

# CUENCA expats

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See page 10

ARCHITECT  
Pablo Vintimilla



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**/ Micasa.ec** *Builder of Dreams*

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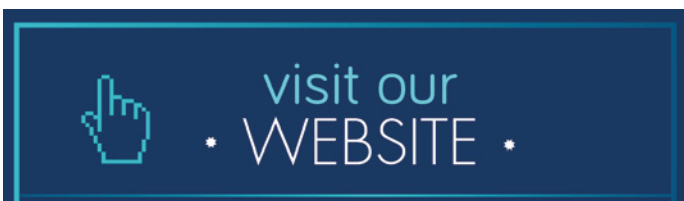
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# CUENCA expats magazine

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**34**

Cuenca Expats Magazine  
Cuenca, Ecuador

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Cuenca Expats Magazine

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# PUBLISHER'S LETTER



Hello, Beautiful Cuenca!

I can't believe it's already June. Wow! Time flies while living in such a vibrant and active city. It seems like there have been festivities and holidays every few weeks. I hope you have had the opportunity to get out and enjoy the beautiful weather and all the celebrations.

We had the pleasure of hosting the 2nd Annual Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award on May 7, 2019. We were honored by all those who came out for this congratulatory evening of graciousness and gratitude.

This event would not have been possible without the backing of our local business community. I would like to thank all the vendors that provided drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and entertainment during the reception. I would also like to thank our sponsors for their support.

One exciting feature I hope you were able to see was the electric vehicle on display by Trophy Sponsor BYD E-Motors.

In addition, I would also like to thank the Steering Committee members: Dr. René Cabrera of SOI OPTICAS, Janet Loman, and Gringo Visas. Without your support, this event would not be possible.

Ecuador may be the only country in the world and Azuay is the only province in Ecuador that officially honors the expat community for its humanitarian contributions. We thank Governor Xavier Enderica and his special guest US Ambassador Todd C. Chapman for their continuous encouragement.

As you all know, this award has a special place in my heart. Knowing so many people come together to support our community makes me proud. While I was touched by all the stories, I was equally moved by the comments and responses afterward. Adrien Winger posted, "This is a reminder to me that I can do more to help others." This highlights the very purpose of the award. Congratulations to 2019 recipients HKIE's Tod and Mary Freeman and all the other nominees. I hope to see you all at next year's event.

Best regards to all,

*Melody J. Crabb*

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Lorena Dávalos González**, 38, is a yoga teacher certified by Yoga Alliance. She started practicing yoga when she was young, deepening in this practice and oriental philosophy studies since she was 25 years old. She decided to open her Adhikara center so that she could share all the benefits that she received through practice.



**Edward Lindquist**. Successful California-born businessman, Ed is Managing Partner of Expats Magazines Group, parent company of Cuenca Expats Magazine, Coastal Expats Magazine, Quito Expats Magazine, REDBOOK, the Directory of English-Speaking Businesses and Services, and YAPA On-Line. Ed has called beautiful Cuenca his home for the last 5 years.



**Teresa Drake**, formerly of Florida, has been in Cuenca 1 ½ years with her husband of 11 years, Raymond Drake. Graduated Ferris State University BA with honors, fiber artist, quilter, award winning photographer, former photographer for Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival, published author and writer.



**Henry Noel** is a retired aerospace engineer turned acupuncturist/spiritual healer and teacher. Having transitioned from outer-space to inner-space he maintains a transitional website, [www.waken2017.com](http://www.waken2017.com), dedicated to guiding those seeking a better understanding of themselves and the world we live in. With his wife Rita, traveling has become a hobby.



**Lorena Larriva** is a 36-year-old mother of three. Knowing firsthand the importance of a clean home, she and her husband started LIMPORT 10 years ago so others could appreciate the same benefits. Since then, they have been providing residential and commercial cleaning services.



**Jeff Salz**. Google 'anthropologist/adventurer' and at the top of all listings is one guy—Jeff Salz. Celebrated as "America's Leading Anthropologist and Adventurer" by both the Discovery Channel and History Channel, Jeff is a member of the prestigious Speaker Hall of Fame and author of *The Way of Adventure: Transforming Your Life and Work with Spirit and Vision* (published by John Wiley and Sons). Reach Jeff at: [www.wayofadventure.com](http://www.wayofadventure.com).

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educational  
feature

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## We Have Pastrami

Photograph by Luis Nieto

Pastrami was introduced to the United States in a wave of Jewish immigration from Romania to New York as early as 1872.

The raw meat is brined, partially dried, seasoned with herbs and spices, then smoked, and steamed. Beef plate is the traditional cut of meat for making pastrami, although it is now common in the United States for it to be made from beef brisket or beef round. Like corned beef, pastrami was originally created as a way to preserve meat before refrigeration.

Matthew Bagel Store is an American-Jewish bakery and cake shop. It is directed mainly expats that reside in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador. Bene Placito provides a variety of mature and fresh cheeses imported from different parts of Europe. It also offers wines and of course the famous Dill Pickles (olives, eggplant, etc.).

Plaza las Américas, local #15 (Av. Las Américas y calle del Tejar)

Mon to Sat: 10am - 8pm / Sun: 10am - 6pm

099 860 4290 matthewbagelstore@gmail.com

matthewbagelstore



Perla Azul, Salinas. General view of the building



Perla Azul, Salinas. Interior view of apartment



Perla Azul, Salinas. Exterior view of the pool area and common areas

# Vintimilla Constructora

## Builder of Dreams

By Henry George Noël

Photographs Courtesy of Construcciones Vintimilla

To talk about the architectural influences incorporated into the culture, language, and customs of Ecuador, one must begin with the history of the territory known as Ecuador. Ecuador has been inhabited for about 11,000 years and these inhabitants have influenced the culture, language, and customs of its peoples.

Architecturally, Ecuador's largest and latest influences were, of course, from the Spanish after arriving in 1531 and conquering the Inca in 1532. But before the arrival of the Spanish and even before the rise of the Inca Empire, Ecuador was the home of a number of ancient tribes whose skills and architectural prowess has stood the test of time.

The arrival of Francisco Pizarro's expedition began the Spanish influence in the architecture of Ecuador. This Spanish-colonial architecture is found in every city and town that was ever visited by the Spanish. From the oldest monastery to the newest and most modern city, the Spanish look and feel is undeniable.

In Cuenca, we are surrounded by the beautiful architectural works with Spanish and other European influences such as the Old and New Cathedrals, the Mayor's office, the Old Justice building, and many others that have been well-preserved.

More recent years have seen several newer buildings depart from the classic Spanish colonial style that typifies the region. Modern architects often draw inspiration from current world-wide trends, and the more modern cities in Ecuador boast newer and older sections with very different architectural styles.

One such architectural firm leading this transition from the old to the new is Vintimilla Constructora. Vintimilla Constructora is one firm looking to make a statement by designing and building unique structures in Ecuador. With offices in Cuenca, Salinas, and Guayaquil, they are making a name for themselves.

Vintimilla Constructora was started in 1965 by Ing. Marcelo Vintimilla Borrero father of the present owner, Arq. Pablo Vintimilla. Facing the challenges of modifying traditional architectural designs and innovating building practices while bridging the old technologies with new technologies, materials, and building methods has not been an easy task. "It is difficult to get others (legislatures and the public) to let go of traditional workmanship while introducing new, artistic, innovative, and safer construction methods altering the types of construction methods familiar to everyone.

"I am 57 years old and a native Cuencano. I am married with three children all of whom work for the company. I worked for my father and decided to study architecture. With 39 years of experience in design, architecture, and construction, I have seen this industry change quite a lot. I am a lover and breeder of horses, and I participate in equestrian harness competitions. It is a sport which allows me to be close to nature, and it is this closeness to nature I like to incorporate in my designs.

"Our construction activity is 90% residential including apartment buildings, housing developments, and single-family homes with the remaining 10% being commercial land development and business construction.



Jardines de la Sierra, Cuenca



Jardines de la Sierra, Cuenca. Front main view



Jardines de la Sierra, Cuenca. Interior view house



Jardines de la Sierra, Cuenca. Interior view house

"Our offices are located in Cuenca at Av. Ordoñez Lasso and Calle de Higuierillas, in Salinas on the ground floor of the AQUAMIRA apartment building located on the malecón and in Guayaquil on Avenida Pedro Menendez Gilbert. We are a family-owned and operated business. By having my two daughters and my son assisting me, we add the latest generations' knowledge to exemplify future construction styles, innovations, and environmentally sound concepts to our industry. We employ approximately 250 people who are treated as part of this family. Our internal team as well as the professionals needed for every aspect of construction and design join together to build the dream home or business facility of our valued clients.

"Our biggest challenges continue to be the development of projects that meet the expectations of our national and international clients, complying with and educating regulatory agencies on better and safer construction methods and materials, and placing the environment above the needs and wants of everyone. We use the latest technologies and methods to harmoniously integrate our projects to meet and exceed the cities' requirements under their urban development plans.

"In the past 15 years we have seen a significant growth of international residents settling in our country, especially Cuenca, including many Ecuadorian citizens returning home after years of living abroad. This influx of internationally astute buyers has helped the real estate market grow in Ecuador.

"However, this has also created expectations for higher quality, modern, safely constructed, and environmentally friendly residences. This influx of people has also created the demand for new products never before available in Ecuador along with guarantees and higher quality expectations.

"As a company, because of the growth in population, we realized that we had to develop alternative projects that satisfy these new users. We understand, for example, the important needs of young people who have recently married and now seek their very first home. The demands are always changing, and as a company, we realize we must change with these demands.

"The construction industry has moved from doing the same thing the same way to being one of continuous innovation and improvement. We can no longer design





Verona, Cuenca. General view of the building



Verona, Cuenca. General view of the building



Verona, Cuenca. Interior view of apartment



Verona, Cuenca. Interior view of apartment

and build using old-school methodologies. Our learning and experience over these many years has provided us a framework of continuous improvement and innovation all because the needs of our clients are continuously changing: newer and better improved spaces, technology, finishes, designs, and materials that incorporate our clients' dreams. As a result, we have become better innovators.

"It has taken some time and a lot of pressure on legislatures to allow many of the newer and better-quality products into Ecuador from all over the world. This has led to Ecuador now manufacturing many of the latest construction products in-country. This merging of imports and manufacturing is opening the door to higher quality, safer, and more environmentally friendly construction products than ever before.

"We are far from done. Because Ecuador is located on the Ring of Fire, we experience many earthquakes. The devastation in Manabí was a wake-up call to legislatures that they must do something other than enabling the status quo. Our company policy, apart from providing the best service and design of our products, is to provide the greatest security to our customers. Because of this, we

have been at the forefront of the use of quality materials incorporating the latest technology and safety standards which allows us to say we have never had any type of accident in our construction provoked by these types of catastrophes in our country. This is because we not only comply with all the required construction standards; we exceed them.

"It is our desire to be the innovative architectural leader designing the future, not simply follow those who think they are the leader."

What's the next beautiful project in Cuenca? A yet unnamed apartment building at Av. Juan Iñiguez and Gonzalo Cordero Dávila.



**Address:** Av. Ordoñez Lasso & Higerillas, building Pinar del Lago #4, ground floor

**Phones:** 07-4089775 / 099 821 6124

**E-mail:** ventas1@micasa.ec

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Meet Dra Karol Andrea Guzmán Guillen



Heart disease is the leading cause of death for North Americans and a major cause of disability. Therefore, it only makes sense for all expats to have regular cardiac check-ups. Dr. Guzmán is the only doctor in Cuenca who has registered titles with the Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (Senescyt) in Internal Medicine, Cardiology

and Echocardiography. Call for an appointment today for cardiac consultation, transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE), and stress tests including stress echocardiography.

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Call for an appointment: 098 297 6667

Karol Guzmán

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

[www.hospitaldelrio.com.ec/directoriomedico](http://www.hospitaldelrio.com.ec/directoriomedico)

## Suffering from Allergies?



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Fernández de Córdova  
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Juan Fernández de Córdova

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

[www.hospitaldelrio.com.ec/directoriomedico](http://www.hospitaldelrio.com.ec/directoriomedico)

# Gran Colombia Suites

## Celebrating 5 Years as Cuenca's Premier Extended Stay

By Ed Lindquist

Photographs Courtesy of Gran Colombia Suites



Site of first hotel in Cuenca

When I heard Gran Colombia Suites was celebrating its 5th anniversary, I jumped at the chance to tell about my experience there. When it was just opening, I was a guest for 4 months. Just me and the original French Tranvía engineers. Since then, the property has earned well-deserved praise from travelers from around the world and has the highest occupancy rate of any in town.

And why not? Aably managed for the last 2 ½ years by Daniela Moncayo, the beautiful historic building is on the corner of Luis Cordero and Gran Colombia (a block from Parque Calderón). The structure was constructed by José María Montesinos in 1924, as the very first hotel in Cuenca. It was operated for almost 30 years as "Hotel Patria". A two-year restoration project by the Vázquez Family, who also own sister properties, Mansión Alcázar and El Dorado Hotel, was completed in 2014. It was transformed into executive suites for discerning travelers who want to stay for fifteen days or more. Because it is so centrally located, guests can walk to numerous restaurants, museums, and explore the heart of the city.

When you enter Gran Colombia Suites, your eyes will be immediately drawn to the stunning design. Every element has been carefully perfected, from the art on the walls to the soaring atrium. After the bustle of El Centro, Gran Colombia Suites is remarkably peaceful and quiet. Each one of the many windows in the building was fitted with special double-paned glass to ensure quiet. If you have ever tried to get a good night sleep in El Centro, you'll be the first to appreciate this feature.

Because each room is spacious, with a kitchen, large sitting areas, high ceilings, and palladium windows, guests feel they are in a lovely apartment. The one- or two-bedroom suites are fully furnished and beautifully decorated, so it's not hard to imagine moving in for a long visit. There is an on-site laundry, fine linens, high-speed Internet, DIRECTV, and 24-hour Front Desk, Concierge and Security Service.

Returning guest, Jan Loman from Houston was asked what she liked best about her 2 weeks stay at Gran Colombia Suites. She replied, "I can't name only one thing. I love the beautiful building and my room, the cleanliness of the place is outstanding, and the friendly staff will do anything for you. Having a 24-hour English-speaker at the Front Desk is very important to me as I have no Spanish. Plus, there is unlimited, powerful hot showers! Something you don't always find when traveling in Ecuador!"

I will always remember my first stay at Gran Colombia Suites. It was there on my suite's dining table the dream of Cuenca Expat Magazine became a reality.

The next time a friend asks for a recommend place to stay in Cuenca, I trust you'll do them a favor and recommend Gran Colombia Suites. I do all the time.



Large Dining Area with Palladium Windows

**Address:** Luis Cordero 10-13 y Gran Colombia **Website:** [www.grancolombiasuites.com](http://www.grancolombiasuites.com)

**Phone:** 07 2 829 862  Gran Colombia Suites

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# STEAKS *from* URUGUAY



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Alfonso Cordero 2-41 y Manuel J. Calle  
(Across from Supermaxi El Vergel)

# YAPA

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Favorite) for 2 at Full Criollo

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CONTACT: Diego Burgos / Verónica Ortega

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📱 Amiel - Organic Honey

# The Path of Yoga

By Lorena Dávalos González  
 Photographs Courtesy of Adhikara

The practice of Hatha Yoga and meditation provides not only external changes in the form of strength, flexibility, and balance but, more importantly, internal changes by recognizing death is not an end but a transition. One leads a calmer life with improved concentration, less stress, and a heightened awareness of strengths and weaknesses. The body asks for a change of habits, a more natural diet of unprocessed foods, more contact with nature, quieter spaces, and chemical-free personal hygiene products that are good for the body and don't harm the environment.

This is why Adhikara has been enhancing its services to include everything a person requires to maintain a healthier and more peaceful lifestyle while trying to keep energy balanced to avoid illness and discomfort. With the awareness that everything put on the skin enters the body, we have sought options to maintain fresh, hydrated, clean, and relaxed skin based on products without chemicals so that those with skin sensitivities or diseases may use them. Adhikara also maintains balanced energy through Reiki and reflexology massages.

Go ahead and try this path that will undoubtedly change your life.



For more information about Yoga Classes contact us through Whatsapp: 0999189844 or email us at [lorenadavalos@gmail.com](mailto:lorenadavalos@gmail.com)

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**ADDRESS:** Remigio Tamariz 2-40 y Federico Proaño



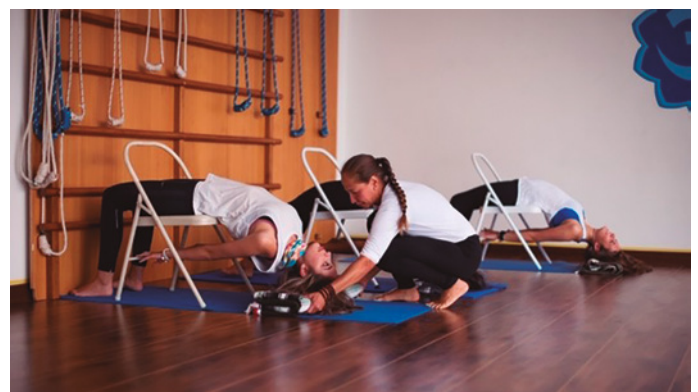
Adhikara Cuenca



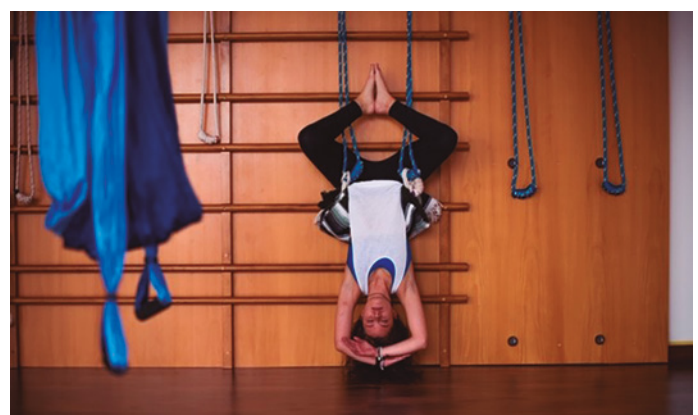
Lotus posture, for meditation



Tree posture



Iyengar style



Iyengar wall ropes

Presents 2nd Annual

## GOVERNOR'S EXPAT HUMANITARIAN AWARD EVENT

### A Night to Remember



Reception in Old Justice Center

By Teresa Drake

Photographs Courtesy of Cuenca Expats Magazine

As I approached the la Corte Superior de Justicia, or the Old Justice Center, I was in awe of its grandeur. Oh, the stories those stone walls could tell if we but listened. The archways and grand staircases that greet you as you enter instantly demand your respect and for you to speak in hushed tones. As you pass through the archway, you are greeted by a circular courtyard that is awash in natural light from the glass dome overhead. Your eyes travel the circular balcony above to the courtyard below and are greeted by people scurrying about preparing for the event that is soon to take place. Young ladies in crisply pressed uniforms from Mujeres con Éxito are getting last-minute instructions on how they are to serve the tasty morsels from the various reception sponsors.

Slowly the courtyard begins to fill with people smartly attired for the event: military personnel in uniform,



Event Hosts Maite Duran & Ed Lindquist

dignitaries representing various organizations, and everyday expats. Soon a young lady is lifted skyward on a narrow acrobatic ring as the roar of the crowd builds in anticipation of what is to come. No, this is not Hollywood on Oscar night, but I feel like I have traveled over the rainbow and landed not in Oz but in another magical land—Cuenca, Ecuador, where the 2nd Annual Governor’s Expat Humanitarian Award is to take place.

Four hundred and one people have been nominated for this prestigious award by their peers for their charitable contributions to the Azuay community. Every charitable work imaginable is represented from a doctor offering free medical assistance to a gentleman running a soup kitchen to a woman providing a safe haven for battered women and their children. The nominees are from 22 different countries who all now call Azuay home. They did not come here to take, as conquerors of the past did, but to give and to make a home and a new life. By giving unselfishly of themselves, they have demonstrated their unconditional love for the people of Azuay, their new “home,” and have bonded together with the people in a way that the United Nations, Congress, Parliament, or any other governmental body will never understand. These people give from the heart and do not look for payment. The smiles of U.S. Ambassador Todd Chapman; Governor Xavier Enderica; Susan McBride, last year’s recipient; and Tod and Mary Freeman, this year’s recipients; said it all. No, this isn’t Oz or Hollywood drama. It’s just real people proving that when you work together and give from the heart, nothing is impossible.



Governor and last year’s recipient Susan McBride



US Ambassador Todd C. Chapman



2019 Recipients Tod and Mary Freeman with Governor, US Ambassador and Susan McBride

# EVENT PROGRAM



**07**  
**MAY**

6:00pm - 6:45pm

Sponsored Reception

📍 *Old Justice Center*

7:00pm - 8:00pm

Welcome, Presentation of Nominees, Awarding of Governor's Trophy to 2019 Recipient

📍 *Old Cathedral*

8:00pm - 8:30pm

Governor's Receiving Line for Presentation of Special Award Certificates to All Nominees

## GOVERNOR'S EXPAT HUMANITARIAN AWARD NOMINEES

It is an honor to present the 2019 Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award Nominees.  
Sincerely, Melody J. Crabb, Chair, Nominating Committee

1 Anonymus  
2 Anonymus  
3 Anonymus  
4 Anonymus  
5 Alcorn Keyes, Dean  
6 Amos, Paul  
7 Andreatta, Kris  
8 Appel, Marilyn Kay  
9 Appel, Roger  
10 Arismendi, Karla Sanchez  
11 Arond-Thomas, Many  
12 Ashton, Colette  
13 Askam, Lorraine  
14 Avila, Daniel  
15 Bacigalupo Duarte, Karla  
16 Barber-Lindstrom, Gretchen  
17 Barber-Lindstrom, Timothy  
18 Barfield, Anne  
19 Barr, John  
20 Barrett, Della  
21 Barry, Madelaine  
22 Basso, Annette  
23 Basso, Greg  
24 Bates, Mark  
25 Bayard, Claude  
26 Bayard, Jill  
27 Bayless, Daniel  
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# Electric Buses and Taxis

Reasonable & Responsible Alternatives to Solving El Centro's Noise & Pollution

By Cuenca Expats Magazine Staff Writer  
Photographs Courtesy of BYD-E



Ecuador's first fleet of electric taxis

Tourism is growing in Ecuador, and Cuenca is getting recognized as a hot spot. Already known as North America's favorite retirement destination, the city is earning well deserved honors from visitors from all over the world. Friendly people, colonial architecture, wide range of cultural activities, the weather--what's not to like? Well, there is one thing visitors and residents all agree upon--noise and pollution in El Centro.

Downtown's confined area of historic buildings and narrow streets, the combustion of fossil fuels, and high noise levels all make for a toxic environment. Diesel and gasoline vehicles produce nitrous oxide, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds, and macroparticles. Besides the gases mentioned, gasoline engines emit lead compounds and small amounts of sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide. Bus fleets in Cuenca operate with diesel fuel which is even worse. In addition, diesel and gas engines generate vibrations that damage the infrastructure of the buildings, sidewalks, and streets of El Centro.

To reduce the pollution caused by vehicular traffic, it is necessary to take measures that promote the use of non-standard modes of transport such as public transportation, bicycles, and electric vehicles.

El Centro was never designed to handle the number of buses and cars now chocking its streets. The good news is Cuenca has taken steps to reduce noise and pollution problems downtown: the Tranvía, bike-sharing, and more pedestrian-friendly walkways. Now it's time to

do more--eliminating diesel buses in certain areas of El Centro and reducing the number of gasoline cars.

In addition to the overall health benefits of these moves, there is greater efficiency in the consumption of energy. It's possible to reduce fossil fuel and, therefore, save oil. And with the new hydroelectric plants, there is plenty of energy in Ecuador suitable for these new modes of transportation with an opportunity of a special rate for charging electrical vehicles.

Loja was the first city in the country to have a fleet of electric vehicles and have an electric charging stations. BYD E-MOTORS ECUADOR SA, a distributor for the world's leading manufacturer and seller of electric buses and cars, worked with the Loja city government to invest over \$700,000 to prove the viability of electric mobility for the future of Ecuador. The 35 drivers in the Loja Ecotaxi project demonstrated what could be achieved. After two years, carbon dioxide was reduced by 1 million tons and \$170,000 were saved in fuel costs. The project proved to be beneficial for visitors, residents, and taxi owners alike.

There is a similar situation happening in Guayaquil where the Municipality through its Transit Agency promoted a different bus rate of USD 0.35 for Saucinc, the bus operator that purchased from BYD the first pure electric bus fleet in the country (the 2nd one is Latam). With 20 electric buses, Saucinc has doubled its riders since April and has become an example for the country and the region.

The future is now. Loja and Guayaquil led the way. Now, it's Cuenca's turn.

# Expats in the News



Expats at the successful grand opening of Mike's Meats. Federico Malo & 12 de Abril. Corner, across from Parque de la Madre

Photographs Courtesy of CEM & Mike's Meats



Pastrami has arrived



# Your Health

## Importance of Deep Cleaning Your Home

By Lorena Larriva  
Photographs Courtesy of Limport



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# Road Trip! Seeking Shangri-la

## Cuenca to Colombia

By Jeff Salz  
Photographs by Jeff Salz



Ecuador's Best Beach Los Frailes Beach, Parque Nacional Machalilla



Small girl with Kinkajou, Rio Blanco

Yowwccch! I rise from the sofa and fall to the floor as my knee gives out. I've been doing plenty of hiking recently feeling strong... and now this? Impossible.

Worst of all is the timing. Stephen Meyers, my best travel buddy for more than four decades, is about to arrive from the States for ten days of ardent adventuring. Depression deepens as I hug the sofa in my thigh-to-ankle splint watching Game of Thrones Season Seven reruns, cursing my luck, my bum knee and growing grouchier every day.

Stephen arrives. In need of a fresh destination, we point our rental car in a direction neither of us has explored, where viewing the wildlife and living the wild life is possible... even with my minimized mobility. We will head toward the coast and choose the less-beaten path northward toward Esmeraldas and the Colombian border in search of Shangri-la.

The outskirts of Guayaquil are a shock to the system. Threading gargantuan shopping malls, fast food joints and gated communities, we escape the heat and humidity in an air-conditioned highway sandwich shop swarming with tattooed twenty-somethings in tank-tops, flip-flops, and back-facing baseball caps. My senses reel. Suddenly it is 2010 and I am back in southern Florida visiting my parents in their condo complex. Cast into this sweltering abyss, overwhelmed by the throngs in thongs, I think to myself "this is not Ecuador" in the same split second I realize it is. Obviously, I've been too long sheltered in our sweet and timeless Cuenca. We keep driving.

North of Montañita and just past Olón, before the highway drops over the hill toward the wide, green alluvial valley of Río Ayampe, we turn left down and dead end at the tiny fishing settlement of La Rinconada. Perched high above the water, Vista al Mar is an economically priced restaurant with a million-dollar view. We strike



Stephen Meyers Makes a New Ecuadoran Friend



up a conversation with Enrique Rivera. He has lived the fisherman's life since age eight when his mom and dad built one of only three houses that formed the original settlement. "The town and he grew up together," he says. The restaurant was his wife Ana's idea. When I hold out pen and paper asking him for her last name he demurs, stiffening when I joke about not being able to spell it.

"True, I cannot read or write. I never had time for that," he says, chest puffing. "But I can do many things. Most of all, I am a damn good fisherman."

Daughter Elizabeth serves us langostinos brought home by her dad earlier in the day. "Shrimp are farmed," she explains. "Langostino are tastier. A few hours ago they swam in the sea." She is right. Every bite offers the taste of the ocean. It's the best lunch we'll have on the entire trip.

What makes the settlement of Ayampe outstanding is what it lacks. No traffic, loudly pumping music, resorts or fancy restaurants; Ayampe is lush, green and seductively tranquil. Las Cabañas Tortugas, a romantic, laid-back haven with a vegan vibe, hosts a mix of European Rasta-coiffed surfer-types and locals in search of a romantic getaway. Offshore is a dramatic rock formation named "Los Horcados" once provided convenient natural gallows for pirate gangs to string up their rivals. Stephen and I walk the beach at dusk watching as the sun sets directly between the two sea stacks. It's breathtaking.

Owner David Cárdenas explains how everyone considered him insane when he purchased this wild stretch of coast to build a tourist hostel. No electricity. No water. Now he works with fellow owners to 'keep Ayampe funky' by establishing limits to growth. On a map he shows us a dirt road leading into the interior. Another heads even deeper but is currently impassable. "Come back in the dry season. I'll take you there myself."

Where the tire tracks disappear into a rapidly rushing river, the road we chose comes an end. A small girl approaches cautiously with what turns out to be a kinkajou. Able to turn their feet backwards to run easily in either direction along branches or up and down trunks, their sweet disposition stems from the fact they have no predators. Fearlessly, it climbs and sniffs our heads, nibbles our ears, and hangs from our arms with its prehensile tail. Eyes like deep black pools stare into ours, tiny teeth teethe on our necks. Apprehension dissolves into childlike laughter. A kinkajou is undeniably the cutest animal on Planet Earth.

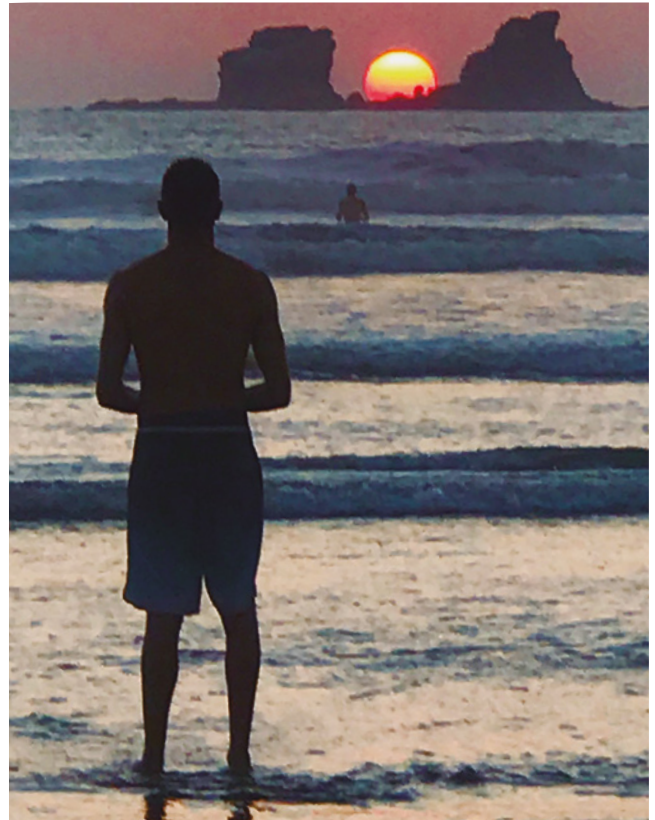
Half an hour north of Ayampe and known as the most scenic in all Ecuador, Los Frailes Beach is indeed beautiful. It's also no secret. Mid-morning we arrive and park between tour busses disgorging excited beachgoers. Families with folding chairs gather under umbrellas along the white sandy coastline. A short visit later we push on.

Our trip up the coast toward the border of Colombia is only getting underway. Still ahead lie the less-visited

beaches of Manabi Province, the islands and mangrove swamps off the coast of Mompiche and - most alluring - the marimba-infused, mysteriously provocative province of Esmeraldas.

Ecuador continues to amaze our eyes and open our hearts at every turn. Excited to see what lies around the next bend, we head north. Still in search of Shangri-la.

To be continued: Onward to Esmeraldas!



Sun Sets over Los Horcados, Ayampe



The Rivera Family of the Vista al Mar Restaurant, La Rinconada



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# EXPAT REALTY CUENCA



**LOOKING FOR INCREDIBLE VIEWS  
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**THIS IS YOUR HOME**

- PROPERTY SIZE: 300 M2
- PROPERTY LOT SIZE: 2.000 M2
- BEDROOMS: 2
- BATHROOMS: 3
- PRICE: \$ 750 PER MONTH

**📍 MISICATA 010150**

**FOR  
SALE**



## **FURNISHED APARTMENT WITH TERRACE**

- Property Size: 104m2
- Bedrooms: 1
- Bathrooms: 1.5
- Price: \$ 124.000

**📍 EL CENTRO, PARQUE CALDERON**

**FOR  
SALE**



## **BEAUTIFUL TURNKEY APARTMENT**

- Property Size: 130 m2
- Bedrooms: 3
- Bathrooms: 3
- Year Built: 2013
- Garages: 1
- Price: \$ 179.000

**📍 ORDOÑEZ LASSO**

**FOR  
SALE**



## **TURN-KEY LUXURY FLAT WITH ALL THE AMENITIES**

- Property Size: 132m2
- Bedrooms: 2
- Bathrooms: 2
- Year Built: 2015
- Price: \$ 189.900

**📍 ORDOÑEZ LASSO**

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Hi! My name is Isaac May,  
expert real estate agent,  
& my passion is to be at your service.

My mission is to help you find the home  
of your dreams, giving advice and guiding  
my clients through the purchase process,  
so they can achieve their goal.



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