

# CUENCA expats magazine

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# CUENCA expats magazine

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**23**

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# PUBLISHER'S LETTER



## Hello, Everyone!

We have a couple of very exciting things to tell you about. First, we are thrilled to announce the inaugural Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award. What is this you ask?

Governor Xavier Enderica Salgado of Azuay is aware of the many contributions that English-speaking expats are making to the community and wishes to publicly honor these efforts with a special award. Cuenca Expats Magazine is proud to partner with the governor's office.

To nominate someone, send an email to [events@expatsmags.com](mailto:events@expatsmags.com) following the format below. Name - Email Address - Phone Number - Organization - Description of Activity (100 words or less) The deadline for submission is March 30, but don't delay...do it today! For more information, please go to page 9 in this Issue.

Secondly, have you had a problem finding a current issue of Cuenca Expat Magazine? You can now pick up a copy at SuperMaxi, starting with the store in El Vergel. That's right! Pick up your copy of Cuenca Expat Magazine as you do your grocery shopping.

I'm going to sign off for now but hope you all had a great Carnival and are enjoying the great weather Cuenca has to offer this time of year.

Blessings,

**Brian Gary** - [musodude@gmail.com](mailto:musodude@gmail.com)

## CONTRIBUTORS



Native New Yorker **Madelaine Barry** came to Ecuador in August of 2016 from Chiangmai, Thailand. Before that, she taught for eight years at an international school in Shanghai, China. She appreciates the chance to meet her interviewees, whom she might never have met otherwise.



**Nancy Laughlin** is a recently retired Marriage and Family Therapist from Sacramento, California. In her earlier life she served in the US Army as a reporter and editor, and later wrote feature stories for a daily newspaper in the Louisville, Kentucky area. Nancy currently enjoys creating abstract art. Contact: [nancylaughlin4change@yahoo.com](mailto:nancylaughlin4change@yahoo.com)



**Melody J. Crabb**, a graduate of Trinity University, moved to Cuenca 3-years ago with her husband Jeff. Prior to retiring, this native Texan was an educator at all levels. Since arriving to Cuenca, she has been involved in many community activities. Melody is a proud mother of four children and two dachshunds.



**Ed Lindquist** is Managing Partner of Cuenca Expats Magazine. After a successful international business career, he moved to Cuenca 4 1/2 years ago. Lindquist lives in el Centro where he enjoys being in the city center with its many vibrant culture activities and restaurant offerings. Lindquist is also an active supporter of numerous charitable activities contributing to the betterment of the community.



**Bartley J. D'Alfonso** is a 65-year old retired postal clerk from California, an avid photographer and writer, and Cuenca expat. Many of his photo-articles have been published in various magazines, newspapers, and internet travel websites. He invites all to his photo website at: [www.bdalfonso.zenfolio.com](http://www.bdalfonso.zenfolio.com). Contact: [bdalfonso.ec@gmail.com](mailto:bdalfonso.ec@gmail.com)



**Eukaris Maurera**, was born in Venezuela, she is author of Articles in the Journal of Internal Medicine of the Society of Internal Medicine-Venezuela and co-author in other articles. Author of chapters in the book of Therapeutic Medicine. Currently in Chile.



**Lucia Espinoza** grew up in New York and moved back to Ecuador eight years ago with her family. Soon she will earn her law degree from the University of Azuay. During her free time, she volunteers at an animal shelter and helps to raise funds to cover the different expenses involved in the care of the rescued dogs.



**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.



**Katy Johnson** has happily lived in Cuenca for 6 years with her husband of 48 years, Eric. She is a retired RN of 30 years experience in medical/surgical, teaching, ob/gyn, home care and hospice nursing. Learning about Cuenca's medical and palliative care system is one of her passions.



**Rich Westcott** and Pat, his wife of 49 years, came to Cuenca in 2011. Rich is the founder of Cuenca Bagels. After 30 years in the supermarket industry he spent 21 years as a full-time children's magician, working primarily with pre-school children. You can find him on YouTube doing magic in Cuenca.

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presents



The characteristic flavor of *blue cheeses* (cow and goat) tends to be sharp and salty. The smell of this food is due both to the mold and to types of bacteria encouraged to grow on the cheese.

Some blue cheeses are injected with spores before the curds form, and others have spores mixed in with the curds after they form.

Cheese plate pairings. Blue cheese is one of the best cheese with fruit. Blue cheese pairs beautifully with honey, dried fruit, apple or pear slices, figs and walnuts. For something special try serving blue cheese with Cranberry and dried cherry sauce.

*Bene Placito* is an artisan goods store focused on the needs of the expat community. We sell Italian aged cheeses and complements such as wine, olive oil, honey and much more. We also specialize in New York style pastries and other baked goods.

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📷 Photograph by Luis Nieto - Juan Diego Vélez

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**Doctor**  
Santiago González



# Implantando Sonrisas *Implanting Smiles*

Doctor Santiago Gonzales of Implaesthetics

By Henry Noel - Photographs by Luis Nieto and Juan Diego Vélez

There was a time when, destination United States, was the go-to place for medical and dental needs, but with skyrocketing costs and insurance limitations, people are now seeking alternatives to the United States. Ecuador has become that destination, and Cuenca the go-to place, and with the talents of professionals such as Dr. Santiago Gonzáles it's no wonder at all.

Few professional titles can illicit as wide a variety of preconceptual reactions in people as the title "Dentist". From anxiety to down-right fear, dentists carry the stigma that turns children and most adults into cringing, mouth-grabbing toddlers. This may have been a justification in the past, but now knowledge, technology and talent has completely changed the dental profession.

There is no better exemplification than Dr. Santiago Gonzáles of Implaesthetics whose motto is "Implanting Smiles." A native of Azogues, Dr. González, being an artist and sculpturist in his youth, received encouragement from his sister-in-law to use his talents and study dentistry. At 17, and through the support of his mother, brothers and sisters, Cuenca became his new home, sharing an apartment with friends and attending the University of Cuenca studying dentistry.

As a child he wanted to be a priest, but, as he grew up, a mentor explained to him there were many ways to serve God, for example, being a missionary. This longing to help others stayed with him, and, upon graduating, when it was time to perform his internship, he chose a place where no one wanted to go—the border with Peru in medical centers working with the Shuar communities. Seldom requiring his dental skills, he assisted with pregnancies, snake-bite and scorpion-sting victims. But the most important learning he received was survival. Purifying water to drink, traveling through the jungle, hunting and fishing for food were everyday events for him—the same as for everyone in the community. His initial desire to help never waned and this humanizing experience instilled in him a gratitude for the conveniences we all take for granted like water, electricity and food, and throughout, his experiences fanned the flames of his desire to help others. He taught himself Portuguese to prepare himself for his postgraduate studies in Brazil where he specialized in aesthetics at the University of Uningá, in Baurú, São Pablo and later, oral implants at the Metropolitan University of Santos in Santos, São Pablo. Always a frequent reminder of his humble time serving in the Shuar community, he finds ways to help everyone regardless of their resources.

"Implantando Sonrisas" is the motto of Implaesthetics. And implanting Smiles is exactly what they do. Implaesthetics is derived by combining the two specialties Dr. González loves, that



Modern dental equipment

of implants and aesthetics. Dr. González explains, “Many people aren’t able to smile because they don’t have any teeth, so the first step would be to place dental implants and then the teeth will be placed on top until finally a smile is designed according to the patients face size and gender.” He continues, “So the name ‘Colocar Implants’ is for placing dental implants and designing smiles, so everything will be in harmony. The saying in the clinic is ‘Implantando Sonrisas,’ Implanting (Placing) Smiles.”

With the assistance of several professionals the clinic offers many services: Cirugía Oral (Oral Surgery), Endodoncia (Root Canal), Estética Dental (Cosmetic Dentistry), Odontopediatría (Pediatric Dentistry), Ortodoncia (Orthodontics), Periodoncia (Periodontics), Implantes Oral (Oral Implants), and Rehabilitación Oral (Oral Rehabilitation).

This is a “state-of-the-art” clinic with the latest in new equipment. Each piece of equipment is specific to each of the areas of dentistry performed in the clinic. “Our way to show respect to our patients is to have a place equipped the right way so they can feel comfortable and satisfied with the attention they’re getting,” says Dr. González proudly.

Dr. González explains how nowadays dentistry is a compliment of all areas covering all specialties, and he recommends this practice because it wasn’t long ago when a person would graduate from a dental school and began performing specialty treatments they were not qualified to perform, and this was wrong. That is why the staffing of his

clinic is with specialists in all areas of dentistry. This assures the patient will receive the best attention and attain the best results.

Dr. González has built relationships with the best dental laboratories in Cuenca, Guayaquil, and Quito assuring the patient receives the best quality components. “The dentist and the dental lab must complement each other because, if a crown is being placed in a patient’s mouth, and it is made wrong, then your job as a dentist is also compromised,” says Dr. González emphatically.

Dr. González appreciates honesty and believes it is a value everyone should have. When he performs a treatment, he prefers to tell his patients exactly what their condition is, what his diagnosis is and the pros and cons of the treatment, so everything is clear and addressed from the start. “Many times, a patient comes to the office with unrealistically high hopes for a certain result. This must be explained truthfully,” Dr. Gonzalez states passionately.

Dr. González is limited verbally in English, but he understands English well and makes himself understood. He is studying English, so he can better express himself and provide better attention and service to his clients. The other professionals in the clinic do speak English.





## MEET THE DENTISTS OF IMPLAESTHETICS

DR. SANTIAGO GONZALES | Periodontics, Oral Implantology, Dental Aesthetics.

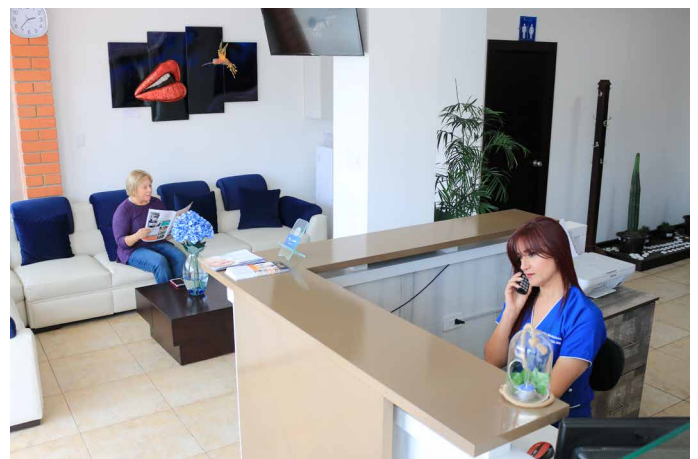
DRA. MARIA DANIELA ANDRADE SOLIS | Pediatric Dentistry

DRA. DIANA MONSERRAT MARIN ARIAS | Orthodontics

DRA. MARIA PAZ PIEDRA ZAVALA | Endodontics



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## Melody J Crabb



I am a native Texan. Because my dad was in the Air Force, I was a military brat and offered the opportunity to travel and attend international schools all over the world. My greatest experience was living in Cairo, Egypt, and attending Cairo American College. After school, I moved back to San Antonio, Texas, to continue my studies. It was there that I met and married my husband of almost 30 years, Jeff Crabb. Jeff is a retired deputy sheriff. We have four beautiful children and one amazing grandson. I have been in the education field for 20+ years, specializing in Special Education and STEM Education while working at inner city schools. I also serve as Cuenca Expats Magazine's Special Events Manager.

### Why Cuenca?

My husband and I took an exploratory vacation in 2012 to Ecuador. We always knew that we would be retiring in South America, we just hadn't decided where our final stomping grounds would be. It was during that trip that we first discovered Cuenca and knew instantly that it would be the place we would retire. We found our paradise. The old cobblestone streets, unique architecture, beautiful natural landscapes, family traditions, historical sites, and overall beauty and charm of the city won our hearts. We immediately returned to Texas to begin our two-year journey back to Cuenca. We officially retired in Cuenca in 2014.

### Who is your hero(s) and why?

My heroes are my great-grandparents Perry T. Ford and Flossie Ziegler Ford. Born in the early 1900s, both my great-grandparents realized the importance of an education for all people—primarily women. My great-grandfather, who was an engineer by trade, supported my great-grandmother in all her endeavors. He was the driving force behind my great-grandmother being a rebel in her time. She was the first woman in her neighborhood to drive a car and obtain a college education. She held official offices while serving her community. She was a successful wife, mother, and career woman. Her courage and my great-grandfather's inspiration led to a family of strong women that believed in making a difference in the world.

### How would you describe yourself in three words?

I would describe myself as an independent, compassionate, free-spirit. Yeah, I love chasing butterflies!

### What are you most passionate about?

My greatest passion is to care for others—primarily those that cannot care for themselves. My calling is working with children and animals. I am very passionate about these two specific groups because, many times, I have found that children and animals have no control over their environment thus their destiny is left in the hands of others. If I can provide guidance, support, encouragement, and maybe a smile or two, perhaps I can help make their lives a little happier.

### What is your favorite daily wear attire?

I am a straight-up pajama girl! If given the choice, I would spend my days in jammies, drinking coffee and reading a book. Now, that's not to say that I do not like the occasional "dress-up" affairs! Sometimes just wearing an elegant dress to a special event makes me feel great.

### What's the magic formula for success?

I don't believe that there is a "magic formula" for success. Success, for me, comes from within. It is not about figuring out a formula so much as figuring out yourself...who you are and what you want to achieve. Desires, dreams, hard-work, and gratifications all look different for each individual. The key is figuring out what works for you and having the courage to trust yourself.

### What is your favorite "pig-out" food?

My all-time favorite "pig-out" food is Italian. I love everything on the menu; lasagna, ravioli, chicken alfredo, pizza...all of it. Add garlic bread sticks along with a fresh salad and a glass of wine and I am in heaven!

Cuenca Expats Magazine Presents

# Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award

By Madelaine Barry - Photograph Courtesy of Gobernación del Azuay



Governor Xavier Enderica Salgado announces Expat Humanitarian Award

Do you know someone who reads to the blind, tutors students, cares for orphans, shares their medical talents, aids battered women, feeds and/or neuters animals, cleans up litter or otherwise works to beautify Cuenca and its surrounding areas?

English-speaking expats have brought their tradition of voluntarism and generosity to their newly adopted country of Ecuador. Many of these efforts go unnoticed. No longer.

Governor Xavier Enderica Salgado of Azuay is aware of the many contributions expats are making to the community and wishes to publicly honor these efforts with a special award. Cuenca Expats Magazine has teamed up with the governor's office to announce the inaugural Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award.

Azuay is one of the provinces that has seen the positive effects from its expat community's charitable efforts. Silently contributing, no recognition sought, and tirelessly giving of themselves, these outsiders work hard to bridge the gap between themselves and their adopted community, demonstrating their desire to "fit in, be accepted, and help those in need."

Besides the obvious recognition of a deserving person, the award hopes to encourage others by showcasing the wide range of philanthropic opportunities available in this province and to build awareness of expats as productive members of their community.

Here's where Cuenca Expats Magazine's readers come in. We need your help in finding these "unsung heroes." We

need you to nominate an individual who works to elevate life in Azuay in either public or private ways. If you know of more than one deserving person, that's OK because multiple as well as self-nominations will be accepted. Here is the format to follow.

**Name:** John Doe

**Email Address:** johndoe@gmail.com

**Phone Number:** 099 999 9999

**Organization:** None

**Description of Activity (100 words or less):** Once a month, John personally donates all the medical supplies for a free dental clinic for under-privileged Ecuadorian children. In six months, 50 children received dental care—some for the first time ever in their lives.

All nominations need to be sent to [events@expatsmags.com](mailto:events@expatsmags.com). The deadline is March 30, but, if you're anything like me, do it today!

All candidates will receive a certificate and a picture with the Governor. Five finalists will be featured in Cuenca Expats Magazine and attend a special event during which the winner will be announced.

In these days of local and world news lacking positivity, here's an "excuse" to look around for people making magnanimous contributions. Oh, and did I mention, you can nominate yourself?

All of us at Cuenca Expats Magazine look forward to reading about the many English-speaking expat contributors living in Azuay!

# TAI CHI IN CUENCA

By Rich Westcott - Photographs Courtesy of Rich Westcott



As we age, flexibility and equilibrium are more and more important in preventing falls and other injuries. Tai Chi not only improves these factors, but respiration improves as does cardiac health. It is practicing meditation in movement.

Recently, a fellow gringo suffered a heart attack and needed open-heart surgery. This was made memorable by the offers of four times the amount of blood needed for his surgery. Cuenca hospital staff were amazed at the response.

Wayne Materi has said, "Tai Chi was an integral part of my quick recovery from open-heart surgery. I highly recommend it for healthy joints, good balance, muscle tone, and concentration."

Fortunately, Cuenca has three well-known instructors: Manuel Dutan, Freddy Zúñiga, and Eduardo González.

Manuel is the senior of the instructors. Besides studying here, he lived in China for four years studying their martial arts. He teaches both Yang and Chen forms of Tai Chi as well as Qi Gong, Kung Fu, and various weapons associated with them. He has studied Tai Chi for 30 years.

Manuel has a studio at Padre Matovelle 7-55, west of Ricardo Muñoz, on the third floor. He has morning classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7:00 and 10:00. He also offers a class on Saturday mornings from 8:00 until 10:00. This is mainly a Tai Chi class that teaches self-defense as well. His e-mail is [mdutan2001@yahoo.com](mailto:mdutan2001@yahoo.com).

Freddy studied with Manuel and then went on to further his studies in Peru. He teaches Chen style Tai Chi and a sword form as well.

Freddy holds classes four times a week. He is at Parque de la Madre on Saturdays from 8:00-9:00. Other times are Wednesday and Friday, 7:30-8:30.

Eduardo is a Venezuelan who has studied Tai Chi for over 25 years. Before dedicating his life to teaching, Eduardo lectured and gave workshops on topics such as Leadership and Stress Management, always including Tai Chi movements, breathing exercises, and short meditation. He closed his two TV programs in Venezuela with a Tai Chi or Chi Kung Movement.

Eduardo holds classes at SkyFit next to Parque Calderón and across from Teatro Sucre. Classes are Wednesday and Friday morning from 10:00-11:00. For information and registration contact Sky Rajewski: [skyfit@gmail.com](mailto:skyfit@gmail.com). He also holds classes along the Tomebamba across from the Vegetable Bar. Classes are Monday and Wednesday 7:30-8:30 and Sunday 8:00-9:00. His e-mail is [egz1111@gmail.com](mailto:egz1111@gmail.com).

For related costs please contact each person; each has their pluses and minuses.

The author began his study of Tai Chi in the United States in 2010 with a sifu (master) who, 12 years previously, had battled cancer. The muscles in her legs had seriously atrophied. She began her study of Tai Chi and was, at 72, fully recovered.

Whether stressed or not, the quiet time in Manuel's studio isolates the author from everything else. With a view on all sides of Cuenca's mountains and meditative music playing, it is a time away from all else. When he leaves, he is refreshed and at peace.



# EL PEDREGAL AZTECA

## RESTAURANTE MEXICANO

• DESDE 1989 •

## El Pedregal Azteca

Serving Authentic Mexican Cuisine with a Modern Touch

By Ed Lindquist and Lucia Espinoza - Photographs Courtesy of El Pedregal Azteca and viajesvistalsur.com

While other restaurants come and go, El Pedregal Azteca has been serving delicious Mexican food for almost 30 years. El Pedregal Azteca moved to its current location 4 years ago into a setting representing classical Mexican architecture, furniture and fixtures, but with a modern touch.

For years, Juan Manuel and his wife Maria have been serving customers delicious, healthy dishes cooked in old-site way, everything made from scratch. This is not Tex-Mex but traditional. Plus, there is little turnover in the staff ensuring teamwork resulting in excellent customer service.

Having grown up in the restaurant, son Pablo has now joined the family business in transitioning to the next generation. Pablo



The classic “Chile en Nogada”

or fajitas. Served with guacamole, frijoles, drink and desert. All this for just \$6.50 (if you don't want the soup, the price is \$5).

It's 2X1 time. Tuesday through Friday from 12:30 to 3pm and again from 7 to 9pm. Mojito, Gin and Tonic, Cuba Libre and the best Margarita in town!

While most restaurants are closed on Sunday, El Pedregal Azteca is open from noon until 3pm. Great way to spend mid-day Sundays, especially with the new terrace.

The Ramos family invites the expat community to drop by and see all the new updates. For those who have never visited before, you're in for a real treat.



New Terrace with spectacular view

brings new energy and a creative flair to the family business. New menu items have been added. You will notice a different color schemes. There is even more room for larger parties. An expanded bar has been completed with featuring only high-quality liquor. There is even a “noche de vinilos” once a month with a DJ planning old LP's. A new upstairs terrace with a specular view of city's skyline is now open. The new terrace has its own bar and is available for everyday seating or can be reserved for special occasions.

El Pedregal Azteca serves a lunch special during the week. Soup of the day, and your choice of burrito, enchiladas, tacos



Mexican Chic Interior Design

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f El Pedregal Azteca

## Louis & Don Chavez

by Nancy Laughlin



### Where did you live before moving to Cuenca?

**L:** We moved from Round Rock, Texas, a bedroom community right outside of Austin. But we spent most of our lives in California. We also lived in Taos, New Mexico for a while.

### What did you do before moving to Cuenca?

**L:** Don had already retired but I was still working for a bank, in their loan servicing department. I headed a group that sold foreclosures.

**D:** I was in hotel management, having worked for Accor, La Quinta Inns and Suites, Hilton and Starwood over the course of a decade.

### What were your family's and friends' reactions when you told them you were moving to Ecuador?

**L:** Most were supportive, even though they didn't really know where Ecuador was. Most of them thought it was in Central America. Some were envious that we would make such a major move. A couple figured it was an experiment and we would be back in a few months.

**D:** "Are you crazy?!" was the initial response, followed closely by "Why?"

### How long have you been here?

**L:** Two years in October - so we still consider ourselves relatively newcomers.

### When and why did you start thinking about living overseas?

**D:** In the spring of 2014, my beautiful bride of 15 years, turned to me one morning, as the rosy tendrils of dawn crept up the retreating wall of darkness and said, "I'll be retiring next year, (I already had retired) so find us a place outside the U.S. to live." To hear is to obey.

**L:** We started exploring places in the US and it quickly became evident that we couldn't find the right combination of factors there. We had lived in hot, humid weather for several years and wanted a temperate climate. That is difficult to find in the US and when you do, it's expensive. Overseas started offering the options we put on our "must have" list.

### Why Ecuador and specifically Cuenca?

**L:** We are comfortable around the Latin community, especially with Donald's heritage and where we have lived. Panama, Costa Rica and other Central American countries were too hot. We like the mountains and had lived at altitude before so it appealed. Also, I wanted a mid-size city; the size of Cuenca is ideal for me. Culturally, it has a lot to offer. The people

we have encountered are warm and helpful, and it just has a good feeling for us.

**D:** During the research for retirement havens, we looked at the usual places, Panama, Costa Rica, Belize, Nicaragua. Ecuador kept popping up. Quito was too big a city for our taste. We ruled out the coastal area; after eight years in Texas, humidity was the last thing I wanted. We had lived for five years in Taos, New Mexico and loved the climate and altitude, so Cuenca fit the bill in terms of climate, size, activity potential. And it didn't hurt that Ecuador was on the U.S. dollar standard. We came on our exploratory in September of 2014 and on the morning of October 8, 2015, we landed in Cuenca, with a dog, a cat and 14 suitcases to boldly retire where no Chavez has retired before.

**L:** Ha! We are retired - we do anything we want. We walk around the city, travel, see friends, try new experiences - everything we can now that we have time. I like to dig in my garden and walk my dog.

**D:** Eat, drink, zip line (not while drinking), cultural events, read, meeting new and interesting people, jazz, music in general, and then of course, enjoy the company of my beautiful wife.

**L:** Climate, culture, views, people - we have met more compatible people here than anywhere else we lived. Yes, cost of living is a factor but not the most important.

**D:** Diversity of the cultural. Also the musical and social activities of both the local and expat communities. The food, the people, and the ambience of an old and ancient area where several civilizations have risen and fallen.



**What, if anything, do you miss most from "back home"?**

**L:** Not much of anything - except I can't get Crest toothpaste and I've used it since I was a kid.

**D:** American beef.

**Are you completely retired?**

**L:** Absolutely!!!

**D:** Yes, and now everyday is Saturday.

**What events or activities do you recommend for newcomers to meet new friends?**

**L:** Personally, I recommend walking around the city; smile at people, engage them in conversation. The more you get out, the more people you will meet and they will connect you to others. Join a club if that is your thing; there are plenty. Take a class in whatever interests you. Just put yourself out there. Get into a Spanish class and enjoy it if you don't already speak the language. Even if you mess up, locals will appreciate the effort.

**L:** And don't be afraid to start practicing Spanish and reaching out and making Ecuadorian friends and contacts.



# Cuenca's Small Fleet of Women Taxi Drivers

Cuenca's four thousand taxis are so plentiful that they can be taken for granted.

By Bartley D'Alfonso - Photographs by Bartley D'Alfonso

Cuenca's 4,000 taxis are so plentiful that they can be taken for granted.

Yet most passengers probably do not know that their cab driver is earning a small amount only after first having to invest – that is, to borrow - up to \$80,000 to drive you to your hotel, restaurant, office, park, or airport. That is the average amount of money all taxi drivers first need to pay to be issued their permits, license, insurance and to buy the yellow cab they own.

The first step is to pay \$40,000 to the Azuay Province government to receive a permit. Then there is a \$130 fee to apply for their professional category "C" driver's license from the Agencia Nacional de Tránsito, which is valid for five years. But there's another requirement: a mandatory six-month training course costing \$1,500, from the Syndicate of Professional Drivers of Azuay, where future taxi drivers must learn some basic English; the motor vehicle code; and the main transportation byways of Cuenca and surrounding areas.

Every taxi is bought and owned by the driver (not by any taxi company), which can add between \$20,000 up to \$25,000, depending on the vehicle make, model and year. It costs an average of \$600 extra to get the yellow paint job, and the orange license plate is \$28.

Just like in the States, there is no escape from the tax collector, the SRI. Depending on one's annual income (what gets reported, that is) the driver pays up to \$200,000 every six months for a tax called the Impuesto al Rodaje (literally, "a shooting tax").

There is one drawback to being self-employed, which all taxistas agree upon: because they do not pay into the government IESS health insurance plan, they are not covered and have to buy private health insurance for themselves and their family. Since they are also required to carry vehicular insurance, they can pay up to an extra \$500 monthly, depending on the terms of their policy. Most drivers spend \$10 daily for gasoline.

All of these overhead costs are especially cumbersome for the few taxi drivers who are women, of which there are only 10 female taxistas in Cuenca. And they each have something in common: they are divorced or separated and are the single breadwinner trying to support and provide for their children and extended family, all the while paying out-of-pocket expenses for gasoline, license renewals, taxes, repairs, and maintenance needed to stay afloat. That explains why most of them need to work six days a week, and up to 12-hour days.

During a recent interview with one female driver, Patricia Paderes, she shared that, indeed, all of her colleagues are single-income family supporters.

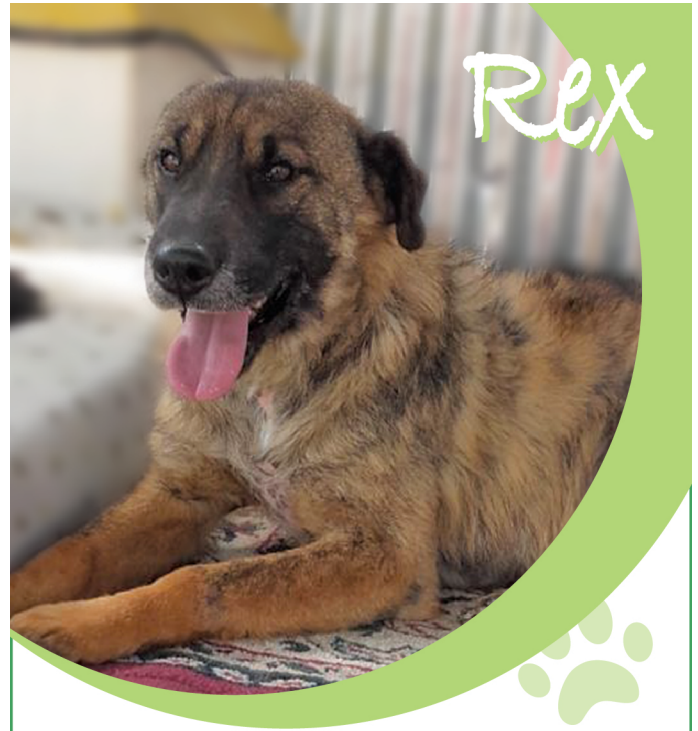


"At first some of the men (drivers) resented our presence, thinking we were depriving another man of feeding his family. Others felt that our proper roles were to stay home with the children and clean house and cook all day." However, she added that now, they have accepted them in their male-dominated ranks, and that "The men are very protective of our safety. They quickly respond to any emergency calls on our radios or cell phones." When I asked Patricia if, overall, it was safe for women to drive taxis in Cuenca, she immediately smiled and said, "Yes, especially with the gringos, who always are so polite, respectful and friendly."



With all of these expenses, why do so many drive a taxi cab at all? Patricia said that there are still many benefits which she greatly enjoys: being independent and being her own boss, allowing her to choose her work schedule and thus accommodate her family's needs.





Rex

## Peluditos

**Rex** was rescued from the streets by one of our volunteers. He was found malnourished and with a severe skin condition. He's been in treatment for a long time now and in the last 8 months he's been able to grow back almost all of his hair.

Rex is now a healthy dog, he's been neutered, dewormed and up to date on his vaccinations. He's very calm and gets along with other dogs.

Rex has been in the shelter for over 3 years now and is waiting for his forever home. If you would like to open your heart up to this amazing little guy or any of his friends from our shelter, please contact us.

Call Martha Parra - Spanish - 099 561 9212  
 Lucía Espinoza - English/Spanish - 098 381 1641  
 or email [peluditos@gmail.com](mailto:peluditos@gmail.com)

In the next few months we'll be having a Gala to raise funds for the shelter. Stay tuned!

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# Cuenca Medical Resources: A Free Internet Source of Information

By Katy Johnson - Photograph Courtesy of Cuenca Medical Resources



A little-known resource for expats has been quietly evolving over the past few years. A small group of volunteers including some retired nurses has compiled medical recommendations from expats in Cuenca.

What began as a series of seminars has morphed into a free internet source for English speakers seeking information on medical personnel, how to prepare for medical emergency, or how to find assisted living or palliative care options in Cuenca. The web link can be found by entering Cuenca Medical Resources in a search engine or by <https://www.internationalchristiancommunity.org/medical>

Because the initial seminars seemed helpful, the volunteer group continues to condense and organize the material. For the past three to four years, volunteer group members shared their talents and gifts as their time allowed; the group evolved along with the mass of data.

It was exciting to gather new recommendations relating to health care: the use of bilingual medical facilitators, bilingual caregivers, alternative medicine practitioners, and bilingual taxi drivers for transportation to medical appointments or during medical emergencies.

The option of an internet website became a reality when International Christian Community (ICC), as a service to the wider public, offered a free link using their web page. Besides

the monthly cost of maintaining the weblink, ICC agreed to pay for a webmaster to put periodic updates onto the Medical Resource link as directed by the volunteer group.

As stated on the home page of the Medical Resource link, this compilation of expat recommendations is to be used as a point of beginning research into health care options. The site itself makes no recommendations and claims no responsibility for damages arising from the use of the information. No one pays to be listed. Self-referral is not allowed. New recommendations can be emailed to [cuencaomedicalresources@gmail.com](mailto:cuencaomedicalresources@gmail.com). When a recommendation is received, permission for listing and confirmation of contact information is done through the volunteer committee.

In addition to a directory of professionals listed by specialty, the reader can access suggested steps for preparing for a medical emergency. While navigating through Ecuador's medical system, the expat can expect differences above and beyond the language barrier.

Cuenca Medical Resources plans to continue to expand its database through expat recommendations. Facilitating expat research into health care options is part of the volunteer group's mission statement. Enhancing the link between Cuenca's medical community and expats is the goal.

# Amedeo Chocolate: The Food of the Gods

By Bartley J. D'Alfonso - Photographs by Bartley J. D'Alfonso

Here's a challenge worth taking: just try to say the word "chocolate" without breaking into a happy smile! And soon your smile will turn into a big Cheshire grin, with good reason: a new chocolate confectioners shop will open in the heart of Cuenca's central district. Chef Ruth Mahoney, a graduate of Ecole Chocolat, recently created Amedeo Chocolate™, specializing in artisan hand-crafted gourmet products. Why do they use the name Amedeo? Ruth said that it is Italian and means "for the Love of God," and their confections rightfully deserve to be called heavenly and divine. Ruth emphasized, "It's all about the cacao beans." She selects only rare, heirloom-certified beans from three cacao plantations in coastal Ecuador, and from another plantation in Tumbres, Perú. Each bean is individually inspected and selected by hand to ensure purity, flavor, and aroma.

Each fruit of the cacao tree (seed pods) contain between 40 and 60 compacted beans and are covered with a white, fluffy, edible fruit tasting like a cross between papaya, mango, and kiwi. After fermentation and drying, the beans arrive at the Amedeo factory and are hand selected and then roasted. Then they are ground to separate the dried husks. The next step is to crush the beans into broken pieces (called "nibs") and refined until they reach ten microns. This releases and blends the acidic chemicals while creating an amazing sensory taste (see sidebar for the difference between cacao and cocoa). Finally, the chocolate undergoes constant stirring (called "conching") which evenly distributes and smoothens the molecules. Ruth explained, "We treat our chocolate like fine wine. We let it age for up to 60 days, allowing all of the chemical flavors and crystals to blend and bind together." From there, the processed

products are poured into molds and shaped into bars. Ruth added, "Nothing is ever wasted. The dried outer husks of the beans are shredded and sold as delicious chocolate flavored tea. Even the pods are dried and sold as decorative items. They can be made into miniature planters and lanterns filled with candle wax."

Amedeo's main line of confectioner products includes 3 different dark chocolate 70% bars made only with cacao beans and organic cane sugar and a dark milk chocolate 53% bar to which premium milk is added. They also sell sugar-free dark chocolate 79%, using natural stevia, for those connoisseurs who prefer to avoid sugar. In addition, Ruth also features a new

line of 6 to-die-for chocolate truffles called the Obsession Series (I bravely volunteered to sample each of their truffles, and instantly became addicted to "White Passion," a white chocolate coating filled with vanilla and passion fruit). Their new Indulgence Series Bon Bons are molded on the outside with shiny dark chocolate and filled with fruity flavors which can only be described as "creamy, buttery, velvety, smooth, and with a hint of liquor."

Additionally, you will find on their shelves cocoa powder for drinking chocolate; packages of chocolate flavored tea; hand lotion made with cocoa butter, coconut oil and beeswax; and an exciting new recipe: cacao beans hand-rubbed and coated with liquefied chocolate and then hand-rolled in cocoa powder. Gift boxes of different sizes, filled with varieties of chocolate creations, are also available. After the store's grand opening, connoisseurs will be able visit and also order online.

When you walk into their new store as a mere chocolate hound, you will walk out transformed into an epicurean.



Amedeo's hand crafted chocolate products



Ruth Mahoney and happy chocolatiers

The new Amedeo Chocolate shop is now open at Benigno Malo 5-75 y Calle Larga. Come try our delights.  
Website: [www.AmedeoChocolate.com](http://www.AmedeoChocolate.com). Telephone in Ecuador: 096-984-2877; in the U.S.A.: (916) 716-9294



New remodeling is happening at Fabiano's.

## Expats Having Fun at Fabiano's Pizzería - Bar - Restaurante

Photographs Courtesy of Cuenca Expats Magazine

# Expats in

# Fabiano's

pizzería - bar - restaurante



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Fabiano's new bar area. Cheers!



Jeff, John, and Destin sharing a pizza



We are excited to share the newly remodeled Fabiano's!



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Expats Enjoying Sobremesa Café in Gringolandia  
(across from Riverview Condo Building)

Photographs Courtesy of Cuenca Expats Magazine

# the News



Mike and Yvonne visiting with each other.



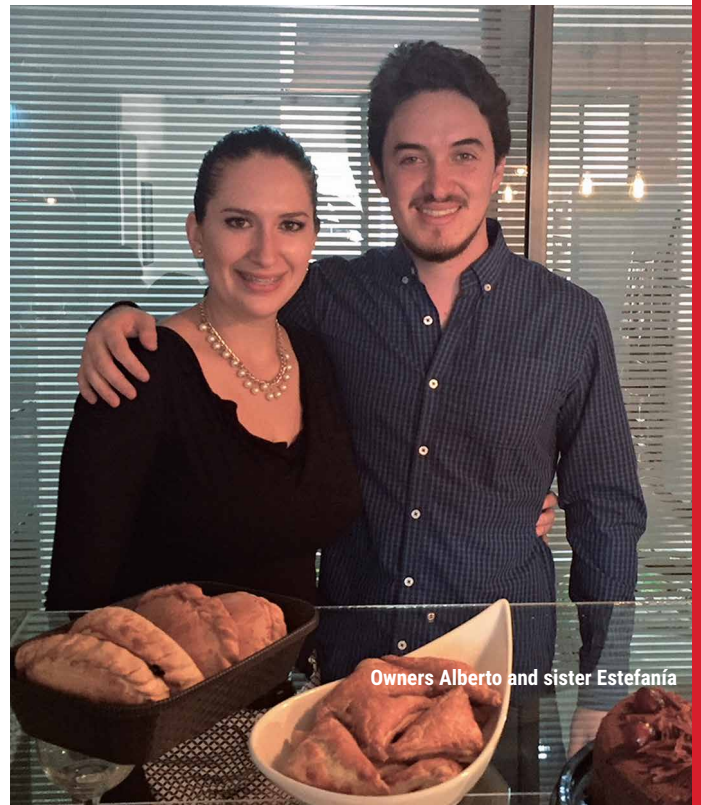
Todd and Mary enjoying a cup of fresh coffee.



Ed and Melody



Great smiles from Paula and Jeff



Owners Alberto and sister Estefanía

# Visiting Quito - Part 1

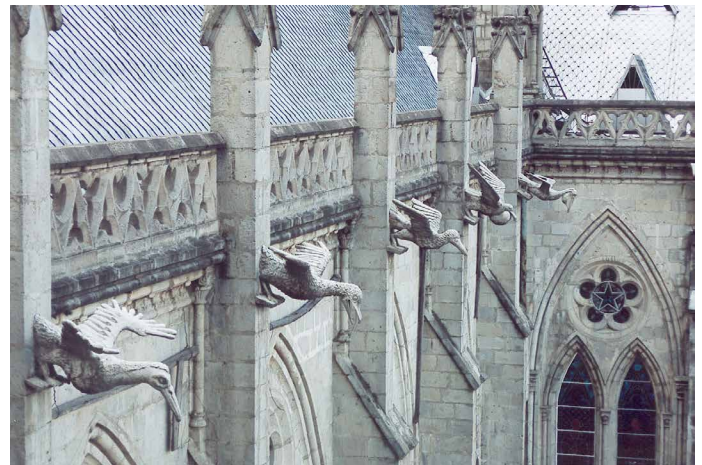
By Eukaris Maurera - Photographs Courtesy of Municipalidad de Quito



continent just behind the Cathedral of Maringá in Brazil at 124 meters.

Instead of gargoyles, the basilica has details highly representative of Ecuador, such as condors, armadillos, giant tortoises from the Galapagos, and iguanas. The condor is the national bird of Ecuador and crowns its national coat of arms, just as it crowns this basilica. From the highest point of the main tower, you can see most of the city and the surrounding mountains. The basilica remains technically "unfinished." Local legend says, "When the basilica is completed, the end of the world will come." It was blessed by Pope John Paul II in 1985 and was consecrated and inaugurated in 1988.

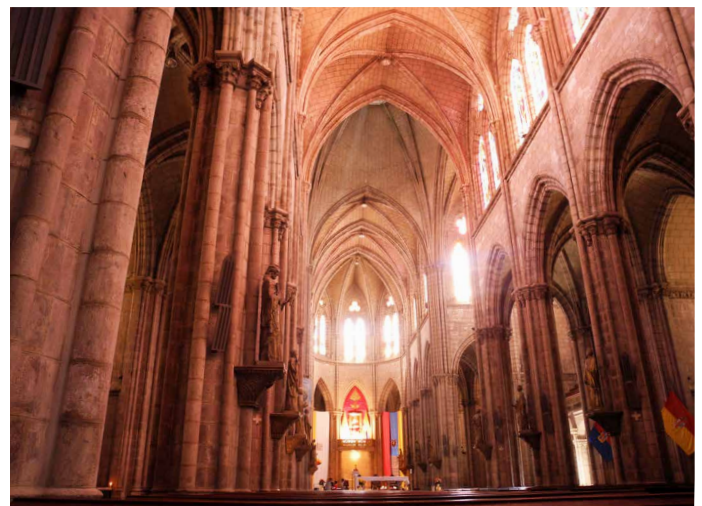
An experience of just one day allows you to see that this is a celestial city. Start with a tour of the main cathedrals including the imposing Roman Catholic Basilica of the National Vow. It is also called the Consecration of Jesus or the Basilica of St. John. This is a stunning, religious building of neo-gothic style in the historical center of the city of Quito. Due to its immense size and style, it is considered the largest neo-gothic Basilica in the Americas.



The City of Quito, frequently referred to as "San Francisco de Quito," is the political capital of the Republic of Ecuador, the oldest of South America and of the Province of Pichincha. It is Ecuador's second largest city and the second most populated in Ecuador. It is also the cantonal or district head of the Metropolitan District of Quito and is currently considered the economic capital of the country.

The architect of the Basilica was the Frenchman Emilio Tarlier, who had already had experience in similar constructions in Spain, France, and England. Constructed at the turn of the 20th century, it was opened in 1909. However, though officiated on October 16, 1919, the service of mass was not celebrated there until 1924.

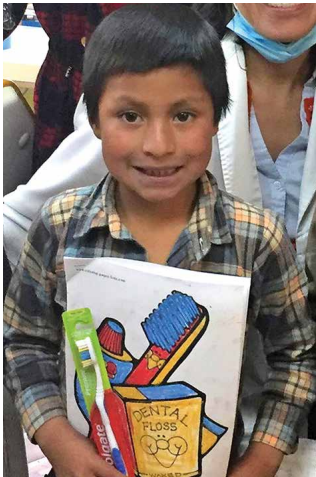
The Basilica is 140 meters long (460 ft.) by 35 meters wide (115 ft.) and 30 meters high (98 ft.) in the sanctuary and 74 m (243 ft.) high in the transept. Two frontal towers reach 115 meters (377 ft.) high, a detail that makes the basilica the second tallest religious structure on the South American



# Introducing the “Your Smile Makes Me Smile” Foundation

Free Dental Care to Impoverished Children in Cuenca and Surrounding Areas

By Melody J. Crabb - Photographs by Melody J. Crabb



10-year-old Edison Zhungo

One child’s story. I have had the pleasure of working closely with the “Your Smile Makes Me Smile” Foundation over the past few months. One of the most rewarding moments thus far involved a 10-year-old boy. At his first visit, he was found still to have four of his baby teeth, which were in very bad condition. Because of his lack of dental care and proper oral hygiene, his adult teeth were

growing in misaligned and through his gums, causing him severe pain. His parents reported that he never smiles and seems to always be sad and shy.

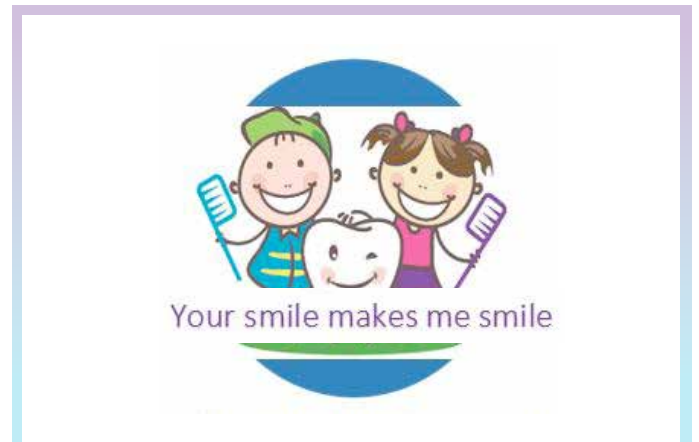
The child explained that he was constantly being teased at school and at home because his breath smelled bad. The child also complained that his older sister did not want to be approached by him as the smell was so unpleasant when he opened his mouth to speak. Upon meeting him, he rarely spoke and never smiled. At the clinic, he was reserved and tended to keep to himself. His parents also appeared to avoid conversation with him. It was immediately decided that he would need all four teeth pulled.

At his second appointment, he walked into the office with a big smile. He told Dr. Grace Ordoñez that he has made new friends and felt “happy” because he no longer had bad breath. He was notably a different child. His eyes sparkled while talking and he was excited to report that he had been brushing his teeth daily. Most importantly, after his first treatment, his adult teeth had already sprouted completely in and were healthy.

The power of a healthy smile can be life-changing. There are many families in Cuenca living in extreme poverty, leading to oral hygiene and dental care being the least of their priorities. The “YOUR SMILE MAKES ME SMILE” foundation offers free dental treatments as well as long-term preventive care to children in Cuenca.

The goal of “YOUR SMILE MAKES ME SMILE” is to provide free dental care to children without resources while also teaching both the parents and children about good oral health. “The work we do is of countless importance while filling

us with pride since in most cases it is the very first visit the child has ever had to a dentist office,” stated Priscila Mendez. The foundation seeks out impoverished families in the Cuenca community and surrounding areas.



## How can you help?

- Sponsor a child for \$20 – each sponsorship goes to buy supplies and materials, transportation to and from the clinic, and a comprehensive treatment plan for each child at no cost to the family
- Make referrals to the foundation for children in need
- Spread the word about the “YOUR SMILE MAKES ME SMILE” free clinics
- Contact the foundation at [graceord13@hotmail.com](mailto:graceord13@hotmail.com) or call 07-409-1958

Our goal is to reach five children a month, changing the lives of 60 children a year.



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### Baked Goods of the Month

## Gluten-Free Bread

Photograph by Luis Nieto - Juan Diego Vélez

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What's gluten-free? Gluten-free products exclude gluten, a mixture of proteins found in wheat and related grains including barley, rye, oat, and all their formss. Some claim health benefits of eating gluten-free.

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# Cuatro Ríos

## Artisan Beer in an Historic Setting

By Madelaine Barry - Photographs Courtesy of Cuatro Ríos



Isn't it captivating to hear the twists and turns of people's life stories? Here is one such story, and it's still evolving! Start with an Ecuadorian securing an international scholarship to pursue an engineering degree, a question of why there can't be a reasonably costing beverage brought

to an encouraging advisor, and a brewery willing to take a chance on a foreigner. That's just the beginning of the story of the husband and wife team of Edy Ayala, Karina Prado, and Cuatro Rios Beer Garden and Coffee in El Vergel.

About five years ago, Edy went to study abroad. While there, he wrote a proposal to create intelligent software to predict reactions during the brewing process. The supervisor agreed; then, his goal was to find an existing brewery willing to let him use their facilities for his research. Out of 150 email inquiries sent out, only one responded favorably and so began the trial and error work since Edy had no experience in this field. He spent a year experimenting. Unfortunately, the end of the master's program was approaching, so Edy had to return to Ecuador leaving his work behind.

Experimenting began anew here with building a brewery, controlling the mineral content and water pH, acquiring the imported hops and yeast, locating the right equipment and choosing organic carbonation. Meanwhile, Karina got a certificate of Artesanal Brewing from the government, so she understands the process as well.

Fast forward to the recently opened Cuatro Rios, housed in a patriarchal home on the historic Calle de las Herrerías. While the neighboring businesses didn't take too kindly to what they saw as food competition, he assured them his niche doesn't detract from what they offer.

Currently they offer four beers in bottles and on tap. And, from time to time, they brew specialty beers. Soon they hope to open for lunch and dinner and offer expanded food choices to add more variety to their menu.

Future plans include expanding hours for better service, offering tours of the facility, and building greenhouses so they can replicate ideal conditions for growing the hops.



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Owners Edy and Karina

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I represent iMarketsLive, a company founded in New York in 2013. The company has expanded to Latin America last year and has been in Ecuador for about 4 months. iMarketsLive offers an online academy teaching you everything you need to know to start making money by trading in the currency market. You can earn extra money by simply using your own computer at home, or via a smart phone wherever you are. All you need is a good internet connection.

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