

CUENCA experts

issue
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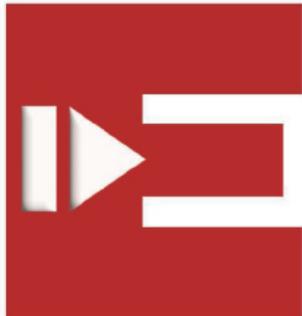


Hector Muñoz

Guey Tortillas Mexicanas

celebrating life together

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- ▶ Remember, whether you live in Ecuador, or gathering information to do so, Ecuador Connection is the source you need.

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Special Announcement

GOVERNOR'S EXPAT HUMANITARIAN AWARD

2020

Attention All Expats. Nominations are Now Open 3rd Annual Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award

For the third year, expats have a chance to nominate other expats for their charitable contributions. We all know someone who has volunteered time or donated their services, household items, or money to help the less fortunate in Cuenca and greater Azuay. Now's your chance to help us honor those good works. All nominees will be invited to attend the Governor's Award event on Tuesday, May 28. At that event, one expat who exemplifies our combined charitable spirit will accept the Governor's Key on behalf of our entire expat community.

Last year, four hundred and one expats were nominated. We know there are many more unsung heroes among us and we need your help in finding and nominating them. The process is simple and will only take a few minutes of your time. Please go to:

<http://bit.ly/GovAwardNomination2020>

Thank you for your help in nominating those who are making our community a better place!

Sincerely,
3rd Annual Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award
Nominating Committee

PUBLISHER'S LETTER



Hello Beautiful Cuenca!

I hope everyone was able to enjoy the many events and festivals held during this year's Carnival season. This is one of my favorite times of the year, as this amazing city comes to life with colorful masks, elaborate costumes and numerous parades. And, let's not forget the famous foam and water fights! What a fun way to come together for this spiritual celebration.

After a brief time in Texas, the "tortilla guy" Hector Muñoz is back. He has opened a brand-new store—a south-of-the-border sensation: Guey Tortillas Mexicanas. You'll want to read all about how Hector uncovered his family's secret recipe for making the best Tex-Mex products. His personal journey can be found on page 6.

The 3rd Annual Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award event is scheduled for Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 6 p.m. This is a yearly celebration held for expats who have made a positive contribution to the Azuay province. Nominations are now open. Please go to <http://bit.ly/GovAwardNomination2020> and nominate one or more fellow expats who have contributed to the betterment of our community. As one of the founding members of this prestigious award, I can't express enough the importance of a simple "Thank you." Get your nominations in today!

Save the Date. As a community service, we are continuing our monthly free dinner seminars on important topics to Cuenca expats. Past seminars were full, so you'll want to put these dates on your calendar. This year's topics will include information on the documents every expat needs, new medical alternatives for

expats, the Ecuador stock market, why Manta offers the best coastal living (and a free way to visit), and much more. Make sure to visit page 16 for calendar dates and locations.

Coming soon: Ecuador Connect. Want more in-depth information about living in Ecuador? Ecuador Connection is a member's only monthly VIP subscription streaming service, the perfect companion to Cuenca Expats Magazine. Whether you live in Ecuador, or gathering information to do so, Ecuador Connection is the source. Watch for more information.

Best regards,

Melody J. Crabb

CONTRIBUTORS



Alan Adams was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Cañar area from 1967 to 1969. In 2013 he retired from teaching in North Plainfield, New Jersey, and at that time the Mushuk Yuyay project director found his email address and contacted him with a request to join their efforts. He didn't hesitate.



Fiona Mitchell is a native Brit and a recent arrival to Cuenca, following an 18-month overland campervan trip with her husband through Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador. She has maintained a regular travel blog detailing some of the adventures she and her husband have enjoyed over the last four years (www.mytb.org/ken-and-fi).



Paul Amos retired after an 18-year career as an adjunct professor and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He moved to Cuenca, Ecuador in late 2015. Since moving to Cuenca, he has participated in many running races, triathlons and Ironman events. Paul also founded the Cuenca Runners and Walkers group, which meets weekly to promote exercise in a fun and easy group setting.



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, 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.



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.



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). www.wayofadventure.com



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.



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Hi, CPA. Jacqui Guerrero Mgs. here. Did you know, Ecuadorian labor law is especially protective of those who do manual labor such as house cleaning, yard work, personal driving, etc.? Did you also know you are open to major fines and penalties from the Department of Labor and IESS if you don't follow strict procedures? Why risk it? I can help you stay legal. Our office is conveniently located and easy to find, right across from SRI. Come in for a FREE consultation today, before it's too late.

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What Are the Four Documents Every Expat Needs (But Most Don't Know About)?

Seminar postponed

EcuAssist's Founder Marcos Chiluisa and Cuenca Expats Magazine will host this important public service seminar on a date to be announced after the Coronavirus concern is over.

The event will be held at Mujeres con Éxito, the well-known expat-supported charity helping women and children escape domestic violence. Their location is conveniently located in El Centro. Come enjoy one of their famous fried chicken dinners complimentary to those who attend the seminar. A cash bar will be available. Seating is limited, so make your reservations today at events@expatsmags.com.



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South of the Border Sensational Guey Tortillas Mexicanas

By Teresa Drake

Photographs Courtesy of Guey Tortillas Mexicanas

Looking for authentic tortillas, nachos and salsa? Missing your Tex-Mex fix? Well, look no further as Guey Tortillas Mexicanas is the answer to your gastronomical prayers. Meet Hector Munoz producer of “authentic” Mexican tortillas, taco shells, nachos, salsas and more. If his name sounds familiar, it should as he previously opened El Maix in 2015. Now, after a two-year absence, he has returned to offer authentic and improved techniques for great quality tortillas and with new products to offer to Cuenca.

To explain his two-year absence, Hector said that he had met a young lady after he had opened El Maix, and she came to work for him. They made plans and dreamed. Unfortunately, the relationship did not work out and they split. However, he had made a promise to help her open her own business. His

grandfather once told him, “If you don’t keep your word in this world, you are not anyone.” So being a man of his word, he sold her the business rather than start one from scratch.

In February 2019, Hector returned to the U.S. and Houston, Texas with no money, a large debt to pay off and no job. This was a low period for Hector for he had lost it all. At that time, Hector made a promise to himself that he would return to the city he loved and called home by July of 2019. He vowed to begin again and do that which he loved. The culinary gods were watching over Hector, as by June 2019 he had not only paid off a \$21,000 debt but was making his plans to return to Cuenca. This he did on September 26, 2019. But first, on September 14, 2019, Hector went to Mexico to find a tortilla machine that would produce identical product time after time and eliminate the arduous work of rolling by hand. The machine would assure consistency in size, thickness and quality. On September 27, 2019, Hector arrived in Quito and traveled via bus to Cuenca, and the machines came two months later via ship to Guayaquil.

Born in Houston, Texas, Hector, as a baby was sent to live with his grandmother in Jimenez, Mexico. There he learned to eat tortillas and how tortillas were made—not by choice but out of necessity. When asked what his favorite recipe was, he simply replied, “those made by hand.” The





To ensure the Tex-Mex authenticity of his products, Hector has secret weapons from Mexico here in Cuenca: family and friends from back home. They told him that they wanted to work and advise him in developing his dream and in promoting authentic Tex-Mex products.

family was very poor and made their income working in the family tortilla factory owned and operated by his aunt. It was there he learned the proper way to grind the corn to retain the flavor that is always lost when made by machines and with preservatives and fillers added. At that time his grandparents instilled the philosophy Hector lives by: "It's not what you have; it's about what you've become."

As he grew older, his mother wanted him to receive a U.S. education and become bilingual. Thus, Hector spent his time between the U.S. and Mexico. When school was not in session, he was in Mexico working in the family tortilla factory or raising goats. Much to his family's dismay, in August 2001, at the age of 17 he enlisted in the army. His training was at Ft. Campbell and he was stationed in Iraq for just over 11 months. It was here that he realized just how precious life is. Upon his return home, he studied briefly in Texas, worked in the Middle East performing security jobs and for some time he worked in Williston, North Dakota at an oil refinery. It was there that he decided that he did not wish to work like a mule for the rest of his life. Being very concerned about the environment and not wanting to see it destroyed, he felt guilty about the destruction incurred while drilling for oil.

Hector made the decision to return to Texas where he began to save his money and focus on what he wanted to do next. He knew that he did not want





to live in the U.S., so he wrote down 10 names of different countries on pieces of paper. Every other day he would pull out a piece of paper, research it, and if it did not meet certain criteria, he would toss the name and begin again. The criteria he used was that it could not be hot and humid, did not have many bugs, use the U.S. dollar and be safe. The winner was Cuenca and he arrived in Ecuador in 2015.

During his time in Texas, Hector poured through his grandmother's recipes and wondered why they did not produce the same in Cuenca as they did in Jimenez. These were recipes he grew up with and of which he was familiar, so why weren't they coming out the same? It was his aunt who provided the answer.... This answer, plus a few secret ingredients, which he will not disclose, is what makes the tortillas and chips at Guey Tortillas Mexicanas so delicious. What makes his tortillas, nachos and salsas different is the way they are made, resulting in better quality and taste. There are no fillers or preservatives and they are fresh every day, not stored in a warehouse.

The corn is first soaked in limestone and then boiled. Once the corn has cooked, it is thoroughly rinsed to remove all traces of the limestone and any corn hulls or unwanted material. The corn is ground with volcanic rock grinders, which prevent

the delicate corn oils and flavor from being destroyed. After the corn has cooked and is ground into dough, it is cooled and mixed and then put onto the tortilla machine. It is there that the tortillas are cut consistently to various sizes and dropped onto a heated conveyor belt where they are cooked and inspected for quality. If one does not pass inspection, it is recycled to be made again. Those tortillas that are designated to become nachos, taco shells or taco bowls, are cut to a specific size and shape and are fried.

To ensure the Tex-Mex authenticity of his products, Hector has secret weapons from Mexico here in Cuenca: family and friends from back home. They told him that they wanted to work and advise him in developing his dream and in promoting authentic Tex-Mex products. It is a working relationship that has resulted in some delicious products.



So why Guey (pronounced way) instead of Toro or The Bull? Hector said that Guey is Mexican slang for friend. When people see Guey, they immediately say, "Oh, you must be from Mexico." He uses the bull as a logo to catch the attention of children. That cute bull logo is on the side of his "toy" truck that can be seen in and around the area. Hector told of a young boy in El Centro who saw the truck and told his mother he wanted that for Christmas. His mother told him that it wasn't a toy, to which the young lad replied, "Well it looks like a toy!"

You can place your order by calling Guey Tortilla Mexicanas, emailing your order or placing it via Facebook. They will be offering tortillas, taco shells, tostadas, bowl crunch, green salsa, salsa ranchera, cheese salsa and blue corn tortillas. At this time, no alcohol is served, but that could be a possibility in the future. Soon, you can enjoy delicious ice cold Tamarindo, Mexican Horchata and Jamaica.

You can currently purchase taco shells, tortillas and such at Guey Tortilla Mexicanas' store or you can order by phone or email.

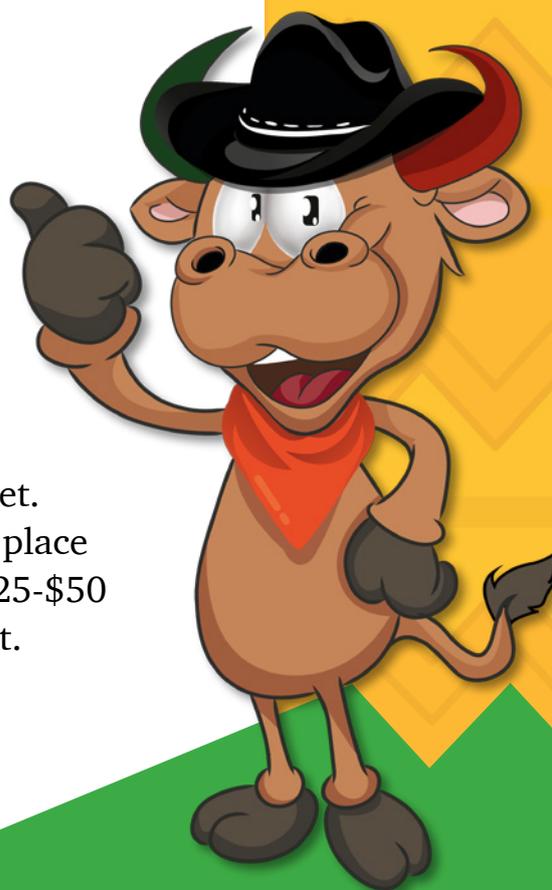
Guey Tortillas Mexicanas' authentic Tex-Mex has arrived in Cuenca and I can attest that it is *muy delicioso!*



Win a Free Bluetooth Headset

Look for Hector's Truck

Look for Hector's truck. Get it to stop, have your picture taken by the truck, and share the picture with FB and Guey Tortillas Mexicanas' website. You will win a free Bluetooth Headset. Hector also has an event taking place at his location: If you purchase \$25-\$50 in product, you get a free headset. Hurry in today!



ADDRESS

Av. Miraflores y Segundo Luis Moreno
(next to Anubis Gym)

PHONE

098 922 1712

OPERATING HOURS

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Guey Tortillas
Mexicanas

Concerned about the Coronavirus?

Here are Some Steps to Take

With the concern about the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), expats may want to take two important steps: follow the CDC's recommendations (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>), and build up their immune system.

Here's some proven products that will help increase your immune system:



Forever Absorbent-C™: Vitamin C combined with oatmeal. Oatmeal is a highly soluble fiber that allows vitamin C to remain as long as possible in the stomach, thus ensuring its complete absorption.



Forever Bee Pollen: It contains a variety of nutrients such as group B vitamins, vitamin C, vitamins D, E, K and beta carotene (vitamin A), minerals, enzymes, coenzymes, vegetable fatty acids, carbohydrates, proteins, and 22 amino acids, all increasing the body's defenses, providing physical and mental energy.



Forever Aloe Berry Nectar: It contains aloe vera, a polysaccharide (unique in aloe), acemannan, and nutrients that help maintain the immune system. A combination of blueberries, that have an antioxidant value at 20 times more than vitamin C, and apple with special phytonutrient and quercetin--other powerful antioxidants.



Forever Garlic-Thyme™: Garlic contains a trace mineral element that helps boost the immune system and selenium, an antioxidant-based element. This product also contains potassium, calcium, magnesium, vitamin B complex and vitamin C.



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Cheryl Pomeroy



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Cuenca Car Share

Montecristi Golf Resort & Villas

A personal experience

By Henry G. Noël

Photographs Courtesy of Montecristi

For golfers who have immigrated to Ecuador, finding a golf course can be a challenge unless you can afford to join one of the few country clubs. But, for many of us, we came to realize golf has reverted to a rare form of exercise rather than the mainstay we enjoyed back home. In Ecuador, golf is a sport reserved for those who can afford it; not for the average resident—that is, until now.

Sculptured by nature, the rolling hills of the central coast of Ecuador, east of the city of Manta and north of the Canton of Montecristi, provide the backdrop for a golf resort unique to Ecuador. The Montecristi Golf Resort & Villas is a planned community with a USGA-rated public golf course as its centerpiece. This public course offers visitors and residents a healthy, active, safe, and tranquil environment in which to live, and close to the conveniences the city of Manta can offer.

We compare golf resorts, evaluate, criticize, and discuss them, but all the hype means nothing until you get out and challenge the links. And challenge the links is what we did; or rather, it challenged us.

As a party of three, we decided to visit the links at Montecristi Golf Resort & Villas and experience them first hand. We warmed up on the driving range, took a quick course on the only GPS guided golf carts in Ecuador, and then took to the links to strut our stuff. From the first tee, we were humbled by the challenge and beauty of this resort and golf course.

Its size is excellent with play covering 6,596 yards from tees to greens. But, for this golf course, the true length must include the yardage from the greens to the next tee.

Being the only ones on the links (as far as we could tell), we enjoyed the comradery, solitude, and challenge this golf course provided. As we reached the 12th tee, we decided this was an excellent place to take a breather and enjoy the serene and picturesque view. We were unaware of the approach of a single player who had caught up to us. It was there we met Dario Herrera, Vice President of Business Development for the Montecristi Golf Resort & Villas. Mr. Herrera, a resident of the resort, lives right

next to the 14th green. He graciously shared a brief and personal history of how this resort came to be and the challenges faced in its development.

If you are a golfer and have placed your game on the back burner, check out Montecristi Golf Resort & Villas. You'll be glad you did.

To learn more about Manta and Montecristi, save the date of April 21 at 5pm. Readers of Cuenca Expats Magazine will be invited to a free dinner presentation on this coastal area. Stay tuned for more information.



Visit and Save

— Free pickup from GYE —

Montecristi wants to make it easy for Cuenca's expats to visit.

As a special incentive to the readers of Cuenca Expats Magazine, Montecristi is offering a special discounted rate for staying at the resort. All readers will receive an exclusive \$99 a night room rate for the one-bedroom condo (which sleeps up to 4) for a savings of over 30%. Included free are breakfast in the main restaurant and car service to and from Guayaquil. Call for reservations today. This promotion is not available during holidays or special events and expires 31 Dec 2020.



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Ironman

By Paul Amos
Photographs by Paul Amos

The Ironman 70.3 Ecuador triathlon was first held in Manta in 2015 and draws over 1,200 athletes annually. The fifth edition of the triathlon took place on July 7, 2019 and had 1,323 competitors. Three Cuenca expats, Bob Cox, Daniel Cañez and I travelled to Manta to compete in the Ironman 70.3 Ecuador.

The Ironman 70.3 course begins with athletes swimming 1.2 miles in the Pacific Ocean. The water temperature on race morning was 78 degrees Fahrenheit under overcast skies. The transition between the swim and bike took place at Playa Murciélago. Athletes then do a 56-mile bike ride on the Ruta de Spondylus to the town of Crucita and back to Manta. The ride is challenging with moderate hills. Athletes finish with a 13.1 mile run along the coastline of Manta. The run course is scenic and flat to the finish line on the beach.

I have participated in five Ironman 70.3 events. I got off to a good start in the swim and my time of 40:10 was the fifth fastest swimmer in my age group. I got through the transition quickly and headed out on my bike to Crucita. I completed the bike course in 2:43:09 and was the sixth fastest in my age group. As I was finishing my bike ride, the sun broke through the clouds and the temperature rose quickly. The heat caused my leg muscles to cramp during the run, but I completed the half-marathon in 1:48:53. My total time of 5:16:59 earned me a



The 2018 Ironman group |

fourth place finish within the 50-54 age group and in the top 10% of all finishers.

Daniel competed in his first ever Ironman 70.3 event the previous year in Manta and placed third in his age group (65-69). Unfortunately, he developed IT band syndrome in his left leg a few weeks before the race. Daniel still competed and finished his swim in 1:01:16, which was the second fastest swimmer in his age group. He also completed the 56-mile bike ride in 3:54:04. After completing the ride, his leg was bothering him and he felt it was best to call it a day rather than risk injuring his leg further on the run course. There were approximately 90 participants that did not finish the race.

Bob has the unique distinction of participating in every Ironman

70.3 Ecuador. He was the first swimmer out of the ocean in his age group in a time of 47:16 and held a 14-minute lead. His bike time of 3:36:53 was also near the top of his age group and he remained in first place after completing his bike ride. Bob persevered through the heat and humidity during the worst part of the day while running the half-marathon. His run time of 3:46:13 earned him a second place finish in the 65-69 age group with a total time of 8:22:20.

Ironman 70.3 Ecuador will take place in Manta again on July 12, 2020. As the saying for Ironman goes,

“ANYTHING
IS POSSIBLE.”

Day Trip to Oña: Time Travel Made Easy

By Jeff Salz
Photographs by Jeff Salz

"There is nothing to see in Oña. That's what people say. In truth, there is everything. People don't know that Oña is remarkable." Our friend Verónica Cabrera is passionate about her home turf and throws down a challenge: "Are you willing to take a day and find out for yourselves?"

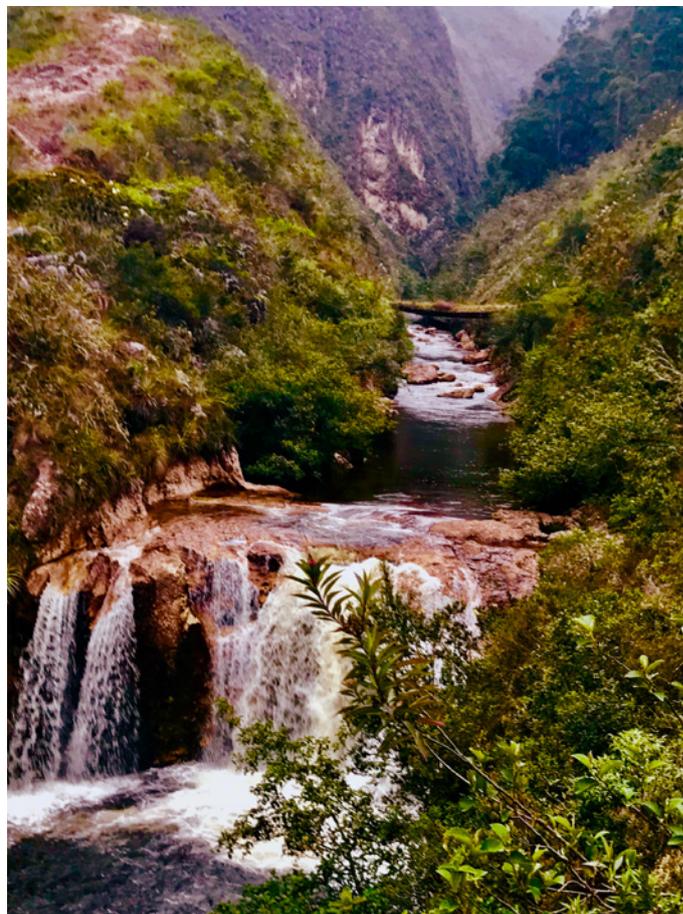
How could we say no?

En route, we head down a long dirt road to Calmecatl—a remote retreat center surrounded by wild paramo and native forest. Eleven years ago the GAMMA Foundation purchased the property with the intention of creating a safe haven where women who had been impacted by domestic violence could gain life skills in a safe and peaceful environment. Recently, the center has opened its doors to outside groups and individuals. Sandra López, GAMMA co-founder, gives us a tour of the property.

"We've also hosted men's groups," explains Sandra. "Men exploring how they can join in the work of preventing domestic violence become better people and partner with the women in building a better society." Calmecatl uniquely uses clean technology: minimum impact techniques including a natural filtration system to insure the water returning to the earth is the cleanest possible. As Sandra explains, "The mission of GAMMA is to re-weave the web of life in the healthiest ways possible. We help people realize that we are a part of nature and that in nature there are no competitive, hierarchal or violent relationships. Relationships found in nature are based uniquely on cooperation. Our center is a laboratory to explore how it is possible for us all to live in a different way."

Closer to Oña, we meet Elman Donaula and Alba Campoverde at their family-run brick-making operation. They laugh and joke with us, handing and stacking bricks the entire time. Engaging us in a lively conversation, they will only allow us to leave after we have promised to return as guests for the big New Year's Eve parade.

It's a steep path down to the adobe house of doña Honorina Ramón. She bounds out the door, throws her arms around us and hugs us tightly with howls of happiness. Never in our lives have we felt so enthusiastically welcomed. Bright-eyed and boundlessly buoyant, doña Honarina gives us a tour around her cafetal sharing the travails and triumphs of a coffee-grower's life. When she



Lower Falls at Oñas' Cascadas de El Rodeo



Romantic Glamping at Calmecatl Retreat Center



“

Oña's waterfalls feel pristine and refreshingly undeveloped. Our visits all seemed from another era, laughing with people who live simply and happily, working hard but never too busy to offer unconditional hospitality to a complete stranger.



Making Bricks the Old Fashioned Way



Doña Honorina Sharing the Secret of her Longevity

proudly informs us that she is Oña's reigning Reina de los Adultos Mayores (Queen of Older Adults), we are not surprised, but amazed there exists such a competition.

Over coffee, we interrogate Honorina, searching for the secret of the remarkable resilience that belies her age. She responds, "It's all about staying involved in life. I don't just sit around; I do things that give me animo. "And of course," she says as she lifts her cup and releases a boisterous chuckle that shakes the room with gladness, "I drink a lot of coffee!"

Oña's other best kept secret is Las Cascadas de El Rodeo. From the road it's only fifteen minutes to the first falls and about the same distance to the next. A pleasant trail leads along a river, through forest and across a log bridge. Crystalline waters plummet with surprising fury into deep pools ideal for swimming on a sunny day. All alone on a Saturday afternoon, we marvel at the wild feel of it all.

At dusk, I gaze out of the car window as we head down the dirt road toward the highway and to our bus back to Cuenca. "Stop the car!" I hear myself yelling, "Oh my God! Where are we?" It's a Twilight Zone moment... literally. In the final light of day—in the blink of an eye—we have slipped backward through time. Old adobe buildings, wooden balconies, and battered hand-lettered signs on mud walls beneath tattered shingled roofs surround us. I leap from the car, snapping photos.

"This is San Francisco—the old town center of Oña," Verónica informs us.

"Oña was once the most important trading hub between the mountains and the coast. There's history here....Maybe even more than in Cuenca," she gloats.

Verónica is right. A trip to Oña is remarkable. What makes it remarkable is how much it feels like traveling to the past. The barrio of San Francisco feels like the set of a Spaghetti Western...except for its mote, it's in Ecuador, and it's real. Oña's waterfalls feel pristine and refreshingly undeveloped. Our visits all seemed from another era, laughing with people who live simply and happily, working hard but never too busy to offer unconditional hospitality to a complete stranger. Our time with Sandra López at Calmecatl was a trip to the unspoiled mountain landscapes of the past. It was also a glimpse of the future—a very hopeful one—where people have learned to treat each other and the earth with respect and gratitude.

We bid farewell to Verónica at the bus stop. On the two-hour ride home, Jaffe and I recap our amazing day. As I think back on the delightful people we have met, tears well in my eyes.

"Me too," offers Jaffe, "but then again," she says, "Oñans always makes me cry."



YAPA

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Cuenca Expats Magazine is hosting again this year a series of free dinner seminars on important subjects to all expats. Last year's seminars were completely full, so save these dates, and RSVP early. All seminars start promptly at 5 pm. at Mujeres Con Éxito headquarters at Baltazara de Calderón 2-26 y Miguel Velez, a few blocks northwest of Parque San Sebastián. Your



attendance will also generate a donation to this popular charity helping at-risk women and children.

More information will follow

CALANDER OF EVENTS	
Postponed	The Four Documents Every Expat Needs (and may not even realize)
April 21	What's the Buzz About Manta? Why Manta Is Best Expat Living on the Coast. (Free Transpiration to visit Manta for all attendees)
May	No seminar this month, but May is the month for the 3rd Annual Governor's Expat Humanitarian Award event. All expats welcome to attend: Thursday May 28, 6 pm.
June 9-10	New Medical Options for Expats
June 30	What Every Expat Should Know About the Ecuadoran Stock Market
July 28	New Banking Services for Expats
August 31	Why All Expats Should Be Concerned About Internet Security. And, How Expats Can Protect Themselves (here and in their home country)



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An Invitation from Mushuk Yuyay in Cañar

By Alan Adams

Photographs Courtesy of Alan Adams



Picture 1: Children at Mushuk Yuyay with their baby trees. Picture 2: Classroom. Picture 3: Children preparing food

We would like to invite members of the expat community in Cuenca to engage their expertise, curiosity, and sense of adventure in any of a wide variety of initiatives that the people of the Cañari Kichwa community have begun. There are small ways, big ways, short term and long term ways that you can participate. Mushuk Yuyay is headquartered near the town of Cañar, north of Cuenca, and would welcome your inquiries and visits. This is an association of small-farm holders raising the world's most nutritious foods in an effort to find economic self-sufficiency and a secure supply of the right things to eat.

If you have experience with farming, marketing, environmental science, or related fields, you are welcome to contact us. A member can sponsor a school garden, an experimental planting, a beehive, an irrigation pump, or the production of a new experimental quinoa treat. And there is much more. Is anyone an ex 4-H member? We have a newly formed alpaca club--the only 4-H club in Ecuador. The club needs equipment to prepare the wool for the artisanal weavers of Cañar.

Children who participate in the nutrition education activities, *Niños Saludables y Futuro Saludable*, would love to demonstrate what they've learned and share their recipes. You can help the Women's Farming Association with a planting or a harvest minga. They help provide products for the children's nutrition program. You can also sponsor a plant. Penco (agave) has wonderful potential as a sweetener. Flowering bushes will provide food for bees and soon the little pollinators will supply a new industry in the area. New products can be developed. One group in a beautiful little valley wants to brew a craft beer.

The fascinating reality of Mushuk Yuyay is that it was conceived and implemented by the community that it serves. At the time of the Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform in the 1960s, the Cañari people saw the opportunity to free themselves from hacienda servitude and make their own future. This agrarian reform was unique to Ecuador, and the way the Cañari people used this opportunity

was unique to them. Each community formed a cooperative to buy the land and administer the division and the projects designed to raise the money for payments. Soon afterwards, cooperatives began to join forces to work on projects that addressed problems that they had in common such as irrigation, seed development, fertilizers, marketing, etc. Mushuk Yuyay was formed in 1994 as a nonprofit to address many of these issues.

Over the years, Mushuk Yuyay has developed several programs. Currently, they are expanding quinoa production through experimental new varieties in coordination with Washington State University. Amaranth production is also being increased. They participated in a program in Mexico to learn more about cultivation, processing, and new products. And the new processing plant is expanding opportunities and developing more products. Please join us. We have people on the ground ready to work with you. I am willing to answer any questions and supply any information you may need.

////// For further information on Mushuk Yuyay, contact Alan at AlAdams475@aol.com or Isabel at irodrigues@umassd.edu



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A Trip to Yurak Allpa Wildlife Sanctuary

By Fiona Mitchell

Photographs by Regina Weitzel

On Friday a large group of curious expats boarded a coach at Plaza Otorongo for a visit to the Zoológico Yurak Allpa, a wildlife refuge located in the Comunidad Tañiloma, about 14km south of Cuenca (or a 40-minute drive if you get stuck in traffic on Avenida de las Américas!). The refuge was officially designated a zoo in 2009 so it could receive visitors and charge an entrance fee, but its primary focus is caring for, rehabilitating and sometimes releasing injured and abandoned animals brought in by environmental organisations, law enforcement agencies and the general public. Although it does not receive any government funding, it is supported by two universities in Cuenca, which assist with laboratory studies and veterinary care.

We were met by the sanctuary's founder, Alberto, who after living in the US for many years was inspired to return to Ecuador and start taking in needy animals. We were each given a small bucket of fruits and vegetables to feed the various animals, and were amused to discover that the monkeys in particular have a very sweet tooth and are quite partial to sugar cane! Walking through the facility, we saw a large variety of animals, including dwarf pigs; a water buffalo; an Andean fox; an ocelot; some black agoutis; a tapir; many exotic birds, such as toucans and a yellow-golden pheasant; a couple of Humboldt penguins and some roseate spoonbills. The monkeys were particularly rambunctious: One cheeky chap reached through the fencing and gleefully grabbed an entire food bucket from an unsuspecting member of our group.

The highlight was undoubtedly the "ostrich massage." Alberto explained that one day, while feeling stressed, as he was standing near the ostriches, they started pecking his back and suddenly all his troubles eased away. To demonstrate, he asked for a handful of brave volunteers

(there were surprisingly many) to lie prostrate on a wooden platform, while Alberto scattered corn on their backs and then let the ostriches enthusiastically tuck in. There was no way I was going to volunteer for that—I'm sure I heard one traumatized volunteer mutter about bite marks on her shoulders afterwards! However it was highly entertaining to watch.

We then drove a few minutes to the nearby falconry facility that is also part of Yurak Allpa. It's just a grassy soccer

field with a small bird-housing area in the corner, but the work they do here is commendable. Due to the ongoing conflict between birds of prey and local farmers—the birds are prone to killing domestic chickens, so the farmers often shoot them or burn their nests—many birds are injured and chicks abandoned. The facility takes them in, rehabilitates them, teaches them hunting skills, and then releases them back into the wild. Unfortunately some do become too dependent on being fed, losing their hunting skills and becoming long-term residents at the center. We were shown four birds, ranging from a very small falcon to a majestic, five-



pound, black-chested eagle. Many of us took a turn holding the birds, wearing the obligatory falconry leather glove for protection. The trainer also managed to get the first bird to do some flying tricks, but the best act of all was when one feathered exhibitionist—a Curiquingue—took off on foot, prancing around the soccer field as the trainer tried to catch her. Now that was a great show!

We finished the day with a tasty lunch at La Yunta restaurant before returning back to Cuenca—an enjoyable and uplifting day, although I am now plagued by recurrent nightmares of being pecked to death by hungry ostriches!

Andrew Staub

Clairvoyant and Psychic at Large

By Madelaine Barry
Photograph by Madelaine Barry

Do you often finish someone else's sentences, feel a sense of foreboding before something bad occurs, see a vision of something before it happens, sense how friends are feeling (even before they express it) and/or catch a vibe about a new acquaintance before (s)he even speaks?

If you answered "YES!" to one or more of the above, then chances are you have psychic abilities according to lawyer-cum-psychic Andrew Staub. Actually, he claims that we all have psychic abilities, but not everyone has the circumstances and/or inclination to foster them. A native Chicagoan, Andrew has lived in Cuenca for over four years but has been learning about becoming a clairvoyant and healer for about 25 years, and he has taught people to turn on their psychic ability of clairvoyance for over 20.

It all started when he accompanied an employee who had been urging him to attend a reading, skeptical of the outcome, but with an open mind. "I was blown away," he exclaims about the accuracy of what the team of readers revealed: details no one could have known about his life. This piqued his interest to learn more and was about as far away from his corporate lawyering as anything could be.

As he progressed through courses in acquiring basic psychic tools, he came to the realization that he had always had this gift, though at times it was a burden. Looking back, he realizes it explained a lot of events in his life. He practices in Cuenca what he did in Chicago: performing readings and healings and teaching others to do the same. He does not



use props in his work: no tarot cards, crystal balls, palms, or tea leaves. He is adamant in that he neither gives advice nor tells the future, but he reads past lives and works with your chakras and aura to clear out foreign energy to restore space for your own energy. Blockages in one or more chakra can create physical and emotional uneasiness and ailments. Stateside, he charges \$180 an hour, but in Cuenca, it's only \$35.

He came to Ecuador sight unseen because, on paper, Cuenca checked off all his boxes. I asked whether he broke his own rule to look into his future to see if Cuenca would work out, but he shook his head, smiled and said "No."

One experience Andrew offered as an example was a woman in Hawaii to whom he had been giving readings and healings for over a decade. During her battle with an ovarian fibroid, he continued to work with her long distance as she healed herself by clearing old energies from her body, aura, and chakras. During surgery, the doctors were dumbfounded to find no signs of a fibroid or damage to her organs.

While this isn't something that Andrew can guarantee for everyone, you can contact him if you're curious about this field. He can be contacted at amstaub88@gmail.com.



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