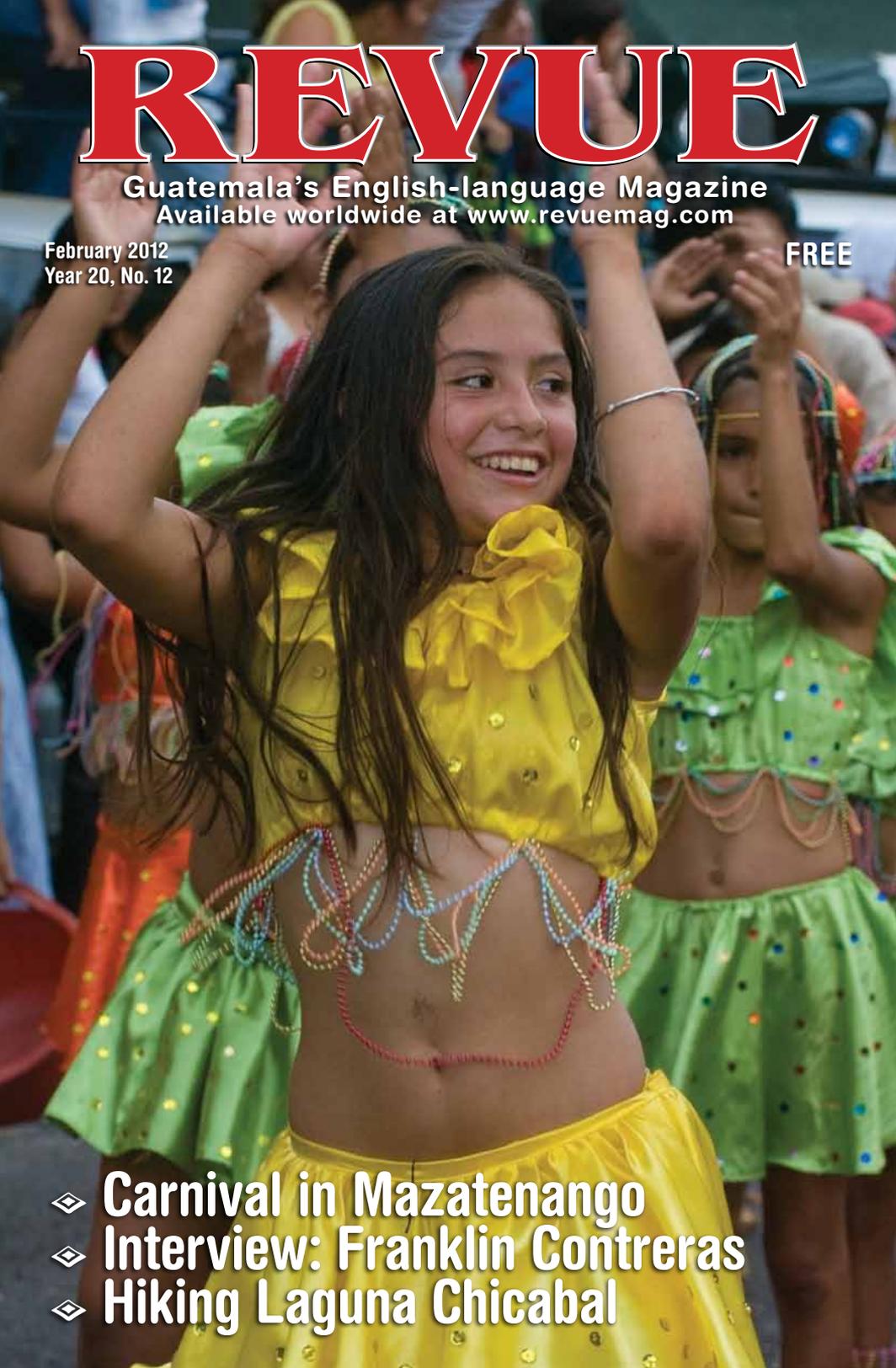


REVUE

Guatemala's English-language Magazine
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February 2012
Year 20, No. 12

FREE

- 
- A young woman with long dark hair is the central focus, smiling and dancing. She wears a bright yellow short-sleeved crop top with a large ruffled collar and a matching yellow skirt. Her midriff is adorned with several colorful beaded necklaces in shades of red, blue, and yellow. In the background, other dancers in green and yellow costumes are visible, some with their arms raised. The scene is set outdoors at what appears to be a carnival or festival.
- ◆ Carnival in Mazatenango
 - ◆ Interview: Franklin Contreras
 - ◆ Hiking Laguna Chicabal



Agréguete valor a su menú sirviéndolo en las mejores vajillas

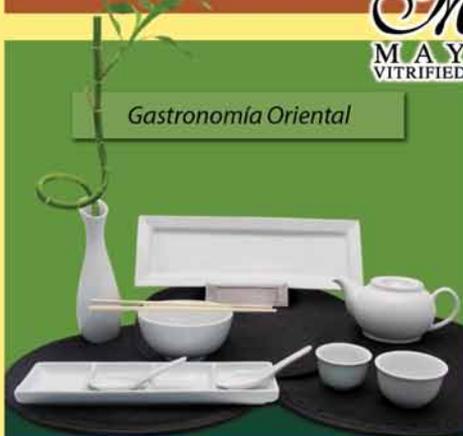
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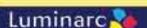
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Serán elegibles las fotos que se reciban **antes del 10 del mes** para el concurso de la edición siguiente.

If you would like to participate in our **MONTHLY PHOTO CONTEST** starting with the theme **PEOPLE** in MARCH 2012, please send your HI-RES photo with caption/location and your name and website for the credit line to:

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There will be prizes for winning photos including dinner for 2 at La Peña de Sol Latino.

More information at RevueMag.com

Submissions entered **before the 10th of the month** will be eligible for the following month's contest.

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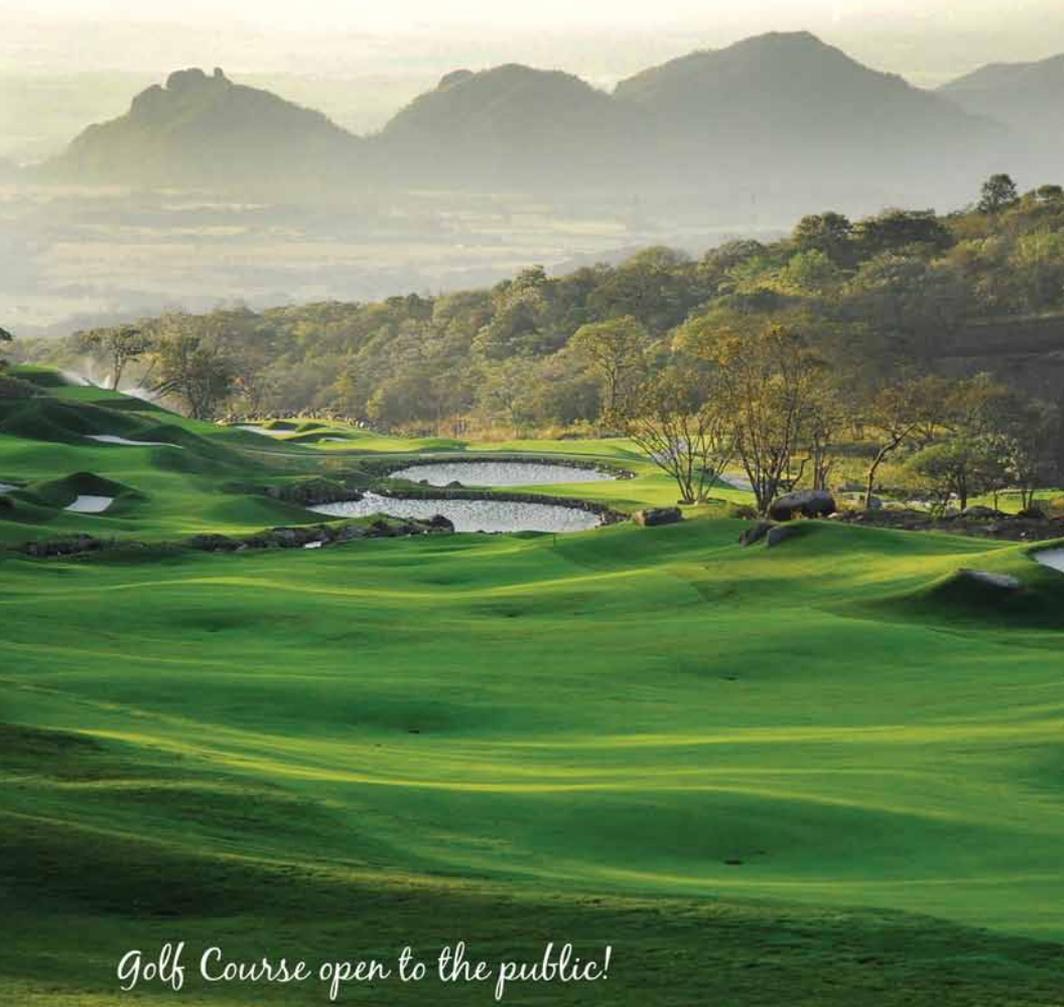
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*Mazatenango
Carnival*

by
Thor Janson
bushmanollie.com



**Deadline for the
March 2012 issue » Feb. 10**

A left handed Jimi Hendrix
played a right handed guitar.

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From the Publishers

Hello, thanks for picking up the February issue of REVUE. The first-of-the-year is behind us and it's time to continue on with 2012. With that in mind, we have filled the pages with all kinds of fun stuff to do in Guatemala.

For those who feel the need to dance in the streets (or at least observe others doing so), Thor Janson invites you to *Shake Your Booty* at the annual Carnival in Mazatenango.

Other travel stories include two interesting locations on *Guatemala's Exotic Pacific Coast* by Tara Tiedemann, and a breathtaking spot outside of Quetzaltenango called *Laguna Chicabel*, written by Blake Nelson.

Anna-Claire Bevan interviewed the well known and very talented designer and architect *Franklin Contreras*, who shared some of his thoughts and insights.

Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth takes us on a *Search for Original Mayan Cotton*. And Kathy Rousso fills us in on the tradition of *The Chajul Basket*.

Elizabeth Bell answers the question, *Why has there been so much speculation about the Mayan 2012 calendar?* And Ken Veronda searches for subtle touches of *Cardinal Red* in the Guatemalan countryside.

We happily introduce two new columns this month: *2012 Spirit* by Sri & Kira, and *Healthy Solutions* by Lori Shea.

And as always, throughout the pages are photo gems by our ever-amazing contributing photographers.

Just a reminder, REVUE is I-Pad and Tablet friendly, you can read our pages by just tapping on our website.

Alert: the **REVUE Monthly Photo Contest** begins in March. Send your favorite photo of people to photos@revuemag.com and become eligible to win a prize.

Have fun, and see you online with updates at Facebook.com/RevueMagazine.

—John & Terry Kovick Biskovich

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Del Palomar



There are short-cuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them. —Vicki Baum

Dance first. Think later. It's the natural order. —Samuel Beckett



Celebrate February with Carnival in Mazatenango. Story on following page. (PHOTO: THOR JANSON)



Shake Your Booty

Carnival in Mazatenango

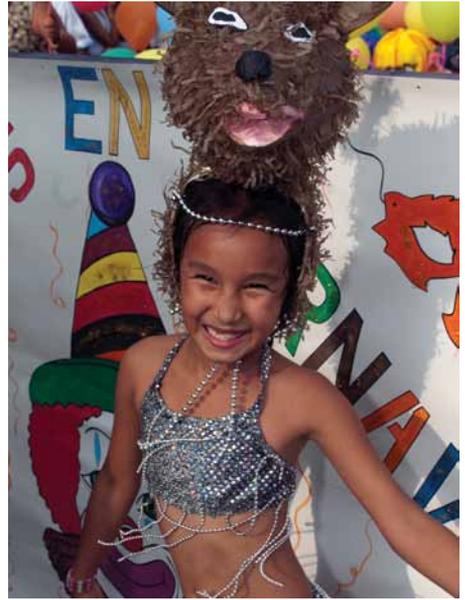
There are special moments when the sheer exuberance and joy of the human spirit, shining so brightly, transcend all the negative forces and we find ourselves walking on air!

Another in a long list of Guatemala's best-kept secrets is the fantastic annual Carnival of Mazatenango: an event virtually unknown to those outside the Pacific Coast region.

I do not recommend "Mazate" for those who need luxury accommodations and require that everything be according to an orderly schedule. Mazate is typical of the Pacific coastal towns in Guatemala, the hustle and bustle of the multitudes in the swelter-

ing heat can be daunting, and the cacophony of children shouting, buses honking and vendors hawking creates a kaleidoscopic, swirling, sensory barrage that can be disarming for a lightweight or rookie traveler. But for those of you who are adventurous or wish to begin to be so, Mazate may become for you, as it is for me, a magic wonderland.

Carnival is a period of public revelry typically held the week before Lent in accordance with the Catholic calendar. According to some sources the word "carnival" comes from the phrase: "carne para baul" or "meat for the devil" because it was the last lustful celebration and feast before lengthy fasting.



There is the children's parade in the morning, the parade of carnival floats, a horse parade and the wild nocturnal adult parade.





Queens on parade

Lent is the period preceding Easter that in the Christian Church is devoted to fasting, abstinence and penitence in commemoration of Christ's fasting in the wilderness. It runs from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday.

Carnival is celebrated all over Guatemala with small parades and events. If a little child sneaks up behind you and breaks a colorful egg stuffed with confetti on your head, this is to be taken as a sign of affection. It is a tradition in Guatemala. So, when you notice people all over the place with confetti in their hair, now you know why. Only in Mazateco do we find big carnival parades. They cannot compare in opulence with the events held in Trinidad, Veracruz or Merida. But what the "Mazatecos" lack in financing they make up for with their exuberant spirit. If you look closely, all the costumes are homemade. Mothers work all year to do the very best with what the family has to create costumes of incredible color and variety for their children. One costume may be made of white satin adorned with painted peanut shells and other common objects made magical

through the ingenuity of its creator. Other girls will be wearing real grass hula skirts likewise painted in psychedelic colors. It is all for maximum fun and the big party of the year for the entire population.

I know now why kings of old were entertained by dancing girls. In my normal life I am a wildlife photographer and it is my job to seek out and photograph the incredible beauty I find in nature. But nothing is more beautiful than to see the girls of carnival dancing through the streets of Mazatenango. During carnival week every day there is something different. There is the children's parade in the morning, the parade of carnival floats, a horse parade and the wild nocturnal adult parade. The carnival culminates with a masked ball at the municipal salon. 

Feb. 3-17: cultural activities and the election of the queens.

Feb. 18-26: more cultural events and parades.

Feb. 21, Tues 9am: Carnival! Beginning at 1a av., z. 1 the parade ends at the Campo de la Feria. This carnival has been celebrated for 127 years. (For more details/times see DateBook on page 22 and RevueMag.com)

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Guatemala's Exotic Pacific Coast

Everyone has heard of Guatemala's beautiful Lake Atitlán, the mysterious ruins of Tikal and colorful Livingston, but can you imagine a Guatemalan destination overlooked enough to offer a tranquil getaway yet offering something for everyone? Welcome to the laid-back, friendly Pacific Coast of Retalhuleu, a destination that caters to everyone from beach bums and nature enthusiasts to budding historians and coffee connoisseurs.

In this month's Revue, we present two destinations outside of Retalhuleu, both a gentle winding ascent up the coastal piedmont: Nueva Alianza, an organic, fair-trade

coffee and macadamia farm; and Reserva Patrocinio, a privately owned nature reserve and bird-watching hotspot.

Nueva Alianza is a unique community and organic coffee/macadamia association, founded in 2004 by a group of 40 families who had worked the land together for five generations under a private plantation owner. The community has worked hard over the past seven years to improve its quality of life, increasing access to education and undertaking a major housing project. Spend the night or make it a day trip; the community is equipped with a comfortable eco-hotel (the old, refurbished ...continued page 87



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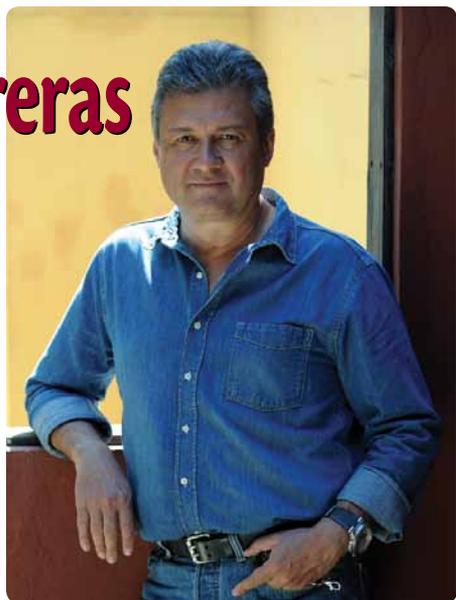
Franklin Contreras

From building houses out of cardboard boxes in his parents' electrical store when he was a child, to designing candy stores at the university, Franklin Contreras was always destined to be an architect.

The talented Guatemalan now owns his own firm, which employs over 200 people, and their designs stand out as pieces of art, especially along the streets of La Antigua Guatemala.

Having grown up in the historic city, the architect long ago fell in love with its distinctive Spanish Colonial style.

"It still surprises me every time I go inside a house here; each door hides something new," says Contreras. "It's a privilege to work in such a beautiful place: There's no stress and no problem with traffic slowing



MATHIEU HUTIN

down construction."

Within his work, the Guatemalan architect draws upon Moorish motifs, such as Moroccan brickwork, domed cupolas and water features, to soften the Spanish Colonial style.

After graduating from Francisco Marroquín University, Guatemala City, in the late



MATHIEU HUTIN



1980s, Contreras' first project was to build a furniture workshop on a plot of land his father had bought him in Antigua. However, it soon became apparent that the young architect had bigger plans: He constructed an elegant two-story building with a central patio and interior gardens, where his company still resides, and from there his career took off.

First he built for foreigners and then for locals, with many clients moving into their homes before they were even completed. Each of his designs is unique and intended to surpass the customers' expectations. "I like the challenging clients; when people agree with me too often, it's boring. I like it when people have their own ideas, and I have to find ways to fulfil them," says Contreras.

Contreras acknowledges his style has

changed since he first became an architect over 20 years ago. "I think that over time you're exposed to different sources of inspiration. I like to travel and that has definitely changed my way of designing spaces and architectural details."

The designer remains unaware of what makes his style of architecture unique to him. "I don't know whether it's the curved ceilings, the materials we work with, or the use of axis that remains a constant, but people often tell me they recognize my designs—I hope that's a good thing!" he laughs.

Even his modern designs retain their traditional roots and the architect is able to perfect the balance between preserving the traditional and evolving with the fashions.

"Before, kitchens were closed areas for the cook, but now cooking's ...cont. page 56



DATEBOOK

FEBRUARY GUIDE TO CULTURE AND UPCOMING EVENTS COMPILED BY MERCEDES MEJICANOS

2 Thurs. — CELEBRATION: Special activities to honor the Virgen de la Candelaria. Flores Costa Cuca & San Juan Ostuncalco, *Quetzaltenango*.

2 Thurs., 7pm — ANTIGUA PHOTO CLUB: Club Fotográfico de Antigua meets the first Thursday of every month with photo talks by special guests as well as photo contests in color, black and white and digital categories. Novice and professionals welcome. Visit www.clubfotograficoantigua.com or [Facebook.com/ClubFotograficoAntigua](https://www.facebook.com/ClubFotograficoAntigua). FREE. Cooperación Española, (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calle poniente), *La Antigua*. ▼



4 Sat., and 18 Sat., 9am-noon — COOKING CLASS: Learn to create delicious *pepián*, *empanadas* and more. \$40 per class. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, *La Antigua*.



4 Sat., 7pm — MUSIC: *El Oxígeno es Fundamental*, by Guatemalan singer Tavo Bárcenas. El Sitio (tel: 7882-4468), *La Antigua*.

4 Sat., 9pm-midnight — FUNDRAISER: Joe Machete presents Terremoto Carnavalero. DJ sorpresa and live music to benefit Art Association Chinchilete, which promotes art and culture in Sacatepéquez. Adm. Q30 with costume and includes complimentary drink; Q50, no costume. San Juan del Obispo (Cuchilla); transportation hourly from 9pm, departing Angie-Angie, 1a av. sur & 6a calle oriente #11-A, *La Antigua*.

5 Sun., 11am — (Spanish) THEATER & MUSIC: *Carrosello*, espectáculo de música, títeres y teatro gestual. Un extraño personaje llega con un carro que se convierte en un teatro de la ópera. Cooperación Española, (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calle poniente), *La Antigua*.

7 Tues., 5:30pm — TALK: Los Patojos: *Forming Leaders for Guatemala*. Director Juan Pablo Romero will discuss how this NGO helps young people in Jocotenango, Sac. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, *La Antigua*.

Please submit your DATEBOOK entry for the MARCH 2012 edition of the REVUE by Friday, February 10



Datebook online at www.revuemag.com

8 Wed., through March 8 — ART: *Habitat*, by Lezzuek Asturias. El Attico (tel: 2368-0853), 4a av. 15-45, z. 14, **Guatemala City.** ▼



9 Thurs., 6:30pm — ART: *El mundo es un Silencio*, works by Cuban painter Luis Felipe Oviedo and poet Luz Lescure. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City.**



10 Fri., 7pm — ART: *Instrumentos de Retina* by Manuel Barrientos. Cocktail. El Sitio (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle pon. #15-C, **La Antigua.** ▼



11 Sat., 5:30-8pm — GRAND OPENING: Atelier Antigua design studio celebrates its grand opening with *Let There Be Light!* featuring handcrafted, one-of-a-kind lamps and other works of art for the home. Atelier Antigua, 4a calle oriente #43 (tel: 4830-3060), **La Antigua.**



11 Sat., 1pm — BENEFIT DANCE: The Niños de San Antonio Aguas Calientes dance and play the marimba, flutes & bombas. Free. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle pon. #15-C, **La Antigua.**

11 Sat., 6pm — PHOTOGRAPHY: Inauguration of *Mi Pueblo y Yo* by photographer Manuel Morillo. Free. Cooperación Española, (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calle), **La Antigua.**

11 Sat., 7pm — MUSIC: *Melodías de La Selva* by Pablo Collado. Q60. El Sitio (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua.**



11 Sat., 7pm — BENEFIT PARTY: *Gala Menu*, live music by Lico Badelli and his band, with cash bar. Proceeds benefit Club Rotario. Q300 per person. Convento Capuchinas (tel: 5664-2071), 2a calle & 2a av., corner, **La Antigua.**

12 Sun., 11am — (Spanish) THEATER: *Popol Vuh, Gente de Maiz.* El Popol Vuh cuenta las antiguas historias de los pueblos mayas, cómo fueron creados el cielo, el mar y la tierra; cómo nació el sol y la luna y cómo fue creada, por fin, la humanidad. Cooperación Española, (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calle poniente), **La Antigua.**

14 Tues. — **VALENTINE'S DAY**
You know what to do!

14 Tues., 5:30pm — **MAYAN DANCES:** K'a k'a' Saqarik - Nuevo Amenecer or New Dawn helps more than 30 indigenous children in San Andrés Itzapa. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua.**

14 Tues., 7pm — **MUSIC:** Arte Antiqua Project presents harpsichord recital/lecture *Five Hundred Sonatas for a Queen* by Roberto E. Vargas (Costa Rica), featuring works by Scarlatti, G.F. Handel and J.S. Bach. Donation, a bottle of wine or Q50. Documento Arte Contemporáneo. More info: tel: 5297-5481 or arteantiqua@yahoo.com, **La Antigua.** ▼



14 Tues., 7pm — **DINNER:** Celebrate *Valentine's Day, Lover's Night* with Romero playing soft easy Trova Cubana. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), **La Antigua.**

15 Wed, 5pm — **Art:** Inauguration of *Road to Nirvana* by Raúl Vásquez. Galería Panza Verde (tel: 7832-2925) 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua.** ▼



16 Thurs., 6:30pm — (Spanish) **CONFERENCE:** *Hallazgos recientes en Quiriguá*, por José Crasborn. Adultos, Q30; estudiantes con carné, Q15. Parqueo tarifa única Q15. Museo Popol Vuh, 6a calle final z. 10, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, **Guatemala City.**

17 Fri., 8pm — **RECITAL:** Violin and piano by Dúo Guatemala. Q60. El Sitio (tel: 7882-4468), **La Antigua.** ▼



18 Sat., 10am-2pm — **NGO SHOWCASE:** *Guatemala in Motion!* The Guatemala NGO Network presents a showcase and dance extravaganza. Featuring up to 18 NGOs, participants can learn about projects, volunteer opportunities, buy unique items and more. Q100 entry fee includes all dance lessons. For more information: www.guatemala-ngo.net. Lutheran Center, 1a av. norte #35, **La Antigua.**

18 Sat., through March 17 — **ART:** *Mujeres que conozco* (Women I Know) by Puerto Rican artist Nuni Canals, a solo exhibition of 20 of her latest sculptures. La Antigua Galería de Arte (tel: 7832-2124), 4a calle oriente #15, **La Antigua.** ▼





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There is a bit of insanity in dancing that does everybody a great deal of good. —Edwin Denby



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21 Tues., 9am —CARNIVAL! Beginning at 1a av., z. 1, this colorful parade ends at the Campo de la Feria. This carnival has been celebrated for 127 years. *Mazatenango*. See article on page 14.

21 Tues., 5:30pm — TALK: Maya Pedal supports many community projects in collaboration with local, national and international groups. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, *La Antigua*.

23 Thurs., 7pm — PHOTOGRAPHY: Monthly contest by Club Fotográfico de Guatemala. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, *Guatemala City*.

23 Thurs., 7pm — PARTY: First anniversary party for Integral Heart Foundation. Everybody is welcome. Great auctions and gifts. Reilly's, 5a av. norte #31, *La Antigua*.



Live

La Cueva de Panza Verde

tel: 7832-2925 5a av. sur #19, La Antigua

Mondays — Night blues: Nelson Lunding or guest artist.

Wednesdays — Jazz Duo with Lisandro, Grand Piano & Double Bass.

Thursdays — Buena Vista de Corazón, Ignacio Perez on congas and Aniet Gonzáles on flute.

Fridays — Latin Trio, Denis Medina on Cubano Tres and Coloso Gudierre on congas

Saturdays — Classical Piano, Julio & César Barrios or guest artist.

Nightly cover: Q35

La Peña de Sol Latino

tel: 7882-4468 5a calle poniente #15-C, La Antigua

Mondays — 7-10pm: The magic guitar of Carlos Trujillo, Latin Jazz/Salsa, with Bill on congas. Free.

Tuesdays — 7-10pm: Ramiro plays Trova Cubana, with Bill on congas. Free.

Wednesdays thru Sundays — 7-10pm: Sol Latino plays Andean music (pan flutes). Free. ▼



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

Gaia Restaurante

tel: 7832-3670 Calle del Arco #35-A, La Antigua

Thursdays — 7pm: Live music.

Fridays and Saturdays — Belly dancing.

Como Como

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.

Tuesdays — 7:30pm: Gustavo plays Latino classics, western tunes with some harmonica.

Wednesdays — 7:30pm: *Open Mike Night*: come along and show your skills. Free drink for anyone who performs!

Thursdays — 7:30pm: Kenny and Friends, some of Antigua's best loved local musicians will amaze you with some great music.

Fridays — 7:30pm: Segio, this talented local plays a mix of music including lots of reggae!

Saturdays — 7:30pm: A variety of bands!

Sundays — 7:30pm: Kenny and Friends, some of Antigua's best loved local musicians will amaze you with some great music.



La Posada del Pintor—Circus Bar

tel: 7832-1033 4a calle oriente #10 (2nd level), La Antigua

Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays — 8pm: Live music, featuring a variety of artists.

Las Palmas

tel: 7832-9734 6a av. norte #14, La Antigua

Wednesdays — Bossa with René and Gilberto Fridas — Salsa Caribe

Saturdays — Your music with Dj Ozone

Sundays — Folk with Ted



CHECK DATEBOOK CALENDAR LISTINGS FOR MORE CONCERTS AND SPECIAL MUSICAL EVENTS

Music



Ocelot

tel: 5658-9028 4a avenida norte #3, La Antigua

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

9pm: Mike & Moriah, piano & vocals.

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.



Pub Quiz hosted by Brendan Byrne; **Sundays** at 6:30pm

Fridas

tel: 7832-1296 Calle del Arco #29, La Antigua

Wednesdays — 7:30pm: Latin music.

Thursdays — Ishto Juevez, swing & Mexican.

La Casbah

5a av. norte #30, La Antigua

Tuesdays — Live music: cover band

Restaurante Personajes

tel: 7832-3758 6a av. norte #6, La Antigua

Fridays & Saturdays — 9pm-11:30pm: Rock in English and Spanish. Cover Q20

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tel: 7762-2056 Avenida de los Árboles, Panajachel

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

8pm: Marco Solo and friends, Pana's Carlos Santana. Rock, blues and jazz.

9pm: Norte, contemporary trova.

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

8pm: Rockiris, alternative rock.

9pm: Latin ensemble.

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

8pm: Latin ensemble.

9pm: Carlos Rangel and son, swing, Cuban and rock.

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

8pm: Latin ensemble.

9pm: Norte, contemporary trova.

Fridays — 7pm: Flamenco by Marco El Messina.

8pm: Latin ensemble.

9pm: Trova del Lago.

Saturdays — Los Vagabundos, hot rhythms in a fusion of rumba, flamenco and Guatemalan traditional elements.

Sundays — Latin ensemble.

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Wednesdays — 8:30pm: Victor Arriaza on piano, Alejandro Alvarez, bass and Julio García on drums.





24 Fri., — ART: *Jardines Diferentes*, a collective exposition. Ves-sica Galería de Arte (tel: 5381-4232), 3a av. 7-35, z. 1 (a few steps from Parque Bolívar), *Quetzaltenango*. ▲

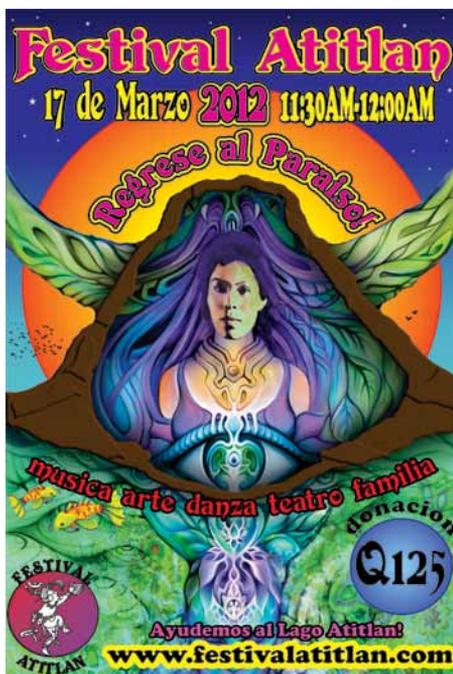
28 Tues., 5:30pm — TALK: Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads) is a non-profit indigenous organization that helps empower Maya women artisans and improve their quality of life. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, *La Antigua*.



24 Fri., 7:30pm — MUSIC: *Canta el Pasado*, musical ensemble by Capilla del Valle de la Asunción. Q60. El Sitio (tel: 7882-4468), *La Antigua*. ▲

25 Sat., 7pm — MUSIC: *El Gordo en Concierto*. Q60. El Sitio (tel: 7882-4468), *La Antigua*.

28 Tues., 6:30pm through Fri., March 2 — ART: *Una Noche de Arte*, exposition of works and talk by curator Inés Díaz Widmann. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, *Guatemala City*.



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THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Daily, 2pm & 4pm — MOVIES: Different movies every day. Film of the month, *El Norte*. Las Palmas (tel: 7832-9734), 6a av. norte #14, **La Antigua**.

Tues., 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. Q30 per person, tickets available at the door. Proceeds benefit educational programs in Antigua. El Sitio, 5a calle poniente #15, **La Antigua**.

Through Feb. 27 — ART: Exhibition by North American artist William Kalwick Jr featuring new collection of over 15 works, most of them portraying the every day life of the Maya people of the Guatemalan Highlands. La Antigua Galería de Arte (tel: 7832-2124), 4a calle oriente #15, **La Antigua**. ▼



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

Thursdays, 6pm — FILMS: Donation Q15. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), 5a calle poniente #15, **La Antigua**.

2nd and 4th Thursday, 6:30pm — CURRY CLUB: The Antigua Curry Club meets to enjoy delicious Indian food. For more info. go to: www.cernikovskyy.com/curry.htm. A members-only club, limited memberships are still available. **La Antigua**.

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

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

Sundays, 11am & 4pm — (Spanish) THEATER FOR KIDS: *ImaginaMar*, a musical adventure for the whole family written by John Tartaglia. The Spanish version is produced and presented by Fundación Paiz as part of the Festival Internacional de Cultura Paiz. Visit www.fundacionpaiz.org.gt. Tickets Q70, todoticket.com or at the door. Museo de Los Niños (tel: 2464-4545 ext. 4552), 5a calle 10-00, z. 13, **Guatemala City**. ▼



DATEBOOK continues on page 32

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Celebrate February with Carnival in Mazatenango. Story on page 14. (PHOTO: THOR JANSON)

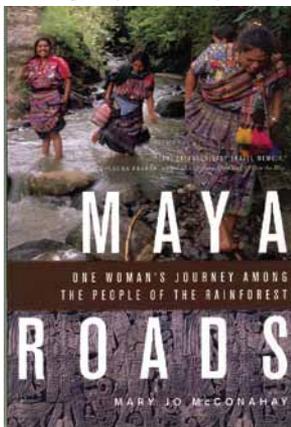


PLAN AHEAD

March 9, tee-off 8am — **BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT:** *BAM Esperanza Juvenil Open*, a go-go format, groups of four. Information and registration at Guatemala Country Club, tel: 2417-0000 or Esperanza Juvenil, tel: 2254-9911. Proceeds benefit Esperanza Juvenil programs. Guatemala Country Club, 30 av. final, z. 11, **Guatemala City**.

March 14, — **BOOK PRESENTATION**, five-star reviews, best seller and National Geographer Traveler Book of the Month, *Maya Roads: One Woman's Journey Among the People of the Rainforest*

by (Antigua's own) Mary Jo McConahay. Meet the author, along with artist René Ozaeta who drew the classic Mayan images in the pages of *Maya Roads*. Plus, limited copies of the book will be available. View www.mayaroads.com. Galería Panza Verde, **La Antigua**.



March 17, 11:30am — **FESTIVAL ATITLÁN:** *Regrese al Paraíso*, music, art, dance, theater and family activities. Donation Q125. For more information visit www.festivalatitlan.com. **Santiago Atitlán**.

The 2012 Mayan Meetings Beyond the Glyphs: Mayan Inscriptions as Literature

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March 12-14—**WORKSHOPS:** *Beginner Hieroglyph* (English & Spanish); *Advanced Hieroglyph* (English); *Narrative Structures of Mayan Texts* (English)

March 15—**SYMPOSIUM:** *The 2012 Maya Meetings in La Antigua Guatemala* will be the first international conference devoted to the topic of ancient Mayan literature. For additional information and updates: www.utmesoamerica.org/maya/; Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Austin-TX/The-Maya-Meetings/128001023897735>?



April 28, 7pm—3rd annual **NOCHE DE LOS CHEFS GALA DINNER:** Presented by degustantigua.com, featuring fantastic food prepared by chefs from 10 of La Antigua's best restaurants. Convento de Capuchinas, **La Antigua**. Stay tuned for more information.



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I like the word "indolence." It makes my laziness seem classy. —Bern Williams

Without passion man is a mere latent force and possibility, like the flint which awaits the shock of the iron before it can give forth its spark.

—Henri-Frédéric Amiel

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The Continuing Search for Original Mayan Cotton

When you look at the portraits of kings, high priests and other nobles on Mayan stelae, murals or painted ceramics you can see how much attention the Maya dedicated to their clothing. Each ritual, every ceremony, had special clothing. Even peasants wore at least a loincloth.

Most of the women of the elite class wore expertly decorated outfits, almost always of some form of woven cloth. The Maya also made string and cordage (rope and comparable materials) from scores of different roots and vines. The selection of material depended on rank, status, purpose of the clothing, and whether the outfits were for the hot humid Lowlands or the chilly Highlands.

The ancient Maya (and Aztec and their neighbors) tended to make their clothing from cotton, various kinds of agave or comparable plants, and bark paper. The botanical or Latin name for cotton is *Gossypium hirsute*. “Cotton” in the form of *kapok*, from ceiba trees, is a different fiber—important, but not

widely used for weaving and clothing.

I had thought there were two world centers of cotton origin: pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica and Egypt. Thus, I was surprised to learn that the primary origins of cotton were, in addition to Mesoamerica (Mexico and Guatemala), in Peru, India and southern Africa. It turns out that the cotton for which Egypt is so famous is a modern-day cotton! I also assumed that Egyptian cotton was white and native Mesoamerican cotton was brown, or at best, off-white. But it turns out that pre-Columbian cotton was prob-

ABOVE: Dyed cotton fabrics, San Juan La Laguna

BELOW: Cotton display at Algodones Mayas
Guatemala (SOFÍA MONZÓN)



ably available in a wide range of many subtle colors. Wild cotton plants are over 2 meters high, some up to almost 3 meters. Cotton in industrial plantations tends to be under 2 meters to facilitate picking by machine. Most of the modern commercial cotton that I have seen is not much above 1 meter in height.

The ancient Maya tended to make their clothing from cotton, various kinds of agave or comparable plants, and bark paper.

The first non-industrial cotton I found in Guatemala was south of Rio Dulce at Frutas del Mundo farms of Dwight Carter. I was shown this interesting agricultural farm by Kevin Lock, a knowledgeable local guide. Algodones Mayas Guatemala sells products made from organic cotton in La Antigua Guatemala; it raises its cotton on the Costa Sur. Also, the cooperative Asociación de Mujeres en Colores Botanicos, at Lake Atitlán, has plenty of locally grown cotton. The cotton flowers may vary in the same plant between rose colored and yellow (one or the other, not in between). ...continued next page

Cotton fibers, San Juan La Laguna (SOFÍA MONZÓN)



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My wife is a light eater. As soon as it's light, she starts to eat. —Henny Youngman

You know it's time to diet when you push away from the table and the table moves. —Aldo Quinn

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Cotton flower from the Izabal region (SOFÍA MONZÓN)



Cotton fiber, San Juan La Laguna (SOFÍA MONZÓN)

I observed these colors on a large cotton bush while visiting this cooperative. The most informative place for learning about cotton was at the San Juan la Laguna cooperative. It has a museum that shows all the plants, plus the best book you could possibly want on the subject; you can buy this book on natural plant-based color dyes from the Maya women's cooperative in this village. You can reach this village most easily by boat from Panajachel, or you can drive up and down volcanic slopes for hours (as we did). If you choose to drive, we recommend 4WD and a high axle (big tires).

Twenty years ago much of the Guatemalan south coast was an endless commercial cotton plantation. The quantity of insecticide used to raise this modern Guatemalan cotton is mind-boggling. The pesticide amount was so high that the U.S. was not allowed to import beef in those decades if the cattle grazed anywhere near a cotton field.

In later years these former cotton plantations were transformed into sugar cane and/or cattle ranches. There is not much industrial monoculture of modern white cotton remaining (fortunately for the environment, as cotton requires more nasty chemicals than any other form of agriculture). The modern colorants include even more carci-

nogenic chemicals. So it is important to locate organic cotton and learn where it can be obtained.

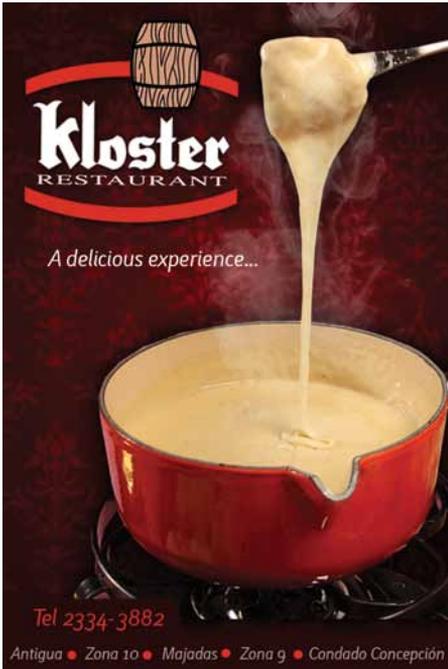
Dwight Carter provided hospitality and local knowledge at his Frutas del Mundo farm. Well worth visiting if you are near Rio Dulce. We found the cotton by pure coincidence as we were driving out the gate area, since we visited Dwight's place to study zapote and annona fruits, not expecting to find cotton.

We appreciate the permission of the organic cotton store, Algodones Mayas Guatemala, to photograph its samples. We look forward to visiting its cotton farm in the Costa Sur when the next crop is available.

Maria Cristina Sicay, of the Asociación de Mujeres en Colores Botánicos, San Juan la Laguna, provided knowledge and hospitality in their facilities. To make an appointment to visit, e-mail: cooperativabotanica@yahoo.com.mx

We also thank Hideo Kojima for his insights on colorants for Maya weaving. 📌

Dr. Nicholas M. Hellmuth is director of FLAAR Reports (Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research). The full list of all Mayan ethnobotanicals is available at www.maya-ethnobotany.org. If you find any of the plants we have not yet located, please contact us at FrontDesk@FLAAR.org

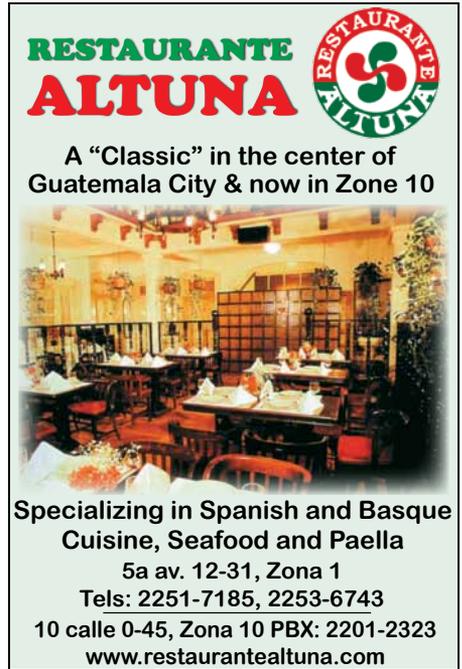


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Interior detail of design work by Architect Franklin Contreras. Interview on page 20.



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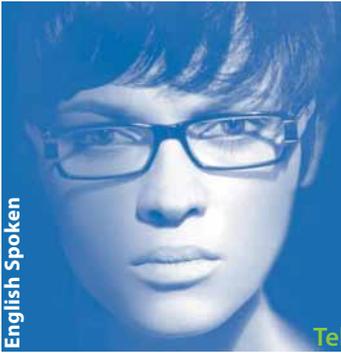
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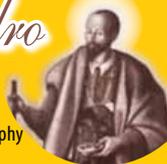
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Adult stem cells are released from bone marrow into the bloodstream. Then they go searching for tissues and organs in distress. For example, if the heart sends out a cry for help, the traveling stem cells exit the bloodstream, migrate to the heart, multiply and become brand new healthy heart muscle cells to replace the sick or worn out cells.

Dr. Byron Sanchez, medical director of the Medi-Center Stem Cell Research Clinic in

zone 10 of Guatemala City, is an oncologist and hematologist with 15 years of experience in stem cell research and transplantation. The highly skilled medical team at Medi-Center offers stem cell transplantation therapy to patients with the same degree of success as any other country in the world, from the United States to South Korea, but at a fraction of the price.

Dr. Sanchez explains the process: Stem cells are derived from the patient's own bone marrow or umbilical cord. Blood, fat and skin are also excellent sources of stem cells. In adults, these cells are rare, isolated at a rate of about 1 in 1,000. Immunological reconstitution is done by isolating the patient's natural killer cells, T cytotoxic cells. They are extracted, isolated, stimulated and processed in the laboratory. The new, multi-potent cells are restored to the patient intravenously, in a method much like chelation therapy or dialysis.

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Healthy Solutions cont. from page 44

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Medicine is the only profession that labours incessantly to destroy the reason for its own existence.
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Architecture by Franklin Contreras

Franklin Contreras cont. from page 21

become a family activity so I like to design open kitchens and eating areas, which become the heart of the house.”

Contreras believes in maximizing one’s surroundings—he uses roofs as places to entertain friends while enjoying the mountains and volcanoes of Antigua, and internationally, glass walls to provide a contemporary feel while showing off beautiful views in Mexico City.

However, working in a World Heritage site such as Antigua, does come with a few difficulties, and failure to abide by the rules can have costly consequences. CONSEJO, an institution established in 1969 to preserve the city’s heritage, imposes strict limitations on construction within the historic center. For example, there are height limita-

tions, second floors are forbidden and restoration projects are closely monitored.

“It’s complicated working in the center, but if we didn’t have these rules we would have lost the city years ago,” states Contreras. He admits he used to prefer the freedom of working outside the historic center, but now enjoys the challenge of restoring buildings inside it.

In the past, he has designed houses and hotels, many of them in Antigua, but he now wants to do something to benefit the whole community. “We have a special treasure in our country as people still know how to work with their hands,” states Contreras. He hopes that an upcoming project will help artisans to promote their crafts and goods around Antigua. 

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Jorge Herrera

*Accordionist
at large*



Ever since he was a child and had to use a booster seat to reach the marimba, Jorge Herrera has had a passion for music. Growing up on a coffee plantation in Huehuetenango, he was inspired by the Mexican-influenced folk music that was popular in his village and soon started practicing both the marimba and the guitar.

At the age of 18 after being invited to play guitar on Guatemalan TV, he learned from some friends how to play the accordion. However, it wasn't until 40 years later that he was able to adopt the instrument as a member of his family and devote himself entirely to learning it.

"The accordion's difficult to master, but I took the decision to study and play it in Xela (Quetzaltenango) and, after eight years, I conquered it," says Herrera.

After performing with the accordion at cultural events throughout the country,

Herrera later traveled to Europe, where he spent three months playing it in restaurants across Germany and Italy.

The musician admits that the box-shaped apparatus, which is usually associated with European music, isn't an obvious instrument to play in Latin America, but he insists its versatility makes it well-suited to Guatemalan compositions.

Known as a one-man band, the accordion is the perfect instrument for those who enjoy playing alone. It's sufficient for a whole concert and you don't need accompaniment due to its many registers and different sounds, which are produced by directing the bellows that support the keyboard in a variety of directions.

"I play French, German, Italian and Guatemalan music on it and get my inspiration from the public," states Herrera, who says he often examines the ...continued page 62



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Jorge Herrera cont. from page 60

mood of his audience and adjusts his songs to suit it.

One of his favorite arrangements that he has adapted for the accordion is *Noche de Luna Entre Ruinas*, a Guatemalan piece originally written for the marimba by the Chapín composer Mariano Valverde: “It was inspired by the earthquakes of 1917 and 1918 and is full of nostalgia and emotions,” says Herrera.

Singing in Portuguese, Italian and Spanish, the accordionist now resides in La Antigua Guatemala, where he gives music lessons and plays at a number of restaurants.

“I moved to Antigua because it’s ideal for art, culture and music. Musicians have little

support in Guatemala so it’s difficult to do it as a profession, but international tourism is strong here and the people have a warm quality,” says Herrera.

Although he enjoys the security and climate of Antigua, Herrera still travels about the country with his accordion and appears at Xetulul, Retalhuleu each year to commemorate Oktoberfest.

Future plans for the musician include recording his own music and learning how to play the violin so he can teach the instrument to his granddaughters. “Through perseverance, dedication and enthusiasm you can achieve anything,” professes Herrera. 🍷

You can contact Jorge Herrera in La Antigua at 5378-7929.



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Thanks to all!

This month Open Windows Library and Learning Center will also be serving the disadvantaged children of San Miguel Dueñas. The children will receive help with homework, reinforcement of math and reading, computer classes and a daily afternoon activity that follows the fourth-grade curriculum of the public schools. In addition, over 50 scholarships are given to students in *básico* and *diversificado*.

Open Windows organizers thank the following for their continued support throughout the years: Nathan Liskey, Café Condesa, REVUE Magazine, Antigua Tours and Barbara Cernikovsky.

They also thank the following who have donated to Open Windows activities:

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In addition, Open Windows thanks the many businesses and people who donated to its New Year's Eve party and silent auction. A special thanks to the guests, Audrey B., helpers, board members, staff and volunteers who make Open Windows' work possible this year. 🍷

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The Chajul Basket

Tradition and Souvenir



Baskets are important utilitarian, decorative and potential income items found around the world, including Guatemala, where many locations are known for specific basket styles. Among them is the community of Chajul, located in “the Ixil Triangle,” a region in the department of Quiché that encompasses the municipalities of Santa María Nebaj, San Juan Cotzal and San Gaspar Chajul. Distinct traditional dress and accessories, such as locally made hats and net bags, are worn by many of the Ixil-speaking residents. As elsewhere in the country, markets and festivals provide an opportunity to showcase and sell these specialized items.

Pilgrims from all over the western and

northern Highlands, some walking for several days, arrive in time for the second Friday of Lent—this year on March 2—to pay tribute to the Christ of Golgotha, housed in the large colonial Catholic church. After Esquipulas, this is considered the most important religious pilgrimage site in Guatemala.

During these and other special events, visitors often spend time in a maze of nearby market stalls, looking for things to commemorate their trip. For example, in Esquipulas it is common to buy adorned hats or long colorful strings to decorate cars and buses. These highly visible items give notice to others that the pilgrimage was a success. In Chajul the must-have ...continued next page



Artisan Pedro Anay Lainez demonstrates a few of the several steps in completing one basket

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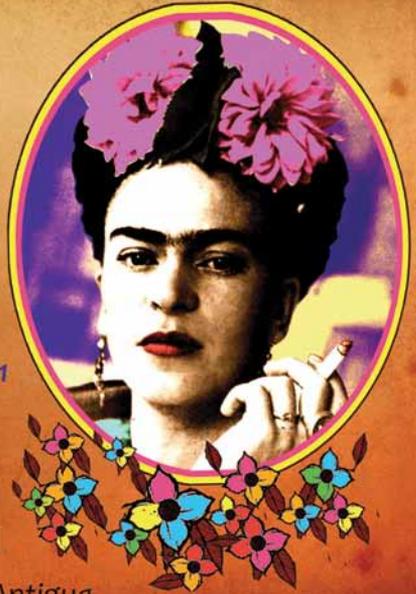


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The Chajul Basket from previous page

memento is the unique basket, marketed by men and women in the central park and on the church steps.

When I asked a basket weaver about Chajul's basket history he replied: "A long time ago a few local Ixil were in the forest harvesting food and upon returning to their camp midday to prepare their meal, they discovered that it had already been cooked. After this happened three times, the culprits, some visiting Lacadons, revealed themselves and then taught the Ixil the secrets of basket-making."

This singular item became so important to Chajul that the Dance of the Baskets was performed once a year until at least the 1960s, with the principal dancers wearing locally made baskets as their ceremonial headgear. The entire tradition ceased in the 1980s when it became too dangerous to travel during the civil war. Since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, basketry



Artisan Salvador harvests raw materials for baskets

is again alive and well in Chajul and today about 45 weavers, mostly men, make baskets. While the Dance of the Baskets has not yet been re-introduced, a week prior to any celebration, basket materials drying on rooftops and basket-weavers can be seen around town.

These round baskets are not only beautiful objects, but important containers for historical knowledge of a traditional art form.

But before this idyllic scene develops, there is much work to do. This includes locating, harvesting and preparing the materials. A long trek to the cloud forest where they grow wild is required because the necessary plant, bark and vines are not cultivated nearby. Often a few men will go together and spend several days harvesting and processing their materials before returning home to weave the actual basket.

Several varieties of warp materials (*to'chuk*, *xinak* or *pin* in Ixil) can be used, and when a basket is begun, six, eight or 10 warp strands are arranged in a way that radiates outward from the middle, locally referred to as *reflejo del sol* (reflection of the sun). An additional single warp is inserted to create an odd number, and a single active strand weaves in and out of the warps with a basketry method called "English randing." For the first two or three rows, a strong, flexible vine (*otxotx* or *jul* in Ixil) is woven to hold the warps into place, and then the same technique continues for the remainder of the basket with a thin variety of bamboo (*xicap* in Ixil), until the end. Lastly a flat strip of cambium or inner bark (*ubetx* or *tz'xuk* in Ixil) is soaked in ...continued page 84

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I don't understand why Cupid was chosen to represent Valentine's Day. When I think about romance, the last thing on my mind is a short, chubby toddler coming at me with a weapon. —David Niven

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ASK ELIZABETH

by Elizabeth Bell
AUTHOR/HISTORIAN

Why has there been so much speculation about the Mayan 2012 calendar?

Calendars reflect how cultures and societies view the organization of time and space over the centuries. Many calendars have emerged and many have disappeared or been modified: the Julian calendar, the Republican calendar, the Gregorian calendar and the Mayan calendar to name a few. Each one involved astronomical calculations and incorporate harvests and religious or spiritual fiestas.

I remember in the late 1970s, we all studied how it would be the “End of the World for the Maya” in 2012; we thought it was “pretty neat” as to how it tied into other doomsday calculations of other cultures. With very little bibliography by Maya writers at the time (in fact none in English), we continued to believe that indeed the world—at least in Mesoamerica—would end in 2012. I have recently referred to this as a “California spin.” Watching a recent TV program on the subject, I noted that the experts were all from California. I wondered why a Maya expert was not a participant!

Talking to the experts, we find it is the end of a Mayan calendar cycle and a rebirth of the Mayan culture for the new cycle. Some great references include: *The Order of*

Days: the Maya World and the Truth about 2012 by David Stuart (Schele Professor of Mesoamerican Art and Writing, University of Texas/Austin), *2012: Science & Prophecy of the Ancient Maya* by Mark van Stone, Ph.D., and *Ri Rejqalem Kisamaj Ri Ajk' Ex-elom Chuqa 'Ri Ajq'ija* by Calixta Gabriel (Maya spiritual guide/Thesis Universidad Rafael Landívar), which are all outstanding. Also, refer to the Dresden Codex.

The Mayan Long Count calendar started at 13.0.0.0.0. (not “0”) in 3113 B.C. and comes to a complete cycle at the winter solstice this year. This marks a new cycle. There are two calendars that work together. The solar year (365 days), known as *haab*, has 18 months (20 days each) and a five-day period before the next year. A day (*q'ij*), a 20-day month (*winäq*), a year (*tun*), a 20-year cycle (*katun*) a 52-year cycle (*tzolkin*) and so forth up to the end of a *b'aq tun* (Kakchikel spelling). The sacred calendar, known as *tzolk'in*, has 13 months (20 days each), for a 260-day count. Each day has a *nawal*, look yours up in the calendar.

The new *b'aq tun* begins on the winter solstice 2012—time for another fiesta but this one will be BIG! 



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There are three kinds of men: The ones that learn by reading. The few who learn by observation. The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence and find out for themselves. —Will Rogers

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—Carl Woodside

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—Robert Fulghum

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—John E. Southard

Spitters, Scratchers, & Snappers

PET Q's & A's
by Cynthia Burski, DVM



Question: I have an 8-year-old Dachshund named Lilly, who has had several episodes of a lower-back pain. A cortisone shot and heat relieved the problem. About three months ago I could tell that she was experiencing pain in her neck. This time her body did not respond to the same cortisone treatment. The veterinarian explained that she probably had a pinched nerve in the vertebrae of her neck and would probably require surgery. I could not afford the surgery, so I brought her home and over the course of several weeks, she gradually got better, although she is not as active as before. What are the chances that this problem will recur?

Answer: Unfortunately, this type of disorder can be acute. Medications are generally very effective but do not eliminate the cause of the problem. The disc material between each of the vertebra that makes up the backbone normally acts as a cushion. Under pressure or through degeneration with age, the disc material can move up into the spinal cord or out against the nerve roots that come off the spinal cord and cause a great deal of pain and weakness.

Medication can reduce the swelling at the point of injury and reduce the pain. However, in severe cases, medication has no effect and cannot stop the damage to the cord that the disc material can cause. In these cases, surgery is performed to remove the disc material and/or open up the top of the vertebrae to allow the spinal cord room to expand if necessary. Because nerve tissue is so delicate and susceptible to injury, there is no guarantee of success or complete recovery with surgery, although most dogs improve significantly.

Prevention would include the use of a harness instead of a collar; not allowing her to jump on or off furniture; not playing "pull games" with her toys, and keeping her weight under control. You should discuss her situation with the surgeon and decide at what point he thinks that surgery would be absolutely necessary. Maintenance medication relieve spasms and keep her comfortable. Also you should be aware that any signs of weakness or pain, which indicate deterioration of her condition. Many dogs do well without surgery if some precautions are taken, but those that do need surgery are often helped and improve dramatically. Each case is individual in its response to treatment.



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Cardinal Red

Rojo (PHOTO BY RUDY GIRÓN)

This rich red color cries out for attention, from ALTO signs to garden blossoms to a flag announcing fresh meat at the village butcher. No wonder that cardinal signs are used by the big cola companies, a big phone service and most market chains. Your assignment this month, however, is to spot more subtle touches of cardinal-red among the bright blues and greens and browns and whites of Guatemalan towns and farms.

Finding cardinal in the fruit and vegetable markets is easy: apples from the Highlands, red pepper and chili in baskets, fat radishes in neat pyramids. Cardinal coffee berries are mostly picked by now, but enough still dot the *fincas* to catch the eye of passers-by. Some *huipil* weavings, such as the woman's blouses of Patzún, are dazzling cardinal red; other brocades from San Antonio Aguas Calientes weavers have more subtle touches of cardinal.

It's in gardens and along roadsides that sprinkles of cardinal stand out. Actual cardinals flutter by year-around in the Petén jungles, and macaws preening in their cardinal feathers munch seeds in some hotel-garden cages. Cardinal poppies dot the highway from Mexico to Salvador, springing up in dirt patches from recent slides. Tanagers and woodpeckers flash their cardinal feathers as they take their morning splash in our fountain, while the neighbor's poinsettias don't realize that the holidays are over and continue their cardinal show against the white walls.

But the best displays of cardinal in February come in crayon Valentine drawings from a child, and in a bouquet of long-stemmed red roses from a lover. May you be fortunate enough to receive either or both this month in Guatemala! 



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by
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GUATEMALA: LAUNCH PAD 2012

When we moved to Guatemala four years ago, we honestly thought we were on vacation! With each passing day it became evident that there was more to explore in this mystical land, and much more to discover. Everyone was talking about the “2012” experience—and now here we are!

There is a shift that is happening globally with many energies coming into play. Whether you are seeking it or not, the energy that is the heart of Guatemala will reveal itself—if you just give yourself a moment to discover it.

You may find you have the ability to feel things you have not ever felt before. You

may touch things you have not ever touched before. How you break free and navigate these core feelings will be influenced by your reactionary system, which is habitual.

We are collectively at the “if not now, when” moment, and the time to let go of old habits is upon us. How and where is your future to go? Where do you want it to go?

While you are in Guatemala exploring the wonders of nature and the smiles of the people around you, this might be the perfect moment to give yourself the gift of loving your life. If you have been looking for the place to find your greater life’s purpose, congratulations, perhaps you have already begun!

*You can contact Sri and Kira at
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When love is not madness, it is not love.
—Pedro Calderon de la Barca

At the touch of love, everyone becomes a poet.
—Plato

The heart has its reasons that reason
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Who would give a law to lovers? Love is
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The Chajul Basket cont. from page 68

water for about five minutes to soften, and then wrapped around the rim to hold everything together and give a finished look. With prepared materials, a small basket can be completed in about an hour, while larger ones take three hours or more.

These round baskets come in many sizes and are not only beautiful objects, but important containers for historical knowledge of a traditional art form. So, if in Chajul for a celebration, buy a basket to commemorate the occasion. But, if this municipality is not in your travel plans or it is the wrong time of the year, Chajul baskets can be found at Nim Pot, in La Antigua Guatemala. 📍



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Avoid any diet that discourages the use of hot fudge. —Don Kardong

The cardiologist's diet: If it tastes good, spit it out. —Sally Wheeler

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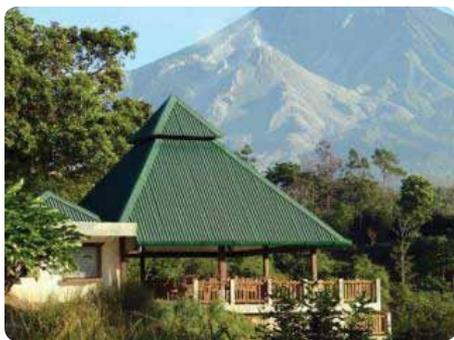
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Pelican watchtower (LENA JOHANNESSEN)



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Pacific Coast **cont. from page 18**

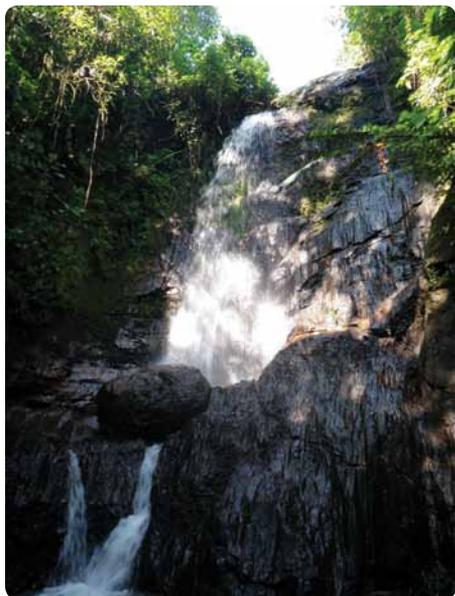
casa patronal), staffed by local women who welcome visitors with smiles and plates of savory *comida típica*. Take a tour through the processing facilities, or hear from community founders about the community's battle for legal title to their lands. Don't miss the crystalline waters of the community's two waterfalls or the magnificent views of Volcán Santiaguito and the Pacific sunset from the hotel's rooftop terrace. And when you leave, remember to take home a package or two of smooth chocolaty organic coffee and tasty macadamia nuts.

From Nueva Alianza, continue over to neighboring Reserva Patrocinio, owned by the amiable Mario Aguilar. Patrocinio is a treasure for bird enthusiasts, who can climb the bird-watching tower as early as 5 a.m., greeted with fresh hot coffee, cookies and granola bars. Local guide Paulino is intimately familiar with flight patterns and birdcalls, and under his care you may just spot the elusive highland guan, among a variety of other species such as motmots, parrots, hummingbirds and woodpeckers. After your early morning, tuck in to a delicious three-course breakfast in the main lodge, then take a ride on the reserve's

four adventure canopy zip-lines, or simply relax and read a book in the well-appointed lodge. Take a guided tour of the property and the plantation's diverse operations, including coffee, cacao, mangostán, bamboo and more. The attention to detail and service at Reserva Patrocinio will be something you'll surely be telling your friends about back home, although you may have the urge to keep this piece of tranquility to yourself.

Comunidad Nueva Alianza and Reserva Patrocinio are just two of many special destinations just outside of Retalhuleu. Check future issues of *Revue* for more on the Pacific Coast, including the Pre-Classical Mayan archeological site of Takalik Abaj and Retalhuleu proper. 📍

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Remember that everyone you meet is afraid of something, loves something and has lost something. —H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

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No diet will remove all the fat from your body because the brain is entirely fat. Without a brain, you might look good, but all you could do is run for public office. —George Bernard Shaw

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MAP BY ELVIRA MÉNDEZ



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Ambition is a poor excuse for not having sense enough to be lazy. —Charlie McCarthy

The time will come when winter will ask you what you were doing all summer. —Henry Clay



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Life is short but there is always time for courtesy.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life—reciprocity. —Confucius

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View of the lagoon from the top of the ridge



Lagoon-side altar, recently used

Hiking Laguna Chicabal

In the Newberry Award-winning book (and Disney movie) *Holes*, the hero Stanley Yelnats and his friend Zero survive in a barren desert after discovering a hidden lake tucked on top of a mountain. Though Guatemala's Western Highlands are far from barren, scaling the breathtaking Laguna Chicabal makes you wonder if the author of *Holes* drew any inspiration from this local gem.

A microbus ride away from Quetzaltenango, the lagoon rests in the collapsed top of a dormant volcano. Not terribly large—perhaps a mile all around—the lagoon impresses visitors at once not only with its sheer beauty, but also with how isolated it is. More northern Minnesota than Lake

Atitlán, this is the perfect day trip if you're staying in the area and one of the few destinations that is probably more popular with locals than tourists.

The hike to Chicabal's concave peak is a little over a mile from the base. The cloud forest around you and the rolling mountains beyond mean you will be more than happy to stop, and the view provides a better excuse than the elevation. The vista also makes the journey seem like every other Highlands hike—until glimpses of blue through the trees hint at something you've never quite seen before.

Part of the lagoon's appeal is its mystical (and mythical) history, a doorway to another world for many Mayas. ...cont. on following page

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Laguna Chicabal from previous page

While we watched from a lookout deck, clouds rose over the bluffs with remarkable speed, gathering strength and body before they twisted downward like an extinguished candle in reverse. Casting shadows that morphed across the water's surface, it looked as if spirits from above were diving down to converse with creatures rising up from the depths. Before contact, the fog stopped

and hovered at the surface, the black creatures below doing the same. The two never touched. Then sunlight broke through and the mist disappeared.

The lagoon impresses visitors at once not only with its sheer beauty, but also with how isolated it is.

The water is surrounded by signs marking the 20 sacred days of the Mayan calendar, translated into both K'iche' and Mam (and it's the Mam who find the location particularly hallowed). Because it's used for rituals and sacrifices, swimming is not allowed. But that doesn't stop an endless stream of locals from camping out on the surrounding shore. While a friend and I walked around, 20-somethings were setting up tents, families were building bonfires, and women were clustered around crosses with fresh ash at their base. ...cont. page 101



Maya calendar signs and alter on the trail



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—Winston Churchill



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Inside some of us is a thin person struggling to get out, but they can usually be sedated with a few pieces of chocolate cake. —Karin Ducarn

I lied on my Weight Watchers list. I put down that I had 3 eggs... but they were Cadbury chocolate eggs. —Caroline Rhea

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Laguna Chicabal cont. from page 96

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Flowers leave traces of a Mayan ritual

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I went to a general store but they wouldn't let me buy anything specific. —Steven Wright



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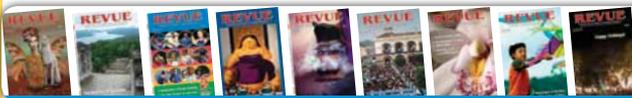
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