ecuador. Those two incidents detailed above are just what they are, but what about the “other” things? Other things like kindness, compassion, caring, mutual respect... Those qualities are much more abundant in Ecuador.

There is a little cafe that has some of the best ceviches I have ever had. The fresh shrimp just pop in your mouth and the flavors are always perfectly blended. The same family has been making ceviches there since 1945! But it is on a high-traffic sidestreet in downtown Manta and there is no parking. So like many places here, there are parking “helpers” who will direct you to a place on the street where you can park.

They also watch your car while you are away. They don't require any payment, but a tip of \$0.25 or \$0.50 is customary if you want to thank them for their help. One day I parked there, got out of my car, and inadvertently dropped a \$10.00 bill when putting my keys into my pocket. Who knew? Not me! As I proceeded to walk toward the cafe the “parking guy” came running down the street waving my \$10.00 bill and hollering for me to stop so he could give it back to me! Now I estimate that this young man likely makes about \$2.00 - \$2.50 per hour in tips. That \$10.00 would have meant a lot more to him than it does to me, but it just wasn't in his nature to even think about keeping it, so he just did the right thing.

I frequently shop in a little produce shop in the town of Montecristi where I occasionally play golf. A little old man operates the shop and his extended family lives in the back of the store. It is very common for more than one generation of family members to live together in Ecuador, as it is in much of Latin America. Fruits and vegetables are very plentiful and inexpensive in Ecuador. I usually get a big stalk of about 60-70 bananas there for about \$2.50. On this particular day I bought a stalk of bananas, a few apples, five lemons, 20 limes, a couple of cucumbers, and some onions.

When I asked “how much?” he said \$4.00. As usual, I am pleasantly surprised, hand him a \$5.00 bill, gather my goods, and walk out to take my treasures to the car. As I climbed into the driver's seat he was tapping at the window with my \$1.00 of change. I had intended that dollar to be a little extra for him for his great services, but he had chased me to my car to try to give me that dollar! It just wasn't in his nature to keep money that he didn't think was his.

One more. There are numerous “local” Ecuadorians who will help expats, or anyone else who needs it, with whatever services they may need... or may need to find. Angel is my guy! If I need to know where to find a refrigerator repair person who will come to my house at the beach to fix a refrigerator or an air conditioner, all I have to do is tell Angel what I need and he will “make it happen.” Same with car repairs, painting, supplies, translation of documents etc. And I pay him about \$10-\$15 per hour depending on how much extra and special service effort it takes. And he makes sure that the job is done correctly and the price is fair. A bargain at twice the price.

But recently one of his clients, a 90+-year-old single widow lady living here alone since her husband passed years ago, was diagnosed with a life-ending malady with only a few months to live. She was alone, scared as we all would be, and she didn't want to be in a cold hospital to die alone. Angel spent the next 3-months of his life taking care of her needs and wishes. He arranged a hospital bed in her condo, 24/7 caretakers, nurses, and medical care. And “company.” His family and I hardly saw Angel during this period because he was always there helping, making sure she was comfortable and her wishes were met. She was not a wealthy lady and I am sure that Angel didn't get adequately compensated for the time and effort he contributed, but he treated her like she was his family. And she passed with comfort, dignity, and someone who cared for her by her side. What is that worth?

The media is full of stories about increased petty crime, and some “not so petty” crime also, but this expats experience is that the fundamental character, integrity, and honesty of the Ecuadorian people more than offset the much-publicized uptick in crime. Stories like this one don't get news coverage, but they abound in real life in my Ecuador.



# MINIMUM STAY REQUIREMENT AS A TEMPORARY RESIDENT

By MARCOS CHILUISA

The Human Mobility law has changed, and a fulfillment of a certain number of days in Ecuador is no longer a requirement for every temporary resident. They now have three options to choose from when it comes to required minimum stays. None of these options are good or bad, but all depend on the future plans that one has for their travels into and out of Ecuador. A temporary resident whose plan is to become a permanent resident does have to stay a required number of days, while those who are looking forward to renewing their temporary visa do not have to, unless they want to complete an Ecuadorian background check for the renewal.

Residents who plan to pursue permanent residency in Ecuador are required a minimum stay in order to qualify for a permanent residency visa. During those 2 years or temporary residence, a person can be out of Ecuador for a total of 90 days. This requirement is verified when reviewing one's Migratory Movement obtained from Migration Police. A migratory movement includes detailed information on the times a person has left and entered Ecuador.

Article 65 of the Human Mobility Law says that a temporary resident can enter and leave Ecuador an unlimited number of times except for those who plan to become legal residents and refugees. Many people like this option because they still have some pending things in their home country and are not forced to stay in Ecuador during their residency time, and this will not affect a renewal process. The third option is pretty similar to the permanent residency requirement, but the goal in this case is to renew a temporary residency visa status.

Obtaining a background check can be a headache in some countries and it may take a while to apostille them as well, so for those who would like to use an Ecuadorian background check, they cannot be out of Ecuador for more than 90 days in those two years of temporary residency in accordance to Article 58 of the Human Mobility Bylaws.



PHOTO CREDIT: STEWART MACLEAN





PHOTO CREDIT: STEWART MACLEAN







PHOTO CREDIT: STEWART MACLEAN









# EL AGUJA DE CUENCA

By Claudia Acosta

If there is one thing that people from Cuenca are proud of, it is our water. The flavor, quality, rivers, and more that make up this generous and vital resource for our city. Yet, few people know about the importance of its history and origin, something that should truly be taught in schools. We need to understand the journey this precious liquid takes to get from rivers to houses, the networks, channels and above all, where the water source originates from.

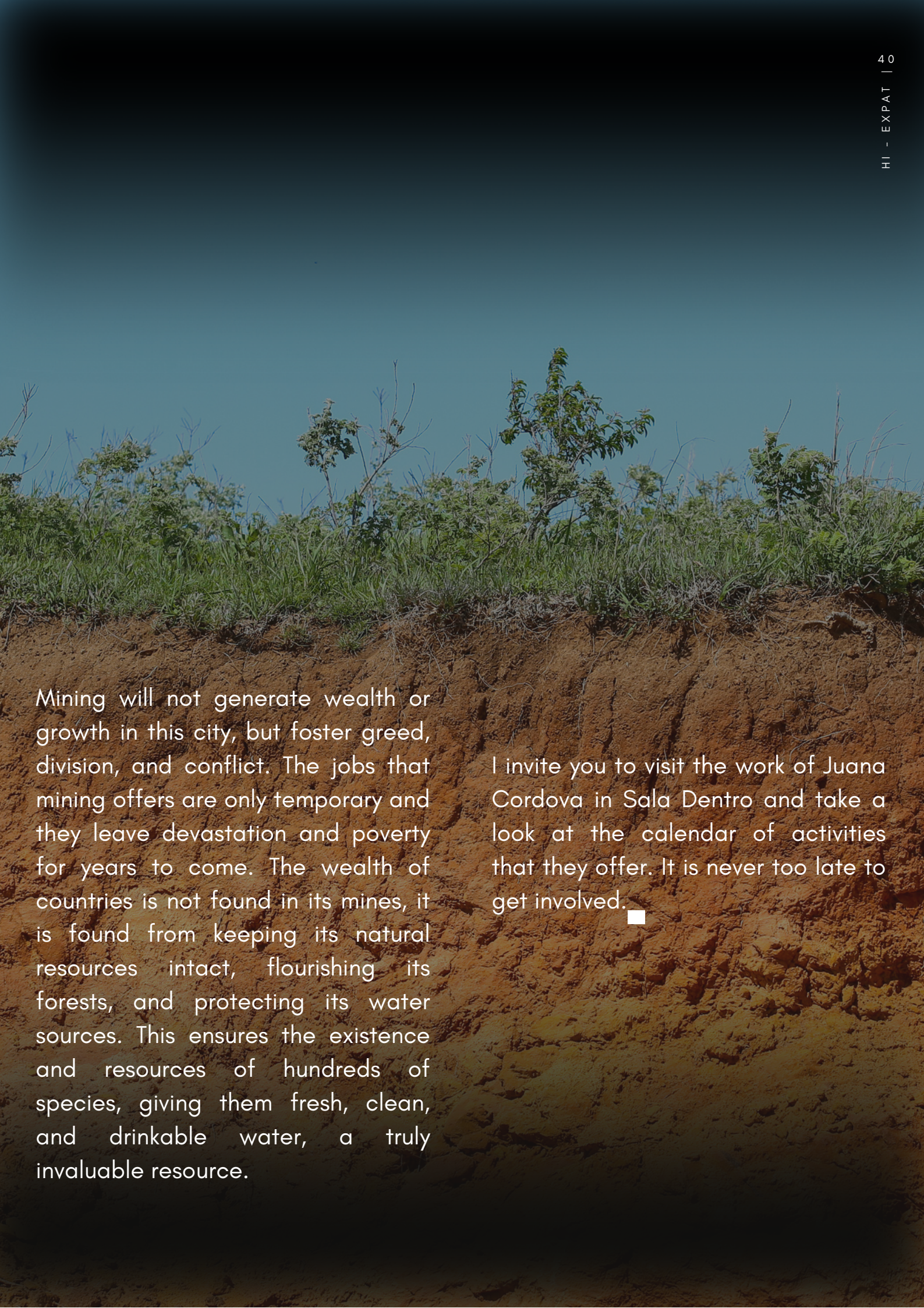
The water that arrives at our houses originates from the mountains, from the beautiful massif of Cajas, a sanctuary of life and biospheric reservoir. It is in these zones where the reserves of our water are and where our water originates from. It is an area that must be protected and cared for.

For the past few years, I have attended talks and meetings regarding the importance of water in our city as it relates to high-altitude mining. Listening to this information, which has been ignored for far too long, alarmed me. I couldn't comprehend why this information has not been talked about, shared, or acknowledged by the news or media. As citizens we need to inform ourselves, ask questions, and demand answers.

It turns out that we have 113,688 acres of mining wasteland. Did we know this? Do we understand the risk that this mining poses to our water sources? Many people think that Canadian mining is the best, but does that mean it is without risk? Do we remember what happened at Giant Mine, in Yellowknife, Canada with the release of arsenic dust? What is arsenic and what does it have to do with the exploitation of gold? Why do we need to get more gold out of the ground? These are questions we should be asking, researching, and understanding when only 7% of the gold extracted from mines is used for medicine and technology, while the other 93% is for gold bars and jewelry.

As a final reflection, we have left this fight to be fought by those only in the mining world, when it should really be a concern of all citizens. We should unite as Cuencanos to defend water rights, where 80% of inhabitants have said no to metallic mining.





Mining will not generate wealth or growth in this city, but foster greed, division, and conflict. The jobs that mining offers are only temporary and they leave devastation and poverty for years to come. The wealth of countries is not found in its mines, it is found from keeping its natural resources intact, flourishing its forests, and protecting its water sources. This ensures the existence and resources of hundreds of species, giving them fresh, clean, and drinkable water, a truly invaluable resource.

I invite you to visit the work of Juana Cordova in Sala Dentro and take a look at the calendar of activities that they offer. It is never too late to get involved. ■



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# Ecuador Everything you need to Consider



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

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# EVA A HIDDEN GEM OF CAFÉ CULINARY DELIGHTS IN MANTA, ECUADOR

By SARA MOORE



As a self-proclaimed food aficionado and an ardent explorer of unique dining experiences, stumbling upon Eva Cafe was a stroke of pure luck. Nestled inside the cozy lobby of the Santa Fe Hotel, this small cafe-style restaurant instantly won me over with its warm and inviting atmosphere. With an extensive menu featuring delectable desserts, refreshing drinks, and tantalizing snack foods, Eva Cafe became my go-to spot for an indulgent culinary journey. Led by the talented Chef Erick Villavicencio, whose culinary expertise extends beyond the restaurant to his role as a teacher at a prestigious gastronomy school in Manta, this charming establishment promises an unforgettable dining experience. Join me as I delve into the extraordinary offerings of Eva Cafe.

### **The Enchanting Setting:**

Stepping into Eva Cafe, I immediately sensed a welcoming and cozy ambiance that instantly put me at ease. The tastefully decorated interior, adorned with charming trinkets and soft lighting,

exuded an inviting charm that beckoned me to stay. The attentive and friendly staff greeted me with warm smiles, ensuring that every guest felt like a cherished friend. The aromatic scent of freshly brewed coffee lingered in the air, hinting at the delightful treats that awaited me.

### **A Gastronomic Symphony:**

Eva Cafe's menu, expertly crafted by Chef Erick, boasts an impressive array of mouthwatering dishes that cater to every palate. With a focus on coffee desserts and Sunday lunches, the options are both diverse and enticing. From delectable sandwiches on toasted bread to perfect empanadas, moist cakes, crispy dessert waffles adorned with vibrant strawberries, and indulgent ice cream drizzled with chocolate, Eva Cafe offers a symphony of flavors that will leave you craving more. As I embarked on my culinary journey, I couldn't resist starting with one of Chef Erick's specialties: the Mocchachino coffee. Served in a delicate porcelain cup, the rich espresso blended harmoniously with the velvety milk, offering

a balanced and aromatic delight that awakened my senses. It was the perfect accompaniment to the heavenly desserts that lay ahead.

My taste buds rejoiced as I savored a slice of Eva Cafe's signature Tres Leches Cake. This classic Ecuadorian dessert, prepared with love and precision, boasted a sponge cake soaked in a divine blend of evaporated milk, condensed milk, and cream.

Each forkful revealed layers of moist goodness, complemented by a cloud of freshly whipped cream and a sprinkle of cinnamon. It was a true testament to Chef Erick's expertise and passion for creating culinary perfection.

Next on my gastronomic adventure were the savory empanadas, a staple of Latin American cuisine. The golden pastry encased a savory combination of tender chicken, onions, and aromatic spices. The first bite revealed a symphony of flavors, with the flaky crust providing a delightful contrast to the succulent filling.

Paired with a tangy chimichurri sauce, these empanadas were a delicious homage to Ecuadorian culinary traditions.

To cleanse my palate, I indulged in a velvety Cappuccino coffee. The perfect marriage of smooth foam and robust espresso awakened my senses, and I marveled at Chef Erick's talent for crafting the finest coffee creations.



The attention to detail and commitment to quality shone through with every sip. No visit to Eva Cafe would be complete without savoring their tantalizing sandwiches on toasted bread. I opted for a classic combination of turkey, cheese, and fresh vegetables.

As I approached the grand finale of my culinary expedition at Eva Cafe, I couldn't resist the allure of their famous crispy dessert waffles. Served with vibrant strawberries and a generous scoop of creamy ice cream, these heavenly delights were adorned with a decadent chocolate drizzle.

The combination of the warm, crispy waffle, the refreshing fruit, and the indulgent sweetness of the ice cream created a symphony of textures and flavors that left me in awe.

Aside from its exquisite menu, Eva Cafe also stands out for its dedication to culinary education. Chef Erick Villavicencio, a seasoned chef and esteemed teacher at a prestigious gastronomy school in

Manta, imparts his knowledge and passion to eager learners.

Offering culinary classes specifically tailored to foreigners, Chef Erick shares his expertise and insights into the art of creating exceptional dishes. This unique opportunity allows visitors to not only savor the flavors of Eva Cafe but also delve deeper into the culinary world under the guidance of a true master.

Eva Cafe opens its doors to customers on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 5 pm to 9 pm. Located at Avenida 23, between Calle 16 and 17, inside Hotel Santa Fe, it is conveniently situated in the heart of Manta, Ecuador.

The cozy and friendly environment, coupled with the impeccable culinary creations of Chef Erick, makes Eva Cafe a must-visit destination for food lovers seeking an unforgettable dining experience.

In conclusion, Eva Cafe is a hidden gem in Manta, Ecuador, where gastronomic dreams come true. Under the guidance of Chef Erick Villavicencio, this small cafe-style restaurant has carved its place in the hearts of locals and visitors alike.

With a menu featuring delectable desserts, refreshing drinks, and savory snacks, Eva Cafe offers a symphony of flavors that leave a lasting impression. The cozy and friendly atmosphere, coupled with Chef Erick's culinary expertise, creates a dining experience that is as unforgettable as it is delightful. Whether you're indulging in their moist cakes, savoring the perfect empanadas, or learning the art of cooking in Chef Erick's culinary classes, Eva Cafe is a haven of culinary delights that will leave you longing for more.

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# Dr. DUVAL MOLINA

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## Can you talk to us about your family, father and wife?

**DM:** I'm married to Kariam Sabando who is a doctor as well and we have 2 children, our son that will graduate as a lawyer son and our younger daughter that's 4 years old said that she wants to be a Neurosurgeon. We like going to the beach and love sports. I try to maintain a balance in the phases of my life and my family is always one of my priorities.

## What is the PRIZE TO THE MEDICAL BY ACHIEVEMENT FOR A BETTER LIFE?

**DM:** It is an international award given by the International Organization for Medical Research Training (IOCIM), a distinction to give merit to a constant effort and dedication for outstanding work and exemplary performance exhibited throughout professional life, intending to provide quality health for the nations. This award was given to me in Puerto Iguazú-Argentina 2019. We attached a photo. It is worth mentioning that in 2022 I received another distinction (Award) by the same organization: Prize to MEDICAL SUCCESS (IOCIM AWARD TO MEDICAL SUCCESS) on May 28th, 2022 in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.

I should mention that I also currently hold two scientific representations in my country: I have been the current Neurosurgery Council for AO SPINE LATINOAMERICA in Ecuador for the last 3 years and also the current representative of the South Zone of the Spine chapter of the FLANC (Latin American Federation of Neurosurgery Societies).



## **We want you to tell us the level of effectiveness of your surgical procedures and the technique you use and where you acquired it.**

**DM** The effectiveness of the procedures in my specialty of Neurosurgery and High specialty of Spine Surgery is approximately 97% in brain procedures and close to 99% in spine procedures. I can say that the patients I operate on do not seek me out because of some publicity but because they are recommended by another patient I have operated on or by another medical colleague who knows my results. Fortunately, I have not had any problems with any patient in my career since I am not only characterized by having high technical effectiveness with optimal results but also for knowing how to indicate with good judgment and honesty the procedures. You can check my Google business reviews.

My two specialties of Neurosurgery and High specialty of Spine Surgery were performed at the National Institute of Neurology and Neurosurgery "Manuel Velasco Suarez" in Mexico City,

the main hospital for these specialties of the UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico). I performed these specialties from 2008 to 2016. Attached titles and on the website you can download apostilled titles and curriculum.

In addition, I have made improvements in minimally invasive techniques at the forefront of the world in the United States, Brazil, and Colombia. I keep myself in constant technical and scientific evolution.

### **Also, about the technology you use, tell us a little bit about it**

**DM:** In my brain and spine procedures, I use state-of-the-art technology that fortunately exists in Ecuador in almost all our provinces for the past 8-10 years, which allows us to perform first-world surgeries at a lower cost for being a developing country.

Such technologies include: Neurosurgical microscope, state-of-the-art endoscopes and exoscopes, ultrasonic aspirator, neuronavigation, and minimally invasive tubular systems. This technology reduces the risk of injury and prioritizes the least damage to the tissues, thus optimizing the results and ensuring that patients have a speedy recovery and rapid return to normal life.

### **Can you tell us Dr. Duval, how we can reach you and make an appointment with you?**

**DM:** The phone number for appointments is 0968414286, which is active 24 hours on WhatsApp as well as landline calls. In the early morning hours, we also have priority attention, thus achieving a high rate of availability.

You can also send us a message to our emails: [doctore@duvalmolina.com](mailto:doctore@duvalmolina.com) and [duvalmolinaneurospine@gmail.com](mailto:duvalmolinaneurospine@gmail.com)

You can find Dr. Duval Molina on Google and visit our website [www.duvalmolina.com](http://www.duvalmolina.com), which has a direct link to WhatsApp.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT OUR WEBSITE HAS THE OPTION OF VISUALIZATION IN ENGLISH (by scrolling the main menu in the upper right quadrant). On our Website, you can find among other things academic formation, titles of both specialties and their registrations, curriculum, procedures, etc.

**Dr. Duval Molina Chóez  
Neurosurgeon (Senescyt 7160 R-15-25147)**

**Spine Surgeon (Senescyt 48417898)**

**ACCES: 1307611135**

Phone: 0968414286

Web: [www.duvalmolina.com](http://www.duvalmolina.com)

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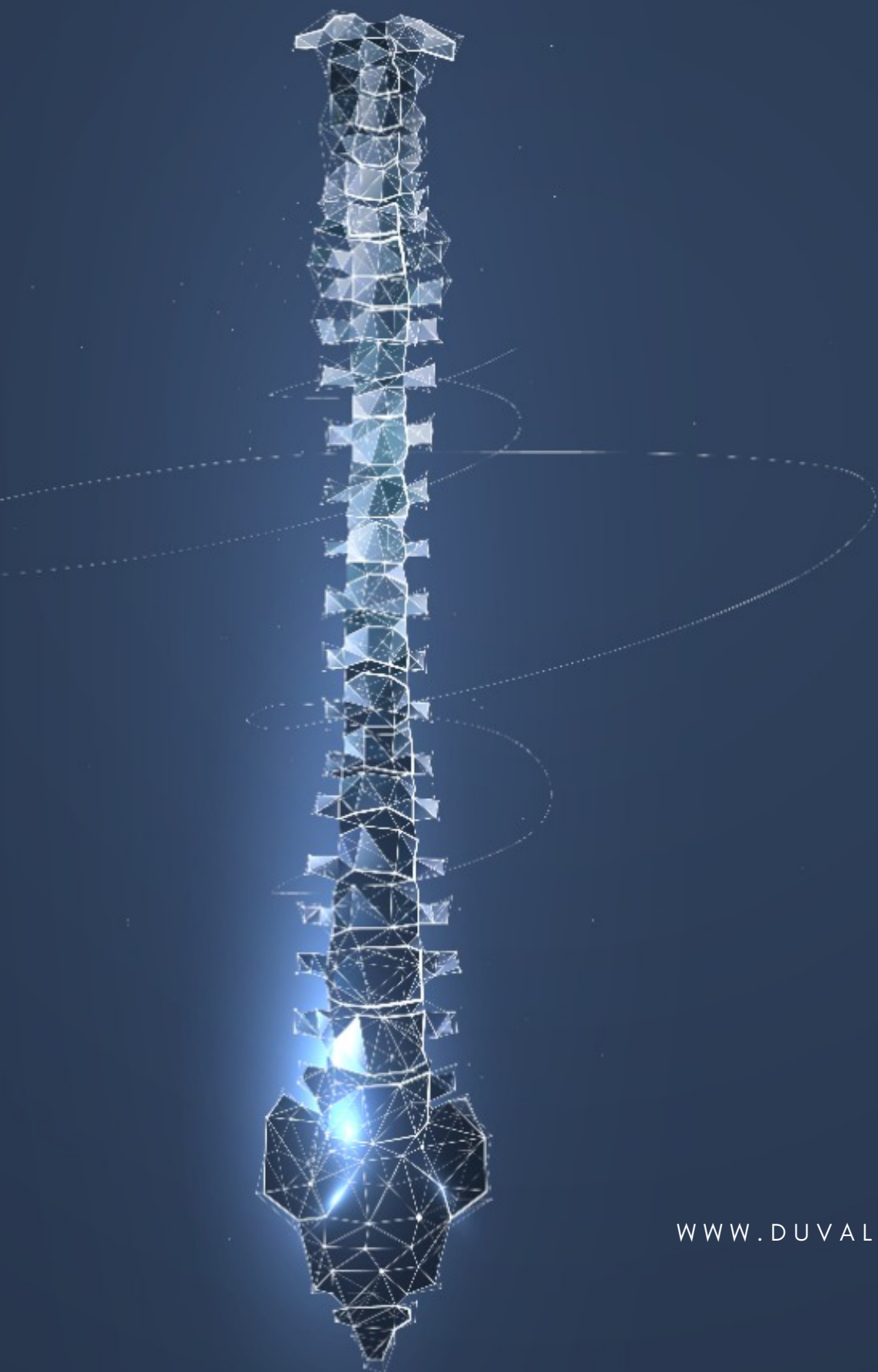
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Neurocirujano especialista en columna

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# EMPOWERING HEALTH SECURITY: BLUEBOX AND HUMANA SEGUROS JOIN FORCES

By CARLOS RAMIREZ

In the realm of contemporary healthcare, ensuring comprehensive coverage with uncompromising quality has become a non-negotiable priority. In light of this, the alliance between BlueBox and Humana Seguros shines as a beacon of innovation and excellence. The recent unveiling of their collaborative health insurance product has not only redefined industry standards but also established a benchmark for exclusive and top-tier coverage. This article delves into the dynamic partnership's significance, the unique advantages it offers, and its resounding success in transforming the healthcare landscape.

## Setting a New Paradigm in Healthcare Assurance

The monumental partnership between BlueBox and Humana Seguros marks a turning point in the healthcare insurance arena. Rooted in a shared commitment to excellence, this collaboration has birthed a revolutionary health insurance offering that blends BlueBox's advisory prowess with Humana's unparalleled reputation in prepaid medical insurance.

The outcome is a holistic insurance experience that seamlessly integrates quality, affordability, and an expansive network of services.

### **Exclusivity: The Cornerstone of Trust**

Central to this partnership is the hallmark of exclusivity in sales, signaling a strategic emphasis on unparalleled quality and service. By making this insurance product available exclusively through BlueBox Asesores, both entities have forged a path that assures clients of exceptional quality and competitive pricing.

This business model not only safeguards the integrity of the product but also elevates the overall client experience.

### **A Synergistic Blend with Public Insurance**

One of the most noteworthy outcomes of this collaboration is the harmonious integration of Humana's insurance coverage with the government-backed IESS scheme. A common challenge within the IESS public insurance system lies in accessing specialist appointments, medications, and minor medical interventions. The supplemental coverage offered by Humana assumes the role of primary coverage, effectively bridging the gaps left by the IESS system. For major surgeries or costly treatments, the IESS coverage remains available. This dual strategy optimizes coverage while maintaining cost efficiency, with plans starting at an affordable rate of just \$49.

## **Empowering Choices: A Financial Perspective**

Comparing two highly sought-after health insurance products in Ecuador reveals an intriguing insight. While a policy with a \$110,000 coverage limit per event for a 70-year-old individual could cost as much as \$270 per month, the combination of two policies from Humana Seguros offers coverage up to \$500,000 for a monthly premium of \$141.54. This stark contrast underscores the financial prudence of opting for Humana's comprehensive coverage, all while effectively managing costs.

### **Humana: A Legacy of Trust and Excellence**

With an impressive 27-year presence in the Ecuadorian insurance market, Humana Seguros stands as a testament to sustained excellence. Bolstered by international endorsement from CONFICO, Humana operates an extensive network of healthcare facilities under the Metropolitana umbrella, ensuring top-tier services for policyholders.

Affiliation with Humana grants immediate access to benefits upon presentation of identification documents. The company's network boasts collaborations with the nation's most esteemed clinics and cutting-edge laboratories.

### **Pioneering Innovation: The MI HUMANA App**

Humana Seguros places innovation at the forefront with the user-friendly MI HUMANA application. This digital platform empowers policyholders to access contracts, coverage details, monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and more, all online and without the need for direct company communication. This revolutionary feature encapsulates convenience, transparency, and stability within the insurance experience, mitigating the risk of unexpected fee hikes or additional costs.

## Why Trust Humana?

With a legacy spanning years, Humana's rich experience in the insurance market sets it apart. The company's stable market standing is reflected in its ascending ranking within the national hierarchy overseen by the Superintendency of Securities, Companies, and Insurance. Bolstered by a robust network of copayment-based service affiliations, Humana's focus lies in expanding its affiliate base while delivering unparalleled quality service. Bluebox Asesores, in turn, vows to champion policyholders' interests, offering optimal policy proposals at the best value, devoid of unwelcome surprises.

### **A Nexus of Excellence: Joining Forces for Unparalleled Service**

As two esteemed companies with storied legacies converge, they offer a potent partnership tailored to diverse healthcare needs. The collaborative force of BlueBox and Humana Seguros marries experience, innovation, and dedication to exceptional service.

Are you ready to explore the transformative potential of this dynamic alliance? Feel free to reach out for more insights and information.

In summation, the synergy between BlueBox and Humana Seguros has given rise to a healthcare revolution. The collaboration's underlying theme of quality, accessibility, and exclusivity ushers in a new era of healthcare assurance. This alliance redefines insurance norms, setting an elevated standard that promises to empower and safeguard policyholders across Ecuador.

## "Exploring Coastal Real Estate Investment on Ecuador's Beautiful Beaches"



Ecuador's coastal charm beckons investors in search of financial growth and a slice of paradise. Owning a seaside property in Ecuador offers allure and investment potential. In this article, we will delve into the benefits of investing in beachfront homes and land in Ecuador, highlighting opportunities for savvy real estate investors.

**Tourism and Rentals:** Ecuador's coastal regions are gaining tourist popularity, creating opportunities for beachfront property investors. Seaside homes are lucrative vacation rentals, attracting both domestic and international travelers. The demand for experiential travel ensures a steady rental income.

**Diversification and Stability:** Adding beachfront properties in Ecuador diversifies investment portfolios. Oceanfront holdings act as a buffer against market volatility. Stable politics and a growing economy enhance the appeal of these properties for global investors.

**Growing Market and Appreciation:** Ecuador's coastal real estate market is growing due to tourism, infrastructure, and international interest. Increasing demand leads to property appreciation. Early investors benefit from steady appreciation over time.

**Tranquility and Natural Beauty:** Ecuador's breathtaking coastline provides stunning ocean views. Beachfront properties offer tranquility and potential appreciation. From the golden sands of Puerto Cayo to the waves of Playa de San José, the diverse coastal landscapes cater to various preferences and investment strategies.

**Affordability and Value:** Ecuador stands out for its affordable beachfront properties. Acquiring oceanfront land here is often more economical than in neighboring countries, appealing to budget-conscious investors. The growth of tourism and improved infrastructure contribute to the investment value.


Investing in beachfront properties in Ecuador combines financial potential with personal fulfillment. The natural beauty, affordability, rental income, diversification, and appreciation prospects make Ecuadorian beaches attractive to real estate investors. Choose Ecuador's coasts for a solid financial strategy and the opportunity to experience the captivating coastal life of South America. Early investors benefit from steady appreciation over time.


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