

# Hi Expat

INSPIRING & INFORMING EXPATS

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Made in Ecuador



by Mark Bradbury

## Editorial

# The Story of the Art Show That Could!

**T**hree years ago, in September of 2019, I was contacted by Tina Rettka, a Canadian expat living here who wanted to do an art show in Manta. Tina had a contact with a large orchid grower here in Ecuador, and she proposed that we have a joint show for art and orchids. I thought it was a great idea, so we decided to go ahead and plan an event.

I was living in a condominium building near Mall del Pacifico, the Pireos Building, and the owner, Jose Atiaga, was kind enough to tell us we could use the lobby and the pool area there to set up a show. We picked a date and started contacting artists that might want to take part. We had settled on a Friday and Saturday in the middle of October and started promoting the event. The response seemed good, and we were encouraged by the number of people saying that they would come!



We were not prepared for what happened at 9 a.m. on the first morning of the show. We discovered that there were quite a few orchid aficionados that all wanted to be the first to shop for the available orchid plants. The lobby doors were blocked by about twenty people all wanting us to open the doors and let them in. I remember joking that it looked like Macy's on Black Friday morning! It was pretty wild!

We opened the doors and let the buyers in. Not all of them were there for the orchids; some were eager to peruse the art, too, so everyone just spread out and started shopping. We watched both days as people left the building, clutching orchids and artwork. It was fun to see the response! We had decided to donate any money made at the show to the very worthy **You & Us for Manta's Children Foundation**, a local group made up of mostly expats with a few locals pitching in. We turned over around \$175 to them to use for their Christmas parties in some of the poorer neighborhoods of Manta. It felt good for us to do that, and it was decided that we would continue to raise money for this group.

**Tina and I discussed doing a second show the following year, but a little problem called COVID-19 created a worldwide health emergency and kept most of us off the streets in 2020. Tina and her husband David Robinson decided to move back to Canada rather than ride out the pandemic here in Manta, and just like that, I had no partner and no show that year.**

One of the things that several people had mentioned after the first show was that we should have waited until after November 1st to hold the show because many of Manta's part-time residents did not arrive until then. This was not something I had considered, but it made sense. I decided to try a second show in November of 2021, heeding the advice of my friends who had spoken to me.

**The 2nd Manta Orchids and Art Show** soon became a reality. The owners of the new **Hotel Voyager** in Manta agreed to let us have our show at their place, giving us all their available space to display the art and the orchids. It was during the planning stages of the show that I was fortunate enough to have Alane Oriard, of Puerto Cayo, join me in putting the show together. It was a great decision! Alane had hosted some art events called **Ecuadorable** in Puerto Cayo and she had a strong background in staging and display, so her talents were put to good use in making our next show at the hotel work smoothly.

We had added more artists than the original show, so we used up every bit of room inside and out to put together a great display of art, and we believed that the show was a hit! We had at least 400-500 people come through the show in its two-day opening, and also had one hotel owner looking for artwork to decorate his new hotel.

The combination was quite successful! Like the first show, we saw a lot of sales of both art and of orchid plants. Everyone had a rather good sales effort, and we vowed to expand the show again for the next





ESTORIL



time. Through donations at the door and gifts from several of the artists that we sold in a raffle at the end, we were able to raise around \$1800 for the You & Us group. When we shut the show down on Saturday afternoon, we had already made the decision to plan the next one, but we knew we needed more space.

The search was on for the next show! Months went by and we still did not have a good spot, but one lucky day I went to **La Briciola Ristorante Italiano** and spoke to Paulo Ulloa, the general manager of the restaurant. I told Paulo what we were doing, and we talked about what we needed for him to host the upcoming art show. Paulo was kind enough to offer his beautiful restaurant as the setting for our show, and we started planning the event the next day.

Unfortunately, our orchid supplier withdrew from participating in the show just three weeks before the opening, which was a huge loss. So many of our patrons had wanted to visit to shop for orchids and we had none. We had to forge ahead with just having an art show, and that is what we did!

We opened the show on Wednesday, November 16th, and had a very nice day! Alane had worked her magic once again, and had executed a great presentation of art, including many of our sponsors, who had asked to have some space. We had increased the artists and vendors for this show once again, and honestly, we did not have enough space for

the number of participants. We could have used more space, but now we know what to do next time.

Growing pains, for sure, but not impossible to repair moving forward. We are already looking for a much larger space for the next show, and we have a couple of venues we are keeping our fingers crossed on! We are also going to go back to our Friday and Saturday format, and we are going to try to stay open longer on Friday night, allowing more of you to attend.

But back to the show! We had a very eclectic and diverse group of artists and an incredible amount of talent on hand. There were so many different mediums being offered throughout the show, making it easy to find something to buy as a gift, or as a lifetime investment.

We had several exceptionally talented artists from San Francisco de Ibarra, north of Quito, who brought some truly amazing art with them to Manta. We had a glass fusion artist from Cuenca whose glasswork was spectacular! Modern art, traditional art, watercolors, and lots of outstanding abstract work was on display throughout the floor. Beautiful ceramic work from AJ DeLissa of Burning World Pottery in Canoa, one of the leading potters in Ecuador, and several jewelry artists with truly unique and rare pieces, were on hand to highlight the selection. If you did not attend this year's show, we hope you will mark your calendars for next year!



We did some things differently this year and they worked out quite well. One of the things we did that raised over \$2000 was to sell sponsorship spots to local businesses that wanted to help support both the art and the fundraising effort for the **You & Us** group. We cannot thank them enough for their help! We plan to expand the sponsorships next year to include more businesses, so please contact us if you would like to sign up for the next show. We also had several private donors who contributed to the foundation, and we certainly want to thank them, as well! And every artist who attended donated 10% of their sales to the **You & Us** group, which was a very nice addition this year!

**The best part of the show was the final numbers raised for the charitable efforts of the You & Us for Manta's Children group. A combination of sponsorships and private donations, artists' contributions, raffle tickets, and door donations netted us a bit over \$4000 this year for the charity, a substantial number that we will look to beat next year. Every dollar of that money has gone to the group and is helping them with several projects, including Christmas gifts for kids, and stocking a new library in the city.**

A few special thanks need to go out to all our artists, without whom there would not have been a show. To Alane Oriard, our Show Director, who once again pulled a rabbit out of her hat, to Marcos Chiluisa, owner of EcuAssist, for all his help with so many things, to Kay Ward, who handled our Sponsorship and Donations, and did a fantastic job, to Pam Feltman, President of the **You & Us** group, and to each of her members for their hard work taking care that things went smoothly. And a very special thanks to Mike Bombrys, my good friend, for everything he did both days! He was amazing! And a huge thank you to Paulo Ulloa for hosting our event at his incredible restaurant, La Briciola! It was a terrific venue, and the food was exceptional. If you have not been there yet, make it a point to go soon. You will not be sorry!

**Thank you to each of you who came and helped us succeed in our efforts! Without you we could not have done it! And to those of you who for various reasons could not get to this year's event, we hope that you will join us in November for our 2023 Manta Art Show and so much more! We have a few new things up our sleeves, so mark your calendars when you see the event officially announced in the next couple of months!**





Dr. McPhee  
Mixed Media - 2018  
100 x 100 cm  
\$ 1,200

















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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.



# Fashion And Glamour: Under the Manaba Sun

by Julie Harper

For the fourth consecutive year Manabí had the distinction of hosting an extraordinary fashion event. Every year the venue changes and each year the venue is fitting and exciting. This fashion show is a very coveted invitation to receive, indeed.

Without exception the December 4 venue was perfect for jewelry designer María José Zambrano and her exquisite Marine Collection, Patricia Olmedo's Tropical Reef Swimwear Collection, and Fernando Zambrano's Resort Collection.

Puerto Atún Jaramijó, owned by the generous and charitable Paladines Family, offered its attendants, starry skies, and sweeping evening views of the Pacific Ocean with fishing boats well lit and anchored at sea. It was really quite perfect. Though quite windy, the breeze gave movement to the garments and drove home the fact that it was indeed a Marina Collection. The Paladines family were very gracious hosts, attending to everyone in the crowd, introducing themselves, greeting friends and making everyone feel equally welcome and important.

The event opening offered models wearing matching, shimmering, flowing fabric that the breeze picked up and you could truly imagine the movement of water. They flowed smoothly down the runway with lovely symmetry, like waves gently coming to the shore. And then the true show began.

There is only one way to describe the jewelry of María José Zambrano, breathtakingly gorgeous!





Pulling her inspiration from the sea, each piece is exquisitely handcrafted using cuprum which is a byproduct of aluminum, gold, and treasures from the sea, fashioned to resemble coral and seahorses. Every woman of means who is fortunate enough to live on the coast of this spectacular country or has the pleasure of vacationing in other shoreline cities around the world should have at least several pieces of her creations in their jewelry box. Each piece is unique and elegant with a true feeling of exclusivity. I cannot imagine wearing one of her pieces and not having compliment after compliment. Her art is a conversation starter and a show stopper! I would go so far as to say they are truly all “important pieces.”

**Patricia Olmedo dazzled us with her Tropical Reef Collection of swimwear as well. Each piece was exciting and either playful, sophisticated, or just plain sexy. Swimwear styles change so much from year to year and it is imperative to stay current when you live in a coastal city. When you're out looking for your next swimwear, you must check out Patricia's collection. You just have to!**

Fernando Zambrano's resort collection was very sophisticated. These exciting fashions will easily take you to an exclusive club, dining out on the Isle of Capri, or perhaps yachting on the spectacular Wayra Kontiki. There were several pieces in her collection that I honestly haven't been able to quit thinking about. I simply love her designs. They were realistic and smart designs that you can easily imagine yourself wearing. True class!

A special and unexpected culinary treat awaited for us afterwards. Manta's wonderful La Bricola Italian Restaurant set up on the mainland of the expansive Paladines family properties. They offered a limited but tastefully thought out menu, complete with table linens, china, music, and beautiful table service. Sitting with friends al fresco under the beautiful star lit sky after such a beautiful event was something I will not soon forget.





















Patricia Olmedo



María José Zambrano





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# Health Insurance in Ecuador vs the U.S.

by Carlos Ramírez



Over the years as a broker I have seen the good and the bad in the insurance industry. The questions and problems that I have repeatedly run into have allowed me to create services that meet the needs of the market, especially those which fill the holes in the Ecuadorian private insurance sector. Many of the questions that have come up from customers over the years have a lot to do with the differences between health coverage in Ecuador and health coverage in the United States.

There are many ways to receive high quality private medical services in Ecuador from top-level professionals, 24 hours a day and seven days a week. These private clinics are part of the Ecuadorian health system but externally partner with insurance companies. This means that once a patient has received medical attention the clinic is not responsible for contacting the insurance company to obtain payment or reimbursement. This responsibility falls on that of the patient, or affiliate, and they must obtain the correct documentation of services in order to do so. This is the first major difference between the US healthcare system and Ecuador's system. In the US, medical clinics and health insurance companies work together and the patient simply has to wait to receive a bill or reimbursement, more information about their next appointment, lab tests or referrals. In Ecuador, this type of communication between the clinic and health insurance company is not typical, despite the fact that the clinic and

insurance company have contracted agreements.

Additionally, in the US, health insurance bills usually arrive directly at the patient's home address a few weeks after receiving medical care. The patient is then responsible for the remaining payment, if it was not covered by their insurance. If a patient cannot pay the full amount, insurance companies will typically allow for a payment plan to be put in place. Unfortunately, payment plans and different types of relief for medical bills do not exist in Ecuador and the patient is obligated to pay their deductible, copayment, non-covered expenses, and excess medical fees in full when requested.

In my time as a broker I have noted that some of the most common insurance plans in the US are MEDICAID, MEDICARE, and OBAMACARE, among others which vary in price depending on income and resources. People in the US tend to pay much higher monthly payments for private health insurance as well. This is a big change for many foreigners from the US when they arrive in Ecuador. In Ecuador, private health insurance is priced very reasonably and the only public, government insurance option is the IESS, which unfortunately is going through a state of economic crisis at the moment.



**Technological advances and social development also account for some of the changes between the US and Ecuadorian health system. For example, in the US, medical insurance typically covers annual exams and check-ups. In Ecuador these same exams are not covered since they are considered preventative exams. This is a significant difference due to the technological, economic, and social development of the US which allows them to provide this service to the people who live there. Additionally, most medical clinics in the US have software that allows them to verify in real time the coverage that you have with your health insurance plan. Unfortunately, Ecuador does not have this level of technological infrastructure in place yet and you should be wary of health insurance brokers who offer to reimburse funds without proper documentation. Ecuadorian health insurance laws are clear and strict and must be followed by all companies whether national or international.**

Another difference is access to pharmaceutical medicines within the private health care system. In the public health system, access to prescriptions is limited but generally includes paracetamol, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, omeprazole and other antacids, calcium and some types of

psychiatric medicines. This is due to the current turbulent situation that the IESS, hospitals, and other public health centers are facing. In the US there are private health care plans that do not include coverage for prescriptions. Plans that do include prescriptions are normally priced higher or are a separate plan combined with principal coverage. Once coverage for prescriptions is obtained the patient can access their prescriptions at the pharmacy they choose or even have them sent directly to their home. In Ecuador the process is quite different, you must present all the correct documentation and you will be reimbursed on a monthly basis. Alternatively, you can go to a specific pharmacy that is authorized to sell medicine for mild and moderate diagnosis. One of the exclusions in Ecuador's health coverage is that it typically does not cover psychiatric medicine, dermatological treatments without curative purposes, ozone therapy or care with podiatrists (in Ecuador this specialty is not recognized as a branch of medicine and a reimbursement of this type is only paid in the event that the podiatrist has a university degree as a general practitioner).

**Reimbursement documentation can cause headaches for many expats and it can be a difficult process since this is generally not the responsibility of the patient in the US. Although it is true that the documentation process occurs directly between the clinic and the insurer in most cases, in the US, there are times when it does not. For example, there are times when specialists or certain doctors**



are not covered under one's insurance. This also occurs in Ecuador and if you see a doctor outside of your coverage area you must present the correct documentation in order to be reimbursed. Overall, in Ecuador, the law states that it is the patient's responsibility to present regulatory documentation to obtain reimbursement from a company. If one does not do so, or presents it after the 90 day limit, the company is not required to process any refund.

One of the most significant differences between insurance plans in each country is undoubtedly its cost. In the US it is reported that only 6% of the population has premium private insurance. This same insurance in Ecuador can be bought for half the price you are used to, with a much lower deductible than what you pay in the US. Although the US government provides insurance for the elderly and people with disabilities, these insurances do not always provide complete coverage and they find themselves in need of contracting supplementary plans to access medicine or certain doctors. In Ecuador these problems do not exist or are rare to encounter. This is a huge benefit to those who settle in Ecuador. Here, all policies include outpatient and hospital medical care, medicine, access to surgeries, physical rehabilitation, and additional dental or vision benefits.

The differences between the two systems are minimal, but it is what matters to you that is important. In a brief summary the main differences pertain to price, documents, coverage, and medicine. Always remember to first choose a broker and then a company that has a wide network of agreements at the national level. This will ensure that you have ample access to care and it will reduce the amount of documentation and paperwork you have to provide. After choosing a well connected company and broker I would suggest choosing a plan according to your economic comfort. I recommend this approach because you can find international insurance plans with high deductibles and quotes that will ultimately not be able to connect you to the medical services you actually need. If you choose a company that is well connected you will pay reduced deductibles and have broad coverage so that you will be able to receive health care anywhere you want in Ecuador. The process may seem daunting at first but it does not need to be complicated. The secret is to take the time to understand the system and then make it work for you.



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# The Ecuadorian Karate Kid

by Juan Francisco Carrasco



For this special sports edition, I am honored to interview a person that I greatly admire, with whom I have trained Karate for almost ten years and with whom I have shared my day-to-day life in the Dojo. On this occasion, I will interview my Sensei, Pablo Reyes.

Pablo Reyes is the owner and instructor of the Karate / Krav Maga Club, KAIZEN, located in Quito. He has the rank of 5th DAN Black Belt in Shotokan Style Karate Do and is also a Krav Maga Monitor, which is an Israeli self-defense system. Today, we will find out what it is like to be a Sensei and an elite athlete in Ecuador.

### When did you start practicing Karate?

I started when I was four and a half years old, and I've been practicing for 33 years now. I hope I will have another 40 years of practice.

### How did you decide to start practicing this sport?

When I was a very young child, my favorite show was Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. My motivation to practice started when I tried to imitate their movements. When I was in preschool, I would come home scratched and sometimes hit by

older classmates and that's when my parents made the decision that I needed to learn to defend myself.

### What do you like the most about Karate?

That is a very broad question. I like that it strengthens my body and mind. With Karate, I have been able to travel to several countries to compete and train. I have been able to make Karate friends in many countries of the world, thanks to that. But what I like the most is the great positive energy that Karate gives me daily.

### What do you like most about being a coach?

Mainly sharing with others. Teaching others and also learning from each of the students. It is a beautiful responsibility to be able to contribute positive values in the life of each child, teen, and adult and, many times, to be their example.

### Do you think Karate is a complicated sport?

All sports have their degree of difficulty, whether it be technical, physical, or mental. That is why only the best obtain the best results. Like with any sport, it requires a lot of dedication, perseverance, effort, and sacrifice. I think that what is defined as "complicated" or "easy" is decided by each person according to their own sensations and experiences.



## What days do you train? How many hours do you train each day?

Before, when I was a national team competitor, I trained 6 times a week from Monday to Saturday, 3 hours each day. Now at this stage, I no longer have any sports goal as such, and with my age and my work, I try to train 3 to 4 times a week for 1 hour and a half each day.

## Do you participate in competitions? Have you won any titles?

A few years ago I stopped participating in tournaments, but my students compete sometimes. The competition is important in some ways, but it is only a passing stage, the martial art lifestyle is forever. I was juvenile and adult National Champion on many occasions for several years in a row, practically in my entire school stage, and I also won some South American medals representing Ecuador.

## How long do you plan to continue dedicating yourself to this?

The truth is that I never intend to leave it. Karate is my life and I will practice it as long as my body allows it in good health. There are people who are over 80 years old and continue to practice with their physical limitations of age, but they are present with wisdom and spirit.

## Do you have any goal you want to achieve?

At the moment my main goal in life is to continue learning and enjoying everything, including the practice of Karate, nature, and valuable moments.

## Do you have an idol who is dedicated to this sport?

An idol as such, no. I think it's good to admire others but always keep your own essence without wanting to imitate or idolize them. I have admired several people from Karate and other sports as well. In Karate, I greatly admire Sandra Sánchez from Spain, who is an Olympic and World Kata Champion. I also admire some of my Senseis. In Israeli Krav Maga self-defense, I greatly admire Kfir Itzhaki from Israel and Michael Ruppel from Germany.

## Tell us a moral that you have learned thanks to this sport.

Well, I have many anecdotes during these years of practice, so it is difficult to mention any in particular. The main thing is that I always appreciate and value the respect and gratitude of people (students, parents, friends, acquaintances and family) and that is what I hold dear.

I have been training karate for 10 years now and I am grateful for being a part of this amazing community of athletes in Ecuador. It sadly doesn't receive the attention needed by the government, and could be even larger if the government would not only focus on sports such as soccer.



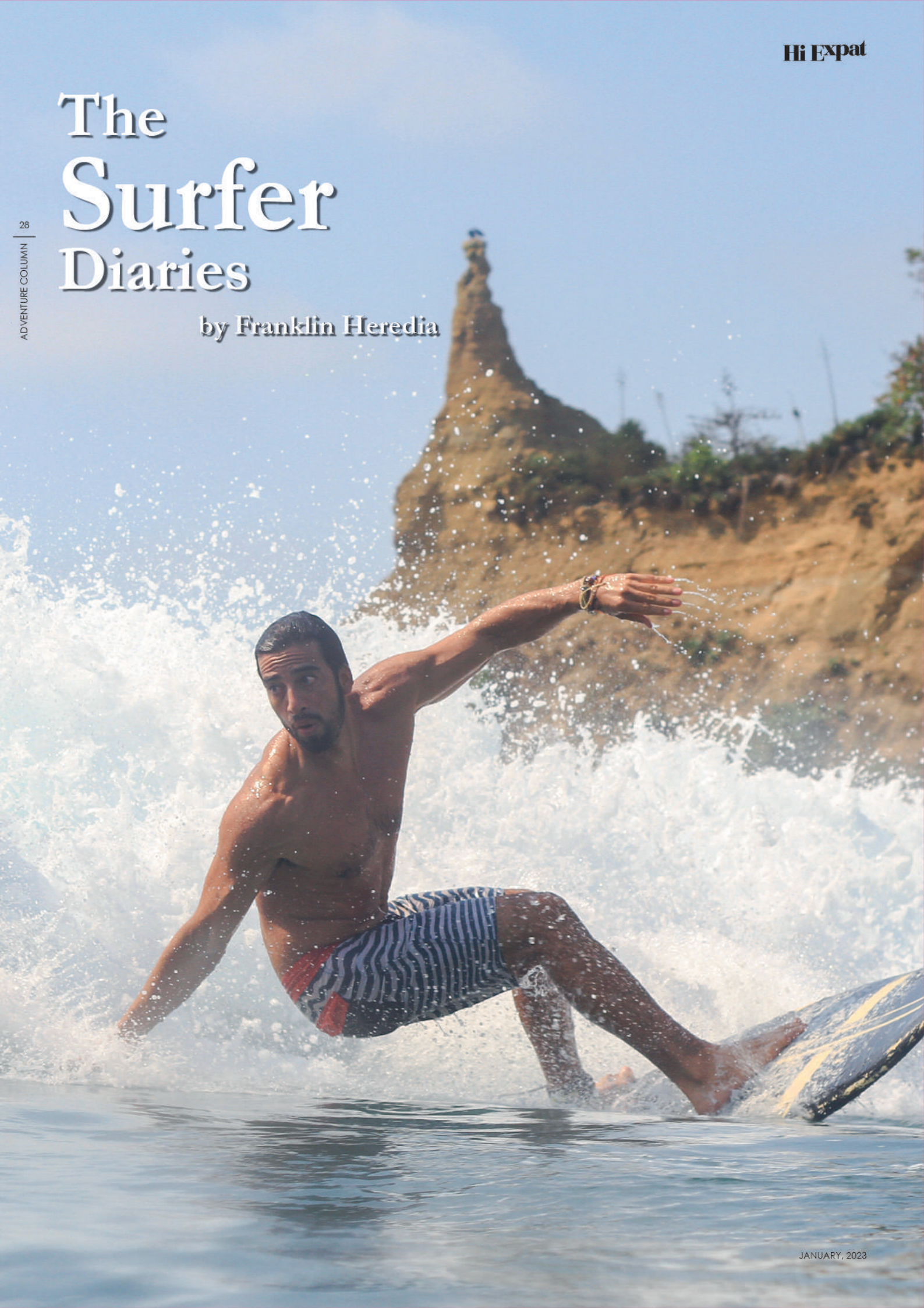




# The Surfer Diaries

by Franklin Heredia

28  
ADVENTURE COLUMN





## “SURFING IS...”

A sport. A form of artistic expression. A philosophy of life.

All of the above.

Not long ago,

The common perception of surfing was summed up to being a water sport where you perform turns and maneuvers taking advantage of the force of a wave, on a board (according to Wikipedia).

## SOME HISTORY

Recently in the year 2020, surfing debuted as an Olympic Sport in the town of Tokyo, Japan, despite the fact that there is evidence from archaeologists and historians about its origins more than 3000 years ago on the coasts of Peru, and in Hawaii for 500 years (thanks to the Polynesian culture). It was not until the beginning of the 60s of the last 20th century that it became popular on several continents, including of course the South American region where it has great importance on a socio-cultural level in countries such as: Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Additionally, among the most prominent, but on a smaller scale with a significant upturn in recent decades are destinations such as Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

## ITS INFLUENCE ON ART AND CULTURE

Today, the existing intersection between surfing and the realm of art extends into areas such as popular culture, commerce, music, fashion, language, and personal development. We see this through our daily attitude and even our spirituality (in line with oriental thought), since we link the way we perceive the waves to life itself: the representation of a perpetual, transformative and dynamic movement.

## IDENTITY AND LIFESTYLE

Each surfer has a unique style, the desire to surf the best waves possible makes us dependent on rapidly changing conditions.

"When you ride a wave, it's an expression of how you perceive the world and nobody rides a wave in a similar way."

Getting to understand the movement of the ocean (tidal changes, the influence of the wind, currents, etc.) for a unique connection with nature and with oneself, is to adopt a lifestyle in communion with the environment, which in general, leads us to adopt healthy lifestyle habits, thus allowing us to continue enjoying this connection for a long time.

That is the magic of surfing.



## PREJUDICES AND CONTRAST

Despite such wonder, at some point in its recent history surfing suffered a deterioration in its image due to the social transformation experienced in the 70's - 80's. We see this today even where surfing is not established as part of the local culture in some parts of the world.

From artificial waves created in locations without access to the sea to video games featuring the sport of surfing, today surfers are considered athletes who take care of every possible aspect that affects their performance in the ocean (nutrition, psychological, training, etc.).

## EVOLUTION

In all this they challenge the impossible and achieve the most daring acts on a board, from acrobatics aerials to riding waves over 40m high.

But the most beautiful thing is witnessing how the lifestyle and philosophy of this wonderful sport is shared with new generations from an early age, ensuring not only the continuity of the sport but also its connection with nature and the environment in general.

Surfing is .. Life!








by Manuel Avilés





by Manuel Avilés





**The Valdivia  
Experience on Board  
the Kontiki Wayra:  
The First Super Luxurious  
Yacht in Ecuador**  
by Pilar Albuja



**We sailed all night from Manta to Ayangue. We saw the sun rise and heard the singing of the birds, which indicated that we were close to the mainland. Looking out the window, you could see the calm waters of Ayangue Bay and the swaying of the local community's artisanal fishing boats. The crew of the Kontiki boat began to move from one place to another to prepare for our landing. Our guide, Ruli, was with us. Ruli could talk with anyone for hours about his experiences and his knowledge of Ecuadorian customs, thanks to his tour guide career of more than 30 years.**

The Kontiki crew, with their usual kindness, helped us to board a few small, fast boats to head to Ayangue Bay. Going down the beach was a dream. It was very calm and the local community was welcoming. While we walked along the sand of the Pacific Manabí coasts, we felt a breeze that refreshed us from the strong equatorial sun on our heads. The beautiful beach of Ayangue was our companion to get to the hotel where the Orrala family was waiting for us with open arms. By using a Spondylus shell, they made a sound that indicated that something ceremonial was about to begin. This got our attention in a very curious and beautiful way and guided us in the direction of the hotel. Shortly after arriving, the family greeted us. The friendliness and smile of each of the members of the Orrala family made us feel as if we were arriving after a long time to visit our own family. They very quickly introduced themselves and showed us the hotel. They explained to us the ancestral activity that we were about to be part of. Our first activity in this magical experience began

with very large buckets of clay. As a team, we started to stir and dilute the clay. While we did it, the Orrala family checked that it was okay to continue to the next step of the process, which was to sift the clay with a very large sieve. This was the process used by the first settlers of the Ecuadorian coast, by the Valdivia culture, and that through the guidance of the Orrala family, all the passengers of the Kontiki were part of.

**Once the clay was sieved, they recommended that we put it on our hands and face. This was optional, but I did it so that the clay would be absorbed into my skin and leave it soft. The result was even better than expected. My skin thanked me for it in the days that followed.**

Then they made us go to an area where they had a bucket of clay ready for each person and they taught us the techniques of how to create this craft. It was a long, very entertaining process, and above all it made us value this handcrafted and beautiful work. In the end we went to where they had the finished pieces ready, and they were polishing them with a stone. When purchasing a craft like this, we need to remember that it is a labor-intensive process done completely by hand. It was definitely a highly recommended experience. They had lovely products on display, and they gave all the women beautiful necklaces with images that represented the crafts they manufacture. It made us value everything that is hand-made, and the crafts and traditions that these families have. This is definitely one of my most valued cultural experiences, that is, experiencing the Kontiki to the fullest.











# The World My Studio

by Sigrid Tidmore

**As with the butterfly's metamorphosis, it is change that has pushed my creativity forward.**

Throughout my life, much of that change came through travel. Born into a military family, I lived in a dozen countries before I was 20 years old. By then the wanderlust was thoroughly ingrained in me, and global exploration became integral to my existence. In the business world, entrepreneurship is the laboratory of creative expression. I've been a professional musician, a medical illustrator and a graphic designer. A business strategist and a creative director, running my own full-service advertising agency. I've worked as an international marketing consultant and led business missions to India, Central America, Europe and China. I've also built a global health foundation for wealthy philanthropists and run an art center for disadvantaged youth.

**I often tell my friends and students that water unites all earthly life, so it's no accident that I was drawn to watermedia paints like aquarelle and acrylics as my primary vehicles for personal commentary. They give me the brilliance and the sensitivity that is important to my communications.**

Today, I am able to devote much more of my creative life to my art and my garden. It is with great joy that I find myself dividing my time between Puerto Cayo, Ecuador and Tampa Bay, Florida. However, I will always consider the world my studio. Whichever hemisphere you are in, I look forward to hearing from you.







# Delizza: The Stoneware Master

by Alessandro Delizza

Alessandro DeLizza began producing professional stoneware and porcelain pottery as a young man on a foot-powered wheel from 1970 through 1982 in the USA. In 1976, his porcelain pottery became part of The Joan Mondale, White House, "Crafts at Work Program" and was featured in many government offices in Washington DC. DeLizza also produced the ancient reproduction amphoras for Dr. Barry Fells that were featured in The Harvard University Museum antiquities section. Alessandro DeLizza is now a resident of Ecuador and is living near the beach south of Canoa where he produces the same style pottery. The influence of the Ecuadorian Playa and Pacific Ocean have become part of his current style. Every piece of Burning World Pottery is unique. Individually hand crafted on the pottery wheel and hand-painted. No molds were harmed in the making of this product.

Air, earth, fire and water are the only ingredients in Burning World Pottery. While the porcelain clay contains ingredients from China and England, as well as the Americas, it is the China white quality that offers such a unique work canvas for pottery, unlike most traditional products. The colors are produced with various combinations of natural oxides, minerals and metals combined with porcelain clay dust. When heated to 3000 degrees, cooled, and blended, the materials are then combined with water and salt allowing DeLizza to create the colors of the Ecuadorian sunset, sailboats on the Pacific Ocean, and life on the Playa as well as the beautiful flowers growing in La Fortuna. Quite often DeLizza will hand someone a piece of his work and say, "find the dolphin." Some can.







# Lisa's Travels

by Lisa Goldsmith

Lisa is an artist who is so passionate about her craft that she attended the Montserrat School of Visual Arts in Massachusetts, where she studied the painting techniques of classic artists.

**Her professional career in the United States was as an emergency room nurse and she has a master's degree as a family nurse practitioner.**

One day, she decided to retire on the wonderful shores of the South American Pacific in the central coast of Ecuador. Specifically in Manabí is where Lisa developed her passion for art. Now that she is happily retired, she spends her time on large installation pieces of seascapes, marine life, pets, and portraits.

**She specializes in oil paintings with an eye towards realism and attention to detail using bright, vivid colors. For Lisa this is not just a hobby but has become a way to generate additional income doing what she loves to do.**

**Available for commissions, Lisa can be reached at 593-098-417-0422 or email [julm-gold@aol.com](mailto:julm-gold@aol.com)**



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by Manuel Avilés





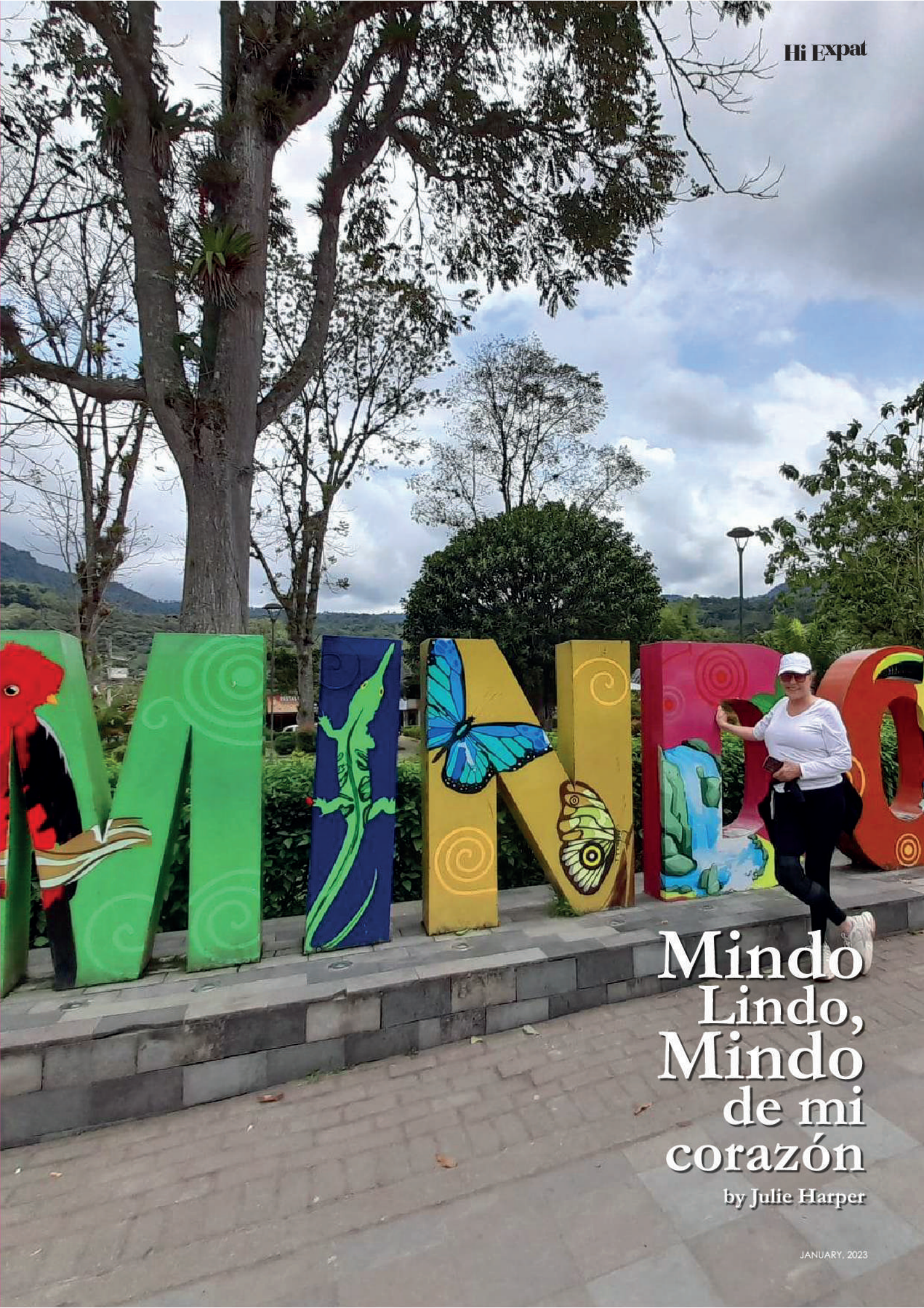
by Manuel Avilés





by Manuel Avilés





# Mindo Lindo, Mindo de mi corazón

by Julie Harper



There is nothing quite like piling into a mini-bus with a dozen or so buddies and striking out on a seven hour road trip. We had been planning this journey to Mindo, Ecuador for some time but had no idea that the date we chose happened to coincide with the official annual bird count, when all of the birders and professional wildlife photographers converge in this lovely piece of paradise nestled in this spectacular rain cloud jungle. This is the migratory season, and they were expecting some beautifully feathered and rare visitors, including the great horned owl which happened to arrive at the Mindo River the same day we did. This owl comes to the river for just one day before going deep into the “selva.” How lucky were we to see it?

**After checking into our lodging, we met with one of the many local tour guides to begin planning our adventure. There is so much to do in Mindo and there are an incredible amount of very cool restaurants. It has completely changed from my visit there five or six years ago, when all they seemed to have was one pizza restaurant and a concrete block structure for typical Ecuadorian food. Not much else. But now the dining options are abundant to say the least, featuring even a few French restaurants. There is also an Argentinian Steak House which was a crowd favorite.**

**But first things first! I signed up for birding, anxious to see my favorite bird, the toucan. If you are unfamiliar, think Fruit Loops.**

Dawn was just breaking the next morning as we scrambled down the hill to meet our guide to go bird watching. Our guide handed out binoculars and set up a type of telescope called a spotting scope for fixed viewing. Mind you, our hotel was in the middle of the jungle so we were already in birding territory. She almost immediately began pointing out

different bird species, their nests, explaining their habits, parenting, feeding, etc. She was brilliant. Nothing got past her. She carried a laser pointer to help us locate the area we needed to look at. We oohed and aahed, then back in the truck for a different location. Up the road we would go, then wham! Brakes on and out of the truck. She would once again pull out her laser pointer and set up her spotting scope to help us novices, as we had some difficulty in the beginning. As we ascended up the hill, the bounty became greater. We were in toucan and parrot country, and it was amazing. There were flocks of them, and different species as well, not just an elusive one or two. We concluded by having a breakfast of fresh bread, marmalade, fruit and coffee served on the open bed of the pickup truck. It was delightful. That afternoon, some of our gang made it to an incredible open outlook point to feed hummingbirds in the wild. We held tiny red bottle caps in our hands which were filled with sugar water. We sat patiently and were almost immediately rewarded as dozens of hummingbirds came and sipped the sweet concoction. Secretly I was thinking, “Pick me. Pick me!” There were so many different varieties. We were all mesmerized. Every time one of these tiny creatures came and sat on my fingers, I couldn’t help but feel a special bond. I sat with fellow bird watchers and understood what only other bird watchers can understand about this beautiful and ever so quiet hobby of birding.

Next, of course, we went to a Mariposario to see the 25 species of butterflies that are in the region. There are a few different mariposarios in Mindo. The particular one we chose is the Mariposa Café which has been around for years. Not only do they have a butterfly park, but they also have a beautiful restaurant with spacious windows that overlooks the gorgeous fauna on the property. They also have a delightful gift shop for anything and everything butterflies, except for t-shirts. They didn’t have t-shirts.



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# SUPER BOWL LVII AT LATITUD CERO KICKOFF 6:30 P.M.

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Football Teams TBD. ALWAYS amazing commercials and RIHANNA is the halftime performance. Latitud Cero has 7 televisions, 4 on the lower level and 3 on the upper level. The broadcast will be Direct TV and be in English. There will be plenty of staff to serve you food, beer, wine and top shelf spirits. Everyone orders from the menu and separate checks are not a problem. Cash and credit cards are accepted. VAT tax and service charge will be included in your invoice. There will be many football squares to buy in the football pools. 1 winner of each quarter and final score. They will be displayed at Latitud Cero and available for purchase. Also, for the Shekinah Orphanage, large bins will be placed at the front door for donations. We will be selling raffle tickets before and during the game for split the pot. 50% goes to the winner (drawn at the end of the game) remaining 50% to the Shekinah Orphanage. This PARTY will be heavily promoted through our WhatsApp groups, FB groups, and Latitud Cero, so a RSVP is required to determine partial space or entire restaurant for a private party. Your hostesses for this party are Roxane Devine and Jules Larson. We need volunteers to help make, set up and selling football squares and volunteers to sell raffle tickets for split the pot. Please PM Roxane or Jules directly as soon as you can.

A huge thank you to Latitud Cero and the Manager Michael Montgomery for helping with this event.

However, the doors will open 1 hour before for PRE-GAME activities...



Four or five years ago when I visited this location, there were many hummingbird feeders that surrounded the property. And there were hundreds of hummingbirds, all different varieties as well as many different butterflies looking to share the same feeders. It was breathtaking. However, I noticed that the hummingbirds were battling large bees at the feeders. The bees were very aggressive and were winning the war as the hummingbirds would retreat. Upon my recent return visit, all of the feeders had been taken down. There was a reason for it. Come to find out, those bees weren't just any bees. They were an invasive and aggressive species of African bees which had built a huge colony behind the Mariposa Café property and it developed into a horrible problem. But everything turned out OK. The feeders were taken down, the hive was destroyed and the hummingbirds have found a safe place to feed. The butterflies also scattered throughout the jungle the way nature intended and hopefully the bees went back to Africa.

You pay a small admission fee to enter the Mariposario. We were given a short introduction as to what we were going to see inside of this sweet butterfly park and there were also lovely guides. Some of them are dressed up in butterfly costumes, so they are easy to spot if you have a question. It is absolutely lovely in this land of 1000 Kodak moments! Afterward, our entire group sat down to a beautiful lunch in the Mariposa Café. The service was impeccable. All of the windows were wide open and occasionally a hummingbird or butterfly would fly through the dining area. Magical!

**The waterfalls in Mindo are beautiful and plentiful. Some of the trails are pretty strenuous for the inexperienced**

**hiker. When you reach your destination, the rewards are sensationally satisfying in the invigorating pools of clear water, and standing under the rush of a waterfall is a delightful way to cool off after your journey. You are suddenly suspended back to your childhood, wanting to frolic and splash all day.**

Another activity is zip lining, which is inexpensive and thrilling, but be aware that the hike up can be slippery and a bit tricky lacking ropes, rails or actual steps. It's more like ruts in the dirt. But man, oh man! What a thrill to zip over ravines as Superman, arms and legs suspended, screaming like a fool! The zip guides are helpful and lots of fun. If you like zip lining, this is the best deal in the jungle. There is also horseback riding, tubing, night walks, frog concerts, cocoa farms, chocolate tours and even a vineyard.

**We refrained from tubing as the water is quite low this time of year but we're encouraged to return in December or January to participate in this joy-ride.**

Just about two hours from Quito and about six to seven hours from Manta, Mindo is perfect for a long weekend. I recommend staying at least three nights because after all the things to do, it is also the perfect place to lay in a hammock, read a book, or, what I enjoy doing more than anything, daydreaming! Dress is super casual. Wear good shoes, just like your mama told you! It can be wet and a bit chilly at night but for the most part, I think it's one of the most beautiful climates I've ever been in. Might be a good idea to pack a flash light and don't forget mosquito repellent. But most of all, don't forget to go!







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# Ecuador In Phases: The Learning Curve Experience

by Kay Ward



Like so many of you who also live here in Ecuador, I have been asked this question many times. For the past four years, I have responded by reciting the reasons I have enjoyed living in my new country as proof that I, along with thousands of others, have made the right decision. Here are my experiences.

I've been surprised by how much more I was getting than just a country on the dollar and inexpensive housing. Having lived in four cities in Ecuador and visiting many more, I've encountered the welcoming nature of Ecuadorians in so many sweet examples. For instance, my first week in Quito at the end of 2018, I was sick and headed to the pharmacy at the big mall not knowing a soul. At the pharmacy counter, I was struggling to tell the pharmacist my symptoms when a young man came up to help communicate with both languages – I knew then I had come to the right place!

From Quito, I traveled to Cuenca and spent the next year acclimating myself to this country, the people, the climate, the foods, and the language. My time in Cuenca was wonderful. I moved four times while there, living twice in the center of the city, once a little farther out, and 30 days watching a friend's house in Turi. My favorite thing was living in the city! The culture in Cuenca is like none other I've seen in any city....even in the US. The activities keep a person busy 7 days a week. However, I finally decided that if I never left Cuenca I might not see other beautiful parts of Ecuador, so off I went to....Manta!

At the end of December 2019, it was the first time in my life living by the ocean – my first response was, how great is this?! I was lucky to find a rental right on the ocean and it was walkable to Mall de Pacifico and the buses. There were several expat meetups at that time in Manta, so it was very easy to meet new people, but then the pandemic hit and that came to a halt. However, I was impressed by how Ecuador handled the pandemic and clamped down immediately. Many of us remember the lines at the mall just to be able to do grocery shopping, and suddenly embracing food delivery from restaurants.

Eventually, by the end of July 2020 things started to ease – slightly! More people started to arrive again but the reopening of restaurants was delayed. In December of 2020 I made the decision to explore more and moved to.....Olon!

Olon is farther down the coast of Ecuador and in another climate zone which is more humid than Manta. However, the trade off in Olon is the beautiful beaches and beach bars along with a wonderful selection of restaurants. The local Ecuadorians embraced a newcomer and once again, it was easy to meet new people. Another plus about living in Olon is Montanita, a party town that is just two miles down the road, to explore more options to have a good time – along with a Tia Supermarket for necessities. Eventually the cooler weather set in around June and I was looking for a warmer climate. So it began time to explore and I decided to move to....San Clemente!

San Clemente is about four hours north up the coast from Olon. I was told Manta and the northern coast will provide more sunshine and warmth, with more days of sun per year, and I found that to be very true! The San Clemente area is made up of San Jacinto and the very small community, San Alejo, in between. When you consider both towns, you have good access to local tiendas and restaurants and, again, the bus system to travel to Bahia farther north or back to Manta for larger stores. San Clemente surely brought more days of sun, and who can resist the experience of going to Meiers local restaurant and his “store.” However, I found myself returning to the bigger cities on the weekend, so eventually I made the decision to move back to Manta in February of 2022. By then, the pandemic was fairly under control and Manta had opened back up and many new people were coming weekly and new restaurants opening just as fast.

My experiences in Ecuador have been life changing and I would recommend it to anyone – just come and don't look back!





# A Jewel in Manabí

by Sara Moore



I discovered a jewel in Manabi. Approximately 30 minutes from Manta, this fabulous restaurant discovery is on the outskirts of Montecristi. Located on the upper slopes of the Montecristi mountain, 200 meters above sea level. This amazing location gives visitors an awesome panoramic view of Montecristi, Manta and the Pacific Ocean.

This jewel is the Italian restaurant Trattoria Da Gabriele. They specialize in a variety of Italian dishes, prepared fresh with homemade sauces, pastas and sausages. They also offer other meats and seafood. Furthermore, this restaurant is a family business with strong roots in Europe. The operators are very friendly and accommodating and they have been here since 2000. They actually operated in Manta first, before relocating to Montecristi.

**The Italian food is authentic and spectacular, and the atmosphere and ambience are beautiful and tranquil. We were immediately greeted and the server was very friendly, pleasant and attentive. We were seated in the rotunda, which is surrounded by double door windows. This area offered stunning views of the city below, mountains and the Pacific Ocean in the distance and also provided us with cool cross breezes during our entire visit. We were served our chosen beverage**

**and hot bread topped with butter and garlic. We ordered the sangria which was lively with wine, limes and apples. We then ordered several dishes. First we had the onion soup infused with white wine and brandy from their appetizers. It was delicious and hearty. The three entrees we had were filet mignon wrapped in homemade bacon, served with the signature mushroom sauce and steamed vegetables on the side, lasagna alfredo with creamy chicken, white wine and ham, and pasta carbonara with cheese. All three entrees were absolutely fantastic! They also have several dessert choices, however the meal was so filling and satisfying that we had no room for dessert this time.**

This restaurant has an authentic, old world Italian feel. The surroundings are full of trees, plants, stone and brick. It's very warm and welcoming. The aesthetics give you a feeling of being in Italy at a charming family restaurant on an old cobblestone street. They also have a full pool on the lower level with tables and chairs throughout that terrace area for alternative seating choices. I would absolutely encourage our residents of Manta to take the short drive to this location. You will be extremely happy with the location, ambience, service and meal! The prices are good as well, that's an extra bonus.



by Stalin Oviedo

# Pride and Prejudice Under the Ecuadorian Law



**Thank you so much for talking with us today Dr. Oviedo. Would you mind telling us a little more about yourself?**

**Dr. Stalin Oviedo:** Hello, and thank you for having me. In respect to the first question, my name is Doctor Stalin Oviedo Ramirez and I am from Quito with heritage from the province of Chimborazo and the province of Imbabura. In my postgraduate career I have completed my master's as well as other certificates, both in Ecuador and abroad. I specialize in litigation and legal advice with a focus on criminal law in the area of gender violence. My team and I have had an office in Quito for over 20 years providing legal services to all natural and legal persons.

**There is a need for legal advice for foreigners who come to Ecuador with the desire to invest. What would be your recommendation to our readers in respect to this?**

**Dr. Stalin Oviedo:** For somebody who wants to come to Ecuador to live, start a business, or just vacation, the most important thing will be to know what the law says and how it is implemented. A trusted legal advisor who is up to date with all current laws will be the most important facet when a foreigner is looking to make Ecuador their home. It's important to remember that foreigners and nationals are held to the same law in Ecuador and whatever act, good or bad, will be accounted for. Within the territory of Ecuador there are laws that must be followed by everyone and the correct legal counsel will ensure that you are in compliance with those laws.

**Doctor Oviedo, can you explain a little about the nature of civil obligations in Ecuador?**

**Dr. Stalin Oviedo:** In Ecuador there is Civil Law, also known as the Civil Code, which regulates the obligations that arise from contracts. By virtue of these obligations, when signing a contract in Ecuador, one is also submitting to Ecuadorian laws. On the other hand, when a contract is signed and becomes law for the parties involved it is possible that the contract will be viable in the jurisdiction of the United States, as long as it is stated in the contract that this jurisdiction exists. For example, if a contract is signed in the City of Manta between a foreigner and an Ecuadorian, and a conflict arises between the parties, the case could be brought forth in New York. In this case I would suggest considering the size and type of business as well as seeking the help of a head lawyer who can provide you with objective, honest, and ethical legal help. In another example, if someone buys an apartment in the City of Bahía de Caráquez it would not be possible to submit a case in the jurisdiction of the United States. But, if the purchase was completed through an investment contract it could be channeled through the United States. The most important thing to remember when signing any contract in accordance with Ecuadorian laws and another country is that everything should be defined and clearly stated in the contract. In the case of an apartment for example, information such as apartment 8A, parking space 20, building 8 of the Mar Abierto building in Manta with 'x' amount of square meters, should be included in the contract.



As with an investment contract there are other things to consider. In an investment contract it must be stated what the investment will be used for, who is giving and receiving the investment, who is using the money, what the approved project is, background of the investment profile, and type of project to be invested such as real estate, business, stock market, etc. The contract must include all the delimitations to avoid any major problems in the future. When preparing a contract in Ecuador it is necessary to have it prepared by a trusted lawyer and have it approved by all parties. It is not feasible in Ecuador nor is it recommended that business be done overnight. Business should always be well verified. There is a legal saying that states, "To be free you have to be a slave to the law," and this is no less true in Ecuador.

### **Based on what you have been telling us, can you illustrate the difference between the judicial system in the United States and the Ecuadorian legal system?**

**Dr. Stalin Oviedo:** The procedural system of the United States is the so-called Common Law that is based on custom and ours is the Civil Law that is based on a legal code. Our legislation has leaned towards coinciding with the United States, or Common Law, since the year 2008 with the Constitution of Ecuador. This is not to say that they are the same thing, but that the system has similarities with that known as Common Law. This Common Law system, in my opinion, is headed towards being universal. I think that it is the system that reaches almost a quasi-perfect justice. Civil Law, on the other hand, was

erected under a procedural system and positivist legal system that is based on Roman and Napoleonic law. In regards to this, and in reference to the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador, Organic Criminal Code of Processes from May 2016, and the Organic Integral Criminal Code of August 2014, judicial processes have become more expeditious, less tortuous, and more similar to the hearing system of the United States and Anglo-Saxon system. I insist once again, that even with this system, one must seek sound legal advice when involved with any legal matters. Even though state lawyers may not provide the highest representation, if a foreigner comes to Ecuador and finds themselves in an unfortunate situation they are entitled to a state lawyer if they cannot afford one. In this situation a state lawyer would be able to provide basic advice and guide one to avoid future problems.

With that, I hope I have been able to answer some of your questions regarding the doubts you may have in the legal system. Many will say, "bad news is the first to arrive and the easiest thing to sell," but that is not the full picture in Ecuador. Our country has a good legal system, a good body of laws, and a procedural system that really works. We may not have the speed and perfection of Anglo-Saxon countries but we do work to ensure that our rights are kept.





Raknetel

by Manuel Avilés



by Manuel Avilés







by Manuel Avilés





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# Ecuador Had Never Crossed My Mind

by Sue Gallagher



I grew up in a suburb of Boston in the 1950s. My mom was artistic so I always had a paintbrush or a knitting needle in my hand and a book in front of my nose. And of course with my toes in the Atlantic ocean every summer.

**My work life was split between Los Angeles and San Diego, always in sight of the ocean. I was a technical writer for almost 40 years, writing mostly about programming languages, managing documentation departments, and presenting sessions and workshops at technical writing conferences. My artistic tendencies migrated to the digital world as I concentrated on designing PowerPoint slides and technical diagrams. I designed a few icons and logos, but the opportunities to really stretch my artistic skills were few.**

When retirement loomed, my husband and I knew we'd only be happy by the ocean and a beachfront property in California was far beyond our means. On a night that would change our lives forever, we saw a couple on House Hunters International looking for beachfront property in Ecuador and, simultaneously, our eyes lit up! We came to Ecuador in 2015, rented a car and spent two weeks driving the coast from Salinas to Pedernales and fell madly in love with this country and its people.

**We moved here in November of 2019 with our four dogs targeting someplace near Manta. We landed in Santa Marianita, and felt so comfortable and so welcomed that we never left. We bought a house and settled in just in time for the pandemic quarantine. While we both managed to escape the ravages of COVID-19, my husband's health took a turn for the worse and he crossed the rainbow bridge in July 2022. Despite the changes life has thrown at me, leaving Ecuador has never crossed my mind. I have made such wonderful friends, Ecuadorian and every nationality of expat, I have a comfortable house, I'm financially secure, and I get to watch the sunset over the ocean from my patio. Who could ask for more?**

I started painting again during the pandemic. First one or two things for the house, then a few Christmas and birthday gifts, and suddenly my workroom overflowed with painted projects as I lost myself in color and design.



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# Cedulas for Expats in Manta

by Marcos Chiluisa



A cedula is the official Ecuadorian identification card. Native residents have them, and expats can get one once they become residents. It is a good option to avoid carrying your passport around.

**Not many expats like to obtain a cedula due to how long the process can take. Before, cedulas for expats were only issued at the 3 biggest cities in Ecuador: Guayaquil, Quito and Cuenca. Now, cedulas can also be obtained at the Civil Registry in the City of Manta.**

This is definitely good news for those who live close to Manta and do not want to travel long distances to obtain their official Ecuadorian ID. Since Manta is newly offering cedulas for expats, another advantage of this is that no appointment is needed yet. First come, first serve.

**The process to obtain a cedula in Manta is pretty similar to other cities in Ecuador. The system opens up for cedulas at 11am every day, Monday through Friday. Allow 2-4 hours for the total process to**

**be completed. Please be patient with the Civil Registry workers as this is new to them so there might be moments when they do things slowly or ask many questions.**

You must bring your cedula order, copy of your visa, passport, and any document that justifies the information that you want to include on your cedula such as:

- Apostille Marriage Certificate + Translation (to justify marital status)
- Apostille Birth Certificate + Translation (to add parents' information or correct any information from the system)
- Senecyt Registration (to change your education level)

**After all your information is entered in the system by the clerk, in just 2 hours your cedula will be ready.**

**Hurry up and give Manta a chance!**





# Gonzalo Magic Hands

by Gonzalo Pozo



**Gonzalo Pozo Jimenez (Goyo)** was born on March 15, 1976 in the city of Ibarra, Ecuador.

Goyo is an artist specializing in plastic arts. From a very early age he began his creative work. At the age of 11, he won his first prize in painting at the provincial level among 300 participating children.

He studied art in his high-school years and specialized in painting when he attended higher education. At the age of 17, he held his first individual exhibition with 70 paintings and drawings, which were widely accepted by the public.

He has participated in many painting contests at a national level, obtaining nominations and national prizes in painting. Goyo has also held exhibitions in museums and galleries, obtaining great success inside and outside of Ecuador.

He is an artist by vocation and conviction. His work focuses on the protection of nature and the influence of human actions for or against their own preservation.







by Danielle Norris

# Christmas Dinner for Shekinah



**Foundation** It is almost two o'clock in the afternoon on Christmas Day here in Manta, Ecuador. Soon there will be a grand venue called Lúpulo BeerGarden that will open its doors, and the hearts of many, to celebrate Christmas together. Almost 150 guests are on their way to gather, to celebrate with one another, and to commemorate a very purposeful event.

With its beautiful décor and warm staff, Lúpulo Beer Garden welcomes its guests from far and wide. As they step through the threshold amidst twinkling lights, ambient Christmas music can be heard, coaxing partygoers into the holiday spirit. Tasteful and elegant place settings are meticulously laid out and Christmas cards are strung nostalgically to enhance the joy of the season. But this is no ordinary Christmas dinner. This particular dinner has a clear purpose...this dinner is bringing people together for a cause that is near and dear to a group of individuals that are the epitome of kindness and generosity, which is exactly what Christmas is all about!

**“We want to become a central pillar for community involvement. We are inspired with the work being done with Shekinah and all the hard work and generosity of those who attended the event”-Ryan Hood, owner of Lúpulo**

Collaborating in the background and initiating this event was Julie Harper and her Board of Directors for the Shekinah Foundation. Julie is Manta's most hard-working community champion, and along with the wonderful members of the Board, they were able to put this special event together.

On the Board is Marcos Chiluisa, Marlon & Sharon Statema, Matto Woodall, Robin & Steve Wright, Gary Meeds, and Ryan Hood.

**Along with Julie, the board got together to brainstorm how they can unite people in our community, by having a function that would inspire hope, change, and prosperity for a foundation that seeks to aid displaced children in Manta. I will say that no matter where you are spiritually, what was able to form and happen with the level of success that was achieved, and in the short period of time they had, can only be described as a miracle.**

In less than a month an idea took form, the venue was established, and the invites were sent out. The dinner was marching ahead, and it was all for the Shekinah Foundation. The Shekinah Foundation is a center for displaced children and is the only one of its kind here in Manta. Upwards of 30 children live there, and they are desperately in need of help. These children have been abused and/or abandoned, but thankfully they have a place to stay at Shekinah. Our community helper Julie has seen firsthand the devastation that these children have lived through and knew she had to answer the call. It was not an easy job, but that woman has tenacity. She will not stop until she achieves her goals, and boy did she ever! “After I did my tour of Shekinah, I was heartbroken because they are operating under the radar and are struggling. I felt I was tapped to do something, but the hardest part of raising money is raising awareness, and that's exactly what I intend to do.”- Julie Harper



To have this become a success, it takes a lot of people, and a lot of love. Even when it seemed that there was not going to be the turnout that Julie was hoping for, she did not stop fighting. Persistence won, and our community of both expats and locals were able to give and receive that day. For those that couldn't afford tickets, donations were made. For those that could not attend or were not even in the country, tickets were purchased...it sold out!! In terms of entertainment, musicians picked up their instruments and played their hearts out. One of the best and most precious gifts was a performance by the children's band from Shekinah called, "Tesoros de Rey", which translates to Treasures of the King.

**Music was also provided by Mantas Blues Project run by Reid Scott Anderson, and on the Saxophone was Alejandro "Alex" Izaguirre. Alex is an extremely talented sax player, and he filled every inch...and every soul with his music. The energy was everywhere. Following the dinner was dessert and a silent auction where you could bid on the donation of services that came pouring through from the hearts of many. Happy to say that 100% of the proceeds of the dessert sales and silent auction went directly to the children's needs.**

"Over \$2000 was raised in the silent auction alone," said the representative from the foundation, Sydney Spires. Her faith and dedication to the children are bar none. She was overwhelmed with the number of people present and the financial assistance that was the product of the selflessness of our community. The total raised between the silent auction, desserts, and percentage from the dinner is an amazing \$3126.81. Shekinah also has gained \$350 a month of sponsorships for children which totals \$4,200 a year! Due to the dinner bringing this awareness to the community, private donations are trickling in as well. "Thank you to everyone who came out to the Christmas dinner, to those who purchased or donated tickets, to anyone who sponsored a child, and for participating in the silent auction. The dinner was an opportunity to pause and reflect on the important things around us. It left all of us at Shekinah feeling seen and cared for. On behalf of the Shekinah Foundation, THANK YOU! What a huge blessing. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, God Bless!"- Sydney Spires

**When people come together, it is fire. It started with the spark of a beautiful idea, then little bits of flint were scraped ever so carefully, lit by people like Ryan Hood, fanned with the fire of the community, and now we have ignited a burning flame that will hopefully turn into a lasting blaze. To have such a turnout and see guests from all over this great Province of Manabí come together in an inspiring way to eat, sing, and dance as one big joyous family...that my friends is what Christmas is all about!**











































































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