



Presented by
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PLAYING TOURIST IN MEXICO

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Mexico is the 6th most visited country in the world. It contains 35 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 28 World Cultural Heritage Sites, 187 archaeological sites, and 7 World Natural Heritage Sites.

Mexico is a naturally diverse country. Between 50 and 60 percent of the world's known plant species are found in Mexico making it one of the most mega-diverse areas on the planet. The Monarch butterfly reserves are just one of Mexico's unique natural habitats.

Mexico is a linguistically diverse country. There are 68 indigenous languages which have approximately 350 different dialects. Six million Mexico speak an indigenous language.

Mexico is an ethnically diverse country. Its current population is

made up of indigenous, European, and African roots making Mexico a land of uniquely and genetically varied people.

Mexico is a geographically diverse country. Its landscape includes jungles, deserts, swamps, coastlines, volcanoes (both active and dormant), mountain ranges, and fertile valleys.

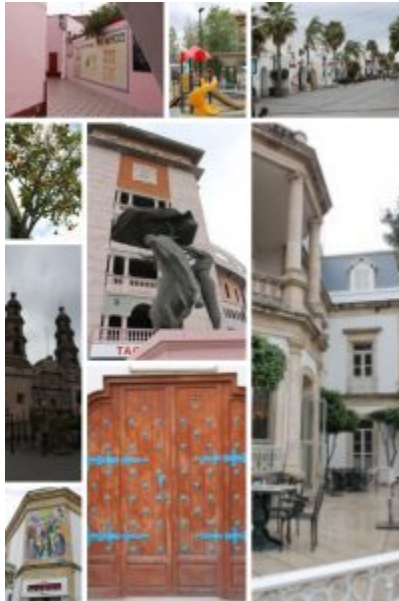
There is a plethora of information about trendy places to visit in Mexico. However, this book doesn't focus on these. Rather, here you'll find little-known treasures as discovered by women who actually live in Mexico. Some of these are part of Mexico's Pueblos Mágicos program. Others are chanced-upon delights, waterfalls, wineries (yes, Mexico has a long history of wine-making), and little towns in the middle of nowhere. Some tourist attractions and metropolitan areas are also included, making this book nearly as diverse as Mexico as a whole. We hope you enjoy traveling with us.

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de-mexico.html)

I. Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes



Since we had a long weekend for Constitution Day the first weekend of February, we decided to get out of town. Go somewhere new. Get off the Highway 57 corridor. *gasp!*

Our destination? Aguascalientes.

My husband visited Aguascalientes when he was young. He saw his first bullfight there, so the city has long held a special place in his heart. It's a well-preserved, colonial city that we've been meaning to

visit for years. The bullrings called his attention. The hot water in its name called mine. Finally, we had time to explore Aguascalientes.

It's a five-to-six-hour drive to Aguascalientes from Saltillo. Head towards Zacatecas and then follow signs to Aguascalientes. It's a long, uneventful drive. Don't do it at night, and keep your gas tank full, as the gas stations are far and few between. There might be one about every 40 minutes. Of course, don't drive at night.

We reserved rooms at the Gran Hotel Alameda. It's farther out of town than we usually prefer to stay, but the hotel description intrigued us. It gave us hope that they had a hot tub. We were wrong. However, they have an excellent attached restaurant. The service, both in the hotel and restaurant was impeccable. And, had we been there on a warmer weekend, we would have taken advantage of their pool and been tempted to pretend that the Gran Hotel Alameda was a resort. It would have been easy not to have left the hotel.

But we did. After all, we came to explore Aguascalientes.

After an amazing spread at the hotel's breakfast buffet, we drove downtown, ready to explore. Parking is plentiful at the Expo San Marcos, with an entrance under a bridge on Adolfo Lopez Mateos—unless the fair is going on. If you come for the fair, stay right downtown and don't get in your car again until it's time to leave town.

This fair is the nationally renowned Feria San Marcos. It takes place from mid-April to mid-May, and you need to have hotel reservations at least a year in advance. Bullfights and beer appear to be the name of the game. To our disappointment, we missed a bullfight on Saturday night and were not able to stay late enough on Monday to see one then. However, we wandered the outside of the big bullring and were able to wander inside a much smaller one.

To our kids' relief, Aguascalientes has an excellent playground right outside of the big San Marcos bullring. After they ran off their energy, we dragged them through the Andador J. Pani, a complex of bars and restaurants that I'm sure are hopping when the fair is

going on. In fact, the longer we stayed, it looked like they pulled in a reasonable business on a long weekend in February.

We could have walked all the way downtown, to appreciate historical Aguascalientes, but our kids' legs and attitudes demanded that we move the car closer to downtown. Like San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes has always been an important connection between northern Mexico and Mexico City. Its strategic position between Zacatecas' silver mines and Mexico City made it an important stopping place for wealthy silver caravans headed to Mexico City. The downtown area has various museums and is very walkable.

However, what called my attention were two bars on Venustiano Carranza. Peeking in, I noticed a large display of microbrews, many of them from Mexico! Given that microbreweries have taken off like wildfire in the US in the decade or two, I've been sorely disappointed that Mexico's beer is still dominated by two or three huge companies. If you're equally sad about that, Aguascalientes has the locally-brewed solution for you! In fact, from the briefest of searches, it seems that they have a couple of breweries. My next trip there may just be called, "The Aguascalientes Beer Quest". I will certainly revisit Bon Appetit and the Beer Boutique and pick the staffs' heads about the Aguascalientes beer scene.

Monday morning dawned cloudy and cold with a very real chance for rain. However, we were determined to check out the hot springs at Ojocaliente, just across the street from the hotel. As it was a national holiday, and we had to make that five-hour drive back home before dark, we were the first to hit the hot springs.

Now, when one thinks of hot springs, one usually thinks of sitting out, under the sun, in gloriously warm, naturally heated water, right? Not the case here. Ojocaliente has a number of private, enclosed pools that are rented by the hour. Open the tap, steamy water begins pouring into the tub, and a half hour later, it is filled to capacity. When the water starts to lose a bit of heat as time passes, open the

spout again, and let the steamy warmth pour on your head, down your shoulders. Bliss.

For extra enjoyment, take breaks from the hot tub. Run to the shower provided in the private room, stand under the cold water (yes, not for the faint of heart), tighten up all those muscles, and then immerse yourself back in the hot tub. They're big enough for one or two people to float on their backs at a time. If you have more time than we had, they also offer massages for an extra price. And they don't mind at all if you add bath salts to the water—in fact, they'll be happy to sell you some when you rent your hour.

I don't know how crowded Ojocaliente might get during Semana Santa when everyone has a vacation. But on a cold, rainy day in early February, we just about had the place to ourselves. And yes, this is a child-friendly establishment. They have play equipment at one end of the interior courtyard, sell floaties for anyone who would like to purchase them, and the water is not too hot for little peoples' sensitive skin.

We had one more excellent meal at the Gran Hotel Alameda. With the cream of olive soup, grilled lamb and roasted salmon on the menu, why would we eat anywhere else?

That long weekend was just long enough to convince me that I need to see more of Aguascalientes.

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Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Saltillo Expats.

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aguascalientes/)(<http://ojocaliente.com.mx/>)

(<http://www.feriadesanmarcos.gob.mx/>)(<http://www.granalameda.com/inicio/>)

2. Cerro de Los Amoles, Guanajuato



I'd like to tell you about a little town called Los Amoles. Its full name is Cerro de Los Amoles (Hill of Los Amoles—I haven't been able to find out what Amoles means though) and it is part of the municipality of Moroleon, Guanajuato. Los Amoles is 2361 meters above sea level and that makes a world of difference.

We've been to Los Amoles on several occasions. We've hiked up the mountain to pick capulines (chokeberries) which only grow in that area. We've been caught in hail storms and flash floods while

driving over the mountain. My husband and son drove the motorcycle through a lagoon on a quest for wild horses said to roam free in the area. And my American sister-in-law fell and knocked out a tooth while picnicking in these parts. Good times!

More recently, the powers that be decided to create an eco-park in Los Amoles. I thought it would be something interesting to see, so we went. The actual road to the park isn't well marked. There's only 1 sign pointing the way. You need to drive past the church, the local drinking spot, and the plaza de toros (bull ring) even to get to that sign. But we found it!

It seems the entrance is yet unfinished. The gate is a wired stick contraption. One of the workers said it was to keep the free roaming chickens, pigs, horses, cows, and other animals from destroying the area.

As you can see, it was actually very nice! There are solar lights, individual cookout areas, wooden playsets for the kids and some saplings that one day will grow into trees providing the animals don't eat them first.

According to one article, the eco-park will also have some zip lines, cabins you can rent to stay in, and some biking trails but that hasn't materialized yet. Maybe there will be more signs up to direct visitors once those attractions are up and running?

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at Surviving Mexico-Adventures and Disasters. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2018/04/01/playing-tourist-los-amoles/>)(<http://www.guanajuato.mx/experiencias/3/8/1>)(<https://en.mexico.pueblosamerica.com/i/amoles/>)

3. Beaches in Baja California



Me and my other half live just north of Ensenada and enjoy the view of the ocean from the house along with access to beaches of San Miguel with major surfing including competitions to Playa Hermosa in town. Also the joys of seeing La Bufadora (Blowhole) to the south. We have a lot of rocky beaches with some sandy areas but water quality has kept us out of the ocean along with the fact it is colder than further south.

Last year the other half and I took a trip from one end of Baja to the other and back which allowed us to see the Pacific Ocean from north to south along with areas of the Sea of Cortez including the convergence of the two at the southern tip of Baja in Los Cabos.

We crossed from the Pacific side to the Sea of Cortez several times as we drove south. Typical at the convergence is not a place to swim

due to the currents and/or undertows. We fell in love with the Sea of Cortez from Mulege to Loreto and La Paz with the white sandy beaches and clear blue waters so we look forward to more visits. The area wasn't good for swimming due to undertows but got to see a mother whale and her baby.

We have seen some of the rocky beaches to the clear blue water with white sand of Baja, all beautiful in its own right. The plan to see more of the beaches as we have barely started this adventure.

Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab.
(<http://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/the-many-aspects-of-beaches-in-baja/>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Bufadora)

4. Bernal, Querétaro



Mexico's Pueblo Mágico program has done a lot to drive tourism to many small towns throughout the country. In most instances, these towns really are something special. My favorite? Bernal, Querétaro.

Why? Read on!

The Wine and Cheese Trail

The state of Querétaro is the second-largest producer of wine in Mexico—behind Baja California, of course. For those who scoff and

say, “Mexican wine?” I say, “keep scoffing—more wine for me!” There really are some quality wines here.

But don’t believe me, try for yourself!

The number of vineyards and wineries has exploded in Querétaro in the last few years. Which wineries should you visit? Whatever piques your interest!

As time is limited on any vacation, I’ve only visited three: Viñedos Azteca, Freixenet, and La Redonda. I do recommend them, but am looking forward to visiting others on my next trip. (But we will ALWAYS stop in at the Azteca! The wine was excellent and the vineyard itself lent itself to a relaxed, afternoon stroll.)

The Wine and Cheese trail wouldn’t be complete without the cheese. While we love cheese, we haven’t been very adventurous. We just go to the Hostal de los Quesos, and go a little hog wild, buying up fancy-pants cheeses that are normally difficult to find in Mexico. The fact that they’re made in Mexico is a huge bonus.

Peña de Bernal

Bernal’s most notable feature is the Peña (or Sugarloaf mountain) that dominates any view of Bernal.

It’s possible to hire a guide and rent equipment to scale to the top of the Peña. But, for less ambitious hikers, it’s possible to get a good way up without a guide or equipment. Bernal maintains a well-marked trail. Be warned though, even the hike through town to get to the bottom of the Peña isn’t for the faint of heart—just getting to the top of the town is quite steep!

The view is worth it, though!

Be warned, only go as far as feels safe. The first time I tried to climb it, it was raining, and it became clear that there was only so far we could climb safely that day. This last time, we went a great deal farther. But once the trail ends, it is completely possible to misstep

and fall off the mountain. That could result in severe injury or death. So be careful!

Also, the crowds can be thick during the weekends. It can be a steady stream of people climbing up and going down on some fairly narrow paths. Whenever possible, spend a weekday in Bernal, get up early, and enjoy the Peña in peace.

It's so worth it!

Puebleando

Being a Pueblo Mágico, Bernal has all the touristy-trinkety shops you'd expect. A store attached to Gorditas el Negrito is packed with gorgeous wood carvings—most religiously-inspired, but some secular. My favorite was a 2-meter tall fat friar, clutching his tarro of beer. He was standing precariously close to a wooden crocodile.

A store specializing in *artesanias* from Michoacán had miniatures for Day of the Dead altars and wall decorations. My daughter's dollhouse is now very well stocked!

Where To Eat

Right next to the fountain in the central plaza is an Italian restaurant, Piave. It was the most memorable meal I've had in a long time. Being in wine country, we asked for a jar of their house wine (which didn't disappoint). The entrees were simple, yet hearty and packed with flavor—everything I expect from a quality Italian meal.

The owner had the appearance of an older, Italian man. Given the quality of the food (and the reasonableness of the prices) was confirming that guess. But I never did work up the courage to ask him!

For a quicker meal, but equally hearty, head to Gorditas El Negrito. They have a wide variety of fillings, and they are precisely that—FILLING! The gorditas go perfectly with an ice-cold bottle of

beer. For less than one hundred pesos you can be fed, watered, and ready to go again!

Unless you order five or six, of course!

Where To Stay

We stayed at the Hotel Rancho San Jorge and loved it! It's a short walk to the downtown area and very close to the entrance of the town, so the location is ideal. For those who'd rather be farther in the country and really get away from it all, they do have cabins (which I bet do not deserve the rustic description of a cabin) a little way out of town. But my husband wanted to walk downtown.

I wanted a nice bathtub. Bathtubs are usually hard to find in hotels in Mexico, but the one at San Jorge went beyond my wildest expectations. A jetted tub, nestled in its own little nook in the room, with a great view of the trees surrounding the hotel—it was the perfect way to finish off a tough day of wining, dining, and wandering around town!

Some Pueblos Mágicos are honestly too big to deserve the distinction of “pueblo”. Some Pueblos Mágicos don't have enough attractions to deserve to be labeled a tourist attraction. Some have too many.

Bernal, Querétaro is perfectly balanced in all the above categories.

It deserves the title of My Favorite Pueblo Mágico!

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Jill's Journeys.(<http://jillmichelledouglas.com/mexico/travel/queretaro-bernal/>) (<https://vinedosazteca.com/>)

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5. Catavina, Baja California



Last year we took a trip from one end of Baja to the other and back. The first and last day of the trip we stayed the night in Catavina. This area is so amazing as it is in the middle of nowhere, no cell service or gas stations unless you would like to purchase gas out of a fifty-gallon barrel, only if necessary. The hotel was like a small oasis in the desert including a lovely courtyard with a pool and will fill up in the evenings as travelers do not typically drive Baja in the evenings due to animals in the road and the horrible, you can't miss potholes from El Rosario to Guerrero Negro.

The flowers of this area are amazing, especially after winter rains. Was hoping to see the cave drawings but couldn't figure out the directions as the sign was knocked over.

It is the beauty and ruggedness of the desert. I find it interesting

how it looks like someone has stacked boulders to create the mountains and in amongst these rocks are wildflowers with cacti. When we drove south predominantly the purple colored flowers were on bloom and two weeks later when we headed back north it was a sea of yellow. We were too early for the cacti blooms but hope to see on another visit.

Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab. (<http://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/catavina-the-beauty-of-rocks-cacti/>) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catavi%C3%B1a>)

6. Cholula, Puebla



A few weeks ago, we took the fastest visit ever to Mexico City took a side trip to Cholula, just outside of Puebla (2-3 hours from Mexico City). Way back in 1999, when I came to Mexico for the very first time, Cholula was home for 4 months. When I spent two years in Morelos, I came to Cholula every other weekend to visit Mario, making it home again. This town has a very special place in my heart, and walking around made me feel like I was home again.

As we drove into town, we drove behind the University de las Americas (where Mario studied and I spent my study-abroad semester). Our mouths hung open as we drove past bar after swanky club after posh bar—it was like the strip at Acapulco without the beach! Mercifully, once we got out of spitting range of the UDLA, it became evident that Cholula was still sleepy, loveable Cholula.

Mario lived for 11 years, two blocks from the zocalo and that was just about where we parked. We had tacos arabes at Tacos Robert (I was also craving a cemita and contemplating getting both a cemita AND the tacos, but they were out of cheese. What's a cemita without cheese? OK, it'd be a big, huge drippy sandwich—without cheese. No thanks). After that, we wandered the zocalo, and visited our favorite chapel Cholula is said to boast 365 churches (as the Spanish built a church over Aztec pyramids and Cholula was a huge center of worship for the Aztecs). In reality, there are something like 200+ churches in little Cholula.

We had ice cream and people-watched on a bench in the zocalo. Then we noticed that they were setting up for a concert in the *kiosko* in the center of the zocalo, so we stayed to listen (Mario will do ANYTHING to drive into Mexico City as late as possible to avoid the traffic—the concert was a great excuse). And a highlight was that they played the William Tell Overture, so I could bounce Joey on my knee with accompaniment other than my own humming. I think I enjoyed it more than he did.

There are three huge, enormously old trees in the courtyard. Waaaay back in the day, the Indians weren't allowed inside the churches, so mass was held outside for them. Passing these trees I always think about the countless people who spent hours sitting under these trees, nearly 500 years ago. Oh, the stories the trees could tell!

I had always wanted to hear a concert in the bandstand. This, visit, dreams came true. What a great day! We felt that we were literally walking down memory lane.

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Loving the Land of the Flour Tortilla.(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2012/05/destination-cholula.html>)

7. Cola de Caballo, Nuevo Leon



Destination: Cola del Caballo

And a destination this was! Two years ago, we meandered out this way with some friends but never made it to the actual waterfall. It wasn't in the original plan anyway.

So this time around, when my parents were around and we thought that a drive through the mountains would be lovely, I was determined to get to Cola del Caballo. Of course, I wasn't driving!

Leaving Saltillo, we made our way to Arteaga, the county just east of here. Arteaga is known for their apple orchards, last year's forest

fires, and the largest artificial ski slope in Latin America. Huh. They do boast a number of cabins to rent, which I'd really like to do some weekend when the spring/summer heat gets unbearable.

Right around the time we meandered to the Nuevo Leon border, we found ourselves in this impressive canyon, which we explored two years ago. Traffic is very light, so a number of people (ourselves included, clearly) just pulled off to the side of the road and pondered the sheerness and immensity of the cliffs. Incredible. To be honest, this part of the road was more impressive than the waterfall that was our destination.

I thought that the waterfall would be just twenty minutes more down the road. After another hour had passed, I was quite confident that we'd shortly be entering the outskirts of Monterrey and we had somehow missed the waterfall.

I wasn't too far off. However, we did find the entrance to the Cola del Caballo just before we cruised into Monterrey. If one would be driving from Monterrey, the entrance would be much more obvious. But if, like us, you prefer the longer, windier road, keep your eyes open!

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Loving the Land of the Flour Tortilla.(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2012/03/destination-cola-del-caballo.html>)

8. Cuitzeo, Michoacan



The other day on the way to Morelia, we drove through the picturesque town of Cuitzeo, also known as Cuitzeo Porvenir, where all the business and houses are painted red and white.

Just outside the town, we stopped at a roadside restaurant Las Jacarandas for a morning buffet breakfast. We enjoyed our meals (I had a yummy fish something or other) and relaxed a bit while Marc Antonio Solis's greatest hits played on the giant flatscreen TV.

I did convince my husband to stop in Cuitzeo on the trip back, though. There were several ladies selling hand-woven baskets in the town center, and I wanted to get a better look. Fiber crafts are

the most common local handicraft. Baskets, floor mats, and hats were displayed for my admiring gaze, all made from reeds from Lake Cuitzeo.

We bought some churros and fruit covered in powdered chile and walked around a bit before heading out again. So honestly, our tourist day was spent in Cuitzeo rather than Morelia.

The name of the town comes from the Purepecha word “cuiseo” which means place of water containers. As the town is right next to Lake Cuitzeo, the second largest freshwater lake in Mexico, freshwater fish dishes are local specialties. On market days, you can find vendors selling baskets and mats and purses woven from the reeds gathered at the lake.

Cuitzeo has even been named as one of Mexico’s Pueblos Magicos which is a program designed by the Secretary of Tourism to promote tourism in non-traditional touristy areas.

The Santa Magdalena monastery is the historical highlight of the town. We didn’t make an effort to tour it, as you’ve seen one monastery, you’ve seen them all. However, I was impressed with the church door in the town center.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2015/10/02/playing-tourist-cuitzeo-michoacan/>) (http://www.pueblosmexico.com.mx/pueblo_mexico_ficha.php?id_rubrique=477) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuitzeo_del_Porvenir) (<http://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/cuitzeo-pueblos-magicos-de-mexico.html>) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Cuitzeo)

9. Cuatrociénegas, Coahuila



Destination: Cuatrociénegas, Coahuila

For our four-day Easter weekend mini-vacation, we packed up and headed northwest to Cuatrociénegas, smack in the middle of the great state of Coahuila. This means that it is smack in the middle of nowhere and only those who live in Saltillo, Monterrey, or Torreon ever bother to go there. And for those of us in this region, it is worth a short trip. Cuatrociénegas piqued our curiosity early on in our encounters with the Coahuila tourism board, as they boast a surprising amount of biodiversity in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert. This small area is home to a number of endemic

species-meaning plants and animals that are found nowhere else on earth. The naturalist in me just HAD to go.

Our first day, we headed off early to Poza Azul, a deep pool that's astonishingly aquamarine. This is the scene of the larger chunk of afore-mentioned endemic species, and some scientists believe that life on earth began here. [That's life in general, not HUMAN life on earth.] It was very pretty, but there's only so long one can look at a pool of water. The Poza Azul park contains a few other pools (not quite as exciting as the blue one), a lovely, clear creek, and a turtle conservation program. Just down the road from Poza Azul are the Dunas de Yeso, or White Sand Dunes. Yes, exactly like those at White Sands National Monument in New Mexico. Just smaller. In fact, the park is a sister park to White Sands National Monument. Having spent plenty of time in 2002 exploring White Sands, I didn't need to spend all afternoon at the Dunas de Yeso. Particularly because these dunes weren't so "dune-y" and not so exciting to run down. More importantly, there was a wicked wind whipping through the valley, slashing our faces with sand, so we really couldn't get out of there fast enough. On a not-so-breezy day, it may be a lovely excursion. That wasn't our luck.

Then on Saturday, we joined a huge line of idling cars at the entrance to the Rio Mezquites park. They let you swim in the river and have grills and picnic shelters, so everybody and their brother wanted to be there the day before Easter. We were among the last 10 people to be allowed to enter. As it is a protected natural area, they have some limit to how many people can disturb the wildlife in a given day. They also request that swimmers not use sunscreen. Fortunately, I had not yet put any on. When we weren't in the water, Clara and I huddled in the shade while Mario did his best to soak up the sun and get burned. I didn't seem to get burned at all, Clara only got a light burned patch on her arm, and Mario, despite his best attempts, just got pleasantly burned. Not the nearly-second-degree burn he was aiming for.

As we were among the final families to join the horde, there were no picnic shelters left for us, but the Jeep came in handy. It was also way more comfortable than picnic shelter benches. And since we didn't bring anything to grill, it was not at all an inconvenience that we had to stick to the car and the river.

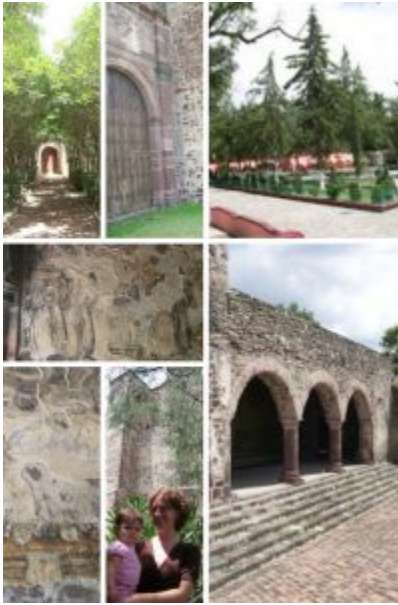
The town of Cuatrociénegas itself is small, cute, clean, and astonishingly well-maintained. While no house looked like millionaires lived there, no houses appeared to be in disrepair. Rather shocking, given all my previous experience in Mexico. Their church is now on my list of Favorite Churches in Mexico. It celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2008 (a rather young church, by Mexican standards) and Mario and I were debating whether they had redone the interior for the anniversary or whether it is original. It's very simple, full of stone arches, painted a tasteful peachy-pink, sporting beautiful curling metal chandeliers—classy, simple, and elegant. I was pretty shocked to find such a lovely church in such a small town and am still disappointed that I didn't get pictures. I was planning on taking them on Easter, but Clara decided to be Miss Crabbypants on Sunday. Just like last year. She seems to have something against Easter.

At any rate, we had an excellent weekend (despite very little sleep—Clara did not adjust well to the hotel). However, we probably won't be back for a while, as Parras is just as charming, half the distance, and sports a much better winery. But I'm glad we went, nonetheless.

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Loving the Land of the Flour Tortilla.(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2010/04/destination-cuatrociénegas-coahuila.html>)

10. Cuauntinchan, Puebla



Never heard of Cuauntinchan?

No surprise. It's not written up in *Lonely Planet*. *Trip Advisor* won't be able to tell you much about it, either.

But we go there once every year or two. It's a place I look forward to visiting.

There isn't much to the town. Like most towns, they have a lovely plaza, and, with their larger-than-usual fountain and normally-empty benches, Cuauntinchan's plaza is more inviting than most.

But the real draw to Cuauntinchan is the former convent. There are traces of some seventeenth-century murals, next to the main church. The convent, its walls, and patios are clearly centuries old, I love the feeling of being immersed in history when I'm there.

But it's also well-maintained. On weekends, the church is

sometimes opened for weddings. (We crashed one there, once.) And it's the type of town that wedding parties parade through town on foot.

Apparently, the town throws a huge party for New Year's. We haven't been to that, but they were full-swing into setting up massive tents around the Zocalo and in front of the convent. But they did advertise tours to the convent's bell tower.

All in all, it's a lovely, quiet place to wander through history, thanks to that convent.

Where is Cuauintinchan?

From the city of Puebla, follow the road to Tecali. It's pretty close to Tecali, but there will be signs announcing Cuauintinchan.

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Loving the Land of the Flour Tortilla.(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2016/02/destination-cuauintinchan-puebla.html>)

II. Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato



I'm not a big fan of Mexican movies, but every now and then, one catches my fancy. Our latest tourist adventure was inspired by 2014 movie *El Último Trago*. Three old geezers set out on a whirlwind adventure, well, as whirlwind as 3 old geezers can spin, to Dolores Hidalgo, specifically to the José Alfredo Jiménez museum.

The movie is a hoot. There was nothing for it but to recreate their journey to Dolores Hidalgo ourselves.

It's only about 3 hours from our home, so it was an easy day trip.

Thank god, we had no vehicle problems or no random police stops. Nearly all of my proposed visit sites were clustered near el centro, so we parked and hoofed it.

After stopping for refreshment at a torta place, we began our tourist adventure with the Casa Museo José Alfredo Jiménez. I even got some pictures of the signature of José Alfredo Jiménez, which is a key feature of the movie. Entrance is \$40 pesos with a discount for teachers and students with appropriate ID. We bought most of our souvenirs here, which meant lugging them around the rest of the day, but after seeing the other gift shops, we decided it was worth it.

We passed the Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores and saw some class trips reenacting the Grito de Dolores, the rousing cry of Miguel Hidalgo, father of Mexican independence.

We went to El Museo del Bicentenario which was disappointing. I wasn't able to exactly understand how the displays came together. The nearest I could figure each room represented an oppressed society. One had posters about censorship in Russia, another Vietnam, 2 full rooms were devoted to China and the last room was all about Israel. There were some exceptional stained glass windows in one room and a few spectacular Catrinas in another, but that was about it as regards to Mexico. Oh, and the two full wall surrealist murals were something to see. Admission was \$20 pesos, half price for students and teachers.

Our next stop was La Casa de Los Descendientes de Hidalgo (the House of the descendants of Miguel Hidalgo), which was also an upscale restaurant. The entrance was \$30 pesos per person and \$10 for camera use. As the name implies, this was the home of the 5th generation descendants of Miguel Hidalgo, the last remaining descendant having just celebrated her 106th birthday. Apparently, after the 5 generations, the blood is no longer pure and the generation count begins again. So the children of the 5th generation, are no longer descendants of Miguel Hidalgo, or so our tour guide told us. This was my favorite museum. There were dioramas

depicting some of the most relevant aspects of the fight for Independence. I have to admit, I always wanted to have my own handmade wooden dollhouse and these little scenes made my heart go pitter patter with longing.

We then took a turn around the centro, which was very pleasant, and had some ice cream (another reference to the movie). There were a few nice statues, lots of benches to sit on, and a whole lotta shoe polishing carts. We admired La Casa de Visitas from our park bench.

We hiked a few blocks to the Museo del Vino and the Casa de Hidalgo. Both had a \$45 peso admission fee, which seemed a little steep now that we'd been to a few of the other museums. We opted not to tour either. I did peek in Hidalgo's house and was reminded of another movie Hidalgo la Historia Jamás Contada which as far as historical movies go, wasn't bad.

Of course, it could be that Hidalgo, who fathered children with two different women and spearheaded the national fight for Independence, was not quite what you would expect from a Catholic priest. Hidalgo had his own vineyards which were burnt in punishment for his treason against the crown, so the Museo de Vino wasn't a far stretch of the imagination right there next to his house in what used to be a hospital. We did hit the gift shop and bought a locally produced bottle of wine called Lloro de Tierra. It was a nice, sweet, fruity rose and we enjoyed it immensely when we got home.

We did not get to the Museo de la Independencia, nor did we stop to see la Tumba de José Alfredo Jiménez en the Panteon. When we asked for directions to the cemetery, hoping it was close enough to walk to, we were told we'd have to walk "un chingo" to get there. My son's flat feet were starting to ache and we were getting tired, so walking un chingo didn't seem like something we were interested in doing. On the way out of the town, we stopped in another nice park with statues, a playground, some nice fountains (without any water) and benches that resembled sofas.

As far as Pueblos Mágicos go, Dolores Hidalgo should be on your

must-see list, not for the quality of the museums because they were rather ho-hum, but for the historical significance of the area, and the wine. I would recommend staying more than one day since there are so many things to see.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2018/08/02/playing-tourist-dolores-hidalgo-gto/>) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pueblo_M%C3%A1gico) (<http://www.dolreshidalgo.gob.mx/>) (<https://www.travelbymexico.com/dolores/>) (<https://www.travelbymexico.com/atractivos/?nom=1282850148>) (<https://www.travelbymexico.com/dolores/atractivos/?nom=1282846273>) (<https://mercadodevinos.mx/products/lloro-de-tierra>) (<https://youtu.be/6SnepJspRRg>) (<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/museo-del-vino-en-dolores-hidalgo.html>) (<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/museo-casa-de-hidalgo-dolores-hidalgo-guanajuato.html>) (<https://www.travelbymexico.com/dolores/atractivos/?nom=1282842343>) (<http://labanderanoticias.com/estado/2017/08/11/conoce-la-casa-los-descendientes-del-cura-hidalgo/>) (<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/escapadas/museo-bicentenario-dolores-hidalgo.html>) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cry_of_Dolores) (<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/la-parroquia-de-nuestra-senora-de-los-dolores-guanajuato.html>) (http://sic.gob.mx/ficha.php?table=museo&table_id=1373) (https://youtu.be/6D98_cYkntA) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Alfredo_Jim%C3%A9nez)

12. BioParque Estrella, Chapa de Mota, Mexico



The school I work for went on an “educational” trip in May to the BioParque Estrella theme park in Mexico State and my son and I went along with them. The promotional material and pictures online made the trip look incredible. The reality was a bit of a letdown.

After a LONG bus ride, we arrived and were shuttled along around the fountain at the entrance until it was our turn to be yelled at by a person with a megaphone. We were supposed to have a tour guide,

but after leaving the fountain area, he wasn't seen again. Looked like we were on our own!

Our first stop on the grand BioParque tour was the Subterranium (Underground). It consisted of a mini-museum with pictures of actual miners and a sampling of mining equipment. Then more than 200 of us were herded into a room with only 1 exit for the What is mining? animated video. Fortunately, it was brief. We then descended several flights of unnaturally short steps to the main attraction. We boarded gas-powered vehicles and went through a "spooky" mine at incredible speeds completely in the dark. The first few stops were mining scenes, then things got a little fanciful. We passed a huge tarantula, a basilisk, a giant scorpion, Medusa (with glowing red eyes) and the lost city of Atlantis, before returning to our starting position and ascending the unnaturally short steps again.

We lost 8 to 10 members of our group during this process, so we had to set out search parties and stand around for a while.

Once we regrouped, we headed to la Tierra de Dinosaurios (the land of dinosaurs) and went on the Rio Jurasico (Jurassic River) boat ride. We all loaded into a seriously tilting motor boat and went around a circular canal, stopping at various dinosaurs that moved or squirted water at us. I was hit by the poison shooting Dilophosaurus, splat right in the face. I was not a happy camper. Despite my fear we were going to capsize, we made it back to the dock and filed out.

I took advantage of the milling about and searching for stragglers time after this attraction to hit the bathrooms. The lines were really long, but there were both toilet paper and seats in the stalls. Five-star bathroom experience! This is an important aspect of any attraction in Mexico.

We then went to the Sendero (path). The brochure described it as a beautiful 1-kilometer hike to admire the natural world with a few surprises along the way. The tour guide at the entrance to the attraction made a disclaimer that the park would not be held responsible if anyone pregnant, or with heart disease or other

physical condition took the hike. We had to give our verbal consent before starting on the path. Red flags should have gone up for me then, but I had been lulled into complacency by the ease of the first two attractions.

It turned out to be a 1.4-kilometer hike over a root filled path, with broken guide ropes along the way. There were at least 100 steps of a variety of heights, shapes, lengths, and angles. My knees were in agony! I'm not as young as I used to be you know. There were also 2 suspension bridges. They did seem to be in good shape, and there weren't any problems crossing them. As for the surprises—the first was a mapache (raccoon) enclosure. It was sleeping. Then there was the tiger enclosure—they were sleeping, I expect they were drugged.

There was a monkey on an island and a tortuga de orejas rojas (red eared turtle). The monkey wouldn't leave it's cage since the rest of the island was bare of trees, and it was hot. The turtle was sunning itself on a rock. And that was it for the surprises. It was dry, dusty and difficult to navigate. If there were other things to be admired, I didn't see them as I was too busy watching my feet so as not to break an ankle and have to be airlifted out of the park.

The only thing interesting on the hike was this plant life. I expect it's a mushroom of some sort because it was growing at the base of several trees. Kinda looks like corn, doesn't it?

Anyway, we dragged our sorry butts back to the beginning and gratefully sat down to wait for the slower members of the group. There was a snack bar conspicuously situated there, and of course, everybody wanted some refreshment. Chips were 22 pesos for a bag that costs less than half of that at a grocery store. I didn't even bother to price the fruit or soda. We made do with our one allotted 1.5-liter bottle of water per person.

Then we headed to Lago Ziwa and the Isla del Mono Araña (Spider Monkey Island). Four-person paddle boats were the main attraction, the route being around the Monkey Island. The lines were tremendous yet again. My knees hadn't recovered, so I passed on

this attraction. My son though managed to loop the island without incident.

There was also a smaller paddle boat attraction for the younger kids. Instead of a monkey island, there were two eagles tied to posts as the “bio” part of the ride.

After waiting an extraordinarily long time for everyone to circle the island, we headed to the Kamba tirolesa (zipline). There actually were two zip lines—one for bigs and one for littles. The big Kamba was more than 100 meters long, and I again passed on this experience. I sent my son as my representative, though.

He said that the dude running the zip lines had to verify twice that he was tall enough to go on the ride. As he was taller than the measuring stick, there shouldn't have been any doubt, but hey, he's in charge. There were no helmets or any other sort of safety equipment, including brakes. In order to stop, a guy at the end of the zip line was supposed to catch the rider and drag him or her to a stop. My son said that the brakeman had a horrified expression on his face as if just knew this one would get away.

By this time, it was early afternoon, and most everybody was getting tired and cranky. The group leaders bypassed the Teatro Muziki in favor of an earlier lunch. There were oodles of school groups milling around the eating area. We had the students sit down at some dirty plastic tables under a roof and went to get some food. We waited in line for 30 minutes only to be told that our order was at the other concession stand. The school had paid for our lunches. We had 3 choices, hamburger, chicken pattie or hot dog and an order of fries and soda. My son and I ordered the chicken patties—which were cold and had nothing on them but cheese. The vegetables were in a buffet area surrounded by dust and dirt kicked up by the milling school groups, so we passed on those and ate them plain. We each received 1/2 container of floppy fries and the smallest soda in the world. It was far from filling, far from healthy and even further from environmentally friendly.

My son and I finished in record time and opted to hit the bathroom line again and go to the Zoovenirs (souvenirs) store to wait for the slower eaters to finish. The Zoovenirs store was disappointing. The only things I could afford were cheap plastic stuff that I could get anyway. Mugs were \$115 pesos, stuffed animals were over \$100 pesos, crappy plastic dinosaurs were \$450 pesos. Well, you get the idea. No Zoovenirs for us then.

The next stop was the Serengeti. It was a motorized tour of an animal preserve with a petting zoo aspect. We boarded this huge DIESEL tour vehicle and sputtered and smoked our way to the first “free range” animal area. It was mostly goats with a water buffalo and emu thrown in. The emu pecked a little kid and probably traumatized him for life. The water buffalo came right up to the side of the vehicle and opened its mouth for the kids to pour the food in. There were some llamas, camels, buffalos, a variety of deer and antelope, ñandu, ducks, gnu, watusi, nutria, zebras, hippos, and baboons. The main attractions were the giraffes who were too regal to consent to be hand-fed by our group, the lions that had a 20-foot enclosure and looked to be drugged and the elephants. The elephant enclosure was horrible. It was a circular pit with absolutely NOTHING in it. Both elephants were as far away from the road as they could get and turned their back on our gawking. I expect they were former circus animals that had to be rehomed when it became illegal for animals to be used as circus attractions. What a bleak life these animals now had. And the trash and air pollution generated by this attraction—unbelievable!

Our last stop of the day was Antartica, which was a sliding ride. There were no lines, so most of the kids got two trips in. My son opted to not ride once the braking system became apparent. Some dude at the bottom of the hill would grab hold of the sled and pull it to a stop. If he missed, well, you would get a quick trip to Paraiso de Jirafas (Giraffe Paradise) which bordered the ride. No, thank you.

However, you can see that several of our teachers, after crossing themselves, took the risk.

There were a few animal exhibits on the way out, and we saw the rather interesting Capybara—the original R.O.U.S.—rodent of unusual size.

And that was that. We headed back to the fountain and mosied out to the bus for an even LONGER ride home.



Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2016/06/27/playing-tourist-bioparque-estrella/>) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capybara>) (<http://princessbride.wikia.com/wiki/R.O.U.S.>) (<https://youtu.be/Y5fRjlUEV5s>) (<https://youtu.be/diEEL9DLwL4>) (<http://bioparquemexico.mx/>)(<https://www.facebook.com/>

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13. San Felipe, Baja California



We just visited San Felipe in Baja California for the first time. San Felipe is found on the Sea of Cortez and is approximately 120 miles south of the US border. The drive from Ensenada took about three and one-half hours. It is beautiful as it has many rocky mountains with desolate valleys of sand. We even saw junipers and a lone pine tree plus snow in the higher elevations of some of the mountains.

BTW, there is snow to be found in Mexico and you can see it in one of the pictures below! The last time we saw juniper and pine trees was in Oregon so this was a special treat. It was also a surprise to see a castle in process in a little rancho in the middle of nowhere.

We stayed in a condo at El Dorado Ranch which is located north of San Felipe. Such an interesting place for us as you almost thought you were in the US. The condo area looked like Southern Cali as you can see.

The restaurants and stores close to this area had English speakers and many people didn't even attempt to speak Spanish, I just wasn't used to this. I make an effort to speak the language of where I'm at, be it spoken well or not. On young lady that worked at one of the restaurants said some have been coming to this area for 20 or 30 years and never try to speak the language. Please note, not everyone is like this but it was definitely more noticeable here than Ensenada or at least where we mainly hang out or visit.

One amazing thing was the swap meet in El Dorado with very nice looking produce and other vendors. We made a very good breakfast of egg, cheese and avocado sandwiches with fresh fruit. We bought gifts for all the grandchildren and they sure enjoyed the items.

The San Felipe is about 10 miles from El Dorado Ranch and is a quaint little town with a lovely beach. We walked up to the top of Guadalupe Shrine because you could see the full vista of San Felipe as you can see.

El General is off the beaten path of the Malecón where most tourists seem to hang out and was very good. We also found another place named La Cabaña Restaurant and also had good food.



Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab.(<http://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/san-felipe-a-charming-little-town-but-also-the-land-of-gringos/>)
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14. Guanajuato, Guanajuato



Some time ago, we had some business to complete in Guanajuato, Guanajuato. Our business was done early, and we had the whole day free. So we pulled over to this side-of-the-road tourist booth to get the grand tour. We followed the guy into town to a parking garage where we could leave the truck and hopped in a minivan with about 10 other people, all Mexicans (except for me) strangely enough.

Our first stop was the Museo Ex-Hacienda del Cochero built in the late 1600s. It seemed mild enough from the outside. However, we were in for a surprise. Our guide, dressed in monk robes, led us from a beautiful garden to the dungeon to see the devices the Spanish

Inquisition used to torture infidels, indigenous, political dissenters and anybody else that was in need of torture.

We saw iron maidens, chastity belts, guillotines, garrotes, hanging cages, the rack, and even a person's remains that had been walled up alive. Our guide explained that some of the mummified remains (I wasn't sure here if these were really mummified remains or just props) were identifiable as witches because of the red skirt and artifacts they were buried with. There was even a graveyard in the back. I guess they had to put the bodies somewhere. All this torturing supposedly went on without the neighbors knowing anything about it for years due to the thickness of the stone walls.

So we were a bit creeped out by that, but surely the next stop would be better.

Nope—we headed to the Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato. Yep, mummies. Lines and rows of naked, crumbling mummies. It seems between 1865 and 1958, the local government required relatives of interred patrons to pay a tax to provide maintenance for the tombs. Those who had no family members, or whose family members did not pay the tax were dug up. The gravediggers discovered that the bodies had been naturally mummified due to the unique soil composition of the area. They started charging a few pesos for entrance into the shed where the bodies were stored. Eventually, the present museum was constructed.

So basically, it was horrible. The clothes had been cut off most of the mummies to cut down on the stench—although most still had their shoes on. There was a horrible section of infant corpses and the mother and child buried together after dying in childbirth, and the woman whose final resting position gave rise to the speculation that she had been buried alive. And did I mention the rows of glass cases with the naked men and women left without a shred of dignity between them?

We hurried through that museum and waited outside with the tour van driver. Next stop, the San Ramon Boca Minas, silver mines where

the Spanish exploited the indigenous men, women, and children for private gain! By this time, we were out of money, so couldn't go on the tour, which was a disappointment as it seemed the only one worth taking.

The tour van also took us to a regional sweet shop and an artesian store, which would have been more exciting for us if we had any funds to purchase anything. After all, each museum was about 35 pesos, plus the tip for the tour guide and the bus guide and the parking garage where we left the truck. It added up. We did take a picture or two though as mementos.

The driving tour also took us past the giant statue of El Pipila. This statue was in honor of Juan Jose de los Reyes Martinez Amaro. He was a miner who became a revolutionary hero when he carried a giant stone on his back to protect him from musket fire and used a tarred torch to set fire to the door of the granary known as the Alhondiga de Granaditas. Once the door was destroyed, the rebels entered the storehouse and killed every single man, woman, and child who had taken refuge there. This occurred on September 28, 1810.

We were also driven past said building where the blood from the massacre could still be seen as late as 1906 on the pillars and main staircase. The morbid history of this building did not end there. The revolutionary leaders Miguel Hidalgo, Ignacio Allende, Juan Aldama, and Jose Mariano Jimenez, were executed by the Spanish firing squad on July 30, 1811, and their heads hung on the four corners of the Alhondiga de Granaditas for 10 years, the time it took for Mexico to finally win its independence from Spain. In 1867, the Alhondiga de Granaditas was converted into a prison by the reigning French emperor Maximilian. It remained a prison until it was converted into a museum in 1958.

Thus ended the tour. This wasn't the Guanajuato I remembered! I had visited the city as an exchange student some years ago and was charmed by the picturesque architecture and romantic stories like the Callejon del Beso. I even took the walking tour of the callejones

(alleys) carrying a jug of sangria and listening to mariachis. After all, Guanajuato is a UNESCO World Heritage Site! I guess it just proves the truth that for every beauty there is an equally ugly underside.



Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2015/09/25/playing-tourist-guanajuato-guanajuato/>) (<http://momiasycalacas.blogspot.mx/2011/07/guanajuato-hacienda-del-cochero.html>) (<http://www.guanajuato.gob.mx/callejon-del-beso.php>) (<http://www.worldheritagesite.org/sites/guanajuato.html>) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alh%C3%B3ndiga_de_Granaditas#cite_note-9) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_P%C3%ADpila) (<http://bocaminasanramon.com/museum/>) (<http://www.momiasdeguanajuato.gob.mx/english/index.html>)

15. Huandacareo, Michoacán



We live just a little too far for most people to head to the beach during the annual Semana Santa vacation period. However, we do live close enough to several lakes which have spawned a number of balnearios (pools literally public bathing areas) to console the would-be beach bum. By far, the most visited are in Huandacareo, Michoacán

Huandacareo is on the northwest side of Lake Cuitzeo. Its name translates roughly as “area of discourse” and was given it the area when Cazonci, a Purépecha leader, passed through the area after a victory and was honored by the locales with discourses full of praise.

There is an archaeological site that dates back to 1200 CE. called

La Nopalera. It was a ceremonial site where justice was served and criminals were punished. It was still in use at the time of the Spanish conquest. As you can see from the billboard, it's also used for Holy Week celebrations, in this case, a concert on Palm Sunday.

But of course, the balnearios are the town's main revenue-generating attraction. We've gone on several occasions. I don't ever take my camera in, so the best I could do was some pictures from the outside.

There are hotels you can stay at or you can bring or rent a tent and camp out. The market area has everything you could possibly need to go swimming from beach balls to swimming trunks.

You can get the most amazing gorditas here, not too spicy, not too bland.

I have to say that it is the most expensive and least fun to go during Semana Santa. Prices shoot up from 40 pesos admission to 100 pesos per person. There are so many people crammed in the pools that you are likely to get kicked in the face. And although you aren't allowed to enter inebriated, there's nothing in the rules that say you can't get drunk while you are in the pool. There are just too many people. But if you can go during the off-season, it is really a nice place to visit.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters.(<https://survivingmexico.com/2018/04/09/playing-tourist-huandacareo-michoacan/>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huandacareo,_Michoac%C3%A1n)(<http://michoacan.travel/en/places/archaeological-site-la-nopalera.html>)(<https://web.archive.org/web/20140227192704/http://www.e-local.gob.mx/work/templates/enciclo/EMM16michoacan/municipios/16036a.html>)

16. Ixtapa, Guerrero



Every couple of months, I'll see posterboard signs up announcing a group trip to one place or other. Ixtapa is one destination that comes up time and time again.

So why should you head to Ixtapa? Because there's a beach! Apparently, the landlocked Guanajuatenses (people from the state of Guanajuato) long for the salt sea air and head to this particular beach by the busload. It's the 9th most visited beach in Mexico, coming ahead Cozumel but behind nearby Acapulco. But Ixtapa is far more than just a pretty beach along the Pacific.

Ixtapa is part of the larger Zihuatanejo de Azueta in the state of Guerrero.

The name Ixtapa comes from the náhuatl term *Iztal, pa* which refers to salt or something white which of course is the perfect name for the salty coastline. It used to be a coconut plantation and mangrove estuary until it became THE place to be sometime in the 1970s. The town was designed by master architects Enrique and Agustín Landa Verdugo.

Mexican Telenovela *Marimar* was filmed here in 1994 and more recently parts of the 1987 film *Hot Pursuit*, which is a funny movie to be sure!

Besides your typical beach activities like laying in the sun and splashing about in the ocean waves, there are several other noteworthy tourist attractions.

Why not swim with the dolphins at Delfiniti? Or visit the Xihuacan Museum and Archaeological Site and see the Soledad de Marciel pyramid ruins? How about a round of golf at the Marina Ixtapa Nautica Golf Club? Or go snorkeling at Isla de Ixtapa? You could always play a little BlackJack at the WinClub Casino or bike the Ciclopista de Ixtapa.

Ah! Now wasn't that virtual vacation imagining yourself soaking up rays on the white beaches of Ixtapa refreshing? Next time those posterboards go up, I'm going to have to check into the packages offered. It would be nice to get away for a bit.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<http://survivingmexico.com/2019/01/17/virtual-vacation-ixtapa-guerrero>) (<http://www.guia-mexico.com/winclub-casino-ixtapa/>) (<http://www.visitixtapazihuatanejo.com/us/bicycle-path-in-ixtapa-zihuatanejo.php>) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isla_Ixtapa) (<http://www.marina-ixtapa.com/>) (<https://www.inah.gob.mx/red-de-museos/309-museo-de-sitio-de-la-zona-arqueologica-de-soledad-maciel-o-museo-de-sitio-xihuacan>)

(<https://www.delfiniti.com/>)([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marimar_\(Mexican_TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marimar_(Mexican_TV_series))) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_Pursuit_\(1987_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_Pursuit_(1987_film)))(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agust%C3%ADn_Landa_Verdugo) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ixtapa_Zihuatanejo)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zihuatanejo_de_Azueta)(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrero>)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Destinos_de_M%C3%A9xico_m%C3%A1s_visitados)

17. Zoológico Guadalajara, Jalisco



This year, the elementary school I work at, had its class trip to the Guadalajara Zoo. Never one to miss an adventure, I signed us up. Overall, it was a nice experience and one I would recommend for tourists visiting Mexico.

Despite the agonizingly long bus trip to and from Guadalajara, the class trip to the zoo went pretty well. The animals seemed well cared for. There were even babies in evidence, showing adequate food and living conditions.

The aquarium was small but nice. The penguin exhibit seemed a bit lacking in penguin stimulation opportunities. A snow slide or two would have been nice. Maybe a dancing penguin. Nope. Nothing like that happened here.

There were two shows available, birds and reptiles. Both were short and entertaining even though there was some snake kissing going on. The sky zoo was out of commission, but my son said that was just as well. They seemed a bit rusty and unreliable to him.

The “train” ride wasn’t really worth it. It went entirely too fast and the same route can be covered on foot. These animals were in smaller enclosures, not in an open area like the safari.

The Safari Masai Mara was much better than BioParque. Our guide almost seemed authentic with his brightly colored robes on and dashes of Swahili in his scripted presentation. The animals had both shade and adequate water. They didn’t seem listless and hungry.

The giraffes were mighty friendly. Also more ecologically sound was the fact that our guide gave us handfuls of food to feed the giraffes rather than a cup, reducing our ecological footprint (again, unlike BioParque).

The Rancho Veterinario was pretty lame. There were a handful of small animals behind glass, Shetland ponies, mini-donkeys, a Clydesdale, a cow, and a hairy pig. La Yacata has more variety. Although there was a short discussion about what it means to take care of animals, the animals were not interested in interacting with the students and the students seemed abnormally horrified at all the pooping going on. This part can be skipped completely.

The food was typical fast food, greasy and overpriced. You are allowed to bring your own food into the park, so that is what I would recommend. Souvenirs are 3 times what you can get at a regular store, but better quality than most. We bought a little Masai drum to add to the Jaguar whistle and Carved Skull from Teotihuacan.

One bit of the trip that made my heart soar was the fact that so many of the kids referenced something we had discussed in English

class when seeing the animals. In fourth grade, we just finished discussing extinct and endangered species. When we passed the mountain goat section, a fourth grader shouted out that the Pyrenean Ibex was extinct. In fifth grade, we are discussing forms of communication. We watched the video about Koko and gorilla sign language. That topic came up as we passed the gorilla enclosure. In third grade, we just finished discussing animal abilities with can and can't. Of course, the students already knew that the giraffe can clean its ears with its tongue and that penguins can't fly. Even my lackluster student in sixth pointed out that a certain bridge would be perfect for bungee jumping (extreme sports being our current theme). Validation as a teacher!

However, as I mentioned, that LOOOOONG trip there and back prevents it from being a repeated activity, at least for us.



Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2017/07/17/playing-tourist-guadalajara-zoo/>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadalajara_Zoo)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/rancho-veterinario>)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/tren-panoramico>)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/sky-zoo>)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/shows>)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/acuario>)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/antartida-el-reino-de-los-pinguinos>)(<http://www.zooguadalajara.com.mx/atracciones/safari-masai-mara>)

18. Centro Ecoturístico Siñaw Kumatay, Baja California



So my daughter and her boyfriend visited before Christmas which was so exciting for us. They wanted to visit some of the places with cultural information and history on the Kumiai of Baja California Norte. One of the places we visited was Centro Ecoturístico Siñaw Kumatay. This is a small community in Valle de Guadalupe which includes a museum, restaurant which serves a traditional meal for larger groups, an area used for gatherings and events, a little store selling handmade crafts, and a nice campground.

In front of the museum, they had historical replicas of the traditional hut where they lived, different plants with signs on what they were and the uses. Within the museum, we were not allowed to use cameras but learned the history and culture of the local indigenous.

The crafts available for sale ranged from handmade baskets to jewelry, dream catchers, dolls, soaps, herbs, local coffee from the crushed nuts which we ended up adding small amounts to our Chiapas coffee and much more. My daughter bought some jewelry and a few other items, I picked up some of the coffee, the earrings pictured above for my daughter and soap. I plan to go back to purchase some gifts for others plus maybe an item or two even for myself and to camp at the lovely campgrounds.

Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab. (<https://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/life/adventure-of-the-week-centro-ecoturistico-sinaw-kuatay/>)(<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Museum/Si%C3%B1aw-Kuatay-410140392475519/>).

19. Los Lirios, Coahuila



Apple Season in Los Lirios

Despite being surrounded by desert, Saltillo has officially been labeled a temperate zone (according to information at the Desert Museum). This temperate zone extends into the neighboring county of Arteaga, making it a perfect area for apple orchards. Have you noticed the huge crates of “Saltillo apples” at HEB? Yep, they’re from Arteaga. In this part of the country, it’s tough to get produce more locally grown than that!

For an afternoon excursion out of town, consider Los Lirios, smack in the middle of apple country. It’s about a half hour outside of

Saltillo. The drive itself makes the trip worthwhile, winding through the pine-covered mountains, skirting orchard-strewn valleys.

There's not much to the town of Los Lirios, but there are crates of apples for sale on every corner-honey, too. The streets are narrow and more people drive through the town on the weekends than those streets were meant to handle. So drive with patience. Or, better yet, park and walk around.

Restaurants seem pretty nonexistent in Los Lirios. But they certainly have plenty of corner stores, so a light picnic lunch is easily found. To be sure of a hearty meal, stop at one of the *cabrito* stands in the town of Arteaga first, before getting on the highway.

Enjoy the quiet, enjoy the views, enjoy the apples.

How does one find Los Lirios?

From Saltillo, take Fundadores out of town, towards Arteaga. Keep heading east, past Arteaga (unless you decide to stop for *cabrito*, of course). Head south on Highway 57, toward Mexico City. After maybe 5km, take the exit to Los Lirios (watch out for northbound traffic on 57 when exiting). Then meander through the valley for about 23 km. Los Lirios is about 5 streets big, but the road goes straight through town, so it's hard to miss.

If you continue on the road (turning left when the road dead ends in town), that will take you to the Cliffs of Insanity and (much farther along) to Cola de Caballo. Those are also great trips but deserve their own post.

Photo disclaimer: while orchards are easily seen from the road, the orchard owners are not likely to be happy about random tourists wandering through their orchards. We were invited to a friend's orchard last week, which is why I was able to take the orchard pictures.

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Saltillo

Expats. (<https://saltilloexpats.com/2014/09/10/apple-season-in-los-lirios/>)

20. San Luis Potosi, San Luis Potosi



Destination: San Luis Potosí

Move over Guanajuato—this woman has a NEW favorite Mexican city!

We had a three day weekend this weekend, and we have also been wanting to spend a weekend in San Luis Potosi for quite some time. This weekend was a perfect one to finally give that wish a whirl.

When we drive through on our way to Mexico City, we often stop in San Luis Potosi (SLP) to buy candy (that deserves its own post). So we weren't completely unfamiliar with the city. We knew that we wanted

to stay in the Centro and not use the car for at least an entire day. And so we did.

The Hotel Napoles, where we stayed is just a block from the Plaza del Carmen, on which sits the Templo del Carmen, a beautiful baroque church; the Viceroyalty Museum, not as exciting as I had anticipated; and the Teatro La Paz, an impressive-looking theater—at least from what we could see peeking in through the glass doors.

That square itself was great for walking, sitting, watching, and, for Clara, stair-climbing. However, we noticed that whenever we walked two or three blocks in any direction, another fountain-filled or tree-lined plaza was waiting to greet us. Over and over, Mario mentioned that he felt that he was more in Europe than in Mexico. We happily spent all of Sunday wandering through the streets, taking in SLP's seemingly limitless supply of colonial architecture.

Starting at the Jardin Colon, on what I believe is the south side of downtown is the Calzada Guadalupe. The Calzada Guadalupe is essentially a very long park with plenty of good pedestrian paths that stretches for blocks and blocks, finally ending at the Minor Basilica for Guadalupe. It passes an impressive military complex and a center for the arts that looks like a medieval castle but was built in 1884. Evening found us returning from our jaunt down the Calzada de Guadalupe, roaming an area that Mario likened to the Roma neighborhood in Mexico City. During this space of time, we had been dreaming big and decided that Mario will be looking for a job in SLP sometime in the nearer future. San Luis Potosi had us wrapped around its little finger.

But then it pulled out all the stops! (Come on, SLP . . . you had us at “hello”.)

Once we were clearly back downtown and near our hotel, we browsed windows, debating where to stop for dinner. Just pass the Palacio San Agustin (it's a hotel/museum . . . what a combination!) we peeked into the windows of a fancy-pants restaurant called 1913. No one was inside—it was Sunday evening, after all—but the decor caught

my fancy with carved chairs, thick stone walls, an antique wooden bar painted bright blue with gold accents. Mario casually asked what they served and once they said traditional Mexican, he was sold. So we tried it and were not at all disappointed. Except for the fact that I wasn't very hungry. I had been craving a Sopa Azteca all weekend and ordered a nopal salad to share with Clara. They offered Pipian (verde y rojo), which I would have ordered, had I been hungrier. Mario ordered pork with plum sauce. It smelled and tasted exactly like a Christmas dinner should taste. I was so disappointed that I wasn't hungrier.

Once we were finished and they brought us the bill, they apologized as they thought they were hurrying with the bill. After all, they explained, they close at 7 on Sundays. It was 8 o'clock as we were finishing and we walked in at 6:30. They had been so patiently hanging around for an hour after closing to serve us! Even before we heard that we had been thinking that their service was impeccable, the atmosphere delightful, and the food . . . I can't wait to go back. Despite the fancy-pants look, their prices were fairly reasonable. 50-80 pesos for appetizers, soups, and salads, and the entrees seemed to generally run at about 130 pesos. Sure, we won't make a habit of going there, but when we feel like a splurge in San Luis Potosi, we'll be splurging at 1913.

Leaving the restaurant, we meandered some more, in part to walk off dinner, and partly just because we were having a wonderful evening. Finding ourselves in the Plaza de Armas, Mario was drawn to the cathedral. I suggested that he go in and check it out, which I strolled around the Plaza with Clara (taking her in with her stroller would have been more of an ordeal than it would have been worth, as mass had just started . . . if we are going to play that whole "tourists-come-to-gawk-at-the-church-during-mass" game, we prefer to draw as little attention to ourselves as possible). As I was taking in the cathedral and the government palaces, their faces lit up in the night, a band began to play in the bandstand at the center of the Plaza.

Not just any band—a formal one, whose clarinets didn’t squeak and trumpets knew how to play in tune.

My cup ran over.

We stayed for a few songs of the concert, sauntered over to Plaza Fundadores nearby, where a light show was playing out on the Central Building of the University and the Loreto Chapel. I had read about this in the tourist information at the hotel, and thought it sounded goofy and a lot of light pollution. However, witnessing the show live, with music in the background, was yet another highlight of our weekend.

Well done, San Luis Potosí! I look forward to getting to know you even better.

Destination: San Luis Potosí—with the parents!

My parents were visiting for two weeks in March. One of the weekends they were here fell on a three-day weekend, so we decided to get out of town. Being in this area of the country, our long-weekend options are a little limited (Monterrey, Parras, Texas, San Luis Potosí . . . that’s about all the options on our safe list).

However, we’ve only been to San Luis Potosí once, and LOVED it, so it was high time to try it again.

Train Museum in SLP

The train museum in San Luis Potosí is located just across the street of the Alameda (on one of the long sides). It’s very hard to miss, given the enormous black locomotive in front of the building.

There’s not much to the museum itself. I can’t say I learned much about trains. They had a charming little display about circuses and circus trains.

But it was well worth our while for the trains on display behind the museum. Not only could we touch them, but we could also go IN

them. We could sit in the seats! My son was able to push buttons! And, let me tell you if you're toting a transportation-loving toddler all around a beautiful colonial city, San Luis Potosí's Train Museum is a must-see.

The adults in the group might not get much out of the experience. But it will be the highlight of any two-year-old's year!

The Real Reason Why SLP Rocks!

As mentioned earlier, normally all we ever do in San Luis Potosi is buy candy. For years, I think Mario thought that's all there was to SLP—Costanzo's candy store (and GM . . . he is Mario, after all).

And Costanzo's really is worth mentioning. They sport old fashioned wooden and glass counters with trays brimming over with an assortment of sweets. Behind the counters, tower stacks upon stacks of cardboard boxes of the freshest gummy candies imaginable. All Mario ever went in there for (before he took me) were their gummy candies—which are excellent. They're really more like jelly candy, and they've ruined me for anything that's traditionally gummy. However, their second counter is filled with chocolate. I can't say they sold any truffles, but they sport chocolates filled with almost anything imaginable. Mint filled chocolate, Kahlua-filled chocolate, gummy candy filled chocolate, lime cream-filled chocolate, fig-filled chocolate (we got some of those on a whim . . . however, now that they're all mixed up in the bag I can't figure out which ones those are). I could spend hours just staring at the candy, never making up my mind which to buy. Mario, fortunately, does not share my indecisiveness. We made out like bandits, and I'll be enjoying these fruits for quite awhile. Once they're gone—bring on the Christmas cookies!



Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Loving the Land of the Flour Tortilla. (<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2014/04/train-museum-in-slp.html>)(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2010/11/real-reason-why-slp-rocks.html>)(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2010/11/destination-san-luis-potosi.html>)(<http://meximamma.blogspot.com/2014/04/destination-san-luis-potosi-with-parents.html>)

2I. Mexico City, Mexico



Papalote Children's Museum

Since we have kids, and we frequent Mexico City, I've been itching for the day I could take my kids to Mexico City's Papalote Museo del Niño (Children's Museum). This year, with my older two being 6 and 4, I figured they were the perfect age to go.

Yes, they were the perfect ages. (Kids around 3rd grade and older probably won't enjoy this museum much. It's perfect for the preschool, early-elementary set.)

However, the museum was under construction. They only had 3 big rooms open, plus the IMAX theater, of course.

Downside #2—we went during Christmas vacation. Everybody and

their cousin wanted to go to the Children's Museum during Christmas vacation. (Heads up for those thinking of going over Spring Break—I bet you'll run into the same issues.)

Now, three big rooms full of children's museum activities don't sound too bad. Except that the museum was filled past capacity. We found a bit of breathing room in an area that was for kids 6 and under. Joey could have spent all day with a magnetic fishing game (and threw a fantastic fit when we insisted that other kids needed a turn).

They also had a little grocery store where kids could get a cart, fake money, and were told that they could check out 10 items. I didn't hear the directions, and Joey didn't follow them, so he filled that cart to the brim! Then we had to go back and put all but 10 items away before he could check out. It was interesting to note which items he hung onto the longest (milk and meat) and which were the first to go.

Around three o'clock, we were ready to give up. But guess what happened? Lots of other families gave up, too. We hung in there a bit longer. Clara was determined to get in on a kite-making workshop, and, after looking all afternoon, we finally found it by the IMAX.

Kites in hand, we were about to head for the exit a second time, but we wandered into the first exhibit room, which had been packed wall-to-wall with people when we entered. Now at four o'clock, that room had places to sit down and play, and material available to play with! So the kids spent at least an hour in this exhibit about construction, putting PVC pipes together for plumbing, landscaping a yard, and making a habitat out of blankets and rope.

In the end, we did have a good time. It was worthwhile.

But if we ever go again over a school holiday week, we will arrive at about 3 pm. The day we went, it was open until 8 pm, which would have been more than enough time.

Then again, once their renovation is complete, it might take all day to get through there.

So we'll try it again. Just later in the day. And we'll buy tickets online, so we won't have to stand in line for an hour.



Destination: Desierto de los Leones

The *Desierto de los Leones* is neither a desert nor are there lions. I believe the original inhabitants came up with the name just to keep other people away. However, my brother-in-law is a bit more knowledgeable on the subject and says that there used to be mountain lions in the mountains outside of Mexico City (on the road to Toluca) and, years ago, a *desierto* could be used to describe any kind of deserted place, whether a true desert or a cold, mountainous forest. But the name is a lot more poetic as the misnomer I thought it was.

Regardless, the week that I was in Mexico City, my sister-in-law suggested going to *El Desierto* instead of Chapultepec. Being closer

to their house, cheaper, and less crowded, I was game. And it is now one of my most favorite places in this entire country.

First of all, we went on a Wednesday, which meant that there were a grand total of 20 other people visiting that day. Plus, the sky threatened rain all day. I'm sure that helped keep people away, too. Had we visited on a weekend, the place would likely have been packed. I highly recommend rainy Wednesdays.

In general visitors to the park come to have picnics, rent shelters for birthday parties or family gatherings, and just to have a *dia de campo*. However, being my first time there, we went to the ex-convent. I love ex-convents. And this is now my favorite one (sorry, Tlaxcala—you'll have to be content being #2).

Most convents in Mexico closed or became government property during the reform movement in the 1850s-1860s. However, Very Knowledgeable Brother-in-law claims that this one was closed because the nuns from this order had to take a vow of silence to live there. One can live in silence for only so long before craziness sets in. So as the convent slowly became a lunatic asylum, someone in charge decided that the best thing to do was to abandon the property. Personally, I think a more sensible step would have been to allow the nuns to talk, but they didn't ask my advice.

Being a woodland paradise it would have been heaven to live in, overlooking the wicked cold the nuns would have had to endure in the winter, of course. Now it makes for a great place for *chilangos* to escape their concrete jungle. It's also impeccably well-maintained by both the government and Grupo Bimbo. There are trails to walk around in the woods, and a path to a river, which I'll explore the next chance I get. However, Clara and her cousins liked the playground equipment best of all, of course.

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Loving the Land of the Flour

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22. Monterrey, Nuevo Leon



Exploring Monterrey with Kids

In Mexico, all schools take a two-week vacation on Holy Week and the week following. Those with jobs—apart from the tourism industry—have a vacation on the Thursday and Friday before Easter. All over Mexico, everyone who can heads to the beach. Or the mountains, or the ranches—anywhere to get away.

Like everyone else, my family wanted a vacation. However, we hate fighting crowds. Where is the best place to go

when everyone flocks to the beach? The cities. Over the course of these few days, Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey suddenly become uncongested, smog-free, cultural wonderlands.

While planning our Monterrey getaway, we had to keep in mind four different vacation styles. My husband hates crowds. I love to wander, preferably around a museum. My six-year-old daughter hates wandering. In her ideal vacation, she would never leave the hotel's pool. My three-year-old is usually up for anything, but (even though he doesn't think so) he often needs a nap.

Given these realities, our choice of hotel was crucial. We chose the Holiday Inn at Parque Fundidora. It is within the gates of the park, which is an attraction in itself. So if the rest of my family wanted to be pool lizards, I could be free to wander. For a city that gets plenty of sun, Monterrey's hotels have shockingly few outdoor pools. According to the internet, this hotel's outdoor pool was the prettiest, and that sealed the deal for us.

Now, once there, what to do?

Parque Fundidora

Monterrey is fiercely proud of its industry, and this park showcases that industrial pride well. Parque Fundidora (Foundry Park, in English) is built on the site of a former steel foundry. Part of the original foundry has been converted into a museum. It's a sight when lit up at night. Take advantage of their nighttime tours!

This park comes alive when the sun goes down. Each of the three evenings we were there, we spent about an hour wandering the park. Watch out for bicyclists—just \$30 pesos rents a bike for an hour, and hundreds of people prefer to tour the park by bike. There are playgrounds for the kids spread throughout the park, bounce houses aplenty, a giant ferris wheel, and a small lake that rents paddle boats. As if Parque Fundidora didn't have enough attractions of its own, the entrance to Plaza Sesamo, a Sesame Street-themed amusement park, borders Parque Fundidora. Plaza Sesamo would have taken the better

part of a day itself, and was unfortunately not on our agenda this time around.

Paseo Santa Lucía

The Paseo Santa Lucía connects Monterrey's downtown with Fundidora Park, thanks to a blue canal, wide sidewalks, and grassy embankments. From one end to the other, it stretches for about 2km, with fountains and playgrounds interspersed. Closer to downtown, restaurants have tables right on the canal.

The best way to get downtown from Parque Fundidora (or vice versa) is to hop a ride on one of the boats that leave frequently from one end or the other. The ride each way takes about a half hour—so much easier than the hours it would take my kids' legs to walk the same distance! At Parque Fundidora, the boats dock just behind the Holiday Inn. At the Macroplaza, take a flight of stairs underneath the Northeast Mexican history museum, and you can't miss the dock—and the line that goes with it! Don't worry, it moves fairly quickly.

Macroplaza

The boat ride ends at the Macroplaza. All Mexican cities have one main plaza, typically spanning one square city block. Monterrey's Macroplaza is aptly named. While it is the standard one block wide, the Macroplaza is 5 blocks long. It boasts the Northeastern Mexican History Museum, the entrance to the Paseo Santa Lucía, the Government Palace (and connected museum), the City Theater, various courthouses, Monterrey's cathedral, and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

We took about an hour to walk from one end of the Macroplaza to the other. While my husband and I thought this was a great way to pass an afternoon, the kids were not so amused. A little more than halfway to the cathedral, we stopped for popsicles, sat in the grass under a tree, and watched the traffic. This maneuver bought us a bit

more patience on the kids' part, so we could enjoy the cathedral and the Museum of Contemporary Art, relatively whine-free.

Cathedral

On the far side of the Macroplaza from the Paseo Santa Lucía is Monterrey's cathedral. People from Monterrey have a tradition of visiting seven different churches during Holy Week. Despite our aversion to crowds, we joined the throngs pouring into the cathedral. The wooden latticework around the side doors give a nod to Monterrey's Lebanese population, and the murals around the altar manage to incorporate both Monterrey's industrial pride and biblical Holy Week scenes—it's odd, yet distinctive. To me, that mural seemed to sum up the city's essence.

MARCO

Right next to the cathedral is Monterrey's Museum of Contemporary Art (MARCO). With only three galleries, the MARCO was a great size for our kids to enjoy the museum without getting overwhelmed. With changing exhibits, there is something for everyone. The guys spent at least an hour in the Stanley Kubrick exhibit, while my daughter and I enjoyed Kati Horne's photography, checked out the permanent display upstairs, and, of course, the gift shop while waiting for the guys.

Dinner

Almost opposite the cathedral, we spied a small franchise of our favorite restaurant in Monterrey—the Sierra Madre Brewing Company. They brew an extensive selection of quality beer. Microbrews are far and few in between in Mexico. Now that we've found one, we frequent it as often as possible. Despite labeling themselves a pub, they are family-friendly and offer a children's menu.

Day Two

Hotel Pool

Day Two was dedicated entirely to swimming in the hotel's pool. This was essential to our trip, because

1) Mexicans believe that it is absolutely necessary to get wet at some point on the day before Easter.

2) after walking their legs off the day before, my kids would have gone on strike if we didn't spend a full day at the pool.

Once we had our fill of the pool (and the other children and their poorly-aimed squirt guns), we explored Parque Fundidora some more, in search of bounce houses and nachos.

Day Three

Planetario Alfa

The Alfa Planetarium is Monterrey's Children's Museum. They boast four floors of exhibits for all age levels, plus a prehispanic sculpture garden (unusual this far north), and an IMAX screen, playing two different movies a day. While the kids were initially excited about the idea of a children's museum, it took them a while to warm up to the activities. The second floor had a Tinker-Toy exhibit, and they did have fun playing with the Tinker-Toys, although the exhibit wasn't as hands-on as I would have hoped. Upstairs, they had a room dedicated to Clifford the Big Red Dog. I was afraid this would be too babyish for my six-year-old, but they jumped right in, and worked the store, drove a boat, fed Clifford enormous bones, and sat down a read a few books. They would have been content to spend all afternoon there.

My husband got a little overwhelmed with the Easter crowds, so we met up with him again in the prehispanic sculpture garden. The Planetarium does have a cafeteria, but we brought a picnic lunch and ate outside on the picnic tables (which get hot in the sun!). After lunch, we braved a few more rooms, but they were geared for older kids, so we breezed through those. After paying one last visit to Clifford, we headed home.

Did we exhaust our options? Not even close. We'll certainly be back, and on other visits, we may see:

- Bioparque Estrella—a safari-style zoo about an hour outside of Monterrey. They also offer camping, either in tents or cabins!
- KidZania—A kid-sized city. Children work various jobs, open a bank account, and spend the money they “earned” at those jobs. I’ve been told that it’s a lot of fun, but it’s on the pricy side, so be prepared!
- Grutas de García—a system of glittering caves just northwest of Monterrey.
- Cumbres National Park—full of hiking opportunities, plus some intense outdoor activities for families with older children.



Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Saltillo

Expats. (<https://saltilloexpats.com/2015/08/27/exploring-monterrey-with-kids/>)

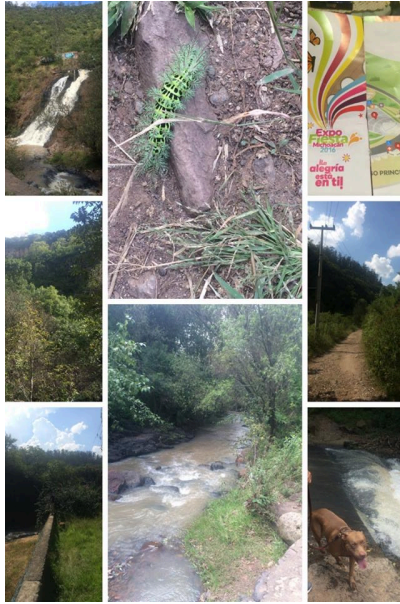
23. Morelia, Michoacan

10 Things to do in Morelia, Michoacan

1. Visit area neighborhood garden parks throughout Morelia!



2. Visit the Nature Sanctuary. Warning: Not for the faint of fitness! This one is a bit of a hike for some, so take your time to take in the view. “What? No, I am not winded. I am just taking in the delicate caterpillars close up!!! Aren’t they so cute?”



3. Enjoy the many puentes de las vistas buenas (beautiful viewing areas)



4. Take a combi or tour bus around town to visit areas like Santa Maria, Las Palomas, Altozano, the Military Zone (where you will see the active duty army along with their sleeping area), and more to enjoy the mountainsides, houses, and warm sunny air.



This is a camion or bus. The vehicle in front of the blue pick up truck is a combi. Also, it is common to see people riding motorbikes and mopeds throughout Morelia. Great way to see everything and gain easy parking spaces! Camiones – notice the windshield on the blue one! I recently watched a vlog with a couple who didn't understand the transit system. Don't let this be you! The combis have a numbering color-coded system. Each number and color is a particular route. The camiones or buses have destinations written on the windshields. So, this bus in the photo is going to the Liverpool Mall, Jesus Del Monte, and the UVAQ University in Altozano. Also, if you ask the drivers, many are helpful. If your Spanish is limited, just repeat your destination a couple of times, i.e. El Centro, or Altozano, or zona militar. The driver will reply with a number in there

somewhere. If his/her vehicle does not have this number, tell them gracias, and leave to find the right route.

5. Go to Liverpool and Altozano Malls for dining, drinking and shopping.



6. Are you an alitas fan? Alitas are chicken wings. Do you enjoy pizza? Have you ever thought to try French or Asian food? Well, there are restaurants throughout Morelia beyond the downtown where you can enjoy a bite of foreign foods such as these. Young Morelia LOVES foreign foods such as makis (cooked sushi rolls), alitas and pizza.



Chapultepec Sur restaurant and Cinopolis movie theater. Left at the light takes you to Sams, Burger King, and Pizza Hut. Right at the light, left, then right takes you to the nature sanctuary. This is a popular area restaurant. The wifi pastry and coffee cafe, bookstore, gym, and Mega grocery store are nearby. Then there are makis!!! There are a variety of flavors. You can ask for makis without cheese too.

7. Catch a movie with subtitles at Cinepolis. Available in both English and Spanish audio/subtitles. Check the movie listings.

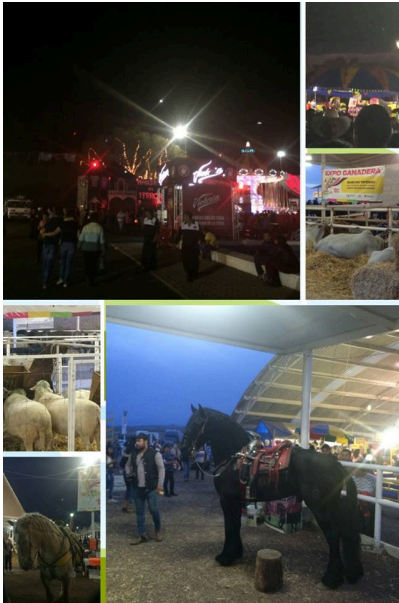


8. Enjoy one of the many festivals that Morelia has year round.

This was in December one year. What the devil? Go to the posadas, find the baby in the Reyes, make some tamales, and enjoy the street bonfires sipping on warm atole on a cool winter night!!



Fiesta Expo



9. Take your children or your child-like heart to the zoologico. The zoo has many outdoor exhibits that include the large cats.



10. Enjoy the colonial era style buildings alongside the indigenous homes right next door to modern style homes.



The corner home caught my eye in the early 2000s. It inspired an update to our living room and dining room decor. Yes, we painted the inside of our home red and yellow when we returned home from this visit to Morelia!! Another photo is, also, from the early 2000s. I fell in love with this 'home'. I was later told it was a nightclub. But, I still love the style with the large windows overall and the arched upper-level windows along with the dome. I feel that it captures the essence of Morelia architecture. You can see a building in downtown Morelia. You will find many historical buildings with step out balconies such as this. Additionally, the door designs are simply incredible and intricate. Plus, the stonework. The large beautiful antique lanterns add to the charm day and night. If nothing else gets done during your visit, at least take in these details.

Originally published by Patty Vanegas at

USMexpats. (<https://usmexpats.com/2018/12/23/10-things-to-do-in-morelia/>)

24. Christmas in Oaxaca



For most of us, Christmas is unbreakably tied to long-standing, comfort-creating traditions. Activities, foods, songs, people, decorations, even smells – we find comfort in these familiar symbols of childhood, family, fun, and belonging. Like no other time of the year, change is unwelcome. We cling to sentimental reminders of the times we felt the most loved.

When you move to another country – a really different country – traditions change and that can be hard. Over these past 3 years, I have tried to hold loose those things that no longer work here and to cling to what is truly the most important. I have been willing to exchange cold air for hot breezes, crispy snow for soft sand, hash brown casserole for chilaquiles, Christmas carols for tuba banda

music. This year we put up our tree and covered it with the family heirloom decorations we have been hanging since our children were babies. But everything else was different and it was fantastic!

In early Fall, our youngest daughter Brett suggested we travel somewhere different for Christmas this year. She was planning a 5-month trip through Mexico, and although she could easily fly to our home, she really wanted to show us a place she had grown to love. Her boyfriend would be there and our oldest would fly down from Canada. Oaxaca. Let's all meet in Oaxaca this year. Every part of our Christmas tradition would be different, but we would be together and that is the tradition that means the most.

So we rented a great Airbnb in Oaxaca and came together for a week to embrace Oaxacan Christmas traditions. It was amazing, and I want to share just a few things we experienced there.



Posadas (Parades)

I have never seen so many parades. Every night, the streets would explode with brass bands, dancers in traditional costumes, paper mache giants, and so many people. Some were religious pilgrimages heading to the giant churches in the plazas, others were celebrating Oaxacan foods like radishes and chocolate. Seriously, there is a parade for chocolate!

Noche de los Rabanos (Night of the Radishes)

Since 1897, every year on December 23rd, over 100 contestants gather in the plaza (Zocalo) to compete in a radish-carving contest. Many thousands of people gather to see the elaborate masterpieces – and when we found out the line to get close was 3-4 hours long, we decided to watch from a distance. The atmosphere was exciting – and of course, it started with a parade!



Navidad (Christmas)

In Mexico, Christmas Eve is a much bigger family celebration than Christmas Day. Again, we headed to the main plaza and watched 3 or 4 different parades go by. There were at least 7 different Santas greeting children near the massive Christmas tree and 4 or 5 Baby Jesus' going by in the parades. We ate tamales oozing with mole and drank giant glasses of steaming hot chocolate. It was chilly, and it was cute to watch the little Mexican children wearing wooly toques and long scarves.

Although they are more often associated with Easter, I purchased traditional *cascarones*, hollowed out eggs stuffed with confetti, and broke them on the heads of all my family members – and of course, I got one too. It is supposed to bring us good luck but I'm pretty sure I just gave Meigan a headache!

Although I had given up on the idea of a Turkey dinner, I was excited when my daughter texted on Christmas day to say she had seen a sign advertising turkey at one of the street chicken stalls. She would bring it home for dinner. Yay – turkey after all. But when it arrived, it looked more like the leg of a tough old dinosaur, and the sweet macaroni salad was not exactly mashed potatoes. But we were together, and we laughed at the sad Christmas feast!

Fireworks

Sparklers and fizzlers and cannons. So many fireworks and noisemakers. Everywhere. All day and all night. If you can't beat 'em you may as well join 'em. We are now officially part of the problem!



Food

Traditional Oaxacan food is outstanding – some say the best in all of Mexico. Over 200 kinds of mole (chile sauce), including my favorite, the thick slightly bitter black chocolate mole. Tlayudas – crispy blue corn tortillas slathered in lard and bean paste and other vegetable and meat toppings and grilled over hot coals. Tamales – pockets of chicken and tomatoes and peppers wrapped in corn dough, steamed in corn husks or banana leaves. Quesillo – the mild white string cheese that is pulled off the round balls as needed. Chapulines – grasshoppers that are eaten crispy like peanuts or are used in sauces or even in ice cream! I can't say I loved that – the taste was okay, but no one needs tiny grasshopper legs stuck in their teeth! Giant plates of meat – thin beef and pork marinated in orange chiles, and small round links of spicy chorizo. Big mugs of

hot chocolate made with either milk or water to drink, or the local favorite mezcal, a smoky version of tequila. All of it so affordable. We ate many times a day, at the local markets or small restaurants, with no guilt because of the low price and the thousands of steps we knew would wear it all off.

Family Time

Most importantly, we just spent time together. We played our traditional game of Upwords (I won...woop woop). We went exploring throughout the grand historical city, shopping for small artisan gifts for each other. Oaxaca is famous for its black pottery and for its colorfully painted Alebrijes, those imaginary animals that come alive in the movie *Coco*. Intricately embroidered blouses and handmade jewelry. We came home with a bit of it all.

We headed out of the city as well. Mont Albán is a cluster of archaeological ruins dated to 500 BC. We walked over 18,000 steps and climbed 78 stories as we explored these pyramid-like structures. Another day we headed into the mountains to visit Hierve el Agua, an area that contains stunning rock formations (petrified waterfalls) and mineral springs. We climbed to the base of the formation to see the stunning view up close, but of course what goes down.....

The thing with travel is that when we let go of what is familiar and embrace the experience of another person in another place, our own traditions become less rigid, more fluid. We can build new ones. We can see things we never knew existed and taste flavors that change our outlook. Turkey flooded with gravy gives way to turkey bathed in black mole. A slab of bread becomes a flat corn tortilla, my morning caffeine comes from chocolate instead of coffee. But like every other Christmas tradition, it comes with my husband at my side and my daughters nearby. We have grown, we have changed, we have risked.... But still, we say, from our family to yours, Merry Christmas and Feliz Navidad. Happy New Year. And most important of all, Happy Birthday Baby Jesus!

Sources:

Originally published by Karen Swanson at Karen Moves to Mexico. (<https://karenmovestomexico.com/2018/12/30/christmas-in-oaxaca/>)(<https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/mexico/articles/a-uniquely-oaxacan-festival-night-of-the-radishes/>)

25. Paracho de Verduzco, Michoacan



So round about the time my son was finishing his secondary education his guitar broke. Talk about disappointed. Of course, I pointed out that we did buy it second hand and it lasted nearly 2 years as he slowly mastered its use and care.

My parents sent a little money for his graduation and we earmarked it for a new guitar. Off we went in search of one. We went to every single pawn shop in our town twice. We even looked at the new ones at Fabricas de Francia after swearing I'd never set foot in there again. I contacted all the musically inclined people I knew in town and even some who weren't to ask about a guitar en venta (for sale). Nothing satisfactory appeared.

Since I had such luck searching online for my piano, I thought I'd give that route a go. Lo and behold, my search got a hit on Facebook and I contacted Guitarras Amezcua to set up an appointment to see guitars. I googled directions to Paracho de Verduzco, Michoacan and my next day off, we set off on our latest adventure.

Google maps gave me three routes and I chose the one that seemed the most interesting rather than the route that took us through Morelia. What a drive! We were enthralled with the scenic views, forested areas and little towns we drove through. It took us a bit longer than we anticipated, but the trip there was disaster free.

We drove past this HUGE guitar monument as we entered the town. Guitars hung from store windows and wooden shacks to the left and to the right. I said to my son that if we couldn't find a guitar in this town then we wouldn't find a guitar anywhere. After all, 40% of the local economy is based on the manufacturing of guitars and other stringed instruments. There are 15 guitar talleres (factories) which produce about 5,000 guitars every week.

The town itself is very small, with a population of 357 residents, and was undergoing street renovations while we were there which limited our explorations. In addition to guitars, every little shop was crammed full of all sorts of handcrafted wooden items.

We delightfully purchased the items in the picture above at a fraction of what they cost elsewhere.

We found the taller of Sr. Amezcua, but it was closed. As he said he might be in a meeting at his daughter's school and to call or send a message when we arrived, we did. He said he'd be there in five minutes, so we waited.

His shop was small, but the guitars were beautiful. In the glass cases, there were autographed photographs of famous cantantes (singers) from the 50s and 60s with their Amezcua guitar. My son asked for a studio guitar and Sr. Amezcua put one in his hands immediately.

As soon as he strummed the strings, he was smitten. I encouraged

him to try a few guitars to make sure that he wanted that one. So he tried out a flamenco guitar. He liked that one as well and it was less expensive, however, the rich tones of the studio guitar had stolen his heart.

My husband negotiated a bit and we walked out of the shop with the guitar and a soft guitar case for \$3,200 pesos. Later, my son had an appraisal done on the guitar and it would have easily cost \$15,000 pesos or more in a store. Needless to say, he's quite happy with his new guitar.

Those scenic views we so enjoyed on the trip there turned into nerve-wracking hairpin curves in the dark. We ran into a military checkpoint. The young officer asked where we were coming from and where we were going, then waved us on. Or at least my husband and I thought he waved us on. My son said that the officer actually told us to pull over to the side for a full inspection. Oops!

Then, we missed our turnoff and ended up driving through Morelia, but once we are in Morelia, we can find our way home pretty well. So, overall a good adventure!

Interested in learning more about the lovely little town of Paracho, I did some internet research and found that for 2 years now, the town has been trying to break the Guinness world record for most guitarists at one gathering. This year the gathering had nearly 3,000 participants.

It was no surprise that Paracho is the home of the Feria Nacional de la Guitarra (National Guitar Festival) which occurs at the beginning of August every year.

Overall, well worth the winding path through the mountains!

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters.(<https://survivingmexico.com/2017/10/30/playing-tourist-paracho-de-verduzco/>)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paracho_de_Verduzco)(<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/feria-nacional-guitarra-paracho-michoacan.html>)(<https://youtu.be/>

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26. Parras de la Fuente, Coahuila



When I'm itching to get out of town, Parras de la Fuente is my easy getaway of choice. Only two hours from Saltillo, it makes for a great day trip. Sometimes it's nice to stay for a whole weekend, too.

Parras is officially recognized as a Pueblo Magico by the federal government. This means that the town is charming, has some attractions, is graffiti-free, and often gets crowded on weekends and during Holy Week. Crowds do abound over Holy Week, particularly Easter weekend, but on average weekends it's a quiet, charming place to visit. However, if one plans to stay overnight, make reservations ahead of time, especially during the warmer months. There are only 4 hotels in town, and they can fill up quickly.

What is there to do in Parras?

- **Casa Madero**—the oldest winery in the Americas. Casa Madero is the main reason my family frequents Parras as often as we do. Often we go all the way to Parras with the sole purpose of bringing home a case of wine. While Casa Madero's *bodega* doesn't offer tastings, they do offer tours with very knowledgeable guides. They explain the wine-making process, from growing the grapes, juicing them, and the fermentation process. They also distill brandy on the property and include the distillery on the tour.

As wine tastings are not provided at Casa Madero, which wines should one buy there? (Given the expectation that everyone would want to take a bottle, or five, home with them, of course.) Honestly, I haven't had a bad wine from Casa Madero. My favorite is their merlot. The chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon are also very good.

- **Estanquillo de la Luz**—Parras boasts a number of reservoirs for public swimming. This is the only one I have tried. But I love it so much, I may never try another! The 9-foot deep, crystal-clear, chemical-free pool would make a beautiful setting for the Olympic games, with the church on the hill, Santo Madero, towering majestically over the reservoir.

Entrance to the reservoir is insanely affordable, a mere \$15 for adults. We like to live it up and rent a *palapa* for the day, so we have some shade, benches to sit on, a table to use, and a grill. That sets us back a whole \$50 for the day. They do charge for parking, but the lot is locked, and again, the price is negligible. They also charge for bathrooms, but that's also about \$3. Despite all the nickel-and-diming, it's a very affordable day away!

They rent innertubes and life jackets, and, for those who don't

bring food to grill, there is a little store stocked with chips, candy, and gorditas. Beer is permitted as long as it's not in glass bottles. For little kids who don't swim well, there is a playground area and a kiddie pool with slides. The kiddie pool can get very slippery, but even after some spectacular falls on the painted concrete, my kids still love it.

When I want to pretend that I'm at a resort, but not pay a resort price tag, this is the place to go!

- **La Casona**—my favorite restaurant in Parras. But, much like Estanquillo de la Luz, this is just about the only restaurant we've ever tried in Parras. It's such a winner, we feel no need to try anywhere else.

We go for their *carne asadas*. They do have tables inside, but it's much more enjoyable to sit outside in the patio, to listen to the sizzle of the grill and smell the smoke when the wind blows in the wrong direction. Just order a package that includes various cuts of beef, *frijoles charros*, and guacamole. They'll happily provide as many tortillas as necessary. My family has spent many delicious afternoons there.

More

While in Parras, stop at one of the many candy stores. Parras is known for their pecan-based and milk-based candies. I stock up on *canelones*, a milk candy that's covered in powdered cinnamon. My sister-in-law is always in search of *ate de membrillo*. Most candy stores also stock dessert liqueurs that are made in town or elsewhere in the region.

Most people also climb to the top of Santo Madero, the church that is on the top of the hill, which overlooks the whole town (it's hard to miss!). However, I tend to spend too much time letting the fish nibble on my toes at the reservoir, so I've never been to the top of Santo Madero. One of these days . . .

Some weekends, people set up stalls in the Plaza del Reloj and sell

handicrafts, candy, and hippie jewelry. The tourism secretary also runs a sight-seeing trolley, which I believe leaves from that plaza, too. The trolley is another one of those things that I'd like to do but still haven't done there.

Thank goodness Parras is so close! Because I will certainly get back there and have the chance to check out all I've failed to do yet.

Where is Parras?

Smack between Saltillo and Torreón. Take the highway going to Torreón, and get off at the Parras exit. Easy peasy.

Where is Casa Madero?

Once you've turned off the highway, you've got about 15 minutes to go to reach the town of Parras. Casa Madero is about halfway between the highway and Parras. As the road passes through some vineyards, you'll see white walls with a white gate just before the road curves left. That's Casa Madero.

Where is Estanquillo de la Luz?

Upon entering Parras, the road all but dead ends. The center of Parras is to the right. Keep on that road until just about the end of town. There should be some signs, but when it looks like you're just about out of town, turn left. The road should go pretty sharply uphill, and the Estanquillo de la Luz is at the top. (I'll get better directions the next time I go.)

Where is La Casona?

The main plaza is Plaza del Reloj. Walk to the backside of the church on this plaza, and you should see another plaza, one with a kiosk. Facing the kiosk with the church behind you (there will be another church on the left side of the plaza from this direction), turn right, walk down the street, and La Casona will be on the left. A hotel is across the street from La Casona. Sta. Isabel, I believe?

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Saltillo Expats. (<https://saltilloexpats.com/2016/01/20/parras-de-la-fuente/>)(<http://www.madero.com.mx/>)

27. Paricutin and Periban, Michoacan



One morning bright and early our family decided to go to Uruapan from Morelia. The crisp cool air among the avocado orchards was one of my favorite experiences in Mexico. We later visited Periban and Paricutin. Paricutin is a volcano located near Angahuan just about 155km from Morelia and 50km from the 'avocado capital' of Uruapan. Periban is located 82km West of Paricutin (unless you take the backroads). It is no wonder we left so early in the morning!

While enjoying our meal, we enjoyed a video that explains the

history of the area. A member of our extended family was shown in the original video history of Paricutin. This was a great experience for us as the family story was passed on to us.

We enjoyed dinner with the end of day sunshine!! It is likely what kept me up along with the excitement of visiting a bunch of places I didn't hear of before this trip. Enchiladas with carne, rice, beans, pico de gallo topped off with fresh limes and Uruapan avocado. Fresh made salsa to add more sabor (flavor)! Served with a cold beer.

The volcano is a day's horse ride back and forth from this restaurant and viewing point. The only way to reach there is on horseback. Fortunately, there are adorable cabins nearby to stay overnight. So, no worries about riding and driving.

There is a viewing point near the restaurant. In the distance, on the far right, you can see the town that was once devastated by the volcano. It is located just under the beautiful colors of the sunset. Of course, as you can see be careful where you step as these are steep drops.



Sources:

Originally published by Patty Vanegas at USMexpats. (<https://usmexpats.com/2018/12/30/a-peek-into-paricutin-and-periban/>)

28. Patzcuaro, Michoacan



Patzcuaro, Michoacan is yet another Pueblo Mágico. Its original name was Tzacapu-Hamúcutin-Pásquaro which roughly translates as Donde están las piedras (los dioses) a la entrada de donde se hace la negrura (where the stones of the gods are at the entrance to where they make the blackness) which sounds ominous. A better English translation would be ‘The entrance to the gates/entrance of Paradise’ or some such idea. The indigenous of the area held the belief that lakes were portals to the otherworld, so it comes as no surprise that there is a lake just outside of Patzcuaro proper.

The Purépechas founded the town sometime before 1300 mostly

as a religious center. The Spanish arrived in 1522, and the town remained a religious center with a very small population until about 1539 when the bishop Vasco de Quiroga dedicated himself to the repopulation and revitalization of the area. He was well received by the native people, even earning the nickname Tata Vasco.

In 1776, the indigenous of the area staged a revolution which was put down in 1777. In 1886, the railroad Morelia-Pátzcuaro was finished, and in 1899, Patzcuaro had its first electric lights.

Since then, it has been a popular tourist area, known for its pottery and basketry. It really is a beautiful little town, done up in the red and white style, with cobblestone streets. Our underlying reason for visiting Patzcuaro was my quest for a foot-pedaled sewing machine. Someone told me that these could be found there. So there we went. The road was clearly marked and we were able to take the libre (free) road the entire way.

There happened to be a tianguis (flea market) in the centro (downtown), but there wasn't much of interest for us. Most vendors were hawking new toys and boxes of cookies for Los Santos Reyes. We did enjoy some gorditas de nata and fresas con crema (strawberries with whip cream).

Around la plaza, we noticed that there were a number of American-styled coffee houses instead of the more typical taco stands. It really smelled heavenly but was pricey, so we opted not to buy any. In line with the town's tourist popularity, there were quite a number of gringos (white English speaking people) enjoying their cups of joe, playing chess or reading. The stores were chocked full of delightful artesania (arts and crafts) but at prices that were not accessible to the average Mexican or to us, for that matter.

Wandering around town, we came across the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de la Salud, built on a Purépecha/Tarasco pyramid platform. There was a sign by the fence warning against tying up your horses or leaning against it. I didn't see much in the way of horses for that to be a current problem. There, outside the Basílica, vendors were

selling prayer cards, rosaries, statues and peyote/marijuana cream for arthritis. Nuestra Señora de la Salud seems to be the same virgin found in La Soledad, so I expect pilgrimages are made here as well to petition her curative powers. Tata Vasco's remains are also housed within the Basilica.

We finally found the Singer Sewing store, and they had a foot-pedaled machine on display. However, the elderly owner would not sell it to me because she said it was a piece of crap, China made rather than hecho in Mexico (made in Mexico). My son pointed out that was just as well since if we did buy the machine, how would we get it in the VW bug we were driving and back home? Good point.

An excellent day trip!

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2016/02/01/playing-tourist-patzcuaro-michoacan/>) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bas%C3%ADlica_de_Nuestra_Se%C3%B1ora_de_la_Salud) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasco_de_Quiroga) (<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%A1tzcuaro>) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lago_de_P%C3%A1tzcuaro)

29. Puebla, Puebla



Food in Puebla

A few months ago, I was on an expat forum, and someone asked for ideas of things to do in Puebla. I had a long list of ideas. Then it dawned on me—this was not a list of things to DO, but a list of things to EAT.

Because really, who goes to Puebla to do things? That city is a gastronomical paradise. We go there to eat.

So, what should you eat in Puebla?

I'm so glad you asked! Here's my short list:

Tacos Arabes

My very first meal in Mexico was *tacos árabes*, at Güero's, right off the *zócalo* in Cholula. Even though *tacos al pastor* are the more "standard" Mexican tacos, *tacos árabes* will always be #1 in my heart!

Why?

Maybe it's because I'm a gringa and they come wrapped in pita bread. (So the "tortilla" is made out of wheat flour, instead of corn.) Let's face it—we gringas LOVE our wheat!

Or maybe it's the chipotle-heavy sauce that gets slathered on top. Unless you're a weenie (like me) and only drip it on top. But again, chipotles are the sweetest of all chiles, and we gringas LOVE sweet things!

Whatever it is, a trip to Puebla is not complete without an order of *tacos árabes*! There's an Antigua Taquería El Oriental or Tacos Tony all over the place, so they're not hard to find.

Calle Santa Clara

Speaking of sweet things, this is why Calle Santa Clara made it to the #2 spot.

Yes, it's a street, so clearly I couldn't eat the street. (But I'd love to try!)

This street is dedicated to candy stores. Colonial-era nuns in Puebla (Santa Clara was their ringleader) put Puebla at the top of the Mexican culinary map! Those ladies are most famous for *mole*.

But again, I'm a gringa. I love sweet things, so I thank God every time I go to Puebla for the inspiration given to these women and the sweet legacy they left behind!

Pasita

Across the street from the Plaza de los Sapos (an excellent antique market on the weekend), lies La Pasita. It's a humble bar, and rather non-descript from the outside. They've got some art deco signage that called my attention.

Fortunately, we were taken there by my husband's Poblano best friend. (He knew the best bits of his city!) Once inside, the bar, while very tight, is also a feast for the eyes. The bartender is ready to serve *pasita* day and night. He fills a shot glass with *pasita* (raisin liquor), places a few cubes of *panela* cheese on toothpicks (one right in the glass), and you're on your way to bliss.

Now, just because it's served in a shot glass, please don't shoot the *pasita*. Like all good things, it's meant to be enjoyed. So sip it slowly, and enjoy! (With a bit of cheese every now and again, of course!)

Where's La Pasita? 6 Sur #399, downtown (maybe 5 blocks BEHIND the cathedral)

Cemitas

For those who have spent much time at all in Mexico, you've probably encountered the *torta*. It's a hefty sandwich on crusty bread, spread with beans and avocados, and a number of fillings can round out a good *torta*.

The *cemita* is Puebla's take on the *torta*. *Cemita* bread is a bit rounder, crunchier, and puffier. The fillings are even more generous. I believe it's possible to fill them with a number of fillings, too, but why bother with anything besides *milanesa*? (That's thin pieces of breaded, fried chicken.)

But what really sets *cemitas* apart is the cheese. Oh, the cheese! Strings of Oaxaca cheese drip out of the *cemita*. (OK, they don't really

drip—they don't melt the cheese.) Perhaps the cheese cascades from the sandwich?

Whatever it does, it's amazing!

Mole

Mole poblano is the quintessential dish from Puebla. It's a dark sauce made of chocolate, chiles, and a bazillion other ingredients that is generously dished over a piece of turkey (usually chicken, but it really should be turkey) and sprinkled with sesame seeds.

Even a few people from Puebla have told me that it's a little too intense for them. (Not because it's spicy . . . it's just intense.) My husband insists that his aunt makes it for him once a year. This year, the Making of the Mole happened just before Thanksgiving, so we had plenty left over for Thanksgiving dinner, making for some very happy Thanksgiving bellies!

But *mole* is also special for me, the Hubs took me out for *mole* for our first date. So, if you're in Puebla and want to go to the Great Mole Date Place, head up to the Church of Beato Sebastian Aparacio, and take a left. In front of the City Express hotel, there's a stretch of a few places serving *comidatipica*—any of them are pretty good!(There are probably better places, but these are special to me!)

There's a picture of me, twenty years ago, thinking I was eating my last *mole* meal. Boy, was I wrong!

If you're heading to Puebla any time soon, don't worry about what you should go see. Schedule your time there around what you should

EAT.



Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Jill's Journeys. (<http://jillmichelledouglas.com/mexico/travel/puebla-food/>)

30. Puruándiro, Michoacan



Puruándiro de Calderón is a town worth mentioning. In the indigenous language purépecha, the area was called Purhuandirhu which means lugar donde hierve el agua (place of water where the water boils) referring to the hot springs found in the area. The area has an abundance of natural water. The streams Cofradía, Tablón, Jazmín, Laguna, Conono, Colorado, Cazahuate and el Angulo flow into the area. The watering holes Tablón, Cofradía and Agua Tibia are found there. And of course, both cold and hot springs round out the waterways of the area.

While the hot springs are worth a visit, it's advisable NOT to go

during Semana Santa. Not only are the crowds impossible, but there seemed to be armed guards at the entrance way to the hot springs this year. We drove past and right at the Michoacan/Guanajuato border the police set up a checkpoint looking for fuzzy sheep to fleece umm... I mean providing a safe and secure roadway for holiday goers.

With hot spring healing waters, it's no surprise that the patron saint of Puruándiro is El Señor de la Salud (Christ the Healer) whose feast day is celebrated May 25 with processions, sawdust and flower carpets, fireworks and a traditional dance (with a bit of Roman twist post-conquest) called La Danza del paloteo.

However, how He became the patron saint is not what you expect. In 1918, bandits tried to attack the town. The townsfolk pleaded that El Señor de la Salud save the town and offered up an enchorizado (a length of firecrackers) to get the good Lord's attention. The bandits thought the firecrackers were bullets and decided to not attack the town after all. Or so the story goes.

With so much water, crops and livestock are plentiful. Thus, one of Puruándiro's other primary draws is the buying, selling, feeding and inseminating of animals.

Other attractions include the motocross track, some neat conical buildings used for storing seed, a lienzo charro (rodeo), several hoochie-mama nightclubs and one nighth club.

As you can see, there's something for nearly everyone (well maybe not) here in Puruandiro!



Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2018/04/18/playing-tourist-puruandiro-michoacan/>) (<https://en.mexico.pueblosamerica.com/i/puruandiro/>) (<https://youtu.be/wZ3tIajkxiQ>) (<http://www.laexpresion.mx/noticia/nota,6110/titulo,HISTORIA+SOBRE+EL+SE%C3%91OR+DE+LA+SALUD./>) (<http://www.laexpresion.mx/noticia/nota,150/titulo,Danza+del+paloteo%2C+embajadores+de+cultura+y+tradicic%C3%B3n./>) (<https://youtu.be/gA-AgHQBLOG>) (<https://youtu.be/ZW7xmZfTxZ4>) (<https://youtu.be/11CC5ij9mqg>) (<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puru%C3%A1ndiro>) (<https://youtu.be/>

IPgoU4wUtP0) (<http://www.inafed.gob.mx/work/enciclopedia/EMM16michoacan/municipios/16071a.html>)

31. Wineries in Querétaro



Mexican cuisine is renowned throughout the world. Tequila and mezcal also claim quite a bit of the spotlight—and for good reason!

But Mexican wine?

Some people scoff at the thought. However, those people have clearly not tried quality Mexican wine. Fortunately, there are plenty to pick from. With Mexico's climate being ideal for wine regions, vineyards are popping up all over the country—many producing excellent wines.

Here, we're off to explore Querétaro, about two hours north of Mexico City.



Viñedos Azteca

The wine from Viñedos Azteca is hands-down my favorite from Querétaro. Recently, we opened up a bottle of Pretexto, which is just labeled as a “mixture of red wine”. Normally, I would just pass over that bottle. (Confession: I’m a little snobby and like to see Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot clearly labeled on the bottle. None of this generic “red wine” nonsense. I usually interpret that to mean “substandard”.) I was so wrong on this one! Thank goodness the Hubs bought it! That bottle in itself merits another visit to Querétaro.

Beyond this surprisingly good “red wine mix”, they do have straight-up varietals and a number of specific combinations. In general, the Azteca makes excellent wine. Viñedos Azteca also gives tours on the weekends. They also boast a stable full of horses and

host charrerías and other equestrian-related events. (People from Querétaro appear to be a wee bit obsessed with horses!)

If you happen to be visiting during the week, give them a call, arrange a meeting, and they'll be happy to show you around and sell you some wine! Plenty of space to sit back and enjoy your wine at Viñedos Azteca!

Viñedos Freixenet

Freixenet is a Spanish multinational business, with wineries all over the world. Because of so many locations, they specialize in each region. For example, in Querétaro, they have decided that central Mexico is ideal for sparkling wine. Therefore, Freixenet's Queretaro winery's production is 80% sparkling wine.

Sparkling wine just isn't my favorite. They do it well, though. If you're looking for red and white wines, they do grow, make, and sell them at Freixenet Querétaro. But they do excel in the sparkling wine. They play to their strengths and do it well. Another area where Freixenet really excels at in Querétaro is wine tourism. They offer a number of different tours, with very professional and knowledgeable tour guides. They offer tastings and wine pairings. They have concerts and five-course dinners. They are a well-oiled machine.

Sparkling wine ages in the bottle, not in barrels like still wine. So the cellars at Freixenet are filled with these crates of bottles, instead of the typical oak barrels. They also have a lovely patio for enjoying your purchases (or the free wine included with your tour!) If you haven't visited many wineries before, this should be your first stop.

Viñedos La Redonda

But just because Freixenet is crisp, clean, and professional does not

mean that the other wineries aren't worth a visit. On the contrary, the smaller, more laid-back, friendlier style by smaller vineyards is just a typically more Mexican attitude. That's the point—the wines here are Mexican, bottling up a distinctive bit of Mexican *terroir*.

All that said, La Redonda is the largest vineyard in Querétaro with more than 100 hectares. They are able to offer tours every day of the week. They have an intimate tasting room, but also offer tables outside, overlooking the vineyard. It's a great place to kick back, grab a hearty snack, and happily contemplate life. (Mercifully, they also have a decent playground for smaller children.)

Cheese

The Wine and Cheese trail wouldn't be complete without the cheese. While we love cheese, we haven't been very adventurous. We just go to the Hostal de los Quesos, and go a little hog wild, buying up fancy-pants cheeses that are normally difficult to find in Mexico. Gouda, guyére, asagio, provolone—they've got it. The fact that these cheeses are made in Mexico is a huge bonus.

Conclusion

A few days in Querétaro's wine country is a marvelous escape from daily life. Combine the vineyard tours with an overnight stay in the town of Bernal, and you're in for a memorable and relaxing getaway!



Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Jill's Journeys. (<http://jillmichelledouglas.com/mexico/travel/wineries-in-queretaro/>) (<https://jillmichelledouglas.com/bernal-my-favorite-pueblo-magico/>) (<https://www.facebook.com/ElHolstalDeLosQuesos/>) (<https://laredonda.com.mx/visitas/>) (<https://laredonda.com.mx/>) (<http://www.freixenetmexico.com.mx/vinedos-en-carruaje/>) (<http://www.freixenetmexico.com.mx/>) (<https://vinedosazteca.com/>) (<https://vinedosazteca.com/pretexto/>)

32. Real de Catorce, San Luis Potosí



Emily Lee Garcia and Jill Douglas collaborated for the South of the Border Bloggers' A-Z Challenge. Our mission? The letter R—for Real de Catorce!

Real de Catorce is a gem of a Pueblo Mágico, tucked away into the mountains of northern San Luis Potosí. It takes a while to get there—but it's well worth the visit!

About halfway between San Luis Potosí and Saltillo (just north of the Matehuala exit), the road to Real de Catorce winds through

mountains for a good hour. When you're convinced that your mummified body will be found 50 years from now by explorers even more foolhardy than yourself, the road stops at the Ogarrío Tunnel.

Just as one can't go to Hogwarts without leaving from Platform 9 3/4, one can't arrive in Real de Catorce without passing through the Ogarrío Tunnel. Real de Catorce was a mining town, and this mile-long tunnel was built in 1902. How long it took people to travel to Real de Catorce before 1902, I can't imagine.

For safety's sake, don't stop to gawk when passing through the tunnel. The tunnel is only wide enough (in most places) to admit one car at a time. Those supervising the entrance and exit of the tunnel count the cars, and radio their counterpart on the other end to let them know when it's clear to send more through. A few years ago, my in-laws stopped to investigate the tunnel, and were surprised by oncoming traffic! They had to back up halfway through the tunnel until they found space wide enough to let the traffic pass.

Once in Real de Catorce, what is there? An assortment of the usual tourist trinkets, *antojos*, and more than that usual number of hippies. It's a tiny colonial mining town that has found a way to survive even after the mine closed. Plenty of locals rent Willys (ancient Jeeps) or horses for those interested in a closer look at the desert, a ghost town, or places of interest in Huichol culture.



Emily's Explorations—on horse!

One of the activities you can't miss in Real de Catorce is horseback riding. You won't have to look far for a guide; walk to the town's main plaza and you'll be approached by more than a few for hire. After agreeing on a price (we paid around \$500 pesos for a 5-hour ride), my husband and I set off on our rented steeds, winding our way out of town on a path that, at times, made me uneasy. I reminded myself that people traveled the path every day on horseback and that my horse knew it like the back of his hand. Err, shoe. In less than an hour, we had made our way up the hill and reached the "Pueblo Fantasma," or ghost town. You'll see only remnants of what used to be a thriving mining area. We dismounted, drank some water, and stretched our legs while we explored the ruins for a few minutes.

Next, we trekked (okay, our horses trekked) down the mountain and back through town, and then set off in the opposite direction. This time our horses took us significantly further outside of town, the path winding through colorful desert terrain. We were officially the middle of nowhere, free from cars and buildings and all modern conveniences. At a certain point, the terrain was so steep and the trail too narrow that we dismounted our horses and our guide motioned for us to follow him on foot. The large hill at which he was pointing loomed in front of us; it was our next destination. Sore from sitting on a horse for the better part of the day and feeling winded from the high altitude, it took the last of my energy to reach the top of the hill.

What was waiting for us at the top? The circular shrine central to the religious life of the indigenous Huichol (or Wixáritari) people is situated there. Every year, Huichol people journey across multiple states to leave offerings at their shrine in the springtime. The shrine was beautiful, indeed, and I loved hearing our guide describe the yearly ritual that is central to the life of the Huichols. However, it was the view for miles and miles that made the hike up to the top of the hill worth it.

Quiet Getaway

My sister-in-law (from Mexico City) recently commented that she wondered where all these quaint “Mexican” towns were that appear in the Hollywood movies. Then she visited Parras and said, “Ah—there it is!” Real de Catorce is along those same lines, and that means that all the restaurants and hotels fall into the category of quaint and charming.

Nine years ago, I had a memorable meal of rabbit at the Real. (Seriously—nine years ago! Who remembers a meal nine years later? It was THAT good.) The Real is also where Emily stayed, and her experience there was positive. She vividly remembers a coffee shop (Café Azul) around the corner from the Real for their delicious mocha frappés.

So, if you find yourself in the middle-of-nowhere in northern Mexico, keep wandering. You might just find yourself in Real de Catorce.

It's well worth the wander!

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Jill's Journeys. (<http://jillmichelledouglas.com/real-de-catorce/>)

33. Saltillo, Coahuila



How to Spend 48 Hours in Saltillo, Mexico

According to legend, busloads of foreign tourists frequented Saltillo, Mexico, just three hours south of the Texas border. The proximity to Texas makes it an easy distance for those who want a quick taste of Mexico, but those three hours from the border give the city a more wholesome air than the infamous border towns.

Why does Saltillo now get overlooked? Maybe flights to the beaches are cheaper. Maybe Saltillo's industrial nature turns people

off. However, if you steer clear of the factories, Saltillo is charming. Whatever the reasons, it's a real shame this Mexican colonial city gets passed over. Being small and also very far north, it has that same self-reliance and cowboy pride that characterizes Texas. To get a feel for Saltillo in just a weekend trip, there are two must-sees: Downtown and the Desert Museum.

DAY 1: DOWNTOWN TOUR

Compadres

Start your tour at Compadres and order a parrillada. It's a heaping pile of beef typical to northern Mexico, with traditional red sausage thrown in (don't worry, it's not spicy). All this meaty goodness is served with handmade flour and corn tortillas. Guacamole is not included, so be sure to order it.

Plaza de Armas

To walk off that feast, turn left out of Compadres and head three blocks to the Plaza de Armas. Elsewhere in Mexico, the main plaza is called the *zócalo*. In northern Mexico, they prefer the term Plaza de Armas. Regardless of what it's called, every Mexican city's main plaza is bordered by a church on one side and a government building on another. Saltillo is no exception, and the state government building and the cathedral sandwich a fountain showcasing Victorian-era frolicking nymphs.

Saltillo's cathedral concentrated all its over-the-top baroque efforts on the outside of the building. On the inside, the decorations are much more subdued than churches further south, making it an authentically peaceful place.

Crossing the Plaza de Armas, the State Palace flaunts its imposing pink façade over the square. Don't be afraid of the armed guards at

the entrance. Walk through the metal detectors and enjoy a series of murals depicting key moments of Mexican history. Across the courtyard is a small, free museum highlighting Saltillo's role in Mexican history. And, if you drank too much lemonade at Compadres, they have free, clean bathrooms.

Serape Museum

Saltillo's claim to fame is the serape, that colorful blanket that used to be worn like a poncho and is engraved in most people's minds as the traditional Mexican costume. Although most Mexicans haven't worn a serape in over 100 years, Saltillo is still proud of its serape-making heritage. This small, but comprehensive museum showcases the history of the serape, the techniques to make one, complete with a collection of serapes from the colonial era to the present. In the afternoons, an octogenarian weaver works a loom by the entrance, demonstrating his skills. He's not chatty, but his work is mesmerizing.

To get to the Serape Museum from the Plaza de Armas, walk to the backside of the government palace, and turn left at the stoplight on Allende. It's half a block up the street, on the right side.

Juarez Market

Once you've had enough serape fun, head back down the Allende, toward the market. Past the stoplight, take a left at the lions on Guadalupe Victoria, and then a right at the newsstand on the pedestrian street, Padre Flores. Follow that street for two blocks, and you'll face the angel statue at Plaza Acuña. Just behind that is the market.

The bottom floor of the market has everything the tourism industry has to offer visitors to Saltillo. Need a horse saddle, cowboy hat, or whip? You're in luck. Tacky Saltillo souvenirs? Yep, they're here, too.

Head upstairs and find yourself in piñata paradise. Browse ceramics and clay dishes galore. However, most of the proprietors on the second floor are butchers. This is not for the faint of heart. Chances are good that you'll come face-to-face with a severed pig's head. Stomach lining is displayed for those preparing their weekend tripe soup. Don't say you haven't been warned.

Alameda

Leaving the market, take a right on Guadalupe Victoria. Walk for several blocks, passing more shoe stores than should be possible in a city this size, until you find yourself in a tree-covered park.

There are a number of things to see at the Alameda, but at the top of the list is to buy ice cream and eat it on a bench by the frog fountain. The benches and the fountain are colorfully tiled talavera, traditional Mexican tiles. Four copper frogs spit water into the shallow fountain. Students and families relax on the benches, whiling away the afternoon. Seems to me, they've stumbled onto something spectacular.

DAY TWO: THE DESERT MUSEUM

The Desert Museum does its best to pack the essence of the whole region under one roof. The first few rooms are rather scientific, defining what is a desert, as well as the flora and fauna that exists in the Chihuahuan Desert. This state is home to some great dinosaur digs, and they have paleontology labs on display, followed by a gallery of huge dinosaur skeletons.

The second section of the museum explores human history in the state of Coahuila—prehistory through the present age. At the end, they have a collection of reptiles, and outside, prairie dogs frolic, black bears roam (cubs rescued from forest fires), and big-horned sheep graze.

BONUS: EL PRINCIPAL

Before you leave northern Mexico, be sure to try the regional specialty of roasted goat. The restaurant chain, El Principal, has a number of branches throughout the city. They boast an upscale atmosphere, great service, and a passion for northern Mexican food.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Colonial San Miguel is right downtown, down the street from *Compadre's*, and within walking distance of the more interesting places to see in Saltillo, good restaurants and bars. They also have an outdoor swimming pool for when the weather is warm.

Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Pink Pangea. (<https://pinkpangea.com/2015/03/48-hours-in-salttillo-mexico/>)(<http://www.hotelcolonialsalttillo.com/>)(<http://www.mesonprincipal.com/>)(<https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/chihuahuan-desert>)(<https://pinkpangea.com/2017/10/surprise-culture-shock-in-mexico/>)(<http://loscompadres.mx/>)

34. Sierra Chincua, Michoacan



One Sunday morning during the long Christmas vacation, we up and decided that today was the day we would go see the mariposas (butterflies). We had high hopes of seeing active butterflies since the numbers were reportedly up this year (2015) as compared to previous years.

Why the low numbers?

Well...Illegal logging of the oyamel tree has caused over-wintering habitat loss. Pesticide use and the excessive planting of corn and soybean GMOs (genetically modified organisms) in the United States have threatened the milkweed plant, a prime source of food for the

migrating monarchs. Even global climate changes have impacted the life-cycle of the monarch. In 2002, a severe winter storm killed millions of monarchs. The total area occupied by monarchs in their overwintering habitats in Mexico dropped to an all-time low in 2012-2013.

I had heard that the hike was not an easy one, so in addition to the “better go and see the butterflies before there aren’t any to be seen” reason, I figured it would be better to make the hike while I was still youngest and able-ish-and not wait until I had trouble getting around. As you will see, that ended up being a pretty good idea.

Adult monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) found east of the Rocky Mountains migrate to the central, volcanic region of Mexico, specifically in the area bordering the states of Michoacan and Mexico. And that’s where we aimed to go to see them.

There are only two sanctuaries open to the public in Michoacan, El Rosario, and Sierra Chincua. We set out with El Rosario as our destination. Outside of Morelia, we got on the toll road, (133 pesos) but inadvertently headed in the wrong direction. After an anxious 10 minutes, we were able to get turned around.

The directions and maps I had printed out seemed pretty straight forward. However, Mexico road sign makers had other ideas. We were to take the Michoacan highway #765 outside of Maravatio. There was a big road once we exited the town, however not one of the road signs had a number on it for verification purposes. We ended up asking and asking “Which way to the butterflies?” Of course, everybody had a different answer to that, but we were able to head in the right general direction.

At the end of the road Michoacan highway #34, we came across an official-looking dude and a big sign that said THIS WAY TO THE BUTTERFLIES. We stopped to talk to the chaleco (vest) wearing man, and he gave us directions to El Rosario and a map. I’m sure the Michoacan state tourism board gives these maps out for free but well,

he had one, and we didn't so we donated 10 pesos para el refresco (for a soda).

We continued along, asking questions in the little towns we entered. Again, everybody had a different answer. One said to turn right at the high school. A right turn there took us to the parking lot. Then another said turn right at the Telecable—again, there was no right turn available. Up ahead, we saw a big old tour bus, like from the 70s. A tour bus must be heading towards the butterfly sanctuary, so we hitched our wagon to the bus and headed up the mountain.

It was an incredibly steep drive, but spectacular! Good old Myrtle (our Volkswagon bug) did her best, and soon we were driving through Angangueo, another one of Michoacan's Pueblo Magicos. The tour bus did take us to the butterfly sanctuary, but not to El Rosario. We ended up in Sierra Chincua. Well, butterflies were butterflies and since we were here, might as well go to this reserve.

We pulled in and paid for parking (30 pesos), then drove another 2 km or so to the lot. We headed to the ticket booth and bought tickets (45 pesos each). In line, I overheard some Mexicans trying to negotiate the price with the ticket seller. Was there a student discount? Was there a discount for the tercer edad (senior citizen)? Nope.

The price of the ticket included a guide. As we were a piddly group of 3, we were assigned Fernando, who looked to be about 10 years old. Well, that was all right. It took us longer than we had figured and we were ready for lunch, though. Fernando took us to the next to last Cocina Economica (Economy kitchen) where his sister worked. We invited Fernando to eat with us as well. We had blue corn tortillas quesadillas con champiñones (mushrooms) and atole de zarzamora (a blackberry flavored corn-based hot beverage). It was delicious!

We also were right under the Tirolesa (zip cable) and enjoyed the screams of several high-flying riders as we ate.

Then we were off. This particular reserve offers a horse ferry for part of the hike. We opted to not ride the sturdy fellows and walk.

Twice, before we arrived at the base of the hill, I was offered a ride up at a discounted price. Apparently, I looked like I might need it. But I declined. Well, it was a hike and a half. I'm sure about half way up, my face was tomato red. One of the horse leader guys, at least 20 years my senior, called out "Anima Jefa" (You can do it lady) as he passed at a high-speed sprint up the hill. Well, if there's one thing I am, that's determined (or pig-headed), and I made it up the hill. But for future reference, it isn't a hike for senior citizens or for children under the age of 6.

At the top, there was a scenic view, which was quite scenic, before the actual trail. Horses are not allowed on this section of the trail, so it's on foot or not at all. The trail was about 8 inches wide and was both the coming and going trail, which meant frequent stops to allow other hikers to pass. It was not nearly as steep as the first section, but it was muddy, especially the closer we got to the actual nesting site. Both my son and I slid partway down the mountain while gawking at the trees. Wear hiking boots.

Here's another future reference tip. The butterflies are most active between 9 and 10 am. After that, the temperature drops (it is definitely winter jacket weather) and the butterflies settle down for the day in a sort of suspended animation. It's still amazing! However, the butterfly's underwing is white, not orange and black, so it's not what you might be expecting. Several of the hikers were quite disappointed. Not me, by golly! The reserves in Michoacan are one of the 13 Natural Wonders of Mexico, and I got to see it.

We headed back—the hike in took about 30 minutes, then another 30 minutes to get back to the scenic overlook. The steep hill trail was much easier going down than up. We gave our tour guide Fernando 20 pesos as a tip and went to the souvenir shops. There were lovely hand knit sweaters, hats, mittens, and ponchos for sale. Quite handy if you happened to not have dressed appropriately. There were also some commercially produced monarch memorabilia. Unfortunately, every store had the same merchandise for sale, so that was

disappointing. The bathrooms had stone floors, and although you had to bring in your own bucket of water to flush with, they were nice and clean. Toilet paper is 3 pesos like most other public restrooms.

And that was that.

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Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2016/01/11/playing-tourist-monarch-butterfly-sanctuary/>) (<https://youtu.be/FE0kxtug7nM>) (<http://www.explorandomexico.com/about-mexico/11/9/>) (<http://visitmichoacan.com.mx/>) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch_Butterfly_Biosphere_Reserve) (<http://monarchjointventure.org/threats/overwintering-habitat-loss/>) (<http://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/02/10/butterfly-deaths-neonicotinoids>) (<http://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/7061/20150812/climate-change-leads-to-butterflies-extinction.htm>) (<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/12/world/storm-in-mexico-devastates-monarch-butterfly-colonies.html>) (<http://www.npr.org/2015/03/04/390757757/monarch-butterfly-population-rejuvenated-after-last-years-record-low>)

35. La Soledad, Guanajuato



During *Semana Santa* (Holy Week), most specifically Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and *Sábado de Gloria* (Holy Saturday), those in need of health-related favors make the pilgrimage to La Soledad, a little town outside Moroleón, Guanajuato and there deliver their petitions to the *Virgen de la Soledad, Madre de todos los enfermos*. (Virgin of Comfort, Mother of the Ill)

The *transitos* (traffic cops) stand on the major roads and slow traffic so that the hundreds of men, women, and children who make the pilgrimage from Moroleón and Uriangato and other communities can cross. From where I live, La Soledad is not terribly far. Through

the dry creek bed and past the *basurera* (dump) the distance is about 3 miles as the crow flies. So Saturday morning, I donned my big floppy hat and long sleeve shirt (not taking any chances on yet another severe sunburn), and we were off.

We were late getting started since we had to attend to the animals before we left and we met more returning from the pilgrimage than going in the same direction. But we arrived in good time, after maybe 2 hours of walking.

Enterprising vendors sell rosaries, holy prayer cards, candles and orange juice to the pilgrims arriving in La Soledad.

The shrine is not especially big, perhaps holding 20-30 people. Inside is a life-size statue of the Virgin Maria, dressed in mourning black and surrounded by flowers.

The prayer goes as follows:

Estás, Madre mía a la cabecera de todos los enfermos del mundo de todos los que, en este momento han perdido el conocimiento y van a morir, de los que han comenzado ahora su agonía, de los que han abandonado toda esperanza de curación, de los que gritan y lloran de dolor, de los que no pueden curarse por falta de dinero, de los que desearían andar mucho y tienen que estar inmóviles, de los que tendrían que acostarse, y la miseria les obliga a trabajar, de los que buscan vanamente en la cama una postura menos dolorosa, de los que pasan noches interminables sin poder dormir, de los que atormenta el pensamiento de una familia en la miseria, de los que tienen que renunciar a sus mas caros proyectos para el futuro, y sobre todo, de los que no creen en una vida mejor, de los que se revelan y maldicen a Dios, de los que ignoran que Cristo sufrió como ellos.

Loosely translated:

Mother of all those that are sick

You, my mother, foremost of those ill in the world that in this moment have lost consciousness and are about to die, those that have now begun their final agony, those that have abandoned hope of being cured, those that shout and cry out in pain, those that can

not be cured due to lack of money, those that desire to walk and must remain immobile, those that wish to lay down but misery obligates to work, those that search in vain for a less painful position in their beds, those that spend countless nights unable to sleep, those that are a torment in the thoughts of their families because of their misery, those that have given up their most precious projects for the future, and above all, those that do not believe in a better life, those that revile and curse God and those that ignore that Christ suffered as they do.

Well, we took a quick look, didn't stay the entire mass since we weren't there to make any petitions, had some *pan* (bread) and *horchata* (rice milk), rested a bit in the shade, then started back.

There is also a procession of silence at night when La Virgen is marched around town for all to see by these alarmingly hooded devotees. Some live music, lots of good food and even some fireworks round out of the evening nicely.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2013/04/12/carnival-lent-holy-week-and-pilgrimages/>)

36. Tecate, Baja California



Tecate is not just a little town on the border of the US and Baja California, Mexico but is also classified as a Pueblo Mágico. This is an initiative led by Mexico's Secretariat of Tourism, with the support from other federal agencies, to promote towns around the country that offer visitors a “magical” experience by reason of their natural beauty, cultural richness, traditions, folklore, historical relevance, cuisine, art crafts and/or great hospitality.

Tecate was officially formed April 2, 1888, but goes back to the time of the missions, when this site was registered as part of the San Diego Mission in the 18th century.

We really enjoy this town as it is small, friendly and very clean. Check out the park when you visit, which is the main plaza and many people enjoy just sitting, visiting or playing games.

Tecate has several museums to visit, including one with the history of the indigenous tribe of the Kumiai's.

Shall we talk about a fantastic bakery full of many flavors and smells? They have traditional to artisanal bread plus salads and pizza. Check them out here on Facebook or via this website. We always stop here after crossing back from the north.

There are several large events held herein Tecate, among which the fair "Tecate en Marcha", where people can enjoy outdoor concerts in August, sports and cultural events, games, exhibition and vendors of local products, food displays, balloon show and beauty pageant.

The anniversary of the city occurs in October and is celebrated with a large popular party in Benito Juárez Park, where you can enjoy exhibits of handicrafts, Mexican food, music groups, local artists and sporting events.

Tecate is also host to various competition events of mountain biking and cross-country motorcycling.

Traditional festivities include the Dance of Spring that the Kumiai celebrate in March and the Parade of Christmas Lights with cars decorated by companies, government, and students of the town, and the spectacular feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe every December.

For a small town there are lots of activities and places to visit, come enjoy!!



Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab. (<https://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/tecate-pueblo-magico/>)(<https://www.facebook.com/elmejorpanotecate/>)(<http://elmejorpanotecate.com/>)

37. Teotihuacan, Mexico



About 20 years ago, which seems a lifetime ago, I came to Mexico for a study abroad summer session. One of our day trips was the pyramids of Teotihuacan. It was an incredible experience that I now wanted to share with my son. So I did.

My son thought he'd be super cool and not try to nap before we left. It's really quite impossible to point out the flaws in logic to a teenager. I opted to wear my granny rebozo (shawl) instead of a jacket, reasoning that it would double as a blanket on the trip. It's really quite impossible to point out the flaws in logic to a middle-

aged adult. However, besides those obvious lapses in judgment, our trip was mostly disaster free for once.

We left at 1 am from the bus station in Moroleon for our trip to Central Norte de Mexico (North Central bus terminal in Mexico City). This was the most costly leg of the journey at \$497 pesos one-way per person. I noticed while we were checking in, that there were discounts up to 50% available for students and teachers during vacation periods. Unfortunately, neither my son or I have school identifications to take advantage of the reduced rates. I plan on remedying that situation before our next trip!



We arrived shortly before 7 am in Mexico City. We opted to splurge on cappuccinos (31 pesos per cup) to help wake us up. We also had to shell out 5 pesos each bathroom trip. However, it was totally worth it.

The bathrooms were clean, and toilet paper was unlimited even if it required a bit of hokey pokey to get through the full-body turnstile.

After freshening up, we set out to find the ticket counter for the pyramids. We ended up turning the wrong way in the terminal so it took us a bit longer than anticipated to get going, however, the blue pyramid was a big clue that HERE we could buy the tickets. We arrived 5 minutes before the next scheduled bus out to the site was due to depart. Tickets to and fro were 46 pesos each way per person, and the trip took about 45 minutes.

We had arrived before the compound was open for business, so we sat in what seemed to be the security guard break area and watched the hot air balloons pass by for about 20 minutes. My son said there was no way he was getting in a one of those, so we crossed that off the things to do list.

The admission price was \$65 pesos per person again with a discount for Mexican teachers and students which we couldn't take advantage of. We were literally the first people through the gate. We stopped to use the facilities again and delightfully found them to be quite clean. Two for two— score for the bathrooms! The souvenir shops at the entrance were not open yet, but some of the mobile vendors were already there.

The first man we came across was selling lovely silver bracelets. Of course, we really had no need of lovely silver bracelets, so we didn't buy any. However, he was amiable enough. He said we should follow a particular path and leave at a different gate to get the bus back to the central. He also stated that we should buy the items from the indigenous vendors as their items were hand-crafted rather than the cheap Chinese imports that the little stores sold. He said we should climb the Pyramid of the Sun and hold our left hand up to the sun in a fist at noon to absorb the blessing of the sun in the form of cosmic energy. We thanked him and went on.

Our first stop was the Temple of Quetzalcoatl. Although the structure itself appeared in ruins, there was a lot of activity going on.

Apparently, archeologists have recently discovered sacrificial victims buried around the site leading to previously unknown information about the unknown ancient culture that built these massive structures in Teotihuacan. Both the Temple and the human remains have been dated to sometime between 150 and 200 CE.

One of the even more recent discoveries is the tunnel beneath the structure, 15 meters below ground and 130 meters long, that ends in what appears to be funeral chambers beneath the pyramid, discovered in 2011. The tunnel and chambers are also dated to about 200 CE. In 2014, large quantities of mercury found in one of these chambers along with jade statues, jaguar remains, a box of carved shells and rubber balls.

There is some speculation that the Temple was actually a large calendar. At one time, the structure may have had up to 260 feathered serpent heads. Each head has an open mouth which may have held a moveable marker.

Centuries later, much of the original pyramid was covered by a stone platform. This renovation, which occurred sometime in the 4th century, drastically changed the appearance of the structure and is thought to be a result of changing ideologies, from spiritual to political domination.

My son and I climbed around on the structure for a bit. Access was limited with the idea of monument preservation in mind.

We headed back to the Avenue of the Dead and heard the strangest animal sound. Turns out it was a jaguar whistle. Oh, we just had to have one of those! Unfortunately, the vendor wanted 200 pesos for it, which seemed a bit high. So instead, my son bought a crystal pyramid from a different vendor. The asking price was 70 pesos, but the vendor said as it would be the first sale of the day, he'd lower the price to 50 pesos. *Trato hecho* (Done deal)!

Our next stop was the Pyramid of the Sun. Scaling its 246 feet was made easier than my ascent 20 years ago by the addition of cables, but it still was quite a feat! This pyramid is the third largest

in the world and the largest structure in Teotihuacan. Although the monument is currently associated with the sun, it's more probable that it was dedicated to Tlaloc, the water deity whose ancient name translates as “encierro del sol” (He that entraps the sun). The pyramid was built over sacred caverns which are only now being explored. Additionally, the remains of child sacrificial victims have been found at the corners of the building thought to have been made at the ritual dedication at the start of construction. In 2004, 12 human remains and several animal remains were found in a vault in the pyramid also thought to have been sacrificed.

We didn't have enough energy to climb the Pyramid of the Moon, which is the oldest of the three primary structures. In this courtyard, ceremonies in honor of the Great Goddess of Teotihuacan, also known as the Chalchiutlicue, companion to Tlaloc, were held. She was the goddess of fertility, childbirth, marriage, water, and crops. She personified both life and death as she was the destroyer of the fourth world, causing the devastating flood in retaliation to Tlaloc's abuse against her.

There was some excavating going on here too. However, I wasn't able to find any information on what may or may not have been discovered recently.

We bought one of those jaguar whistles here from an indigenous vendor in the courtyard in front of this pyramid. As it was his first sale of the day, he reduced the price to 100 pesos. It's the coolest thing, and my son frightened all his friends with the weird, wild sound.

Then, we took a wrong turn on our quest for the on-site museum and were in this series of never-ending up and down courtyards for awhile. Our legs were already jelly and that bright idea of staying up all night that my son had, finally caught up with him. He started to get a bit cranky.

We turned on what appeared to be a goat track and fortunately, found ourselves in front of the museum which turned out to be well worth the effort. Our entrance tickets were good for the museum,

so there was no additional cost, which was just dandy. There was a good selection of artifacts on display and a huge model of the entire Teotihuacan complex.

There was a little store beside the museum, so we did a bit of shopping. My son bought a hieroglyphics necklace, which broke almost immediately after we arrived home. However, the quartz and obsidian necklaces that he bought from the indigenous vendors more than made up for that poor buy.

We started getting hungry, so we set off with nourishment in mind. There seemed to be no restaurants anywhere. We followed the smell of frying onions to the back of a shop where there were a few tables set up behind the rows of chips and soda. They only had tortas de huevo which kinda resembled an egg McMuffin on a croissant, but we were starving so anything at that moment would have been fine. Two sandwiches, two teas, and a bag of chips nearly broke the bank at \$200 pesos. Well, we were starving.

Smack dab in front of the souvenir shop/restaurant were the remains of a residence. Of course, we had to tour it, even though Mr. Crankypants hadn't fully recovered, even with a full belly.

We wandered around a bit more and discovered a herb garden. There were only a few plants. However, each had a marker with its name and its traditional medicinal use. This is the type of stuff I love!

There was also a nice area of statuary.

Our next stop was to take a little siesta under a tree not far from the garden. I dozed for about 15 or 20 minutes or so, but my stubborn son did not close his eyes. When I woke up, the clouds were darkening, so we decided to head toward the exit.

We joined the swarm of people heading out, stopping just long enough to buy some ceramic skulls that the vendor offered for a two for one deal because of the impending rain. We made it to the bus stop right before the heavens opened up, only the bus was already full, so we had to wait about 15 minutes for another one.

We arrived back at the bus terminal hours before our scheduled

trip home. Taking the bull by the horns, I went and successfully changed our tickets at the ticket booth. I have to admit, I was pretty proud of myself and my Spanish skills on this trip. Yeah me!

We had just enough time to treat ourselves to Subway subs before the bus back to Moroleon left. My son had the intention of sightseeing via the bus window, but the moment he sat down, he was out for the count. He slept the entire trip back, which took twice as long as the journey to DF. I watched 4 movies on the bus tv screen, dozing a bit during the boring parts. It really seemed like a never-ending bus ride, but we did finally get back in one piece.



A little more history about Teotihuacan:

The name “Teotihuacan” was given to this area by the Aztecs when they discovered the ruins around 550 AD. It translates approximately as “the birthplace of the gods.” or “place of those who have the road

of the gods” reflecting the Aztec belief that the gods created the universe here.

The once thriving city was abandoned centuries before the Aztec arrived. Evidence of the burning and destruction of the temples and upper-class dwellings supports the theory that there was an internal uprising. This civil strife was probably the result of a period of drought related to global climate change after a catastrophic volcanic eruption and subsequent ash fallout.

These ancient ruins make the list of the 13 wonders of Mexico and are definitely worth a visit.

Source:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*.(<https://survivingmexico.com/2016/09/12/playing-tourist-teotihuacan/>)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trece_maravillas_de_M%C3%A9xico)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extreme_weather_events_of_535%E2%80%93536)(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teotihuacan>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_of_the_Moon)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pir%C3%A1mide_de_la_Luna)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Goddess_of_Teotihuacan)(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalchiuhtlicue>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_of_the_Sun)(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tlaloc>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_World_Monuments_Watch)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_the_Feathered_Serpent,_Teotihuacan)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pir%C3%A1mide_del_Sol)(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teotihuacan>)

38. Uriangato, Guanajuato



Uriangato, Guanajuato is Moreleon's neighboring town and also believes itself to be a city. They are so close they share the Calle de Ropa (Clothing street) and have been involved in recent land disputes over the Moreleon/Uriangato border. However, the culture between the two is centuries apart. Moreleon is on its way to becoming an unimaginative merchandising metropolis while Uriangato still has bonfire festivities.

The name Uriangato (which to me sounds suspiciously like something that translates as cat pee) actually comes from the original Purepecha name of the settlement which was *anapu-nani-hima-huriata-hari-jatzhicuni-anandini*. This translates roughly as *Lugar donde el sol se pone levantado* (the place where the sunset occurs on top) and refers to the fact that the western surrounding hills do not

allow the sun's rays to reach the town center from the early afternoon on, causing it to look like sunset most of the day. Apparently, the conquering Spanish could not pronounce the name and dubbed the area Uriangato.

Back in the year 940 or so, the area was inhabited by the Chichimecas and Otomies under the general jurisdiction of the Purepechas of Yuriria. At the time of the Spanish conquest in the 1500s, Uriangato was considered a border area dividing the Chichimeca and Purepecha domains. In 1529, the area and its inhabitants were gifted to Juan de Tovar. In 1549, Fray Diego de Chávez founded la Congregación de Nativos (The Congregation of Natives), with the supposed goal of bettering the lives of the indigenous left in the area. On February 20, 1604, King Felipe the Third decreed that the area would henceforth be known as the town of San Miguel Uriangato.

During the Mexican Independence War, Uriangato's only involvement was allowing Hidalgo and his troops to pass through on their way to Valladolid (Morelia) on November 14, 1810. There's a monument in the town center marking that they too were part of the "Ruta de la Independencia." (Road to Independence).

The animosity that still exists between Moroleon and Uriangato apparently began in the early 1830s. There were some issues with vendors from Uriangato who wished to set up stalls in the area that is now known as Moroleon and were prohibited by locals. Neither city has forgotten.

In 1918, Uriangato was attacked by bandits under the leadership of J. Inés Chávez García. The town rallied and drove the bad guys away. Venustiano Carranza himself sent his congratulations to the town officials. The Aniversario de la Heroica Defensa de Uriangato (anniversary of the Heroic Defense of Uriangato) is commemorated on June 24.

1918 was also the year that the Spanish Influenza hit Uriangato. During the months of October and November of that year, 25 to 30

bodies were buried daily with an estimated total death toll of 1500 residents.

The town tradition of the Globos de Cantoya (hot air balloons) began in 1928 as part of the festivities honoring San Miguel the Archangel during La Octava Noche. I have not gone to see this particular aspect of the San Miguel tradition, not being a big fan of balloons and all, but the sawdust artistry of the *tapetes* (carpets) is really amazing. This is a relatively new tradition begun in 2009. The other major aspect of these celebration days are the *candiles* (bonfires). Nearly every household has a burning ocote fire in front of their home lit to guide San Miguel through the town. It's an eerie experience. The Fiesta de San Miguel Arcángel runs from September 19 to October 6 culminating in a procession over the *tapetes* with the image of San Miguel the archangel to and from La Iglesia de San Miguel Arcángel.

Uriangato, the neighboring town that also believes itself to be a city, has an incredible community festival in September to honor their patron saint, Michael the Archangel. It begins on September 19 and is followed by 8 days of activities, finishing with an event called La Octava Noche on September 29.

From September 19 to September 28, each household lights a small bonfire with ocote wood (a type of pine native to Mexico) in front of their homes each night. These fires are called *candiles* literally translated as lightings as they are said to light the path of San Miguel Arcangel during this novena (9 prayer days).

I have to say that the first time I witnessed this event, I was startled. It's quite a sight, fire after fire, street after street. Of course, it's origin is prehispanic.

From what I understand, this local tradition was associated with the god Curicaueri, whose name in Purepecha means great fire, and who was credited with the foundation of the state of Michoacan. (Uriangato is a mere hop, skip and jump from the present-day border of Michoacan.) Curicaueri was considered the oldest of the gods and

was honored by the lighting of bonfires with ocote wood. Some of this long ago origin remains in the form of indigenous dancers that perform during the events.

There are peregrinaciones (pilgrimages) over several days usually in the form of parades made up of local civic groups. The parade route takes the pilgrims to the Parroquia de San Miguel Arcángel, the main Catholic church in Uriangato.

The other major event associated with this festival is the creation of tapetes, floor mats. These are labourously created with colored sawdust, seeds, and flowers along the roads in Uriangato. They usually take the form of a variety of Catholic images and are tread upon by the passage of the image of Michael the Archangel on October 6, known as La Octava Noche (the 8th prayer day in the novena). The tapete tradition is said to have begun in 1966 and each year becomes more and more elaborate.

The custom to take out the image of San Miguel and walk through the town at night began after the Spanish conquest. It seems that only the Independence War and the Cristero War kept the procession from well, proceeding. It starts and ends, naturally enough, at La Parroquia de San Miguel Arcángel and covers an area about 5 km long.

The image is carried by different groups of volunteers with rest and prayer stations found along the route. This year, the image has been covered in protective glass, which better protects the 50 ornate vestments from the elements.

Here are some of the outfits.

It really is a unique festival and should you happen this way during the holy celebration, it is definitely worth checking out.

The first rebozo (shawl) textile factories in Uriangato were opened in the 1960s leading to the eventual creation of 4 km of street vendor stalls that continues on into Moroleon. I find the whole shopping experience overwhelming. I mean really, 4 kilometers of clothing?

However, this is a big draw for people from other areas who buy quantities of clothing and then resell it in their own stores.

During the Christmas season, which is observed from December 16 to December 30, Los Enanitos Toreros (midget bullfighters) never fail to make an appearance. Not something you are likely to see in Moroleon.

So if you like shopping, pageantry and midget bullfighters, you won't want to miss stopping by Uriangato.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/2018/04/24/playing-tourist-uriangato-guanajuato/>) (<https://youtu.be/B8V2TriVVbY>) (<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uriangato>)(<https://youtu.be/x7UFC9xZeMg>) (<https://youtu.be/4lIHhYHnVGk>) (<https://youtu.be/VkQPtWjYleQ>)(<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curicaueri>) (<https://youtu.be/BGBVWxdcZrw>) (<https://youtu.be/ruBKA6xr3hU>) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candiles_Uriangato) (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapetes_Uriangato)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Octava_en_Uriangato)([https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iglesia_de_San_Miguel_Arc%C3%A1ngel_\(Uriangato\)](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iglesia_de_San_Miguel_Arc%C3%A1ngel_(Uriangato)))(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Miguel_Uriangato) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uriangato>)

39. Valle de Santiago, Guanajuato



The other week we headed to the town on the other side of the Lake Yuriria, Valle de Santiago. The town, known locally as Valle, doesn't have any of the magic that Yuriria or Cuitzeo have, but what it does have is an awesome tianguis (flea market) on Sunday. We were able to buy two pairs of Levi's jeans for my son, a pair of Dockers Corduroy Pants and Caterpillar Work Boots for my husband and a Spider Plant for me, all at totally reasonable prices. AND since we had to go through Yuriria to get to Valle de Santiago, we stopped for a fabulous

lunch in el mercado (market). Since the weather had turned chilly, I had an excuse to purchase my first ever rebozo (shawl). Wearing a rebozo is like wearing a blanket—and totally acceptable in public. My husband and son called me granny the rest of the day, but I was a warm granny!

So a little history here...

Valle de Santiago and the surrounding area was first settled about 2,000 years ago by the Purepechas and most likely conquered or otherwise absorbed by the Tarascos. Back then it was called Kamenbarhu (or Camembaro) which translates as roughly “lugar del estafiate” which then translates as “place of the estafiate plant.” Estafiate is also known as Western Mugwort, Western Wormwood, Louisiana Sagewort, Prairie Sagewort, Mountain Sage, Simonillo, and Itzauhyatl in Nahuatl and is used for digestive issues, as an analgesic, a decongestant, a sedative, a diuretic, an expectorant and an antioxidant, among other uses.

Kamenbarhu (or Camembaro) was renamed Valle de Santiago (Saint James' Valley) and officially “founded” in 1607 by a bunch of Spaniards. In 1997, the state of Guanajuato declared the area a natural preserve.

While the town of Valle de Santiago isn't much to brag about—the drive there and back is spectacular. We already knew that Lake Yuriria is formed from an extinct volcano crater, so it was not much of a stretch of the imagination to see that the surrounding landscape also had a volcanic look to it. When we got home, I did some internet research—because asking the locals never gets us anywhere—and lo and behold, the area all around Valle de Santiago is known as the Siete Luminarias (7 lights) which refer to 7 distinct craters, although there are more than 30 craters formed by now extinct volcanoes in the immediate area.

Astroarchaeology (the study of how people have understood the phenomena in the sky and the role that understanding played in their culture) suggests that the Siete Luminarias align with the constellation La Osa Mayor (the Big Dipper) every 1040 or 40,000

years (there seemed to be a bit of a discrepancy on when that event actually happens) hence the name Siete Luminarias. It does appear to make the rough outline of the Big Dipper if you look at the map below.

The 7 craters are named as follows:

- La Alberca, formerly known as Tallacua
- Hoya del Rincon de Parangueo, formerly known as Liricua
- Hoya de Flores, formerly known as Membereca
- Hoya de Cintora, formerly known as Andaracua
- Hoya de San Nicolas
- Hoya de Alvarez

Several of these craters have been the site of strange phenomena. The lake in the Hoya de San Nicolas turns red, much like Lake Yuririra does, and probably for the same reason.

La Alberca is reportedly home to Chac (or Chan), the Loch Ness monster's cousin. This creature is said to live in the underground tunnels that connect the craters. It supposedly resembles a sauropod dinosaur. The only picture of the creature was taken in 1956 from a plane, and it seems far from conclusive to me. But maybe you want to believe????

There have even been various reports of extraterrestrial contact and UFO sightings in the area of the Hoya de Flores. A local resident riding his donkey saw strange lights in 1987. Crop circles were later discovered in the area (although I haven't been able to find any pictures of them online.) Some UFO-ologists reported contact with a glowing silvery-blue man there. The most famous contact was with a local farmer, Jose Carmen Garcia Martinez, who grew enormous vegetables in La Hoya de Flores in the 1970s. He claimed that his astronomical success in creating his astronomical sized vegetables was based on agricultural methods he received from astral messages.

Well, I wouldn't have expected aliens and monsters from our

pleasant day in Valle...but then I have learned that Mexico is often not what it appears to be.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters.(<https://survivingmexico.com/2015/10/30/playing-tourist-valle-de-santiago/>) (<http://beforeitsnews.com/paranormal/2014/02/more-humanoids-among-us-chance-encounters-part-ii-2463854.html>) (<http://www.unionguajuato.mx/articulo/2013/05/10/gente/misterios-extraterrestres-en-valle-de-santiago>) (<http://www.tamera.org/fs/don-jose-carmen/>) (<http://forgetomori.com/2008/skepticism/giant-space-vegetables/>) (<http://conspiracionesynoticiasactuales.blogspot.mx/2014/02/en-busca-del-misterio-las-siete.html>) (<http://www.criptozoologia.net/El-Valle-de-las-siete-luminarias-en-Mexico.-El-misterio-de-los-vegetales-gigantes/164>) (<http://thecid.com/ufo/uf19/uf6/196811.htm>) (<http://marcianitosverdes.haaan.com/2008/07/el-monstruo-del-loch-ness-los-primos-de-nessie-23/>) (<http://frontiersofzoology.blogspot.mx/2013/06/central-and-south-american-sauropods-on.html>) (<http://esteladecometa.blogspot.mx/2011/05/el-pais-de-las-siete-maravilla-segunda.html>) (<http://www.univision.com/noticias/noticias-de-mexico/misteriosas-legumbrs-gigantes>) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeoastronomy>) (<http://www.viveguajuato.com/destinos-guanajuato/guanajuato-capital/eventos-en-guanajuato/item/28-valle-de-las-7-luminarias.html>) (<http://www.discossolares.com.ar/sieteluminarias/>)(https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valle_de_Santiago) (<http://mexico-net.mx/blog/2012/06/22/las-siete-luminarias-de-valle-de-santiago/>) (<http://mexicocarrental.com.mx/blog/las-siete-luminarias-de-valle-de-santiago-guanajuato/>) (http://eldecidor.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8700:2014-12-01-03-54-19&catid=41:reportajes&Itemid=61) (<http://www.naturalhealingnews.com/the-healing-powers-of->

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40. Veracruz, Veracruz



The port of Veracruz (otherwise known as Veracruz, Veracruz) is one of my favorite cities in Mexico. When I lived in Puebla, we drove the five hours to Veracruz about once a month, leaving after Mario got off of work and arriving about midnight. We'd first stop at El Gran Café La Parroquia and have a café con leche under the stars while watching the cargo ships in the port.

Taking the kids this time, the malecón (boardwalk) is still the best place to enjoy Veracruz. The main reasons for this: nieves and café con leche at the Parroquia are both very near the malecón.

El Gran Café La Parroquia

Café con leche at El Gran Café La Parroquia is a bit on an institution in Veracruz. One waiter brings a tall glass, filled with just a shot of espresso. Then they ring for the milkman, who comes to the table

armed with a kettle of steaming milk. He then tops off the glass. Mexicans generally prefer their coffee insanely sweet. So don't be shy—go ahead and add those three generous spoonfuls of sugar, and enjoy the Parroquia's café con leche as it was meant to be enjoyed.

Nieves

Nieves (sherbets) are Veracruz's other taste sensation. Decent sherbet is easy to find throughout the country, but the *jarochos* take their sherbet to a whole other level. They have flavors that aren't found readily elsewhere. The *nieve* stands are happy to combine flavors in one cup, and that really is the way to go. Try a coconut and passionfruit combination, mamey and strawberry, or vanilla and lime. Trust me, vanilla sherbet is not at all related to that ho-hum vanilla ice cream! My mother fondly remembers a peanut sherbet that she had in Veracruz 15 years ago—these sherbets are that memorable!

The road leading to the malecón from the Zocalo is dotted with *nieve* stores. Most have employees out on the sidewalk, trying to attract customers, belting out, “¡Güero, güera—nieve, nieve, NIEVE!” At first, that's a little overwhelming, but it's another of those decidedly *jarochos* touches. May they never change.

Beach

Being on the Gulf coast, stopping at the beach was a must. There are decent beaches north of the city, others within walking distance of the malecón, and others by large hotels on the south end of the city.

Being blessed with a nearly endless supply of gorgeous beaches, most Mexicans consider the beaches near Veracruz to be substandard. However, I've reaffirmed my opinion that Veracruz's beaches are still my favorites. The sand might not be as pristine as the Yucatán, the waves are certainly calmer than on the Pacific (that's

a bonus in my book), and in Veracruz, there are always cargo ships dotting the horizon.

But that is precisely what I like about Veracruz. Beachgoers don't have to drive very far (if at all) from a busy, thriving city. That, and the fact that crabs pop their heads out of the sand and scurry off sideways, fleeing curious children. As ubiquitous as picture books make them, real, live crabs are hard to find on beaches today!

History

Veracruz is one of the oldest cities in Mexico. In fact, they're gearing up to celebrate their 500th anniversary in 2019—already selling commemorative T-shirts on the *malecón*! But throughout history, Veracruz has been a great foothold for invaders coming into the country. The Spanish established the port here, as they began their march to Mexico City, on their way to destroy the Aztec empire. The French used the same port when they invaded in 1862, as the did the US when they invaded Mexico in 1914. Pirates were also attracted to Veracruz. So early on in Veracruz's history, the fort of San Juan de Ulúa was built. It no longer serves as a fort (or a prison), but is now a museum, giving visitors a glimpse into Veracruz's history.

Veracruz is a great place to visit, offering a little something for everyone—a modern city with a well-preserved colonial past, surrounded by accessible beaches and filled with delicious restaurants and sights for visitors. On the *zócalo*, it's likely visitors will catch groups of older couples dancing *danzón*. The cathedral's stations of the cross are worth a view—they capture the passion of Christ with pictures of only Christ's hands—impactful in its simplicity. And for families, Veracruz boasts Mexico's largest aquarium!

There's something for everyone!

¡Viva Veracruz!



Sources:

Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Jill's Journeys (<http://jillmichelledouglas.com/mexico/travel/veracruz/>) (<http://acuariodeveracruz.com/>)

4I. Wine Country in Baja California



Valle de Guadalupe is being called the “Napa Valley of Mexico” and in a recent article in our local newspaper, the following information was gathered from the State Secretariat of Tourism and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography. As of 2017, there are 99 wineries, 47 restaurants, 23 hotels, 10 ranches with the sale of wine, as well as six museums and other attractions in Valle De Guadalupe and his doesn’t include the wine areas to the south of Ensenada. Sunset Magazine recently posted this video of the area.

What I love about Valle is not just the wine but the architecture of the wineries, history, the people and the food. Typically, the goal

is also to enjoy the experience with most places wanting you to take your time and not feel rushed.

Wine Country

So far, I have tasted at 23 of the wineries/vineyards plus visited a couple more within Valle. On top of this, have revisited several of these especially with company. My goal when we go to Valle is to visit one or two new wineries then visit a favorite. It is becoming very difficult to just pick one or even just a few favorites.

Food of Valle

As to food, you can go from cheap to very expensive depending on what you want. also wanted to note that two of the top ten chefs in Mexico are here in Valle. We typically eat at cheaper places but still have amazing flavors. There are breakfast places to full course meals or as basic as cheese and bread platters.

There are several nurseries from very small to very large. The largest nursery Vivero Valle De Guadalupe has a very large selection of plant, shrubs, and trees. The nursery is located in the middle of Valle De Guadalupe. They have many greenhouses and a sea of roses, fig trees, bougainvilleas plus succulents to die for. They have a very large facility with extremely knowledgeable staff. They also distribute to Home Depots and other places in this region. I swear they have almost anything you could need or want also including soil and pots. There is never an issue here to take your time, wander around and enjoy the area.

Decantos Vineyard and has an amazing view of the valley and nice wines.

Because Valle de Guadalupe is a short drive from home, I venture this direction frequently with my other half. We enjoy the scenery as it reminds us of the areas we used to live at in the US, plus the architecture, food and the wine (this part is me only as he doesn't care for wine) are amazing. We have barely touched this area as to places to visit with over 120 wineries and growing just in this valley along with the amazing restaurants, olive production along

with other organic produce and nurseries. So far we have enjoyed all the places we have been, bought wine, food, local pressed olive oils, salsas, marmalade, plants, pottery and etc.

Vena Cava has some unique architecture and good tacos.

El Cielo Valle de Guadalupe offers a tour including a video with the wine tasting along with a sovereign glass. Adobe Guadalupe has a beautiful building with amazing metal art and food truck, forgot food and winery pics but next time..nice wines

Vinos Pijoan is one of my favorite places so far as I could go anytime and just chill. One reason this is a favorite of mine is the boutique wines named after the daughters and mothers which reminds me of a cousin who has brews with another cousin and a friend. They came up with the idea as the visited one day, discussing how they were going to be able to pay for seven daughters weddings between the three of them, Seven Brides Brewing came about with the brews named after the girls.



Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab. (<http://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/travel-the-wine-life-of-valle-de-guadalupe-in-baja-california/>) (<https://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/valle-de-guadalupe-a-place-of-wine/>) (<http://www.sevenbridesbrewing.com/index.php>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_wine) (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Vivero-Valle-De-Guadalupe/129782727162556>) (<https://www.facebook.com/SunsetMagazine/videos/10156409406782848/>)

42. Xochimilco, Mexico



When anybody asks what they should do when visiting Mexico City, my favorite suggestion is always, “Go to Xochimilco!” Or, better said, ride a *trajinera* in Xochimilco. What’s a *trajinera*, you ask? Stick with me.

Prehispanic City Planning

Xochimilco is on the very south side of the city. Its claim to fame are the canals that still exist there. When the Spanish arrived in Mexico, Mexico City was a floating city, much like Venice. When the region

was settled, those living in the area built it, quite literally, from the ground up. They made rafts out of reeds, raked mud out of the lake bottom, put it on top of the rafts, and eventually made thousands of man-made islands. This was Mexico City in its hey-day. The streets were canals.

Then the Spanish arrived, drained the lake, and put their medieval city planning to work (the kind of city planning where people dumped their trash out their window so it could rot on the street). We're still wishing the Spanish had listened to Moctezuma's city planners. Sure, go on with your world domination, but for pity's sake, keep the lake!

Anyway, the canals and floating islands (which will now be referred to as *chinampas*) still exist in Xochimilco. The flat-bottomed boats (which will now be referred to as *trajineras*) can be rented by the hour and are a huge tourist draw. So much so that the docks, canals, and *trajineras* at Nativitas are getting a bit icky.

De La Chinampa Tour

When my sister-in-law suggested that we take a tour with a company recommended to her by someone at the Waldorf school she works for, leaving from docks a bit farther south from Nativitas, we said, "sign us up!"

And what a tour we had!

First of all, it was a 5-hour tour. Lunch and drinks were provided. The lion's share of the lunch came right from fields grown on chinampas right in Xochimilco. The whole point of this company is to promote organic products grown on these small farms in Xochimilco. Our tour guide said that only 2% of the fields in Xochimilco are currently being cultivated. If that figure were increased so that a mere 10% of the fields were being used, they claim that the entire population of Mexico City could be fed from products produced on that land. Just imagine the positive environmental impact that could have!

Furthermore, they believe in selling produce at a living wage. Most fruits and vegetables in Mexico are taken to a central de abastos. The central de abastos then sells fruits and vegetables wholesale to those who have fruit/vegetable stores, stalls in markets, corner stores, etc. The central de abastos sets the prices. Even if it costs a farmer 10 pesos to produce a kilo of carrots, the central de abastos can say (and often does), “we’re buying these carrots at 3 pesos a kilo—take it or leave it.” And farmers have to take it. There isn’t much of anywhere else to sell to.

Yes, De La Chinampa’s produce is considerably more expensive than other produce found elsewhere in the city. But it’s an investment. And if it catches on, it’s an investment that would reap huge dividends for everyone.

So if you live in Mexico City, think about getting together with friends, family, and neighbors and having some organic, Mexico City-grown produce delivered right to your house. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that community sponsored agriculture existed in Mexico City.

But if it catches on, wild dreams could come true!

How to Get There

The DeLaChinampa Tour leaves from the docks at Cuemanco (Periferico Sur, Sin Número, to the side of the Olympic rowing training center). It takes visitors through an ecologically protected zone, making it a more peaceful and refreshing time than the boats that leave from Xochimilco’s city center.

Truth be told, DeLaChinampa’s tours are on the pricey side. They are an educational tour—you’ll learn much more than on a regular, chartered tour, they do feed their passengers, and it supports a worthwhile project. But if the price is prohibitive, *trajineras* can be chartered at Cuemanco by just talking with people on the docks. It looks like prices are \$400 per hour (per boat, as of April 2018) but

that's subject to change. At Cuemanco (and, I believe, the other docks) the price is set.

The *trajinera* owners have formed a union and the prices are posted. It used to be that haggling was the norm—not anymore. Despite that, do tip the man who rows you around the canals—he's unlikely to own the *trajinera*, and he works his butt of (well, his arms) to make sure his passengers have a pleasant time. Also, if your Spanish is good enough, be sure to pick your *trajinera* driver's head and ask him lots of questions. I've found that they're all very knowledgeable and love to explain Xochimilco to interested passengers.

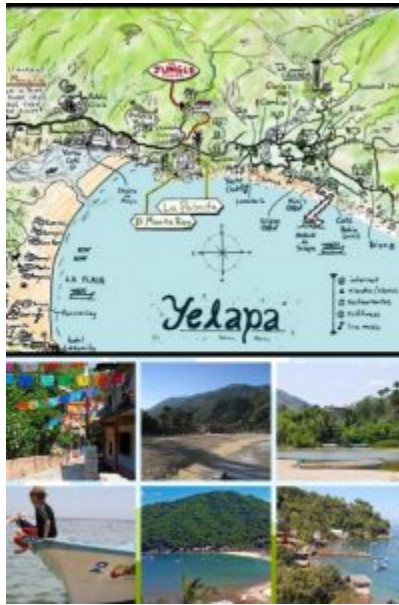
However, most people ride the canals for a unique scene for a party, so the *trajinera* rowers do stay quiet if they get a boatload who is not interested in learning about the area.

This website lists a variety of docks in Xochimilco (with their addresses). So if you find yourself in Mexico City, do yourself a favor and take a *trajinera* ride in Xochimilco!

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Originally published by Jill Michelle Douglas at Jill's Journeys. (<https://jillmichelledouglas.com/xochimilco/>)
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(delachinampa.mx)

43. Yelapa, Puerto Vallarta



Jungle living at its best. I've been living in the jungle off and on for over 25 years in Puerto Vallarta or Yelapa, a remote Pueblo that is mainly reached by panga.

Living in Yelapa has its beauty and of course challenges!!!

The beauty is immense, no cars well now lots of ATVs that drive cra-cra, the ocean, the small rural community, everyone knows each other, waterfalls, hikes... and frustrations of having to schlepp most of your stuff on the water taxis, no banks, expensive to build, electricity arrived early 2000's, water is still an issue as is septic, the internet is

now slowly getting there and well and the indigenous community it has issues too. But a magical place.

Jungle challenges are huge at times, bugs in the rainy season, power goes out for days, then no fans.... but the beauty stays and stays as it's hard to feel sorry for one's self with the beautiful Pacific and sunsets. It's priceless!

Sources:

Originally published by Susi Schuegraf at ...another day in the jungle.
(<https://junglemama.wordpress.com/2018/04/24/a-to-z-challenge-mexico-j/>)

44. Yuriria, Guanajuato



While we often travel for a day trip to Cerano, once in a while we also head to Yuriria, the bigger town of which Cerano is a municipality.

Yuriria is pretty, and there is a restaurant with a one-armed waiter that serves delicious fresh-water fish soup. The market is also full of neat stuff to see, and the whole town has a different feel to it than Moroleon, so we enjoy it as a close-by getaway place.

The actual name is Yuririhapundaro although most people refer to it as simply Yuriria. It was founded the Chichimecas in 945 D.C.As with Cuitzeo, the name comes from the Purepecha language. It translates as The Place of the Bloody Lake. With such a name, it's no

surprise that Yuriria was built along the banks of a lake. It's actually an extinct volcanic crater that is renewed through rainfall rather than an underground source.

Yuriria is also one of Guanajuato's Pueblos Magicos, and on that official site, the bloody lake gets its name from the soil runoff, not from dead bodies. Well, as the idea of Pueblos Magicos is to get tourists to come, I suppose having tainted waters might put people off, so the run-off explanation is given out. However, Diego Basalenque made note, in 1644, that the oral tradition of the native people spoke of sacrifices that had been made in the center of the lake to the gods, leaving the red stain of their deaths behind in the waters.

A scientific explanation might resolve the issue of whether the sacrifices or the volcanic soil give the lake its reddish color. It may be that the coloration comes from the rapid reproduction of microscopic plants, like the chromatiaceae bacteria, that bloom under certain conditions. The plants subsequently poison the water for the fish. A whole lake of dead fish would cause the local population to perform sacrifices to appease the gods, beseeching them to allow the water to return to its normal color.

As the lake is not always bloody, the scientific explanation seems to make sense. Certainly, when we have visited, it's been as blue as Lake Cuitzeo. Locals say that the two last bloody events occurred in 1985, before the devastating earthquake in Mexico City and in 1986, before the earthquake in San Francisco, California. Well, as I mentioned, the extinct volcanic crater is smack dab in the middle of the lake—things like shifting fault lines might cause such an occurrence.

After the lake, the most imposing structure in Yuriria is the Ex-convent of San Agustin. Construction was begun in 1550 by Fray Diego de Chavez y Alvarado, nephew of Don Pedro Alvarado, one of Hernan Cortes' followers. Fray Diego is also given credit for the creation of the lake because he commissioned the construction of a canal that diverted the river waters to the crater in 1548. I'm not so

sure he actually created the lake since the name of the area implies the village had been established by a bloody body of water long before the Spanish came (records indicate that the Tarascos, who conquered the area in 1350 D.C. made a note of the red tinted water phenomenon)...but you know how those Europeans like to take credit for everything.

All things considered, Yuriria is a pleasant stop on the road to little-known tourist attractions in Mexico.

Sources:

Originally published by C.E. Flores at *Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters* (<https://survivingmexico.com/2015/10/09/playing-tourist-yuriria-guanajuato/>) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedro_de_Alvarado) (<http://marcianitosverdes.haaan.com/2006/07/el-pais-de-las-7-luminarias-primera-parte/>) (<https://hoteltaboda.wordpress.com/2015/04/29/leyenda-yuriria-la-laguna-de-sangre/>) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chromatiaceae>) (<http://yuriria-online.blogspot.mx/2011/03/de-leyenda-yuririapundaro-lago-de.html>) (http://dieumsnh.qfb.umich.mx/fray_diego.htm) (<http://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/yuriria-guanajuato-pueblos-magicos-mexico.html>) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuriria>)

45. Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey, Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California



Zoológico Parque del Niño is about family, fun, and education all in one location. The park is located in the heart of Valle de Guadalupe. There are multiple play areas with picnic tables and BBQs for people to use. You can paddle boat in the pond or swim in one of the three pools. There is a jump area, game room and even bikes or carts to use. The main educational portion is the small zoo at this park

with the animals being well-kept along with the habitat. They have “trains” that tour areas of the zoo and park along with interpretative signs on the different wildlife and habitat. The playgrounds and pools are so much fun for the kids and even the adults!

Sources:

Originally published by Lynne DeSantis at My Life of Craft-N-Dab. (<http://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/sotb/zoologico-parque-del-nino/>) (<https://www.facebook.com/zoologicojersey/>) (<https://www.descubreensenada.mx/hoteles/zoologico-parque-del-nino-jersey/>)

LYNNE DESANTIS



Welcome to my life. It has been a crazy time, living most of the time in Baja California, Mexico since September 2015 with adjustments in life, adventures, and mishaps. This is not just about my story of crafting and dabbling in many areas but also of living life.

I love to find ideas to create but make them my own and sometimes includes my partner in crime, a.k.a. my better half. This especially occurs with house projects from woodworking to tiling and then some. I also sew all types of items from clothing to household items, add some crafting of all sorts, so ideas and projects are never in short supply.

My other passions include the Wine Country of Baja California

which provides 90% of the wine for Mexico. There are many places to see and plan to make the information available via mapping this country.

You can find Lynne DeSantis at:

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mylife.craft.n.dab/>)

Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/MyLifeofCraftNDab/>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/mylifecraftndab/>)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/MyLifeofCraftN1>)

My Life of Craft-N-Dab (<http://mylife-craft-n-dab.com/>)

JILL MICHELLE DOUGLAS



Journey with me as we explore Mexico, and explore Christian faith from a Catholic perspective.

I started this blog for a number of reasons:

1. After blogging for a few years, I realized that I was evangelical about Mexico. Mexico gets a bad rap in US media—some of it deserved, much of it not. This blog started out as my way of explaining why I love living in Mexico.
2. Once I realized I was evangelical about Mexico, it dawned on me that maybe I should be evangelical—like, proclaiming the Good News. You know, like Jesus told us to do. But again, mainstream media tends to get this wrong, too. So, much like setting the record straight on Mexico, this is also where I try to set the record straight on Christianity (and Catholicism)—at least, the liberating way I've experienced it!
3. And, sometimes I just find something that makes my life easier. Then I wonder why nobody told me about (whatever it was) earlier. This space is my chance to save someone else time, heartache, and pass on those brilliant ideas that make life easier.

You can find Jill Michelle Douglas at:

Jill's Journeys (<http://jillmichelledouglas.com>)

Loving the Land of the Flour Tortilla
(<http://www.meximamma.blogspot.com>)

Saltillo Expats (www.saltillioexpats.com)

EMILY LEE GARCIA

I'm Emily: wife to Carlos and mom to Sophia. Listening to Spanish and Italian music is something I enjoy, along with playing sports and traveling.

Mexico is where I live, but it's not my home. That would be Texas,

and yet it feels foreign to me sometimes, too. In fact, my life feels like one never-ending equation of trying to figure out where I belong.

My faith in God helps with the confusion. I've been following Him for nearly 25 years, and He's never left my side. I see reminders of His goodness in the simplest of things, like dirty dishes and baby hugs and parks with lots of green grass.

I've been journaling for 20+ years, and blogging is simply an extension of that habit. I hope you'll enjoy my musings on the highs and lows of being a new-ish mom in a foreign country.

Elee Adventure (<https://eleeadventure.wordpress.com/>)

KAREN SWANSON

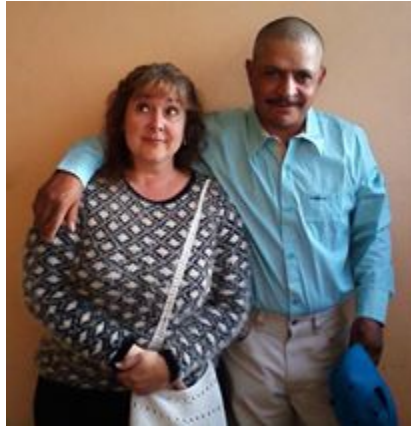


I am a Canadian woman – a mom and wife and Non-Profit Executive – who is ready for a new adventure living in Mexico. My husband and I are not ready to retire but we are ready to embark on a journey of change and growth and service in a country far from home. This is my story of what it's like to prepare for the craziest move of my life!

Karen Moves to Mexico (<https://karenmovestomexico.com/>)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/kswanson203>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/kswanson203>)



My husband, son and I left behind the “American Dream” and opted to try and make a life in Central México in 2007. We have had our share of joy and misfortune in our efforts to make this life a reality, but we always try to remember that it’s the journey, not the destination that is life. Within this blog, you can find some of the highlights (and lowlights) of our journey.

One of our goals is to become self-reliant and reduce our eco-footprint in our world. Recently our efforts were recognized when we were chosen as one of the Star 2014 Modern Homesteaders sponsored by Mother Earth News. (<http://www.motherearthnews.com/homesteading-and-livestock/modern-homesteaders-2014-zl0z1407zkon.aspx#axzz36o8J7wve>)

We also consider ourselves stewards rather than owners and to that end, have had many lovely relationships with dogs, cats, horses, goats, sheep, ducks, turkeys, chickens, donkeys, and rabbits. Our animal adventures abound in *Wascally Wabbits and Zombie Babies: Animal Antics South of the Border*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/>)

wascally-wabbits-and-zombie-babies-animal-antics-south-of-the-border/)

We live in a sparsely inhabited area on the fringe of el cerro (no man's land) in La Yacata outside of Moroleon, Guanajuato. Human greed and politics have allowed our community to be defrauded and left without running water, electricity, and sewer. To that end, became active socios (members) of our community association with the main purpose of improving the quality of life for residents of La Yacata, although we have been unsuccessful in our community improvement efforts thus far. You can read the whole story in *La Yacata Revolution: How NOT to Buy a Piece of Heaven in Mexico*. (<https://survivingmexico.com/la-yacata-revolution/>)

You can also find information on negotiating the legality of living and working in Mexico, parenting challenges, cultural stories, language and communication idiosyncrasies and a host of other adventures and disasters.

You can find C.E. Flores on:

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/SurvivorinMexico/>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/survivingmexico/>)

Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com.mx/survivingmexico/>)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/SurvivorinMx>)

Surviving Mexico Adventures and Disasters (<https://survivingmexico.com/>)

PATTY VANEGAS

Hi Everyone! My name is Patty. While growing up in a suburb of Chicago, I read a lot about different places in the world and dreamed of traveling one day. Then, I met my husband, Enrique, who had the traveling spirit too. We dated for a few years, married, and soon after started our travels. We began with short day trips to explore our local area. Later we took longer vacations out of state during time off work. Eventually, we enjoyed living out of state (Texas) and

even an entirely different country!! (Mexico). My husband and I now enjoy regular travels throughout the U.S. and Mexico. We often drive so we can fully take everything in and also to take our cat and dog along with us. In the United States, we have been to Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. In Mexico, we have been through Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, Guadalajara, and Michoacán.

In addition to travel, we have lived in new places and met new folks. During one winter, we lived in my husband's childhood home city Morelia. Morelia is the capital city of Michoacán in Mexico. Michoacán is a beautiful state full of forests, mountains, and beach areas. Then, we returned to the Chicago area but soon realized that in addition to missing our family in Mexico, we had enjoyed our winter without freezing cold air, snow, and ice as well. When we were traveling to Mexico passing through Texas, we found that some folks in Texas were friendly and helpful. Also, we liked the sunny warm weather and that it is in between Chicago and Morelia. So, while catching the end of winter in Chicago, we decided to relocate to Texas. I had my heart set on San Antonio. Why San Antonio? Well, I visited San Antonio back in middle school with my choir class for the America Sings competition at Fiesta Texas in San Antonio. I had so much fun there going to the Alamo, SeaWorld, and Fiesta Texas with my lifelong friends during this trip that I always wanted to return to visit.

However, we took a slight detour on the way to San Antonio and spent a year in Houston. We were very fortunate to have friends who helped us start out our Texas living adventure in Houston. While in Houston, we explored the places in and around Houston. We discovered all we could – from the bayous to downtown treasures to NASA to the warm Gulf waters of Galveston beach. Houston was a good experience, but my heart was tugging toward the rolling hills

of San Antonio. So there we were! Gorgeous San Antonio with so many events to attend with warm weather and so many friends. Who knows where we will be next year?! Update: we landed back in Chicago -brrr hahaha!! The beautiful windy city full of architecture and glistening snow.

Every place has plenty of opportunities for learning and exploration! We love traveling so much and never thought we would have been to the places we have seen. We greatly encourage others to get out and explore! We want to inspire you to take your dreams of travel to the road, air, water and get out there to live it!

You can find Patty Vanegas at:

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