


REVUE

Guatemala's English-language Magazine
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November 2011
Year 20, No. 9

FREE

- 
- ◆ Sea Turtle Festival
 - ◆ Getting High in Ixchiguán
 - ◆ Weaving a History



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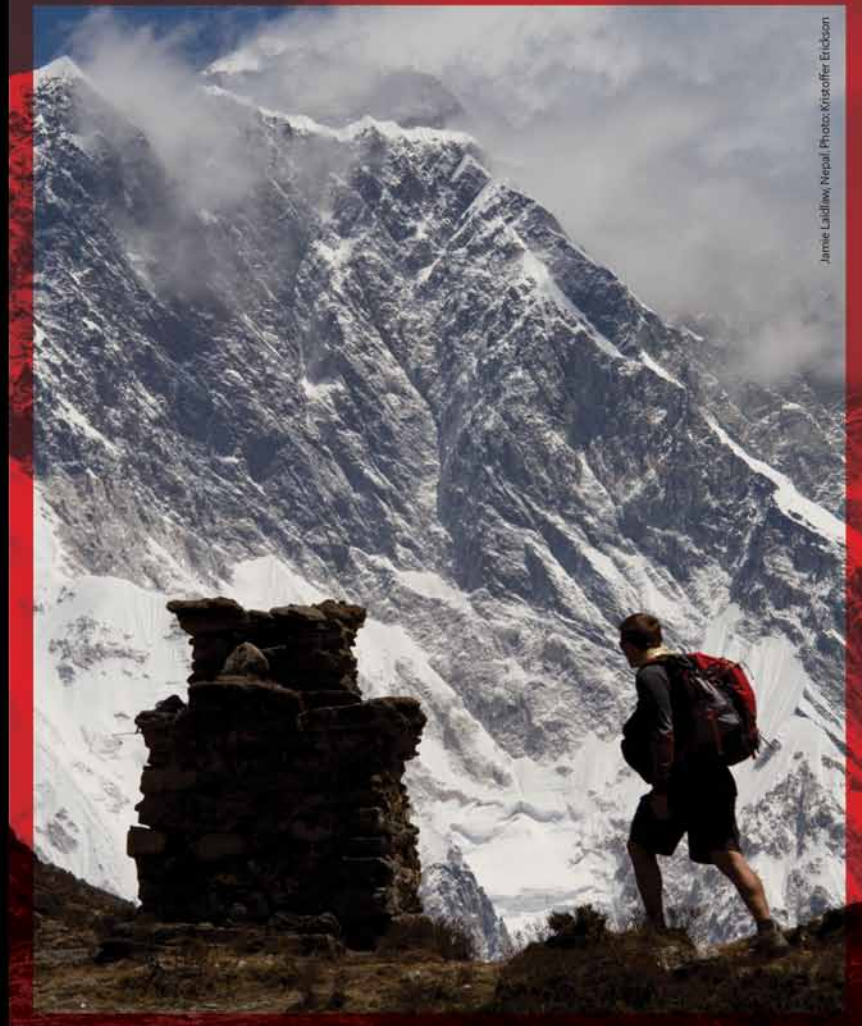
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cover to cover

18 CONSERVATION

by Alice Lee

Festival de la Tortuga

The third annual Sea Turtle Festival in Monterrico and nearby Hawaii



14 TRAVEL

by Thor Janson

Getting High in Ixchiguán

16 COMMUNITY SERVICE

by Clara San Filippo

ITEMP Offers Fresh Start

36 TEXTILES

by Kathy Rouso

Morral Builder



Ixchiguán town center (page 14)

70 SACRED ANIMALS & EXOTIC TROPICAL PLANTS

by Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth

The Nance Tree

74 SENSUOUS GUATEMALA

by Ken Veronda

Brown

78 LIFESTYLE

by Anna-Claire Bevan

Migratory House

86 LAKE VIEWS

by Dwight Wayne Coop

The Atitlán Marathon

108 TRADITION

by Joy Houston

Weaving a History



A new house under construction for rescued victims of human trafficking (page 16)

44 BROADCASTING

Harris Whitbeck nominated for International Emmy

56 ASK ELIZABETH

by Elizabeth Bell

What is the Consejo?

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cover to cover

22 DATEBOOK

November guide to culture and upcoming events

60 DATEBOOK HIGHLIGHT

Handel's Messiah

92 DATEBOOK HIGHLIGHT

Jazz/Blues Cruise Atitlán



22 Check DateBook for November cultural events

SECTIONS

12 From the Publisher

40 Health Services

47 Antigua Map

48 Vet Q & A

84 Travel

100 Classifieds

104 Real Estate

110 Advertiser Index

REGIONS

Guatemala City

31 services / shopping

35 dining

38 lodging

La Antigua

46 services / shopping

53 dining

75 lodging

88 Lake Atitlán

93 Quetzaltenango

94 Las Lisas

95 Monterrico / Pacific Coast

98 El Petén

98 Río Dulce

99 Cobán

99 Tecpán

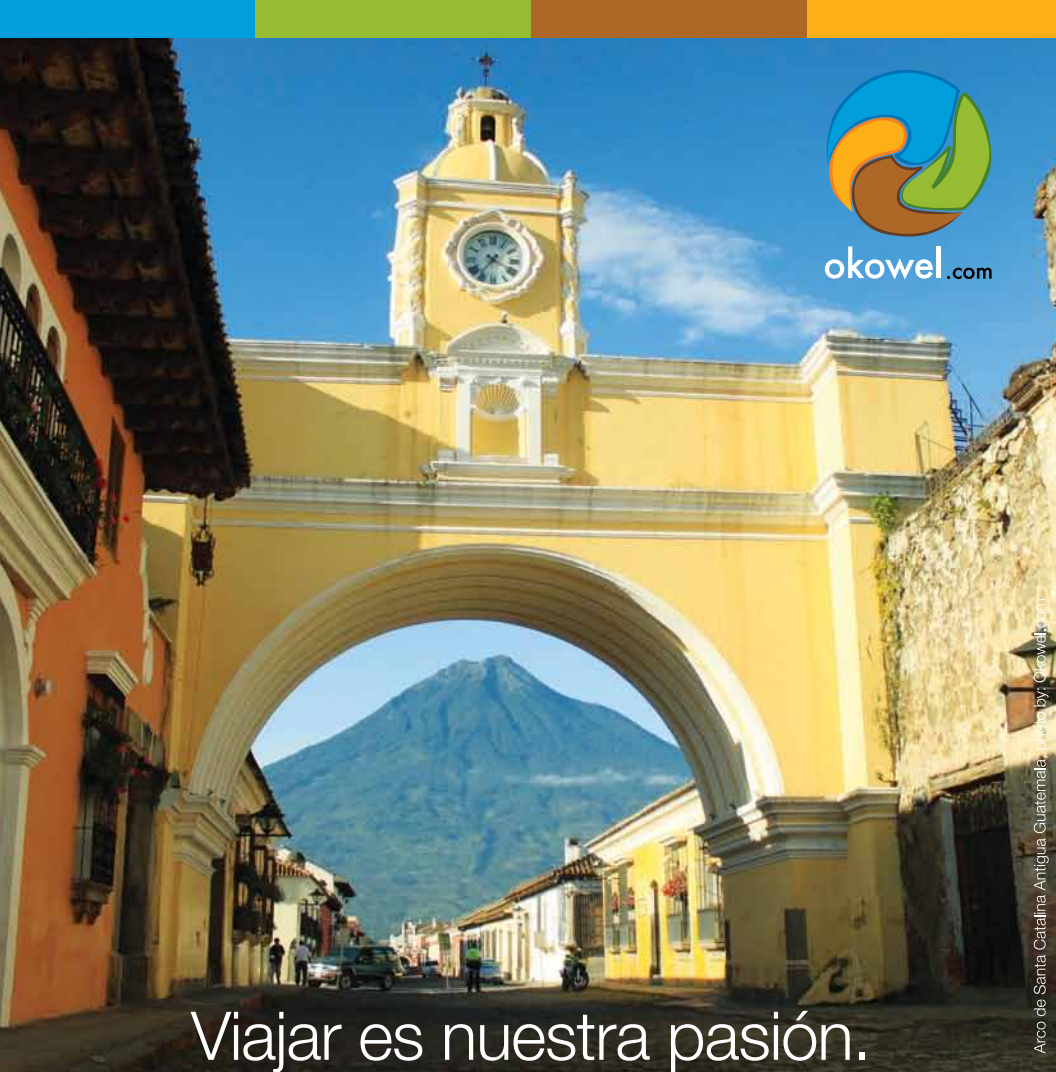
ON THE COVER

*Hatchling
Trek*

by
*Jordan
Banks*



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From the Publishers

The 3rd annual *Festival de la Tortuga* will be held this month on the Pacific beaches in Monterrico and neighboring Hawaii. The festival's purpose is to raise awareness of the endangered olive ridley sea turtle; Alice Lee provides details, including a rundown on the events and activities.

This month Thor Janson brings us *Getting High in Ixchiguan*, and he means exactly that—Ixchiguan is situated some 3,200 meters above sea level, making it the highest town in all of Central America! Kathy Rousso introduces a *Morral Builder*, explaining how a San Marcos la Laguna craftsman learned to crochet beautiful, colorful morrales.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Bell, she has been chosen to receive the prestigious Orden Diego de Porres Gold award which will be presented to her this month in a ceremony celebrating the Consejo de La Antigua Guatemala's 42nd anniversary. *Ask Elizabeth* appropriately answers the question, *What is the National Council for the Protection of La Antigua Guatemala?*

Migratory House by Anna-Claire Bevan tells the story of the building of an authentic Antigua colonial-style home, designed by architect Franklin Contreras—which in itself would be interesting—but there is more. Meet George and Gerri Chester and visit their dream home away from "home."

Weaving a History by Joy Houston explains how, "the weaving tradition is a dynamic art form with ties to the past. It is more than craft."

DateBook highlights include Handel's *Messiah* and the *Lake Atitlán Jazz Blues Cruise*, plus listings for art shows, concerts, theater, films and workshops. Many events scheduled for 2012 are already in the planning stages, including *The Atitlán Marathon* as reported by Dwight Wayne Coop. Stay tuned for updates in the coming months.

Thanks for reading the Revue! We'll be back with another edition in December.

—John & Terry Kovick Biskovich

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The high elevation town of Ixchiguán

Getting High in Ixchiguán

Like Shangri-La, the name beckons from the maps—enticing, mysterious and alluring: Ixchiguán! I had noticed the place many years ago, and I was always looking for someone who could tell me more about this far-flung outpost. Ask anyone on the street in La Antigua Guatemala if they know anything about Ixchiguán and 99-to-1 they will say that they've never heard of it. The only people I have encountered who know of Ixchiguán are hardcore mountain climbers who briefly visited it on their way to scale Guatemala's highest peaks.

For years I entertained the idea of exploring this little-known region in the north. Finally I found the opportunity, and away we went aboard my land-yacht, cruising into the remote western reaches of the Cuchumatanes Mountains.

San Cristóbal Ixchiguán is one of 29 municipalities that comprise the Department of San Marcos. It is located 270 kilometers northwest of Guatemala City. All but a few stretches of the highway are now paved.

The most outstanding feature of Ixchiguán is that it is situated on a high plateau 3,200 meters above sea level, making it the highest town in Central America and the second-highest population center in Latin America, after La Paz, Bolivia. And it is high!

The Cuchumatanes are part of the Sierra Madre, the volcanic mountain range that fringes the Pacific Ocean along the entire length of the American hemisphere. Locally the mountain is known ...continued page 66

No es solo un destino en Guatemala,
es la oportunidad de viajar en el tiempo

AVIANCATACA

Fotografía cortesía del Instituto Guatemalteco de Turismo – INGUAT

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Guatemala - Flores	6:30	7:40	Diario
Flores - Guatemala	8:05	9:10	Diario
Guatemala - Flores	18:20	19:30	Diario
Flores - Guatemala	19:55	21:00	Diario

ITEMP Offers Fresh Start for Entrapped Women & Children



(NUESTROS AHIJADOS)

Rescued children get a chance at a new life

María, 21, mother of four, fled dire poverty to come to La Antigua Guatemala hoping for a better future. But she didn't find the tranquil, colonial paradise that makes Antigua so appealing to travelers worldwide. Instead, she and her older daughter were forced to work long hours for the owner of the house she lived in and barely got anything to eat. The house was frequented by drug dealers, and she had been urged on various occasions to sell her children.


Human trafficking is not something abstract. It is so shocking that it makes us want to look the other way. Who wants to see young children trapped into forced labor or domestic servitude, young women forced into prostitution and sexually exploited, free men turned into slaves? Who wants to see these 2.5 million victims worldwide? They do not have postcard smiles; they are survivors who have been through hell.

Like countless others, María was destitute and far away from her loved ones. She was helpless—the perfect victim for ruthless traffickers. She and her daughter had been exploited, and she might have been

forced to sell her children if the Institute for Trafficked, Exploited, and Missing Persons (ITEMP) had not stepped in to rescue her.

Founded in 2001, ITEMp is a borderless anti-human trafficking program of *Nuestros Ahijados*, an NGO well known for having helped thousands of children and families break the bitter chains of poverty over the last 20 years.

ITEMp works to prevent, interdict, rescue, recover and rehabilitate victims of human trafficking. It provides them with safe houses when necessary, medical and psychological aid, social and legal assistance as well as with education.

Thanks to ITEMp, María is now in a safe house, her children are going to go to school, and she is going to enroll in a literacy program. Tears have been shed but joy is taking over. And now she can agree: Antigua is beautiful. 

If you know about a trafficking victim or if you want to help us offer a fresh start to children and young women whose lives have been broken, contact ITEMp. Call Clara San Filippo, operations director, at 7832-4678 or email: Claire.sanfilippo@itemp.org, also visit www.itemp.org

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Conservation

by Alice Lee



FESTIVAL DE LA TORTUGA

Nesting season for sea turtles is in full swing along Guatemala's Pacific beaches, where from July to December, the olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) comes ashore to lay eggs.

To raise awareness of this endangered species, the third annual Sea Turtle Festival will take place the weekend of **Nov. 18-20** in Monterrico and nearby Hawaii. Events include lectures, workshops and activities for children, hatchling releases and nightly

patrols in search of nesting females. All proceeds support area turtle hatcheries, which buy turtle eggs from local villagers—who would otherwise eat them—to nurture and release.

Other highlights include activities such as a beauty pageant, volleyball and beach soccer tournaments, a horse parade, and the area's first surf competition. Live music, disco and marimba provide nightly entertainment in both towns.



The population of sea turtles nesting in Guatemala is unknown, but the odds are against the reptiles as only about one out of every 1,000 sea turtle hatchlings survives to reproduce. The vast majority of eggs are lost to human harvesting and consumption; destruction of nesting habitat also contributes greatly to the species' decline.

Guatemala is one of the last bastions of turtle egg commercialization, having been outlawed in most countries of the world. Here the government permits the sale of turtle eggs, provided that 20 percent of the nest gets donated to a local hatchery. This system has been established as a compromise, allowing people to continue to do what they have done for generations while attempting to keep turtles from disappearing.

Monterrico, one of the earliest destinations on the coast to use tourism to promote and protect sea turtles, became the home of the first sea turtle festival. Grupo Gestor, a consortium for coastal development, recognized ecotourism as a solution

to their problems of sustainability and lack of jobs and education; the group developed the annual festival three years ago.

Leading up to this year's event, *Hermanos de las Olas*, the surf NGO putting on the surf tournament, has been offering three-day surf clinics in Hawaii, the final set for Nov. 11-13. Call Edgar Guillén at 5316-4637 for details and reservations.

Hotel reservations are highly recommended for the festival weekend, as it is projected to sell out. La Antigua Guatemala transport services provides daily shuttles to Monterrico and there are connecting buses to Hawaii. There are also direct *camionetas* from Guatemala City and Antigua departing daily. 📞

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

📧 <http://festivaldelatortuga.info>

📧 <http://visitmonterrico.com>

📧 <http://hawaiiguatemala.com>

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DATEBOOK

NOVEMBER GUIDE TO CULTURE AND UPCOMING EVENTS COMPILED BY MERCEDES MEJICANOS

1 Tues. — CELEBRATION: *All Saint's Day*. Guatemalans prepare fiambre and visit cemeteries to honor departed family members and friends. Special celebrations throughout the country, including Santiago and Sumpango Sacatepéquez, where they fly huge kites. Many businesses and banks will be closed. **Nationwide.**

2 Wed., 7pm — ART: To celebrate Casa Mima's 12th anniversary, the inauguration of *Los Misterios de la Navidad 2011*, featuring work by Guatemalan artisans; some pieces will be for sale. Casa Mima (tel: 2253-6657), Historic Center, corner of 14 calle & 8a av., z. 1, **Guatemala City.**

3 Thurs., 6:30pm, through Wed., 16th — PHOTOGRAPHY: Awards and exposition of the winning photographs of the contest Fiestas Patronales. Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena, 6a calle final, z.10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City.**

3 Thurs., through Fri., 25th — ART: Recent works by Erick Menchú. Sala Principal, El Attico (tel: 2368-0853), 4a av. 15-45, z. 14, **Guatemala City.**

3 Thurs., 7pm — MUSIC: Piano and guitar concert by children and teen musicians, conducted by well-known musician and musical director Ricardo Carranza. Q40. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua.**

4 Fri., — ANNIVERSARY PARTY: Celebrate Shakespeare Pub's 37th anniversary. The party features lots of surprises! Shakespeare Pub (tel: 2331-2641), 13 calle and 1a av. z., 10, **Guatemala City.**

4 Fri., 8pm — MUSIC: Katherine Soprano Lirica presents music from *Por Amor*. Q50. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua.**



5 Sat., 7pm — (Spanish) THEATER: El grupo Aquellare presenta bajo la dirección de Roberto Arana, *Al Final del Camino*, una adaptación de Guillermo Monsanto. Elenco artístico: Guillermo Monsanto, Val-lardo Díaz, Antoine Gely y Carlos Pellecer. Q50. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua.**

Please submit your DATEBOOK entry for the DEC., 2011 edition of the REVUE by Thursday, Nov. 10



5 Sat., through Dec. 4 — ART: *Pétalo de Sal*, an exhibition of 10 acrylics in large and medium formats by Colombian artist Andrea Castillo. This is her second show at the gallery. La Antigua Galería de Arte (tel: 7832-2124), 4a calle oriente #15, **La Antigua**.



5 Sat., through Sat., 26th — ART: *Síntesis/Rojo & Negro* by Edwin Lone. Salón del Coleccionista, El Attico (tel: 2368-0853), 4a av. 15-45, z. 14, **Guatemala City**.



8 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *Manos Abiertas*, an integrated women's health clinic and natural birth center with two locations in Guatemala, helps a population that otherwise would not have access to health services. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

9 Wed., 5pm through Dec. 14 — ART: Inauguration of *Ludivine* with work by Karla Higueros. Mesón Panza Verde (tel: 7832-2925), 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua**. ▼



11 Fri., all day through Sun., 13 — FERIA: *2a Feria de Comercio Justo y Solidario*, Guatemala (fair-trade fair). Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, Central Park, **La Antigua**.

11 Fri. — CELEBRATION: A variety of cultural and religious activities in celebration of *San Martín Obispo de Tour*. **San Martín Sacatepéquez, Quetzaltenango**.

11 Fri., through Sun., 13th — SURF TOURNAMENT: Leading up to the third annual Sea Turtle Festival, Hermanos de las Olas is hosting a surfing tournament and three-day surf clinics. **Hawaii, Guatemala**. See related article on page 18.



11 Fri., 2-8pm;
Sat., 12th,
10am-10pm; Sun., 13th
10am-6pm — EXHIBI-
TION & SALE: Antique
prints and collectables by
Luisa Stallo;

and original bags, cushions and
throw created by Rosangela
Veglio. Casa Troccoli, 3a calle
poniente #7, **La Antigua**. (see
page 29)



12 Sat., 7pm through Jan. 10, 2012
— ART: Inauguration of *Fantas-
magorías Oníricas* with paintings by artist
Fautisno Pablo Bautista. Cocktail. El Sitio
(tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua**. ▼



12 Sat., through Wed., 16 —
CHRISTMAS BAZAAR: Work-
shops for kids, exclusive products for sale,
Christmas food and beverages. Museo Ix-
chel del Traje Indígena, 6a calle final, z.10,
Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City**.

12 Sat., 1pm — BENEFIT DANCE:
The *Niños de San Antonio Aguas Calien-
tes* dance and play the marimba, flutes and
bombas. Donations benefit educational pur-
suits. Free. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-
4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**.

REVUE is not responsible for event
cancellations or date/time changes.

12 Sat., 3pm — ART: Exposición a
beneficio de la Fundación Cultural
Duane Carter. Un 12 de noviembre nació
Duane Carter, para conmemorar dicho
aniversario, se presentará una expo-venta
de obras de arte. Proyecto Cultural El Sitio
(tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua**.

13 Sun., 4pm — (Spanish) MUSIC/
THEATER: Títere Fue! presents *El
Hombre que lo Tenía Todo*, de Miguel Án-
gel Asturias, títeres y música en vivo. Q50/
niños Q35. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La
Antigua**.

14 Mon., 5:30-8pm — EVENT: *Have
a Beer with Barack!* Brews and a pub
quiz on your political knowledge with fellow
Democrats Abroad-Guatemala. For more
info., contact John Chudy (tel: 7832-4581),
or mayadems@yahoo.com. Casa Convento
Concepción, 4a calle oriente #41, Calle
Concepción, **La Antigua**.

15 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK:
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vides free dental care and education for
children and their families and builds or
improves facilities that serve children.
Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-
1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

18 Fri., through Wed., 23rd — ART:
Works by artist Inés Díaz. Museo
Ixchel del Traje Indígena, 6a calle final,
z.10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala
City**.

18 Fri., through Sun., 20th — FES-
TIVAL: The third annual Sea Turtle
Festival. Events include lectures, workshops
and activities for children, hatchling releas-
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18 Fri., 8pm — MUSIC: Between acoustics, *Undressed Song* (Canción Desnuda) by Iván Hernández (lead singer and harmonica), Antonio Gómez Darce (vocals and guitar), trova, reggae and rock; Gaby Andrade, alternative rock; Pedro Boche, pop rock and The Havanas, blues band. Q40. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua.**



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Sundays — 12:30-3pm: Ramiro plays Trova Cubana, with Bill on congas. Free.

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Thursdays — 7pm: Live music.

Fridays and Saturdays — Belly dancing.

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tel: 7832-0478 6 calle poniente #6, La Antigua

Wednesdays — 8pm: Accordion music by Jorge Herrera.

Rainbow Café

tel: 7832-1919 7a av. sur #8, La Antigua

Mondays — 7:30pm: Don Ramiro will serenade you with some beautiful Latin folk music. Free.

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Thursdays — 7-9pm: Mike Mcarthy plays some mean blues.

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Fridays — 7-9pm: Ron Fortin saxophone; 9:30-11:30pm: Nelson Lunding New Orleans piano.

Saturdays — 7-9pm: Malcolm Oakley sings and plays guitar.

9:30pm: Mercedes, guitar blues/rock/folk.



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Wednesdays — 7:30pm: Latin music.

Thursdays — Ishto Juevez, swing & Mexican.

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8pm: Rockiris, alternative rock.

9pm: Latin ensemble.

Wednesdays — 7pm: Chris Jarnach, classic music, jazz and rock.

8pm: Latin ensemble.

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8pm: Latin ensemble.

9pm: Norte, contemporary trova.

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19 Sat., 11am — (Spanish) CUENTOS Y TALENTOS: ¿Qué habrá en la otra orilla?, ¿Qué soñarán?, ¿Cómo vivirán? Para descubrirlo muchas personas deciden hacer un largo viaje, aunque esto signifique hacerlo como sardinas. Cooperación Española (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte between 3a & 4a calle poniente, **La Antigua**.

19 Sat., 6pm — MUSIC: Orquesta Sinfónica Juvenil de El Salvador. Free. Cooperación Española (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte between 3a & 4a calle poniente, **La Antigua**.

19 Sat., 6pm — (Spanish) THEATER: *El Pescado Indigesto* by Compañía de Teatro Javier. Q60. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua**.

19 Sat., 8pm — ANNIVERSARY BASH: Rainbow Café will be celebrating its 19th anniversary, come join us and celebrate. Live music with Kenny and friends, free drinks and much more. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

19 Sat., & Sun., 20 — FASHION WEEKEND XELA 2011: *Tejido Social*, expositions, contemporary art, concerts and a runway fashion show to present Saul E. Mendez's winter collection. For hotel or transportation reservations, contact Adrenalina Tours (tel: 7932-5858), or meetingplannersgt@gmail.com, **Quetzaltenango**.

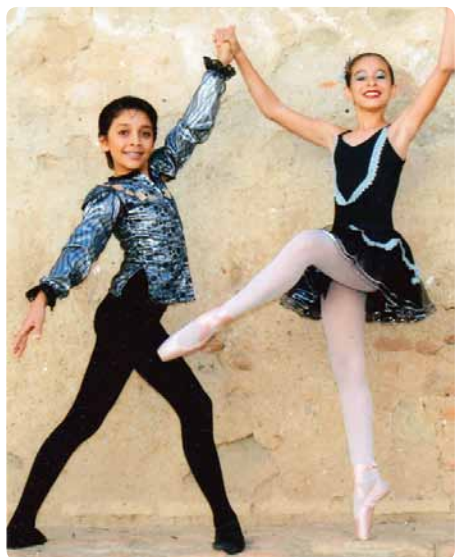
19 Sat., 11:30am-8pm — JAZZ/BLUES CRUISE & GOURMET FOOD FESTIVAL: Featuring great music and delicious food, organized by Festival Atitlán. For more info. & ticket purchase, visit www.festivalatitlan.com/cruise/cruiseeng.html. **Panajachel & Santiago Atitlán**. See related article on page 92.

22 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *Combating Poverty through Education*, presented by Camino Seguro/Safe Passage, which serves children of families working at the Guatemala City garbage dump. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

25 Fri. — CELEBRATION: Many cultural and religious activities planned to *celebrate Santa Catarina de Alejandria, Zunil, Quetzaltenango*.

26 Sat., 10:30am — (Spanish) CONFERENCIA: *El Añil, Un Mundo Azul*, su historia en Guatemala y en otros países, la planta, su uso, etc. Además apreciará una demostración de como se tiñe hilo y algodón. Conferencista Olga Reiche. Entrada gratuita. Vivero y Café La Escalonia (tel: 7832-7074), 5a av. sur final #36-C, **La Antigua**.

26 Sat., 6pm — DANCE: Ballet performance organized by Escuela de Danza Gilda Jolas. Q30, pre-sale; Q35, day of the event. Ruinas de San Jerónimo, Calzada Santa Lucía norte final, **La Antigua**.



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PHOTOS BY GUIDO LUCCI

26 Sat., 7pm —

MUSIC:

Orgullo Nacional by Arturo Xicay and his band. Q75. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua**.



29 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK:

Life in Guatemala: Brief History and Current Conditions presented by Sue Patterson, a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer who also founded WINGS, a non-profit dedicated to reproductive health and family planning. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

29 Tues., 7:30pm — CHRISTMAS

CONCERT: The annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*. Centro Cultural Miguel Ángel Asturias, **Guatemala City**-tickets: Q250, Q100 & Q60... **AND**

30 Wed., 7:30pm — Casa Santo Domingo, **La Antigua**-tickets: Q300 & Q200. See related article and detailed ticket info. on page 60.



Through Mon., 7th — PHOTOGRAPHY:

As part of the Paiz Festival, *Fotokids 20 años Capturando Sueños*. Free. Arte Centro Graciela Andrade de Paiz, 9a calle 8-54, z. 1, **Guatemala City**.

Through Tues., 8th — ART: Collec-

tive exposition *Trazos de Luz 2012*, coordinated by FUNDAL. Galería Guatemala, Fundación G&T Continental, 6a av. 9-08, z.9, **Guatemala City**.

Through Wed., 16th — PHOTOGRAPHY:

Guatemala, Gente de Tradiciones by Santiago Albert. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**.



DATEBOOK continues on page 32



Through Nov. 7th — PHO-

TOGRAPHY:

Paiz Festival presents *Un grito en el Cielo*, as part of the Foto30 photo festival. Free. Arte Centro Graciela Andrade de Paiz, 9a calle 8-54, z. 1, **Guatemala City**.

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THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Tuesdays, 6pm — PHOTO TOUR: *Antigua Behind the Walls*, a one-hour presentation of Antigua and its heritage through vintage and contemporary photographs collected over the past 30 years accompanied by Elizabeth Bell's expert narration. Proceeds benefit educational programs in Antigua. Q30 per person, tickets available at the presentation. El Sitio, 5a calle poniente #15, **La Antigua**.

Tuesdays (November & December), 7pm — FILM: International films. Donation entrance. Café Q'anil, **Panajachel, Lake Atitlán..**

Wednesdays, 5pm (Spanish) FILMS: A different film every week. Cooperación Española, Cooperación Española (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte between 3a & 4a calle poniente, **La Antigua**.

Wednesdays, 9:30am-12:30pm — WORKSHOP: *Primeros Cinceles* by artist Beverley Rowley. Q900 (5 classes), limited seating. Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena, 6a calle final, z.10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City**.

BIRD WATCHING: Watch over 200 Egrets return to their home tree for the night. **5:15, SHARP!** The birds are never late! La Peña de Sol Latino Restaurante, 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30pm — (Spanish) CURSO: *Celebraciones de Fin de Año en Guatemala: Alegría y Tradición*. Tratará los temas de: Fiesta de Todos los Santos y el fiambre, Fiestas de Concepción y Guadalupe, los orígenes de la fiesta navideña: las posadas y las piñatas, las tradiciones navideñas de tamal, pólvora y el nacimiento, las tradiciones navideñas anglosajonas arraigadas en Guatemala. Impartido por el Dr. Anibal Chajón. Cinco sesiones. Contribución: público Q875; estudiantes Q655. Museo Popol Vuh (tel: 2338-7836), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**.

Saturdays, 2-4pm — RUGBY CLUB: Workouts every week, come and join us. Q15. Visit <http://rugby.com.gt/antigua> for more information. Centro Los Luternos, 1a av. norte final, **La Antigua**. ▼



Saturdays 4pm — (Spanish) CHIL-DREN'S MOVIES: Cine infantil. Cooperación Española, (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte between 3a & 4a calle poniente, **La Antigua**.

PLAN AHEAD

3 Dec., Sat., 4pm — (Spanish/English) CONFERENCE: *¿El Fin del Mundo o El Quinto Sol en la Cultura Maya?* (The End of the World or the Fifth Sun in the Mayan Culture?) By Lic. Eduardo Mendoza. Simultaneous translation to English. Q100, includes dinner. Limited seating. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**.

There is no strong performance without a little fanaticism in the performer.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

I have noticed that the people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them. —E. V. Lucas



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Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is. —Francis Bacon

Be who you are and say what you feel,
because those who mind don't matter and
those who matter don't mind. —Dr. Seuss

There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it hardly becomes any of us
To talk about the rest of us.
—Edward Wallis Hoch



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He was a great patriot, a humanitarian, a loyal
friend; provided, of course, he really is dead.
—Voltaire

A single rose can be my garden... a single
friend, my world. —Leo Buscaglia



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PLAN AHEAD

2 Dec., 3, 4—**FESTIVAL:** Celebrating the renovation at the Museo Lacustre. The museum features pottery and stone works brought up from a sunken Mayan ceremonial center that was originally an island in Lake Atitlán. The festival will include daily activities, conferences on underwater archaeology, multi-media presentations and more. Info: www.eventosantiguaguatemala.com. Calle Santander (Posada de Don Rodrigo), **Panajachel, Lake Atitlán.**



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A daydream is a meal at which images are eaten. Some of us are gourmets, some gourmands, and a good many take their images precooked out of a can and swallow them down whole, absent-mindedly and with little relish. —W.H. Auden

All happiness depends on a leisurely breakfast.
—John Gunther

And I find chopsticks frankly distressing. Am I alone in thinking it odd that a people ingenious enough to invent paper, gunpowder, kites and any number of other useful objects, and who have a noble history extending back 3,000 years haven't yet worked out that a pair of knitting needles is no way to capture food? —Bill Bryson

Morral Builder

Handmade bags reflect the creativity of a tradition

The *morral* (bag) is a common textile item found all over Guatemala and is often distinct to specific municipalities. Bags likely developed because men's *traje* does not have pockets, and they became a necessary accessory for men to carry small items when walking to the *milpa* fields or market. Women sometimes use morrales but mostly carry items wrapped in a cloth, which is balanced on their head.

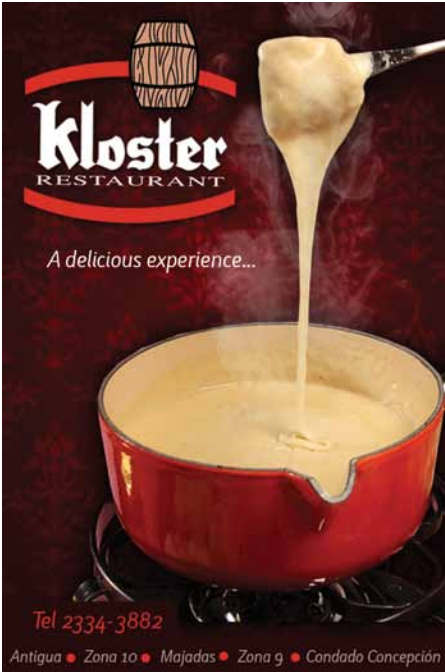
The traditional morral of San Marcos la Laguna, Sololá, is made from the fibers of the maguey plant. The extraction process includes cutting and trimming the leaves, then transporting them to the lakeshore. Here, men pound the leaves with wooden mallets on large stones, after which the

leaves are soaked for several days in the lake. This process softens the tough, thick leaf exterior so that when scraped on a plank with a long-handled, dull-metal tool, the inner fibers remain. These are then dried, leg-spun and “knitted” into beautiful morrales.

In other municipalities morrales are made from a variety of materials, techniques, colors, patterns and styles. One such place is Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Huehuetenango, where the common morral is a brightly colored, cotton-crocheted bag. Sometimes techniques and ideas travel from one place to another, and crossovers happen between communities when contact is made, such is the case with a man from San Marcos la Laguna, Sololá. ...cont. page 38



Salvador crochets a new morral (left) and shows the finished product to author Rousso (right)

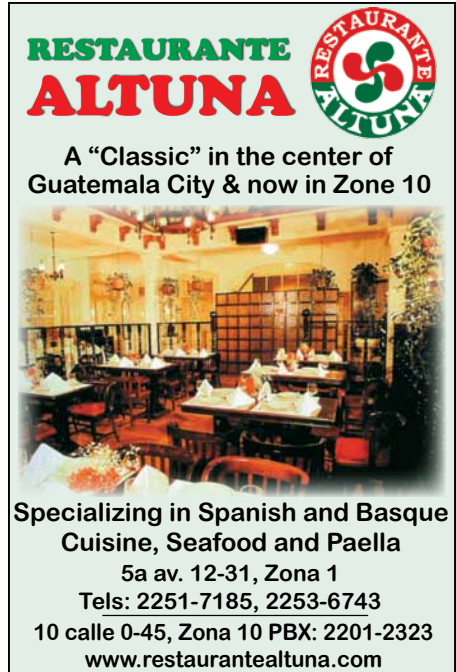


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I was trying to daydream, but my mind
kept wandering. —Steven Wright

If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work.
—William Shakespeare

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Morral Builder cont. from page 36

In the 1970s Mateo Sanquoy Puzul worked for the municipality of San Marcos la Laguna and was accused of embezzling public funds. Mateo subsequently spent three months in the Sololá jail. It just so happened that an inmate from Todos Santos shared his cell, and to pass the time this man worked on a morral. Mateo observed him and slowly learned the process for creating a Todos Santos-style bag, which he later taught to his son, Salvador.

Salvador perfected the art and now crochets intricate, colorful morrales with one side usually depicting a local lakeside scene and the other, specific to the buyer. In my case, I requested a maguey plant, and as he does with all of his design ideas, Salvador drew a picture of the maguey plant in a notebook. The pages were filled with a variety of other drawings, and from that he crocheted the design. I left the colors up to him, and one month later the bag was complete.

When Salvador explained his story to me, he showed me an old photo of his father with a tourist and a crocheted morral. Apparently, the tourist was so impressed with the bag that she had her photo taken with it and upon return to her European home, sent him a copy. This was all the encouragement Mateo needed, and the rest, as they say, is history! 

*To order a bag from Salvador, look for him in
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When your life flashes before your eyes, make sure you've got plenty to watch. —Author unknown

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Guatemalan journalist nominated for International Emmy




Harris Whitbeck

Guatemalan journalist Harris Whitbeck has been nominated for an International Emmy award for his production *La Expedición, Más Allá de lo Imposible* (The Expedition, Beyond the Impossible), which was broadcast last year on Televisa and produced for Fundación Teletón.

Competing in the field of reality programs, *La Expedición* tells the story of 11 people with disabilities who undertake an expedition to Veracruz to face their physical challenges and test their capabilities—on their own and through teamwork.

“I am very proud of this nomination,” Whitbeck said. “*La Expedición* was the first

production we made at Zodiak Latino for Televisa. Having been nominated for an Emmy is a very valuable acknowledgement to me and my colleagues in this industry and to our work. I am very proud and thankful.”

Whitbeck founded Zodiak Latino in 2009 within the Zodiak Media Group, whose partners include singer Ricky Martin. Last year the group produced the Pepsi Music Challenge in Guatemala for Channel 3 and is in negotiation to do a second season. A former CNN bureau chief in Mexico City, Whitbeck directs and conducts the TV show *Entrémosle a Guate* on channel 3, with Guatemalan director Ana Carlos. 

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PET Q's & A's
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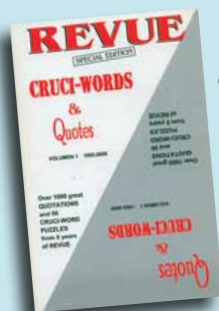
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Few novels or plays could exist without at least one troublemaker in the group, and perhaps life couldn't either. —Mignon McLaughlin

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—Ben Stein

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ASK ELIZABETH

by Elizabeth Bell
AUTHOR/HISTORIAN

What is the National Council for the Protection of La Antigua Guatemala?

The “Consejo” was established by the Guatemalan Congress in 1969 to enforce the Protective Law of La Antigua Guatemala (Decreto 60-69). Written by distinguished Guatemalans who were concerned about the future of this city, the law is intended to protect, restore and preserve all private and public cultural heritage established in the protected area. Without a doubt, it has saved Antigua from destruction.

I worked with the Consejo from 1978 to 1986 during which time we prevented Antigua’s monuments from falling down by stabilizing and restoring many of them. We implemented housing permits and worked on the restoration of colonial art that was literally crumbling apart. We also developed educational and cultural programs to enhance an awareness of the need to preserve this very special colonial capital.

With a board of directors that includes the mayor (as the president of the Consejo) and four representatives appointed by academic institutions in Guatemala City, the Consejo has a *conservador* in charge of day-to-day activities. While the board appoints the conservador, this task was recently given to a group of qualified local foundations and residents. This permitted local partici-

pation in appointing this very important position. After reviewing 21 candidates, the group recommended architect Eduardo Andrade, whom the board immediately and unanimously appointed as the new conservador. This is a great change! We welcome Eduardo as conservador.

What is the “Orden Diego de Porres?”

Created by the Consejo in 1974, this award is the highest honor in La Antigua Guatemala. It is given to those whose extraordinary merits and activities have benefitted the protection, preservation and research of Antigua. It is named after the main architect of the city of Santiago de Guatemala (as Antigua was originally named), Diego de Porres (1677-1741). Diego was born in Antigua and built many of the main monuments in town, including the Fountain of the Sirens, the Palace of the City Hall, Capuchinas and Santa Clara. The award has three categories: gold, silver and bronze fashioned in the form of a beautiful shell (after the St. James symbol); along with a diploma.

I am so pleased and honored to be receiving the gold “Orden Diego de Porres” this month in a ceremony ...continued page 58

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Ask Elizabeth cont. from page 56

celebrating the Consejo's 42nd anniversary. I am so excited! The Consejo will honor me for my "untiring work over many years in allowing people to know La Antigua Guatemala through her multiple books and lectures and constant activities in the preservation of the city and its cultural heritage."

After moving here in 1969, I have lived through all the changes since the Protective Law was passed. During the same ceremony, the first conservador of the city, architect Roberto Ogarrio, will also receive the award posthumously. This makes the honor even more meaningful to me as I started working with the Consejo and Roberto years ago. Since 1977, 16 gold awards have been given to distinguished people, institutions and governments. I am certainly honored by this award.

I appreciate the assistance I have received from many friends and residents in contributing to making La Antigua Guatemala the beautiful city that we see today, and I am committed to continuing my work. 

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DateBook Highlight

IN CONCERT: GUATEMALA CITY & LA ANTIGUA

Handel's Messiah



A rehearsal hall in Guatemala City has been filled with the sounds of Christmas since mid-September as the Guatemala Community Choir prepares for its annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*.

The production, now in its eighth year, will feature U.S. soloists J.J. Hobbs, Liz Cass, Sam Lowry and, making his Guatemala debut, baritone Phillip Hill from Austin, Texas. Trumpeter Randy Sonntag from Jupiter, Florida, will return to perform in the concert as well. They will be accompanied by the 100-member volunteer chorus and members of the Guatemalan Symphonic Orchestra, under the direction of Maya School Music Director Debby Lyttle.

The Christmas portion of Handel's *Messiah* dominates the first half of the concert, while the second half features Christmas music that has become a staple in the celebration of the season for hundreds of music lovers in Guatemala City and in La Antigua Guatemala.


As always, proceeds from the two performances will go to charities benefiting children through education. This year, Fundamex, a group of Mexican companies

operating in Guatemala, will be the main sponsor of the event, and a portion of the proceeds will go to the Benito Juárez School in Guatemala City's Zone 2. The Comité de Becas Mary Sue will also receive a portion of the proceeds, which will benefit a school in Chichicastenango. Principal sponsors include Coca-Cola, Cervecería Centroamericana, the U.S. Embassy, Atitlán Producciones and IGA.

Messiah performances will take place on **November 29** in the Centro Cultural Miguel Ángel Asturias in Guatemala City and **November 30** in Casa Santo Domingo in Antigua. An added feature this year in Antigua will be the addition of risers in the general section of the chapel.

Both performances begin at 7:30 p.m.

Seating in Antigua Q300 and Q200; Guatemala City, Q250, Q100 and Q60.

Tickets will be available at Joyería del Ángel, Casa Santo Domingo and the box office the night of the performance in Antigua and through TodoTicket and the theater box office the night of the performance in Guatemala City. 



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—Ludwig Wittgenstein

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because we will have to spend the rest of our
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The town of Ixchiguán is surrounded by strangely-shaped mountains and hills, and dozens of rivers and streams meander through the cool alpine forests and tundra-like grasslands.

IXCHIGUÁN cont. from page 14

as the Cerro Cotzic. From here you can enjoy some of the most spectacular views in all of Guatemala and really appreciate the immensity of the isthmus' highest volcanoes: Tacaná and Tajumulco, 4,060 and 4,220 meters, respectively (13,320 and 13,845 feet). The town of Ixchiguán is surrounded by strangely-shaped mountains and hills, and dozens of rivers and streams meander through the cool alpine forests and tundra-like "quasi-paramo" grasslands.

Here it is too high and cold for the cultivation of corn or even wheat, so the local population of some 25,000, nearly all of whom are of the Mam-Maya tribe, eke out a living pasturing sheep. The principal rivers are the Suchiate, which serves as the border between Mexico and Guatemala as it makes its way to the Pacific, and the Grijalva, which turns into the rivers Selegua and Cuilco on their way to the Atlantic side of the country.

Adventurous travelers who wish to experience the highest road in Central America should drive to Quetzaltenango and then on to the capital of San Marcos at an elevation of 2,000 meters. From here the climb begins up into the Cuchumatanes.

Ixchiguán is only 50 kilometers from San Marcos but it will take you several hours as you drive along the steep, winding road, occasionally damaged by landslides and washouts. As always, whenever you head way off the beaten path in Guatemala you should ask locals for information and advice concerning road conditions.

Our ascent was slowed considerably because an hour out of town, at an elevation of about 2,700 meters, we were suddenly enveloped by a cloud bank, reducing visibility to no more than 10 meters. As we crawled along up the endless switchbacks the temperature fell to near ...continued page 68

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Here it is too high and cold for the cultivation of corn or even wheat, so the local population, nearly all of whom are of the Mam-Maya tribe, eke out a living pasturing sheep.

IXCHIGUÁN cont. from page 66

freezing. Due to the clouds we did not see much during the trip up but that only added to the mystery.


When we finally made it to Ixchiguán, we were in a freezing-misting rain and opted to camp adjacent to the gas station on the outskirts. Thankfully my camper has a heater, which was much appreciated that evening. The manager greeted us in English! As we were to find out over the coming days, Mam-Maya is the language spoken by the inhabitants, but English is almost as common as Spanish in this district, as many of the people have gone to work in the States.

Dawn came with the most brilliant blue sky above and not a cloud present: a perfect day to explore the area. The town itself is pretty small and has only one rustic hotel. We took a drive to the north toward the town of Tacaná to check out the highest viewpoint at a breathless 3,500 meters. From here you get the most amazing vista

of Tajumulco Volcano and the entire mountain range down to the coastal plain. Absolutely spectacular!

Another enjoyable side trip is to the little town of San José Ixjoyon Ojetenam, where there is a park used by locals for picnicking. The park includes a small lagoon stocked with *mojarra*, a fish that makes for a delicious fresh-cooked lunch.

If you'd like to experience a white Christmas in Guatemala, the best place would be Ixchiguán, where snow is not unheard of. The nights are freezing cold but the days, in the dry season, are flooded with the most intense sunshine. The locals will be quite surprised at your presence but we found them to be extremely warm and hospitable.

When you visit Ixchiguán the hands of time turn back several decades, it is a land where magic is alive and well and where the spirit of the people shines outward, welcoming one and all. 

Dándole sabor a las tradiciones antiguas



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Looking back, you realize that everything
would have explained itself if you had only
stopped interrupting. —Robert Brault

But the fruit that can fall without shaking
Indeed is too mellow for me.
—Mary Wortley Montagu



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Sacred Animals and Exotic Tropical Plants

by Dr. Nicholas M. Hellmuth

The Nance Tree



(SOFIA MONZÓN)

Seven Macaw is the False Sun deity, featured in the Mayan myth of the *Popol Vuh*. His name in the K'iche' Mayan language of Guatemala is Vukub-Cakix. The perch and favorite food of Seven Macaw is specifically identified as a nance tree in most translations of the *Popol Vuh*. "This is the great tree of Seven Macaw, a nance, and this is the food of Seven Macaw. In order to eat the fruit of the nance he goes up the tree every day." (Translation by Dennis Tedlock)

Fortunately, iconographers who have looked at the trees in murals where a Princi-

pal Bird deity perches in the west wall of the San Bartolo murals have all tended to recognize that different species of trees are represented. If you look at every scene where the bird deity perches, you don't see much nance fruit. In other words, the perch tree for the Principal Bird deity in *Pre-Classic* depictions is the calabash tree. It is only in the *Post Classic*, Highland, K'iche' Mayan version of the *Popol Vuh*, that the perch is listed as a nance tree.

Like hundreds of other plants and trees, there are medicinal uses ...continued page 84

The nance fruit is used in desserts, the juice is used for flavoring beverages and the rind makes a textile dye



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—John E. Southard



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The experience I gained at age 21 would be useful if I were ever 21 again. But I'm 71 and new at it and keep making age 71 mistakes.
—Robert Brault

Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in reverie.
—Henry David Thoreau


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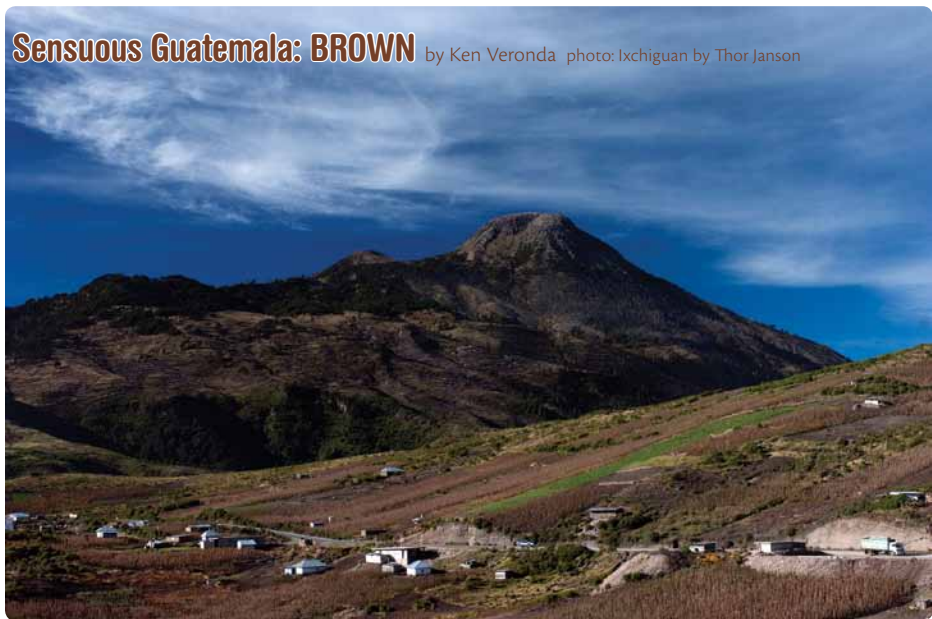
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Brown gets bad press. People feel bad and say they're in a brown mood. When one U.S. president wore a brown suit, his staff knew they were in for a tough day. But watch some of the street artists under the golden-brown arch in La Antigua Guatemala as they mix their oils to make a brown: a squeeze each of orange and red. A squeeze of rose, a touch of yellow. A little black, maybe some gray. Beautiful colors, blended just right. And there on the palette, a lovely shade of oil paint for the colonial walls, a darker shade for the hills, lighter again for paths through a coffee *finca*, or maybe for a painting of the coffee itself, drying.

Brown shades fill the *milpas*, the corn fields, this season as the old stalks await being turned under. Brown strings of peanut plants stretch on mountainsides in neat rectangles of farms, matching the brown nuts themselves being sold by street vendors. Wheat fields in the Highlands wave

greetings in brown, and kelp on the sea-coasts flash a deeper reddish-brown.

Mix your palette for your own painting of the Guatemalan countryside, and you'll need dozens of shadings of brown to do it right: light browns for the walls, deeper browns in the shadows, dark brown for the volcanoes in the dusk. Brown-skinned children at play, browned surfers on the beaches, brown horses plodding with tourists in carriages along the cobblestone-brown streets. You might want to include on your canvas a mahogany-brown table with a light brown tortilla and barbecue-browned meat, or brown beans in a broth of golden-brown cheese. Brown can be tasty indeed.

Brown's not so bad, mixed right to show off the Mayan pyramids against the green jungle and blue skies. Or brown on village *casas*, brown sausages hanging in market stalls, brown monkeys swinging at play. Don't let brown put you in a bad mood—enjoy brown at its best around Guatemala. 





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The easiest way to keep a secret is without help.
—Author unknown

I look at it this way. I'm not an eavesdropper; I have an attention surplus disorder. —Robert Brault

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exactly like the past, only far more expensive.

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Migratory House

For most people, home is where the heart is, but for Gerri and George Chester, home is where Guatemala is—whether they're in Florida or in La Antigua Guatemala.

Tired of moving around every few years for work, the retired Foreign Service officers decided to set up house in Florida just over 10 years ago and build their dream home where they could keep their boat and sail to the Bahamas and the Caribbean. However, having worked for the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City, the Chesters weren't quite ready to say goodbye to the country they had called home for the previous six years.

"We fell in love with it here," admits Gerri. "It was our last overseas assignment, our kids grew up here and we just loved the

Spanish colonial-style houses."

Frustrated with what they could find in the U.S., the former diplomats started searching for inspiration for their dream house around the streets of Antigua.

"We went through all these magazines looking for ideas but couldn't find anything," says George. "Then we went over to a friend's house that was designed by (Guatemalan architect/builder) Franklin; we saw it and immediately wanted one."

Not wishing to waste any time the Chesters flew Franklin Contreras to Florida to walk their lot and see what he could come up with. A couple of days later, he sketched something on the back of an envelope and so the project began. ...cont. on following page



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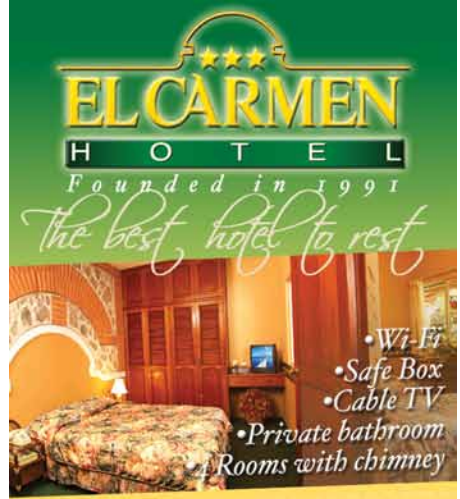
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the waves that break upon the idle seashore of
the mind. —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



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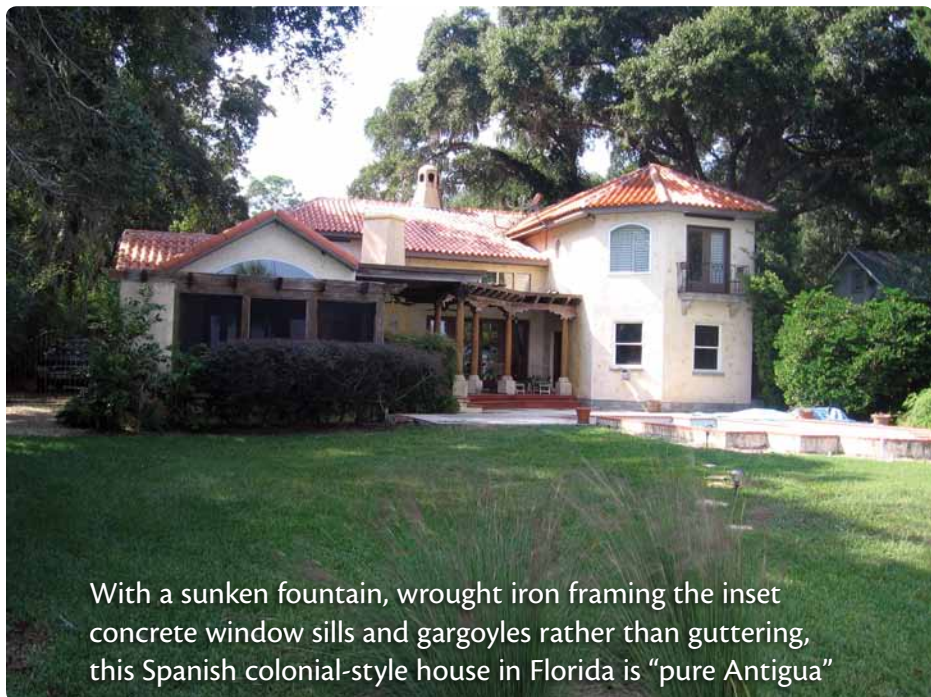


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With a sunken fountain, wrought iron framing the inset concrete window sills and gargoyles rather than guttering, this Spanish colonial-style house in Florida is “pure Antigua”

Migratory House cont. from page 78

“Franklin’s unbelievable,” insists George. “He provided the spark; starting with a blank piece of paper he designed everything. We could have got furniture in the U.S., but we only wanted Franklin—the man’s a magician.”

Once draftsmen had translated the initial design to meet Florida’s codes, building started on the custom-designed four-bedroom home and just over a year later, in Christmas 2001, it was completed.

“We prepared most of the construction details here and sent them over to the States,” says Franklin.

“We shipped the two corridors (porches) with all their pieces, the wrought iron balconies and railings, the stone work for the fireplaces, old doors—even the roof tiles were quantified and sent to provide the right

exterior look to the house. That was the uniqueness of the project: Gerri and George wanted the real stuff!”

With a sunken fountain, wrought iron framing the inset concrete window sills and gargoyles rather than guttering, this Spanish colonial-style house is “pure Antigua”—seemingly plucked from the city’s cobbled streets and placed in Yulee, a town near the coast of northeast Florida.

The house is not only Guatemalan from the outside, it is also filled with Guatemalan features on the inside, too.

After building the pieces, the talented architect took them apart, numbered them and sent them to Florida in a 40-foot container.

The giant box also delivered custom-made beds, a Guatemalan art ...cont. on following page





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To a friend, who asked him how to find out a girl's faults, he gave the sage advice to praise her to her girl friends. —Edwin Lillie Miller

There is no such thing as gratitude unexpressed. If it is unexpressed, it is plain, old-fashioned ingratitude. —Robert Brault



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Migratory House cont. from page 80

nouveau chair and five pairs of antique wooden doors, bought at the Chichicastenango market.

“I think the real challenge was for the builder in the U.S. to use my design and adapt it to comply with all the regulations, codes and building processes so that it was livable and coherent with the Florida environment,” recalls Franklin.

“I know how difficult it is even to change an outlet in the U.S. if you don’t have the right certified electrician with a license, insurance and so forth. We did our best to send instructions on how to put together all the pieces of the *terrazza española* and other details, but this was a totally different language for the contractor.”

With its soaring cathedral ceiling, 26-foot high wood-burning fireplace and outdoor swimming pool, the Chesters’ dream home is a beautiful rendition of a 1700s luxury Guatemalan home.


“Everybody told us we were crazy not to screen in the pool, but that wouldn’t be in keeping with the unique colonial style of our home,” exclaims George.

With careers that have taken the couple all over the globe, it’s not just Guatemalan artifacts that decorate the Chester household. Living and working in locations from Germany to South Africa means they have accumulated an impressive collection of eclectic items along the way, including Belgian stained-glass windows and a nine-foot long, 19th century French farm table. Their diverse array of global purchases, which typifies their past, is so important to them that they even had certain rooms of the house

designed to fit the furniture, not the other way around.

The unique abode, which is located on deep water property in a secluded part of Nassau County, is surrounded by oak trees — four miles from the nearest grocery store. The Chesters are such fans of Franklin Contreras’ work that he has since designed a second home for the couple in Antigua.

Although the initial idea for a Spanish colonial residence in Florida presented them with a few challenges, this museum-quality house bottles the essence of Guatemala. It is a tribute to the strength of architecture in the country and a testament to the unique way that *chapín* life captures people’s hearts.

“At the end of the day it was teamwork, and I have to admit that George and Gerri did a wonderful job of providing Florida with a flavor of Antigua,” says Franklin. 



The house includes a cathedral ceiling and a 26-foot high wood-burning fireplace



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—R.H. Blyth

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—William Arthur Ward



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The Nance Tree cont. from page 70

of the nance tree bark and leaves. Branches cut from the trees thrown into the water can stupefy fish; the bark can be used to tan leather. A liquor of nance is made in Mexico and in Central America, and many people speak of various medicinal uses of nance fruits or bark. The fruit is sold in large quantities in markets because it is so cheap. Sweets and desserts are made from the fruit; the juice is used for flavoring *aguas gaseosas* and other beverages; and the rind gives a light-brown dye that is used in Guatemala for tinting cotton textiles. Ink is sometimes made from the bitter green fruit. The bark is a favorite material for tanning skins, and an infusion of the bark is a current domestic remedy for diarrhea.

The literature states the maximum tree height variously as between 33 and 50 feet; one estimate suggests up to almost 65 feet. Surely the maximum height would vary depending on the climate, so nance trees in the savannas of Petén (near La Libertad, for example) would be shorter than nance trees outside the savanna environment.

Nance fruit is called “craboo,” “crapoo” and “wild craboo” in Belize. The common name “nance” has been utilized in such Guatemalan place names as El Nanzal (a nance grove), El Nance and Los Nances. El Nance is a town in Baja Verapaz, Guatemala. The word today is a Hispanicized version of Nahuatl (Aztec language) origin and is used throughout Central America.

The next time you are in a local market in Guatemala, or the next time you read the Popol Vuh, we hope that this introduction to the nance tree has helped you learn another bit of information about the plants used by the Maya of the past and present. 

Dr. Nicholas M. Hellmuth is director of FLAAR Reports (Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research). For a bibliography and a list of pertinent websites on the nance tree, visit www.maya-ethnobotany.org or contact Dr. Hellmuth at frontdesk@flaar.org



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Runners On Your Mark

A photograph showing two runners, a woman in a white tank top and black leggings, and a man in a light blue shirt and black leggings, jogging on a paved path. The path is bordered by a low stone wall and lush tropical vegetation, including palm trees and colorful flowers. In the background, a steep, forested hillside rises, and a body of water is visible in the distance under a blue sky with some clouds.

Runners along the planned marathon route: Roxanna A. & Cheryl M. (R. MORGAN)

Marathon fever comes to the shores of Atitlán

What would make people want to run barefoot uphill for eight kilometers? The answer: a 1958 foot race departing Panajachel for nearby San Andrés Semetabaj. Scores of participants could not afford shoes, but they would not let this keep them out of the race.

The excitement of that event was such that only a year later it went national, and terminated in Guatemala City's Plaza de Armas. But it still begins in Panajachel every April, where a statue erected in 2008 commemorates its golden anniversary. One foot of the bronze runner in Panajachel's park is shoeless, in memory of the unshod.

The very first marathon runner was even more exposed to the elements. Pheidippides, an Athenian soldier, is said to have run 26 miles from the port of Marathon to Athens to announce the victory of the Greeks over the invading Persians. He was not wearing a Neiman Marcus cashmere jogging suit; according to tradition, he was fully naked, and he collapsed after giving the news: "We have won!" Then, the legend says, he died.

The first modern Olympics was launched in Paris by French and Greek boosters in

1896. A run, called a marathon, was present at this inception, and over the past century local marathons have proliferated worldwide. All celebrate Pheidippides' famous sprint, and the length of the race has been standardized at 42.481 kilometers—the distance from modern Marathon to modern Athens.

Greece still hosts a race along Pheidippides' assumed route, but marathons are hardly new to Guatemala. Today they pass through the rarefied and pine-scented heights as runners set out from the hosting cities of Guatemala, La Antigua Guatemala and Cobán.

The Panajachel marathon, not to be confused with the longer race first held 53 years ago, will be Guatemala's newest, with the maiden event scheduled for 2012. But whereas the other Guatemala marathons are commercial endeavors, the Atitlán Marathon—as it is called—is almost a crusade.

The idea germinated in a conversation between two Panajachel hoteliers seeking a solution to the economic doldrums of the Atitlán Basin, which depends heavily on tourism. The 2009 cyanobacterial bloom on Lake Atitlán spooked much of the international clientele, who stayed ...cont. on following page

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(LENA JOHANNESSEN)

Atitlán Marathon from previous page

away for reasons that were mostly misinformed.

Many organizations have emerged to deal both with the contamination of the lake and the bad publicity. The cleanup now proceeds apace with good, if not yet spectacular, progress, because it is the only issue uniting every constituency: Maya, ladino, expatriate, volunteer and tourist.

The event's two formulators reflect this diversity. New Jerseyan Richard Morgan and Guatemalan Alberto Rivera are today the chairmen, respectively, of the marathon's international and national committees. They are joined by other local leaders in a campaign of concrete action to protect Atitlán and revive the regional economy.

"Our marathon is unique," asserts Morgan, a retired U.S. Army colonel who has penned books on Guatemala ranging in topics from medicinal plants to colonial churches to nativist art. He is also, as every dawn stroller in Panajachel knows, an avid runner himself.

"All proceeds from the entry fees," Morgan explains, "go to clean the same lake for which the marathon is named. And the thousands of folks we hope to draw in will improve the commercial situation as an ancillary benefit."

The route of both the marathon and the planned half-marathon follow a path through the lake's eastern shore and the mountains above it.

"But communities all around the lake will benefit," Morgan says. "Towns and hamlets that are not on the route, or even near it, have come aboard with us, since contestants and spectators will be doing and discovering things elsewhere in the basin during the five days of planned activities."

These activities complement the two main races, and their venues are spread throughout the basin. They include a kids' run, a "fun run" for adults, a bike race, a

cayuco (native canoe) race, coffee tours, an arte naíf painting exhibition, photo hikes around the rim of the lake, and a concert blending contemporary Latin jazz and pre-Columbian music.

"Between these," Morgan says, "and what the lake already offers year-round, there's something for everyone."

The timing of the Atitlán Marathon, tentatively set for the last weekend in May, was dictated by weather and tourism cycles. It will not conflict with major holidays, other marathons or the rain.

The altitude, however, enhances the challenge: the half-marathon straddles the lakeshore, which is already a mile high. But the full marathon ascends 2,000 feet; the exact profile and route can be seen at the event website: www.atitlanmarathon.com. But as with any marathon, volunteers will be liberally stationed to provide water, electrolyte replenishment, first aid and, of course, applause.

One thing still lacking is international recognition.

"That's only because we've yet to stage our first race," Morgan explains. "But we already have a promised donation of Q100,000 from Gatorade, and another of Q45,000 from Banco de Antigua. All this augurs well for the future. Just imagine how many sponsors we will have by the time of the second Atitlán Marathon!"

One contestant already signed up is Floridian Nancy Pullo, who is 70 but does not even look 60.

"I'm what 70 is supposed to look like," she says. "If you eat right, exercise consistently, and eschew tobacco and liquor, etc., you stay healthy. My daughter also runs. And my granddaughter, who's 10, has already entered events."

Pullo, who began running in marathons nearly 40 years ago, is ...cont. on following page



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Atitlán Marathon from previous page

gunning for victory in her category—women 70 to 74. She discovered the marathon because her daughter, biologist Susan Patlyek, was a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala in the 1990s and has returned to live in the country.

Morgan calls this marathon the “worthiest foot race in Central America.”

“First of all,” he says, “it is Guatemala’s only not-for-profit run. We’re not just promoting tourism; we’re raising consciousness of, and funding for, the lake. And, second, the beauty and cultural discovery that runners, volunteers and spectators will experience are unparalleled by the routes of the other, purely commercial marathons. I don’t see how any marathon enthusiast could stay away.”

For registration and information about the marathon, go to www.atitlanmarathon.com

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DateBook Highlight

Jazz/Blues Cruise Atitlán

Featuring great music and food at three of Lake Atitlán's top hotel restaurants, the first Atitlán Jazz/Blues Cruise and Gourmet Food Festival will take place on Saturday, **Nov. 19**.

Limited to just 150 patrons, the cruise departs Panajachel, with a troubadour aboard, at 11:30 a.m., bound for Santiago Atitlán and La Posada de Santiago for its American-style barbecue and a concert by New Orleans blues piano player and singer Nelson Lunding, followed by Marco Trío Eléctrico.

Afterward, participants will enjoy a typical Guatemalan gourmet lunch at Tu-

ricentro Tiosh Abaj where Blues Rocket will play New Orleans-style music.

The boat then heads to Hotel Bambú for an early supper featuring Mediterranean cuisine with Mambo Balam performing modern instrumental jazz, followed by the Imox Jazz Quartet playing traditional jazz, bossa nova and more. The cruise heads back to Panajachel at approximately 8 p.m.

Tickets are Q150 per person and includes boat transportation, meals and musical entertainment (Q125 if you have your own transportation). The event is organized by Festival Atitlán.

There are only 150 tickets available, which can be purchased online at www.festivalatitlan.com/cruise/cruiseeng.html. Tickets are also available in Santiago Atitlán at the participating hotels (offering accommodation packages as well).



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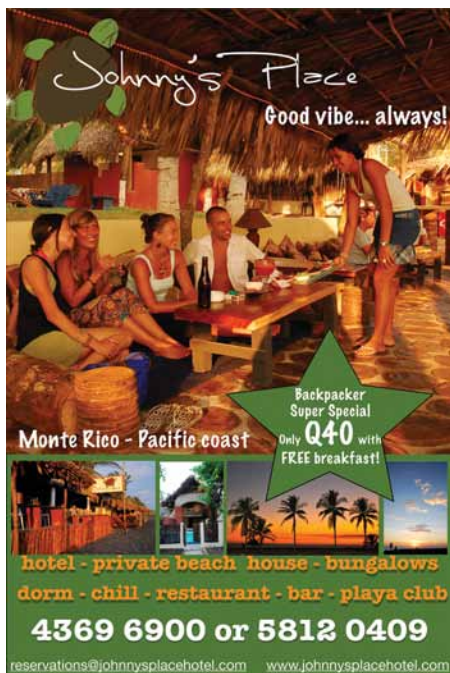
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—Albert Schweitzer

What we see depends mainly on what we look for.

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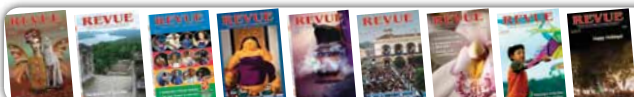
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Where we love is home,
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our hearts. —Oliver Wendell Holmes

PHOTO BY THOR JANSON: THE TOWN OF IXCHIGUÁN
STORY ON PAGE 14



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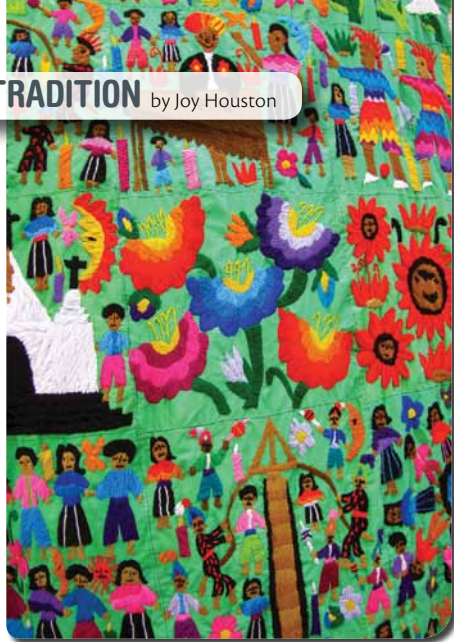
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1 Hectare = 2.471 acres	1 mt ² = 10.764 ft ²
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WEAVING A HISTORY

At the beginning of time, according to ancient Mayan legend, the gods from their center spun out the cosmos, setting in place the universe. The corn god laid out the four corners and erected the World Tree in the center, from whose branches grew one of everything to come. When they became too full, the 'fruit' fell, scattering seeds. The old tree then provided shelter for the new plants and nurtured them. The stump has continued to exist as the center of the world.

Creation and acts of the gods in making the world and regulating nature has been at the heart of Mayan thought and religion for 3,000 years. Mayan civilization flourished at the time of Christ in what is now Central America, building magnificent and colossal cities and temples. The Maya world view that survives in Guatemala's indigenous culture looks back, contrary to the Western world view that looks to the future. For the Maya, the past sustains the present.

The weaving tradition expresses that past and the world view, full of symbolism which connects the Maya to all of creation. The Maya people center themselves in the cosmos and creation by the cloth they weave. The spindle is seen as the center, from which yarn is spun out. Myth has it that a Maya woman, led by a goddess, learned to weave by watching a spider weave a web. The back strap loom is seen as an aspect of the World Tree, the weaver feeding the loom to create. Wearing the traditional, woven costume (*traje*) is part of the backward focus—the importance of customs. The tradition of weaving continues in the *traje*, and so the Maya maintain their identity.

Girls learn to weave at age four or five. Women generally design their own blouses (*huipiles*) and spend several months weaving their creations. It is a costly process, both in time and money, and the *huipil* is worn for many years. Designs may be passed down



Textile motifs celebrate life, showing harmony with nature and the cosmos in symbols such as seeds, rays of the sun, phases of the moon, corn, volcanoes, birds and other animals, water jugs. Vivid colors of the weavings reflect the flowers that abound in Guatemala.

from generation to generation, with styles unique in colors and designs particular to landscape, ceremonies and mythology of each Maya group. Yarn for the weavings is of locally grown and spun cotton or, in the colder climates of the highlands, fine wool.

The traje of an indigenous Maya woman identifies her ethnically and socially. Further information of civil status or position may be shown in the manner in which certain articles are worn. For example, the way she wears the hair ribbon may tell whether she is married or single.

Earliest weavings used only geometric designs but then added fauna and flora. Textile motifs celebrate life, showing harmony with nature and the cosmos in symbols such as seeds, rays of the sun, phases of the moon, corn, volcanoes, birds and other animals, water jugs. Vivid colors of the weavings reflect the flowers that abound in Guatemala.

Much of the meaning of the symbolism has been lost or changed, making it difficult to research this significant aspect of Mayan clothing. And younger women, feeling more and more social freedom, choose colors and patterns according to preference rather than identity. Often huipiles are simply less expensive fabric blouses with machine embroidery. Also increasingly, there is the choice of modern Western clothes.

The weaving tradition is a dynamic art form with ties to the past. It is more than craft. Artisans have filled their weavings with memories of their people. It serves as an instrument of ethnic identity and has also become a major source of income, with tourists choosing table coverings, napkins, bags, pillows, bedspreads and more.

Remarkably, the Maya and their tradition have adapted and survived. 🇬🇧

photos by Rudy A. Girón

ADVERTISER INDEX

LODGING

GUATEMALA CITY

Casa Santorini	39
Hostal Café City	38
Hostal Los Faroles	39
Hostal de Don Pedro	38
Hotel Antaño	38
Hotel Casa Blanca	39
Hotel Centenario	39
Hotel Villa Toscana	39
Mariana's Petite Hotel	39
Novohostal	38

ANTIGUA

All Suites El Marqués	76
A Place to Stay	76
Casa Familia Ovalle	81
Casa Morelia	76
Casa Rustica	79
El Mesón de María	77
Entre Volcanes	76
Hostal San Nicolás	76
Hotel Aurora	75
Hotel Casa Concepción	75
Hotel Casa de las Fuentes	79
Hotel Casa Don Pedro	77
Hotel Casa Quinta	83
Hotel Cirilo	81
Hotel El Carmen	79
Hotel La Real Plaza	81
Hotel La Sin Ventura	75
Hotel Los Pasos	76
Hotel Mesón del Valle	77
Hotel Palacio Chico	79
Hotel Posada Hermano Pedro	79
Hotel Mesón Panza Verde	77
Hotel Panchoy	75
La Casa de Maco	76
Palacio de Doña Leonor Hotel	63
Posada El Antaño	79
Posada El Ensueño	75
Tabihouse	79

COBÁN

Casa del Bosque	99
Hotel Casa Gaia	99
Hotel Posada Don Antonio	99
Park Hotel	99

RÍO DULCE

El Tortugal	98
Hacienda Tijax	98
Hotel Catamaran	98

LODGING

LAKE ATITLÁN

B'al'am'ya	89
Hotel Atitlán	91
Hotel Dos Mundos (Pana)	91
Hotel FONDA del Sol (Pana)	90
Hotel Primavera	90
Hotel Rancho Grande Inn	90
Hotel Real Santander	90
Posada de Santiago (Santiago)	89

EL PETÉN

Hotel Ecológico y Rest. Mon ami	98
La Mesa de los Mayas	98
Posada del Cerro	98

PACIFIC COAST

Asociación Ola Verde	97
Atelie del Mar	96
Cafe Del Sol	96
Casa Bella	96
Cayman Suites	95
Club Isleta de Gaia	94
Hawaiian Paradise	97
Hotel Dos Mundos	95
Hotel Honolulu	96
Hotel Pex de Oro	96
Hotel Villa Kairos	96
Johnny's Place	97
Playa Quilombo Eco-Hotel	97
Villa Los Cabos	96

QUETZALTENANGO

Casa Doña Mercedes	93
--------------------------	----

TECPÁN

Casa Xara / Molino Helvetia	99
Finca San Ricardo	99

RESTAURANTS / BARS

GUATEMALA CITY

Caffé De Fiori	35
Cheers	35
Kloster	37
Pecorinos Ristorante	37
Ristorante Altuna	37
Romano Pizzeria	35
Trovajazz	35
William Shakespeare Pub	35

LAKE ATITLÁN

Café Bombay	90
Circus Bar	91
Club Ven Aca	90
La Terraza	92

RESTAURANTS / BARS

ANTIGUA

Abbasi with curry	71
Café Condesa	63
Café de la Rúa	72
Café Sky	73
Casa Escobar	7
Chez Christophe	72
Christophe Pizza	72
Como Como	71
Cookies, Etc.	71
Doña Luisa Xicotencatl	58
El Sabor del Tiempo	65
Epicure	55
Fridas Mexican Cuisine	67
Gaia	67
Inca Restaurante	72
Kabuki	72
La Bicicleta de Juancho	72
La Canoa	65
La Casbah	59
La Cenicienta	72
La Cueva de Urquizú	73
La Deli	69
La Fonda de la Calle Real	69
La Peña del Sol Latino	57
La Posada del Pintor - Circus Bar	72
Las Palmas	54
Lava Restaurant	71
Mesón Panza Verde	61
Monoloco	53
Ni Fu Ni Fa	72
Ocelot	65
Personajes	73
Rainbow Café	55
Refuge Coffee Bar	73
Sabe Rico	72
Ubi Sushi	71
Welten	61
Wiener	71

QUETZALTENANGO

El Sabor de la India	93
Shai Long	93
Giuseppe's Gourmet Pizza	93
Tertulianos	93
Woon Kook	93

TECPÁN

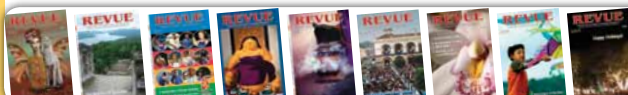
Hacienda Real	13
Restaurante Chichoy	99
Restaurante Katok	99
Kape Paulinos	99

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ADVERTISER INDEX

HEALTH SERVICES

GUATEMALA CITY

Centro Clínico Cutáneo	42
Dermologica	43
Dr. Emilio Novales	40
Dr. Milton Solis Plastic Surgery	45
Marena	40
Palvet veterinary hospital	42
Pediatrics: Dr. & Dra. Hernandez	40

ANTIGUA

Antigua's Gym	43
Casa Madeleine Spa	44
Ceiba Porta Hotel Spa	43
Centro Visual G & G	41
Clinica y Óptica Santa Lucía	40
Clinicas Ovalle	41
Clinica Veterinaria El Arca	101
David Elron, Massage	45
Dermatologist Dr. Samayoa	40
Dietetic Consultant	44
Family Psychotherapist	45
Gail Terzuola	42
Guatemala Medical Travel	45
Hair & Nails Co.	45
Holistic Psychotherapy	42
Hospital Privado Hermano Pedro	42
House of Health Sta. Lucia	45
Le Visage Cosmetology	48
Maxillo Facial Centre	40
Optyma Visión y Moda	40
Skinny Body Care	44
Solident	41
Vet-Pro	42

TRAVEL / TOURS

GUATEMALA CITY

TACA	15
Trans Galgos	85

ANTIGUA

Antigua Tours	25
Filadelfia Coffee Adventure	51
Guinness Travel	84
Lax Travel	84
Maya Trails	113
Monja Blanca	85
Rainbow Travel Center	84
Tabarini Rent a Car	52

MISC.

Adrenalina Tours	93
Fish Guatemala (Parlama)	85
La Reunion Golf Resort	5
Los Tarrales	90
Rancho Carrillo	2
Transportes del Sol	87
Transportes Turísticos Atitrans	85

SERVICES

GUATEMALA CITY

Angel Fire Kennels	33
Elementos Esgrima	33
Hal-Mari Shipping Services	101
Hertz	113
Immigration Services	101
Okowel.com	11
Union Church	33
Vidrieria Shaddai	33

ANTIGUA

Antigua FM	6
Antigua Tattoo	51
CaTours	49
Club Equestre La Ronda	50
Enmarcados El Arcángel	50
Frank Salon	48
Funky Monkey	53
Golden Studio	48
Kinky Afro	50
Wings	102

SHOPS

QUETZALTENANGO

Artesanías Innova	93
North & South Bookstore	93

GUATEMALA CITY

Bernina (Sewing Center)	33
Del Palomar	13
Heirloom Furniture	41
House & Green	inside cover
In Nola (Textiles)	33
Lin-Canola, S.A.	33
Microtec	50
Super Verduras	35
Vivero Botanik, S.A.	31



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SHOPS

ANTIGUA

Ay Robot	49
Carnes y Mariscos Coloniales	65
Casa de los Gigantes	51
Casa Del Tejido	48
Colibri	49
Ecofiltro	62
El Mástil	3
El Patio Antiques	52
Joyería del Angel	back cover
La Casa del Conde (books, etc)	48
Liverpool	48
Muebles Xian	9
Orgánica	46
Púrpura & Té	49
The North Face	1
Vivero La Escalonia	62

SCHOOLS

ANTIGUA

Christian Spanish Academy	47
Oxford Bilingual Education	103

GUATEMALA CITY

Easy Facil	33
------------------	----

REAL ESTATE

Antigua Rentals	83
Carstens S.A.	107
Casa de los Milagros	50
Casa Nova	104
Casas Tipo Canadiense	112
Condominio El Monasterio	105
Inmobiliaria T y E	105
REMAX Colonial	105

CULTURAL

GUATEMALA CITY

El Attico	25
Galería de Arte El Tunel	25
Museo Ixchel	25
Museo Popol Vuh	25

ANTIGUA

El Fotógrafo Galería	4
Festival Paiz	17
Galería Museo Centro Popular	25
La Antigua Galería de Arte	29

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*PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IS REQUIRED

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- Visitor Bathroom • 2-car Carport

2nd Level

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