

The Guide



Showing some heart

Inside México

THE ENGLISH SPEAKER'S GUIDE TO LIVING IN MEXICO

FEBRUARY 2009 • No. 23

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THE EXPATS ISSUE

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25 EXPAT VOICES

25 expats from around the country, nominated by our readers, talk about choosing Mexico, what keeps them here, and how they pass the time.

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25 EXPAT VOICES


IN THEIR OWN WORDS

For the “25 Mexicans You Should Know” edition of *Inside México* (November 2007) our editorial team sat in a room for hours, proposing and debating names of candidates, eventually whittling the list to a mix of well and less-well-known figures, each illuminating some aspect of this country.

For “25 Expats,” we decided to do something different. We put the word out. We invited you, our readers, to tell us who to highlight. E-mailed nominations poured in from around the country, and several of you even called.

This inaugural group of 2009 finalists is a diverse bunch in terms of where they are from, where they live and what they do. You’ve helped us round up the expat equivalent of the “butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker.” In this case, however, it is the activist, the developer and the expat filmmaker... and the dog rescuer, the theater founder, the birder, and the book store owner. The list goes on.

The common thread running through each selection is the effort these people make to build community between expats and Mexicans. We think that by doing so, they are helping to expand the definition of Mexico. That is what immigrants do.



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Originally from:

I was born in Chicago in 1951 and my family relocated to Los Angeles in 1964.

Lives in: I travel between a small traditional Mexican town in northern Jalisco named Huejuquilla el Alto, and the coastal tourist town of Sayulita, Nayarit.

Living in Mexico: Since 1975.



Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts/ Centro Indígena Huichol / www.huicholcenter.org

SUSANA VALADEZ

Why did you move to Mexico?

I was doing fieldwork with the native Huichol people for my Master's degree, and fell in love with one of my subjects of investigation.

Tell us about your involvement with the Huichol people.

I came upon a tribe of corn farmers, shamans, and artists who have until recently lived undisturbed in the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains of Nayarit and Jalisco. Today approximately 8,000 Huichol people survive in this remote, harsh environment.

The tribe visually portrays their psychedelic experiences, myths, and legends in an art form known as yarn painting. I set out to study and document the visual language they use in their paintings and catalog their large inventory of symbols. I fell in love with one of the yarn painters, Mariano Valadez, and married into the tribe in 1978. As my anthropological research progressed, it became clear that outside influences were destroying the core of this ancient tribe at an alarming rate.

I created a non-profit foundation called the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts. It is dedicated to conserving the Huichol cultural legacy of art, symbolism, music, folklore, plant knowledge, profound religious insight, and much more. I believe that the Huichol people can thrive in to-

day's world without sacrificing their traditions.

What other organizations/ activities/ hobbies are you involved in here?

In order to raise funds for my foundation I opened Galeria Tanana in Sayulita to sell the products created at the Huichol Center.

Do you have a specific Mexico "moment" or memory – something that always makes you think, "Yep, this is home," or "That's what I love about this place?"

Every morning when I look out my window and see the rays of first light on the horizon I thank the universe that I live in such a beautiful place, where my spirit and soul are so nurtured and blessed by the simple things in life.

What are both the best and the hardest things about being an expat in Mexico?

As a 21st century American woman living in an ancient Mesoamerican culture, I have learned how to think outside the box. There is more than one way to skin a *nopal*.

The hardest thing is the fact that many Mexicans have a preconceived notion about non-Mexicans and can be very rude. On the whole, however, I find Mexican people to be loving and kind. I realize I will always be *La Gringa*, but nonetheless we share a common humanity.

RONALD BUCHANAN

Why did you move to Mexico?

After several years working on national newspapers in London (The Guardian and, briefly, the Financial Times), I took a job as editor of a series of publications that specialized in Latin America. Earlier I had lived in Spain and Cuba, so I knew the language. When the job of correspondent in Mexico came up, I was keen to get out of London and went for it.

You became a dual citizen. When and why did you decide to do that?

I became a naturalized Mexican citizen six years ago. I don't intend to live anywhere else and the annual battle of red tape that surrounded renewal of my FM2 was getting too much for me. I have a Mexican wife and son, so naturalization was an obvious option. And Britain has never had any problem about Her Majesty's loyal subjects swearing allegiance to other nations.

Tell us about your work as a journalist in Mexico.

I was a journalist long before I arrived in Mexico. After a spell as a construction worker and barman, I broke into journalism with a Glasgow daily. Why? No noble reasons really. There's a lot less work and much more pay as a journalist than as a construction worker or barman. Over the years in Mexico I've been a freelance contributor to many publications. I still write very occasionally for the Sunday Times of London, the Financial Times, and others, but my mainstay these days is energy reporting for Platts. I also provide a daily news service for a website on Central America. In the past I've been editor of the Mexico City Times and of a Spanish-language business weekly, El Asesor. Both publications are now defunct. Does that say something about me?

Are you involved in other organizations, activities, or hobbies here?

I wish I could say I had a rich social life, but it just ain't so. Not that it bothers me, though. I go swimming

Originally from: Glasgow, Scotland.

Lives in: The port city of Veracruz.

Living in Mexico: I lived here from 1981 until just after the 1986 World Cup. Then I went back to London, where I worked with The Guardian once again. In 1994, I returned to Mexico and I've been here ever since. So that's a total of about 21 years..



Journalist

two or three times a week and visit the same cantina every Friday night, except when I'm visiting Mexico City, of course.

Do you have a specific Mexico "moment" or memory – something that always makes you think, "Yep, this is home," or "That's what I love about this place?"

I do have such a memory, but it's not one that can be repeated in a respectable publication.

What are both the best and the hardest things about being an expat in Mexico?

Really I don't think of myself as an expat. I've never really been involved in expat activities in all the years I've spent here, though I do enjoy meeting people from Britain, America, and other countries. In the parlance of Britain's former colonial service, I've "gone bush" here in Mexico.



México, 62130
Tel. 777 313 1052
madatti@gmail.com

In 1986, Italian painting restorer Attilio Tuis Berto began producing top-quality wood furniture under the Madatti brand name. Italian, Spanish, and Mexican design influences can be witnessed in each piece, hand-crafted by Berto and his expert team of local carpenters, wood-carvers, and painters. Attention to detail is the company's hallmark and his sizeable client roster includes tourist developments, hotels, business centers, and private residences. Products for the home include beds, armoires, dining room tables, buffets, coffee tables, and bookshelves.

You may schedule a personal appointment, Monday – Friday from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm; Saturdays from 8:30 am to 1 pm.



JALISCO

Focus on Mexico
www.focusonmexico.com

The eight-day Focus on Mexico educational program was created in 1999 by Canadian

couple Ray and Marie Dwyer-Bullock in response to heavy interest by Americans and Canadians wishing to retire to Lake Chapala. The informative and professional program combines a delightful vacation with comprehensive seminars on key topics related to a move to a new country, like money matters, the legal and healthcare systems, and doing business or just living in Mexico.

The Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts

Calle Victoria 24
Huejuquilla el Alto,
Jalisco

457 983 7054
www.huicholcenter.org
Preserving the rich cultural legacy of the indigenous Huichol people is the primary mission of the Center, founded by American Susana Valadez in 1981. Its numerous projects focus on self-sufficiency, Huichol-specific and general education for children and adults; recording Huichol history, art, and customs in an ethnographic archive; combating poverty and malnutrition; providing medical assistance; and teaching sustainable agricultural techniques.



SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

Lost and Found in Mexico

www.lostandfoundinmexico.com

First-time filmmaker Caren Cross gave up a successful long-term career as a psychotherapist in the US to move to San Miguel de Allende in the mountains of central Mexico. In the quest to understand her own move, Cross became obsessed by what made so many others do the same. This 53-minute documentary won recognition in several US and Mexican film festivals.



In&Out HIGHLIGHTS

The Best of Mexico

www.inandoutmexico.com

DINING

Danubio

Uruguay 3

Tel: 5521 0976

Mon-Sun: 1 pm – 10 pm

www.danubio.com

With over 60 years of experience, Danubio offers some of the best seafood dishes in the downtown area. Widely suggested are: *manchego* cheese, *jamón ibérico* (Spanish ham), and *pulpos a la gallega* (octopus), among other Spanish-influenced delicacies. It is not unusual to bump into celebrities here.

NIGHTLIFE

Zinco Jazz Club

Motolinía 20

Tel: 5512 3369

Wed-Sat: 9 pm – 3:30 am

www.zincojazz.com

Labeled by Condé Nast's *Traveler* as one of the "25 exciting new night-spots," this jazz club a la 1930s Chicago is located in the basement of an art-deco building. Zinco features one of the coolest jazz scenes in the country, attracting talent from Mexico and abroad.

CANCÚN

DINING

Laguna Grill

Blvd. Kukulcán, Km. 16.5

Tel: (998) 885 0267/ 0257

Mon-Sun: 4 pm – 12 am

www.lagunagrill.com.mx

Just as the name suggests, this restaurant overlooks the gorgeous Nichupté Lagoon. Laguna Grill has a stunning interior design, which combines streams of running water with tropical wooden beams. Its cuisine gracefully combines Asian spices with Mexican ingredients. Try the grilled shrimp – marinated in rum, mint, and lime – and don't miss the pineapple-papaya strudel.

NIGHTLIFE

Coco Bongo

Bld. Kukulcán, Km. 9.5

Tel: (998) 883 5061

www.cocobongo.com.mx

The high-tech show presented in this multi-level club comes to life every night with flying acrobats, dancers, and movie characters. It all makes for a vibrant atmosphere for dancing when the sun goes down.