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issue
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John and Sharon Corrick new owners



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ISSUE
36

Cuenca Expats Magazine
Cuenca, Ecuador

www.expatsmags.com



Cuenca Expats Magazine

Printer



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27 - 28
SEPTEMBER

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER



Hello, Beautiful Cuenca!

Brrrr...it sure has been cold in Cuenca lately. El Telégrafo reports that El Niño might be responsible for the drastic weather changes occurring across Ecuador. Those I have spoken with lately agree with some stating that this has been the "coldest weather" they have experienced while living here. I have found comfort in warm blankets and thick socks. I think it might be Mother Nature trying to keep us on our toes. But, no worries! We will soon see our beautiful sunny days return as we move into the next few months. Until then, keep yourselves bundled up and healthy!

Two people who continuously amaze me are Jeff Salz and Lisa Jaffe. They would never let something like pouring rains, heavy winds, or snow keep them from continuously exploring Ecuador. These two adventurous travelers have just returned from trip to Cotacachi where they took on Taita Imbabura. On page 16, read how they did as Jeff takes you along on this enlightening journey.

Exciting news...Banco del Austro is introducing the first credit card for expats! Many have asked why such a card is needed. On page 12, Banco del Austro provides six scenarios in

which such a card might come in handy. The article also explains how easy it is to sign up so get your card today.

One last thing. Please remember that several students will be returning to school in the next few days or weeks. Some will need supplies and donations for uniforms. Should you have the capacity to give, I ask that you reach out to the many organizations working with these students. May each child have a joyous, rewarding, and successful school year!

Best regards to all,

Melody J. Crabb

Ps Cuenca Expats Magazine is celebrating its 4th anniversary of publishing. For an interesting interview with Managing Partner Ed Lindquist on the Magazine's history, you'll find the video on Cuenca Expats Magazine Facebook, or go to Youtube and type in Cuenca Expats Magazine.

CONTRIBUTORS



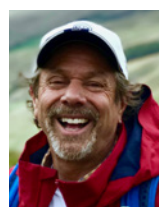
Clay Bodine began his theatrical career in Toronto, Ontario in 1970, and worked professionally in Canada, New York, and Chicago. He transitioned to creative director for Chicago advertising and events. A prolific playwright and theatre director, Clay was one of the original founders of Fishbon and Fishbon del Sur.



Carlos Ramírez is founder and owner of BLUE BOX BROKER. With a degree in engineering, further education in insurance at the SERES DE EXCELENCIA SCHOOL, Ramirez started Blue Box Insurance Broker in 2013.



Bartley J. D'Alfonso is a 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. Contact: bdalfonso.ec@gmail.com



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.



Teresa Drake, formerly of Florida, moved to Cuenca with her husband, 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.



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Dr. Melissa González Urdaneta





You've Got to Have Heart

Introducing Doctora Melissa González Urdaneta

By Teresa Drake

Photographs Courtesy of Dr. Melissa González

There is an old song called "You've Got to Have Heart," and Doctora Melissa González Urdaneta has lots of heart. The cardiovascular/cardiac field is her love. She was born in Caracas, Venezuela, where her parents still reside and her mother is a medical doctor, too. From the time she was 15, Dra. González knew she wanted to be a surgeon. When she went to medical school and was introduced to cardiac surgery, she found her love and her passion.

Dra. González arrived Cuenca in 2015 from her home country of Venezuela where she received her medical degree from the Universidad Central de Venezuela in 2003. Her experience spans almost seven years to graduate as medical doctor, three years in formation as a general surgeon and three more years to get a cardiovascular surgeon degree. When she finished medical school, Dra. González worked two years in general medicine in the private and public sectors. It was during this time that she learned that she wanted to do more challenging procedures that could make a great impact on the lives of others. In order to achieve her goal, Dra. González decided to get her general surgery degree from Hospital Dr. Domingo Luciani and after that her cardiovascular surgery degree from Hospital Militar Universitario Dr. Carlos Arvelo, both of which are large health centers located in Caracas. Following her last graduation, and for the next four years, she worked as a specialist in Caracas both in the public and private sectors doing procedures like bypass surgeries and valve repairs. Dra. González also worked in the area of cardiac and aortic pathologies about which she was even more passionate. A friend of Dra. González suggested that Cuenca may have more opportunities for her. After doing some research, Dra. González found that



Office in Hospital del Rio



In surgery

Cuenca would be an excellent place to practice because of the medical support it offers. Besides its excellent weather, Cuenca's population looked very similar to the people of Venezuela. Once she had all her documents assembled to obtain her permanent professional visa, Dra. González started to practice in Cuenca.

Immediately upon arriving in Cuenca, Dra. González began to work in a public hospital where she continued working in the vascular field using the most advanced technology available. In December 2017, Dra. González earned a position at Hospital Universitario del Río considered by many to be the best private hospital in Azuay. At both of these hospitals she gained experience working with Cuenca's expat community. Her excellent proficiency in English and French, thanks to time spent as a child living in Colorado and Michigan, made it a natural fit.

After a radio program during which she spoke about deep vein thrombosis and cardiovascular disease, she received a call from Dr. Romo, whom many expats know from his work on musculoskeletal pain management. Dra. González began working with Dr. Romo and attending to patients with vascular and other health problems. In Cuenca, Dra. González has decided to work with patients with vascular issues, such as varicose veins, arterial and vein thrombosis, swollen limbs, aneurysms, among

Annual checkups will detect any cardiovascular problems and not only take care of them but possibly prevent a stroke or heart attack.



Dra. Melissa and Team

other vascular problems. She has dedicated herself to the peripheral vascular system and to the diagnosis and treatment of arterial, venous, diabetic foot and lymphatic diseases.

Many people arrive in Cuenca with health issues and decide they are going to start doing things differently.

They start eating healthier and taking lots of walks. Some notice that they have to stop frequently due to pain in their legs, shortness of breath, or sudden fatigue. They believe it is because they are just out of shape, and it will get better. Trouble with the veins in their legs or with their heart never crosses their minds. With heart disease being the number one killer in North America, Dra. González stated that is very important for people over the age of 50 to have a health checkup at least

annually, including a cardiovascular and/or vascular check. If you are a smoker or have diabetes, regular checkups are even more important because these are high risk factors for the cardiovascular system. Diabetes is a major contributor in cardiovascular and vascular problems as well as other

health issues. People with diabetes may not be aware that symptoms they are having, such as pain in the lower limbs, swollen legs, fatigue, shortness of breath, cold feet, changes in the color of the feet or leg ulcers could be warning signs of a vascular/cardiovascular problem or the precursor to a heart attack. Therefore, an annual checkup if healthy or every three to six months if other risk factors are present, is of the utmost importance. These checkups will detect any cardiovascular problems and not only take care of them but possibly prevent a stroke or heart attack. Over 80% of people in the world have cardiovascular problems but are not aware.

The important message that Dra. González would like to give to Cuenca's expat community is this is their time to enjoy life. The best way for them to do that is first to take care of their health and maintain a healthy body. It is very important to have a healthy lifestyle – yearly checkups, proper nutrition, exercise, and no smoking – in order to enjoy a full and healthy life. She is extremely dedicated to providing the very best care to her patients. If you have questions or concerns about your heart or vascular and lymphatic systems, then Dra. González is who you need to ask. She specializes in treatments using advanced medical procedures and is extremely passionate about her chosen field and especially about her patients.

Is it time for a check-up?

*Contact Dra. Melissa González today.
Your life and happiness could depend on it.*



Arterial Thrombosis.
Before: leg with pale color, cold, pain. After: leg recovered



Before & after varicose veins



Dra. Melissa González Urdaneta
Cirujana Cardiovascular



Cirujana Cardiovascular Cuenca Dra.
Melissa González - Tratamientos Várices



@dra.melissagonzalez

CONTACT INFO

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Hospital Universitario Del Río, Av. 24 de Mayo s/n y Av.
De las Américas, Torre de Consultorios, 3rd Floor, #330

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings
Saturday by appointment only

Phone:

(07)245 9553 ext. 2301 or 098 456 4025

Email:

melissasofia@gmail.com

FIT•ALLIANCE

Tu espacio de libertad

This great idea was born eight months ago when three women of three nationalities and three different physical activities met in one place, one atmosphere, one concept. Fit Alliance is a big family in which everyone supports each other on our individual roads to health and peace.



With Rachel: 099 813 5212
Email: junglegymcuenca@gmail.com
f @ JungleGymCuenca



With Inel: 093 967 8991
Email: gravite_zero@hotmail.com
f @ Gravité Zero Cuenca

Rachel, from New Jersey, USA, was the key to building this initiative. Rachel opened **JungleGym** in August 2017, right in the heart of El Centro on Calle Larga and Benigno Malo. She teaches strength and cardio in her popular Bootcamp and Functional Cross Training classes in the morning and does Personal Training by appointment. Rachel speaks English and Spanish.

Next came Inel from France with circus training and five years teaching aerial hoop, aerial silks and acroyoga in Cuenca. She was looking for a place to start **Gravité Zero Aéreos & Acroyoga** but wanted to be part of an athletic and artistic coworking group. And that's exactly what happened! Inel teaches aerial activities for kids, teens and adults of all ages in the morning and afternoon and acroyoga at night. Inel speaks French, English and Spanish.



With Valeria: 097 928 9700
Email: samsarapoleyoga@gmail.com
f @ SamsaraPoleYoga

Finally, Valeria joined the other women. Valeria studied Pole Dance in Cuenca and Guayaquil before opening **Samsara** a year ago. Samsara offers two absolutely combinable activities: Pole Dance and Yoga. Both were located in Esquina de las Artes in front of the Carlos Cueva Tamariz theater before Valeria decided to move Pole Dancing to Fit Alliance. Samsara Yoga classes remain at Esquina de las Artes. She teaches techniques, strength and flexibility for pole dancing in the morning and evening, from Monday though Saturday, in Spanish and English.

Fit Alliance is a shared fitness space in which community, support and positivity leads to happy students, healthy bodies and a relaxed atmosphere. Our philosophy has always been "strength comes in numbers" and both instructors and students have benefited from these dynamics. We offer exciting classes, great projects and special workshops to the Cuenca fitness community.

Save the date! On Saturday, September 21, Fit Alliance is organizing a special Open House. You will have the opportunity to try our classes, meet the instructors and see some of our students' performances. Don't miss out on this opportunity to experience the Fit Alliance community!

Address: Calle Larga 9-46 y Benigno Malo (next to Sunrise Cafe) - fit.alliance.cuenca@gmail.com - f @



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Expats in the News



General Manager Marcelo, Chef Noe and Service Manager Eduardo



NOE Sushi Bar Honors Cuenca Soup Kitchen's Leadership Team For Their Outstanding Contributions To Feeding The City's Less Fortunate

Photographs Courtesy of CEM



Marcelo showing kitchen



NOE welcoming Cuenca Soup Kitchen



Art of sushi



Bill and Desmion



Sushi fiesta



Steve, Jane, Manya, Lisa and Bob

Five Reasons You Need an Insurance Broker

By Carlos Ramírez



The work of an insurance broker is to fulfill your requirements, identify risks, and find the best way to cover all your insurance needs.

Brokers have knowledge of the terms and conditions as well as the benefits and costs of a great number of services and policies. Moreover, they have access to personalized insurance policies. With their know-how and connections, the nuisance of dealing with details and paperwork is a thing of the past. Engaging a broker provides a tailor-made service you won't find on your own.

When it comes to insurance, don't take things lightly. Choose the best option for your needs and guarantee yourself quality service.

Here are five reasons to obtain an insurance broker.

1. PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

Do you really know about the service that you are paying for? Do you know how that service works with the laws and regulations of a country different from your own? Probably not, and it might seem very confusing to figure it out. That's where your broker comes in. An insurance broker is your white knight to deal with all the details of the policies and services you need to acquire, maximizing your benefits so you can rest assured.

2. POLICY EXPLANATION

A broker's responsibility is to explain your policy in proper English. A reputable broker will be sure to communicate important information relevant to your policy including details like cancellations, fees, and coverage conditions.

3. CLAIM MANAGEMENT

A broker is the liaison between you and your insurance company. At all times, this person must protect your

interests. Brokers know the law and will help you file an insurance claim if and when the need arises. Your broker will also represent you in case you need to take legal action to receive compensation.

4. MULTIPLE OPTIONS

Independent agents represent many different insurance companies that offer a wide variety of coverage options and price points. They find the right balance of price, coverage, and service.

5. LINES OF COVERAGE

Independent agents can often meet all of your insurance needs with the companies they represent providing auto, home, renter's, and business coverage. Many offer life and health insurance as well.

For these reasons, our advice to you is to do your research before hiring an insurance broker and always look for trust and security in the professional you hire.



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Six Reasons Why Every Expat Needs an Ecuadorian Credit Card

Introducing the First Expat Credit Card from Banco del Austro

By Cuenca Expats Magazine Staff Writer - Photographs Courtesy of Banco del Austro



Karina Arévalo Expat Private Banker

Most of us from North America came from a credit society where we carried very little cash to now needing cash for most everyday purchases. And, if we tried to get an Ecuadorian credit card, good luck. Impossible to get. Until now.

Banco del Austro has cut through all the red tape and is introducing the first credit card for expats. There is no credit history required, no matching deposit, no annual fee and the interest rate (16%) is the same as all other credit cards in Ecuador. Banco del Austro has listened to the needs of the expat community and acted. In fact, to better serve the English-speaking expat community, they have even arranged for you to have a dedicated English-speaking private banker.

Why do you need an Ecuadorian credit card?

EMERGENCIES: You just arrive home and reach for your wallet. Empty pocket. Either you have lost it or have been pick-pocketed. Your overseas credit or ATM cards are gone. What do you do for money while waiting for a

replacement? God forbid you have a medical episode requiring hospitalization. But, of course, you do.

When you are ready to check out, the hospital refuses your US debit card and informs you that hospital procedure requires a credit card. You contemplate the many varieties of jello you'll enjoy reclined in bed while negotiating your release.

SAFETY: You finally admit it! You cannot live without that giant plasma TV screen you've been dreaming of. After withdrawing a large sum of money from the bank, you find yourself wishing you had simply been able to hand the clerk a credit card instead of losing all that cash to a pick pocket. Or did it slip out of your pocket while getting out of the cab on the way to Coral? No matter what happened, you remind yourself: carrying a big wad of cash is never a good idea.

PROTECTION: How well do you know the waiter at that new restaurant who reappeared after taking five minutes to swipe your credit card? You wonder what else might he be "swiping."

Using a US credit card always increases the threat of identity theft. Maybe that's why you cancelled your card before leaving the States. Dealing with these issues can be easier when the card is Ecuadorian.

RECURRING MONTHLY CHARGES: Are you tired of standing in lines at the bank, phone company, or local pharmacy dealing with the vagaries of a half-dozen different payment schedules? A local credit card allows you to set up automatic payments and free yourself from worries like where to trash that kilo of frozen shrimp that thawed when the electric company cut your power while you were in Puerto Lopez cavorting with the humpbacks.

CONVENIENCE: Remember the embarrassment that time you bought your friends an extra round of drinks only to open your wallet and discover you were just 'a little bit short'? A credit card can eliminate personal embarrassment and the perpetual need to wonder "what's in your wallet?". And, did you know with some "big ticket" items, paying with your Ecuadorian card earns you deferred, interest-free payment plans?

ON-LINE BUYING: Your quick trip 'home' for a reunion means buying airplane tickets and pre-ordering some treats from Amazon to be delivered to a friend's doorstep. Unfortunately, using your US credit card from a foreign location raises red flags in cyberspace and causes transactions to be blocked. An Ecuadorian credit card would have handily scored you an exit row seat and that bottle of Don Julio Añejo.

Here's how to get your own Ecuadorian credit card: Set up an appointment with Karina Arévalo, English-speaking Private Banker for Expats, at the Gran Colombia branch of Banco del Austro located just west of La Taberna. You'll need the following for a productive meeting.

1. Cédula
2. Utility Bill
3. Three (3) months of bank statements

NOTE: your credit line is based on your income so you may want to show the bank balances on more than one bank account.

4. Certification of Social Security (showing pension amount, if applicable)
5. And, if you own Ecuadorian property, the last tax payment.

That's all there is to it! Couldn't be easier.



Receiving the expat credit card

By the way, during your credit card appointment, ask Karina about becoming your personal banker for all your financial needs. She was born in New York City and raised in both the States and Ecuador. With over five years of service with Banco del Austro, she is perfectly positioned to navigate Ecuadorian banking rules and procedures. Karina's branch is conveniently located, and Banco del Austro has been in business for over 40 years and has an AA safety rating. The bank has 92 offices across the country and over 200 ATMs in operation.



Call Karina Arévalo for an appointment today.

Karina's Office Hours:

Mon–Fri: 9 am - 1:30 pm / 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Address:

Gran Colombia 22-270 y Unidad Nacional, Cuenca

Office phone: (07)284 5910 ext. 18008

Cellphone: 098 799 4603

Email: ofcrgcolombia2@baustro.fin.ec

Other Branch Hours:

www.bancodelaustro.com/Tu-Banco/Cobertura/Cobertura-de-Agencias



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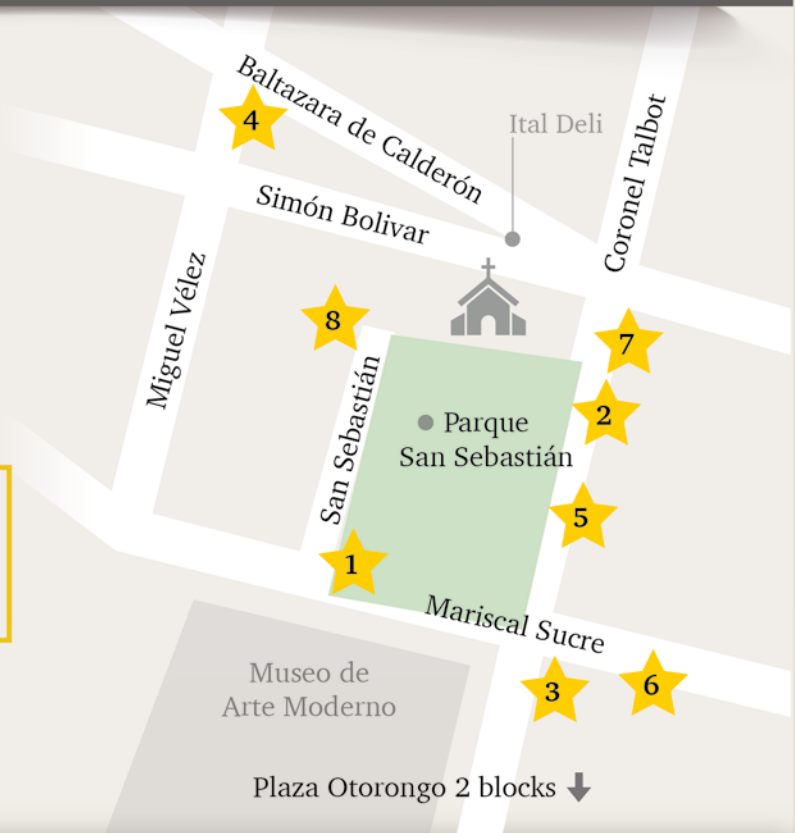
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4



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5



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Osaka Ramen

6



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7



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8



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educational feature



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Photograph by Luis Nieto

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Imbabura... Does Magic Exist?

By Jeff Salz

Photographs by Jeff Salz



It's four years later, and we are back. A lot has transpired. Jaffe and I got married in the States. In fact, an image of our little homeless buddy with whom we danced found its way onto our wedding invitation. A month after we were married, we jettisoned our life and possessions to make the big move to Cuenca.



In an increasingly Westernized world, the energy of Imbabura Province is refreshingly indigenous. More *yachaks* (Kichwa for shamans) live here than anywhere else in Ecuador. Maybe the world. Young dreadlocked bohemians and aging Carlos Castañeda wannabes from all over the planet are drawn here looking for some kind of magic. But does such magic exist?

The quaint village of Cotacachi is cradled in a valley between two towering volcanoes - Taita Imbabura and Mama Cotacachi. Considered matching father and mother gods, they are said to inform and protect the valley like benevolent monarchs on high.

Cotacachi was the place Jaffe and I first touched down upon arrival in Ecuador four years ago. How hungrily we walked the streets, delighting in the young men going about their business in fedoras and long black pony tails, the women bedecked in bright gold necklaces and colorful earrings, parading streets in their embroidered white blouses and long blue dresses! Old potato-face ladies greeted us with smiles completely devoid of guile... and sometimes teeth. It was Mother's Day, so we assisted in the local soup kitchen - serving lunch to the homeless, pinning roses on elfin folk - short, weathered and sturdy as tree stumps. We even danced - especially with one tiny man grinning ear-to-ear beneath his battered hat, happy as a toadstool. We fell immediately in love with him. And Ecuador. It seemed like magic.

Last week we were back in Cotacachi. Our goal was an ascent of Taita Imbabura, the Father Spirit himself. The round-trip valley to summit is a mile of tough, vertical scrambling - equivalent to climbing up from the Colorado River to the rim of the Grand Canyon. And down again. Without the benefit of switchbacks. Perhaps the furthest out of climbing shape I have ever been in my life, I was more than a little nervous.

So we begin. The trail climbs and climbs. Jaffe and I slip and slide. Bunch grass and rock confound our progress.



Climbers ahead of us appear as miniscule as mites on the back of a dog. The scale is enormous. Progress slow. Three hours into the hike, my lungs are screaming for oxygen. Has a wrong turn landed us on Everest instead of Imbabura? Legs like logs, I've got nothing left.

Wait! We never made our *ofrenda* to Taita Imbabura – offerings of gifts and prayers in return for safe and easy passage to the top. Perhaps there is still time. I close my eyes. I offer gratitude and explain that we come not to *conquer* but *commune*. We come to *hike*... but also *honor*. Humbly, I ask for assistance.



Moving again, I am flushed with a second wind. The lead weights are gone from my legs. Air filling my lungs feels like wind in my sails. I recall how the Sherpa friends with whom I guided in the Himalayas never spoke of 'conquering' a mountain. It was always a mountain deity *who lifted them up*. Now Taita Imbabura is lifting me. It feels just a bit like magic.

In the morning, Jaffe and I are relaxing in an outdoor coffee shop when she leaps to her feet. "There he is! Our dancing partner from the soup kitchen. Our friend from the wedding invitation!"

She's right. I pull up an old image of us on my iPhone, and suddenly we are all laughing, hugging. Moments later



he's off down the road with fresh bounce in his step and new jingle in his pockets. We return to our coffee, unbelieving. Tears in our eyes. Magic in our hearts.

Our final night is spent at the home of our dear friends Bill Wallace and Mary Hellman - formerly of Cuenca. Not only is it dinner, it's Mary's superb spaghetti Bolognese.



José and Rocío and their young daughter Yarina from the local Kichwa community of La Calera are there. So is our friend Spryte. We have all come to know each other well. Someone recalls how the last time we were together Mary had mustered her best Spanish to tell Yarina that she has the 'same face as her father' – *tienes cara como Papá*. Instead, she had informed her that *tienes cara como papa* - 'you have a face like a potato'.

With the license that only a friendship possessed of profound and genuine affection can provide, we poke fun at each other, laughing till tears roll down our faces. Laughing now recalling how much we laughed the first time. Laughing simply because - especially coming from such vastly different worlds and separate cultures - it feels so good to laugh together. Catching a glimpse of how someday - just maybe - the whole diverse world might do the same.

I see it clearly in my mind's eye: high above, Taita Imbabura and Mama Cotacachi wink at each other nodding contentedly and proudly in the direction of their children below. It seems they are laughing just a little, too.

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Gringo Post 2019



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By Cuenca Expats Magazine Staff Writer - Photographs Courtesy of Cuenca Car Share

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- **Future services.** Cuenca Car Share will soon be offering "get-away" packages which will include car rental, hotels, and other benefits all at economical prices.

Cuenca Car Share has been in business for over five years. New owner and expat Joanne Bushman purchased the company about a year ago when the founders moved back to the States. Along with Manager Emilio Morocho, Cuenca Car Share has not only been voted "Gringo Post Best Of" but also has provided a high level of customer service which is the envy of other local businesses.



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Pomp and Circumstance with Military Music in Tarqui

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

Recently the 189th anniversary of the “Battle of Portete de Tarqui” was celebrated with a mixture of rousing classical and triumphal military music performed by the Cuenca Symphony Orchestra outdoors at the battlefield. Conducted by Michael Meissner, this concert honored the gallantry and valor of the Ecuador army which stopped the invading army from Perú on February 27, 1829. In attendance were government officials, military personnel, and boisterous children bussed in from area schools.



Located some 15 miles south of Cuenca in the parish of Tarqui (halfway between Tarqui and Girón) the former nation of Gran Colombia – now Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Panamá, and parts of northern Brazil – defended its territory from becoming forcibly annexed by the army of independent Perú. Each side claimed victory, but military historians designated the battle as a stalemate. The ragtag and outnumbered army of Ecuador (mostly from Cuenca and Loja) numbered 1,500 soldiers, suffering 154 dead; 206 wounded; and about 1,000 deserters. The Peruvian forces of 8,000 soldiers suffered 1,500 killed in action with another 1,000 taken prisoner. A year later, a peace treaty was signed in Girón where in 1978 the Army of Ecuador established a military historical museum.





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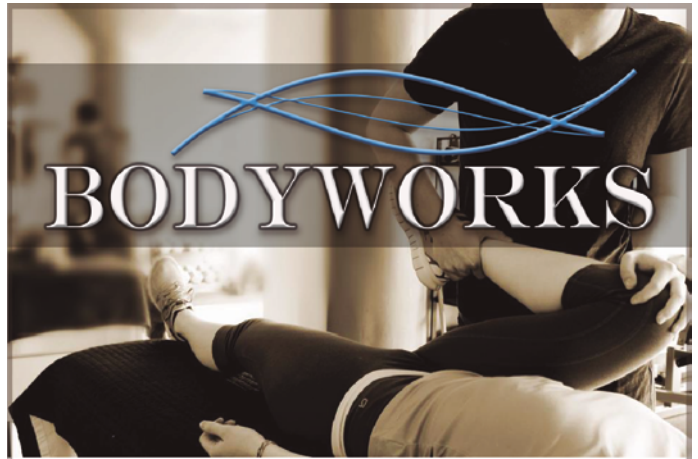
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Gringos on Parade

By Clay Bodine - Photographs by Melody Crabb

After attending our first Inocentes Parade in 2014 with a group from Fishbon del Sur, we just knew that someday we had to participate. It was such a fun, free-spirited romp through the streets of Cuenca with families, university students, organizations, and groups from all strata of society. We wanted to be part of it to show that we had truly become Cuencanos by choice.

Fishbon del Sur is a spinoff of Santa Barbara, California's Fishbon Artist's Collaborative founded in 2002 by a group of artists, dancers, theatre folk, writers, and tech geeks who wanted to create an incubator for creatives of all disciplines. Originally, the group was bound together by the annual pilgrimage to the Burning Man Festival in the desert north of Reno, Nevada. This large-scale art and music event spawned hundreds of adventurous projects including a full scale opera performed on a Greek-style Trireme pulled by 100 performers, a full scale circus, and a vertical sculpture constructed from stainless steel tanker trucks that you could climb inside of. This was very cool stuff.

When my wife Laura Inks-Bodine and I arrived in Cuenca in 2013, we found ourselves being drawn to re-creating the Fishbon California experience in the San Sebastián neighborhood of Cuenca. As Fishbon del Sur, we attracted a largely English-speaking expat audience. It took us a while for our language skills to develop sufficiently to work with Ecuadorians, but we were fortunate enough to find early creative partners in the Lakomuna Artists Collaborative. Most of the group were still students at the University of Cuenca, but fortunately a few had basic English skills and could act as translators on early collaborations. After five awesome years, Fishbon del Sur hosts a bi-monthly Sunday potluck salon, immersive events and lots of theatrical reductions in our 90-year-old casa de familia.

In our inocentes ensemble, Gringüitos Locos del Teatro Fishbon, we wanted to not only share some of the best known American popular music that Cuencanos know and love, but we also wanted to feature a simple and heart-felt message: Muchas gracias, Cuenca.

Thanks from us to the wonderful Cuenca community that has welcomed and included us in the life of this fabulous South American city.

Fortunately, we learned that Ned Flottman and his merry band of kazoo virtuosos invited us to participate with them and together we were proud to be the first expat crew to march with Cuencano groups in an Amistad Club extravaganza. We had a blast, and from the reaction from the crowd, we think the families and friends who lined the parade route did too. VIVA CUENCA!





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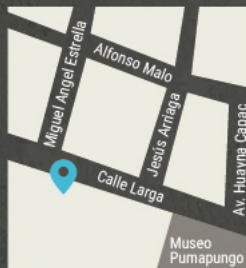


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