

# Insiders NEWS



APRIL 2025

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## The Power of Earth Day

By Guest Contributor April Gaydos,  
President, Sociedad Audubon de México, A.C.

As surely as the sun rises in the east, **Earth Day** appears on our calendars every **April 22<sup>nd</sup>**. What began in 1970 as a movement that inspired 100,000 people to act now draws over a billion participants worldwide to cleanups, educational fairs, and political

events. Yet despite this widespread participation, we continue to face rampant pollution, deforestation, habitat loss, biodiversity decline, water scarcity, and the escalating world-wide disasters caused by climate change. Guanajuato is one of the most affected areas for the impacts of climate change.

In San Miguel this presents a huge challenge to life as we know it and we have little time to reverse course. Bottom line, an annual day of celebrating Mother

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## FACES OF San Miguel


### Learning To Die Well: Lee Carter

By Natalie Taylor.


**Lee Carter** was born in Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, and received an MBA from the University of Virginia. He had a successful commercial real estate company in Texas, until coming to San Miguel de Allende on a lark in the 1980s. He fell in love with the local arts and crafts, and changed his life completely. He began buying art in México and bringing it back to sell in the US, dividing his time between the two countries. His back and forth trips across the border eventually made him realize that whenever he left San Miguel, he felt he was leaving home; and on the way back it felt like a return to where he belonged. In 2003 he moved here for good.

But something bothered him. In the 1980s, living in San Antonio, Texas, he witnessed friends and acquaintances dying from AIDS. Many suffered greatly in their final stages, without relief from the pain and discomfort. By the 1990s, hospice care had become available in the US, and Lee's

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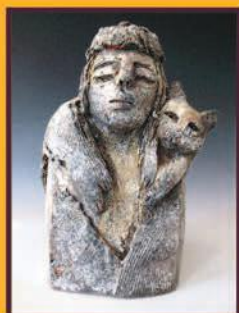
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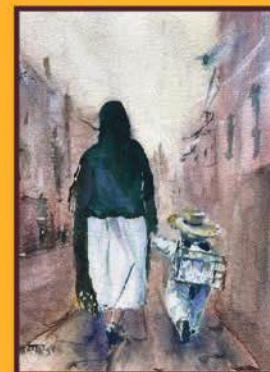
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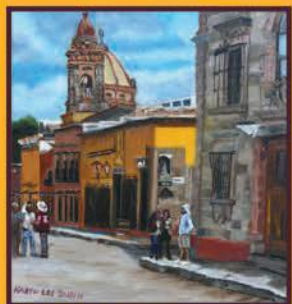
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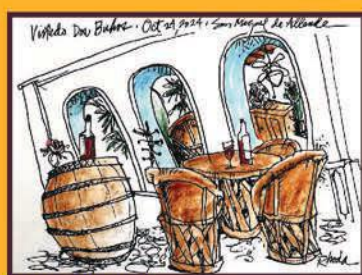
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## News From The Insiders' Team

### A Word From The Deputy Publisher

By Frank "Sugar" Hudson

In the uncertain landscape of printed media, small-town newspapers have the ability to stand out as a unique and invaluable service to their local residents. The first year of **Insiders News** it has been vital to establishing its presence and future in San Miguel de Allende.

The success of **Insiders News** in this first year is a testament to the dedication, hard work, and vision of its founders, mainly Camie Fenton and her team.

With its mission to cover local events and human-interest stories of our community, **Insiders News** plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of connection and

belonging among residents.

In the first year of operation, **Insiders News** has achieved success by developing and delivering a high-quality newspaper to the people of San Miguel. Our sales team, by establishing relationships with local businesses, organizations, and community leaders have contributed to the paper's growth. By understanding the unique needs and interests of San Miguel de Allende, the paper can tailor its content to appeal to a wide range of readers.

By adding our on-line platforms and social media channels **Insiders News** reaches a broader audience and also attracts young readers. Embracing modern

technology, while staying true to traditional journalistic values **Insiders News** has solidified its position as a trusted voice in our community.

Overall, in the first year **Insiders News** has shown the ability to adapt, innovate, and connect with its audience. By staying true to its mission statement of serving the community and delivering quality journalism, it has established itself as a respected newspaper that enriches the lives of the readers in San Miguel de Allende.

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CONTINUED FROM THE COVER

Earth has not fundamentally reshaped our relationship with her. Future generations depend on our ability to make living in harmony with the natural world a priority.

The scale of change required involves individual effort, institutional reform, and political will. As Einstein famously said, *"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."* Individually, small actions like picking up trash, using less plastic, and conserving water may seem minor but shift our priorities and values significantly.

Which is why, locally **Audubon de México** works to conserve our native trees (one of our first lines of defense against climate change); promote habitat gardens for pollinators and other wildlife; remove trash from the Presa and Rio Laja and continue to work on solutions to combat the Lirio Acuatico invasion of the Presa Allende.

We also work to stop polluters and developers who are poisoning our waterways and cutting down old-growth trees. These are all volunteer efforts designed to not only rally positive community participation, but

to inform, educate and make a meaningful impact.

Since 2015, 1600 children have participated in our school-based **Niños y Naturaleza program**, which brings the world of nature to life within a real-world context to prepare and empower children for the challenges ahead through knowledge, skills and the values they need to as future change makers.

This **Earth Day**, I invite you to celebrate not only the planet but also our collective power to create change. Because when it comes down to it, the only thing we truly control is our own choices and behaviors. And those choices ripple outward, influencing others, building momentum, and inspiring real change. Earth Day doesn't have to be just another date on the calendar. Let's make it personal and meaningful. Let's make it a day of renewing our commitment to make changes in our lives that contribute to the well-being of the whole. We all hold the immense power to shape a better future for life on Earth. Let's use it.

April Gaydos is President of Sociedad Audubon de México, A. C. [www.audubonmexico.org](http://www.audubonmexico.org)



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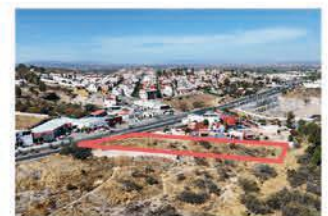
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## Charity Works: Cruz Roja Mexicana

### Can You Hear The Siren?

By Danita Brisson

As the ambulance weaves through traffic, its wailing siren reassures those in crisis that help is on the way. Whether responding to a human misadventure or a natural disaster, **Red Cross** volunteers are trained to deliver on their mission to “prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.”

Local past President Leticia Fernández recently shared the fascinating story behind the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross, from its inception in Geneva, Switzerland. “Since our creation in 1863,” the tale begins, “we have worked to help, protect and provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by armed conflict and other violence.” Swiss author Jean-Henri Dunant was so horrified by the suffering of the 40,000 soldiers killed or wounded and left behind in the Italian Battle of Solferino in 1859, that he struck the committee that produced the first Geneva Convention and established the International Red Cross. The dramatic saga of war, human rights violations and the people who fought against both can be found on the ICRC’s website, or by researching Jean-Henri Dunant and Clara Barton, the nurse who founded the American Red Cross in 1881. These humanitarian pioneers both suffered personally and professionally due to their dedication to this project. However, their legacy is the three-time Nobel Peace Prize winning organization that has saved countless lives worldwide.

As political leaders in the 1860s embraced the grassroots crusade to ensure compassion during conflict, they adopted the Convention that, “obliged armies to care for wounded soldiers, whatever side they were on, and introduced a unified emblem for the medical services: a red cross on a white background.” Globally, that emblem symbolizes help delivered according to the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

Locally, it represents paramedics and ambulances, training in first aid and CPR, disaster relief and much more. San Miguel’s responders are among the most highly qualified in the country. They train for at least twelve months prior to certification, practice year-round, and must pass recertification biannually.

“We handle 600 to 700 events each month or about 7000 services a year,” estimates Leticia Peña, President of the San Miguel Red Cross. An ‘event’ is any call for services, from a minor twisted ankle to a major fire. Humanitarian aid, emergency and pre-hospital services are provided free. Planned activities such as doctor consultations, training programs and ambulance transfers between hospitals generate fees. The goal of their annual fundraising campaign is to exceed basic operating costs of MX\$5.4 million. Leticia Fernández thanks all contributors and reminds us that, “Nobody is so poor as not to donate and nobody is so rich as not to need help.”

This May 5, the Red Cross celebrates 45 years of delivering crisis management in San Miguel.



OUR LOCAL VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF ARE SOME OF THE MOST QUALIFIED IN THE COUNTRY.

From their humble beginnings in 1980 with 3 volunteers, a 14-year-old ambulance donated by the Rotary Club, and a kiosk on Salida a Celaya, they have grown to 200-plus volunteers and staff, including a youth program for ages 8 to 22, and a compound at Libramiento José Manuel Zavala #117. Here the offices, classrooms, lab and consultation rooms cluster around the asphalt parking lot where 14 ambulances, 3 cars, a rescue truck and motorcycle stand ready. Our population growth from under 80,000 to over 180,000 during those 45 years, fueled that expansion. “We’re considering adding a second level to those buildings,” Leticia Peña points out as we tour the grounds. Onward and upward!

All 192 international Red Cross chapters face rising demands for knowledgeable and com-

passionate crisis respondents. When large-scale emergencies arise, volunteers worldwide are pressed into action. “Our responders have served around Latin America, in Veracruz, in Acapulco after the hurricane and in the México City earthquake,” reports Leticia Fernández. Over the past 162 years, the Red Cross’ role has evolved tremendously. The organization battles peacetime needs globally and locally. As the ICRC website explains, “All Red Cross activities have one central purpose: to help those who suffer, without discrimination, whether during conflict, in response to natural or man-made disasters, or due to conditions of chronic poverty.”

They need our help now, in order to continue helping us. Can you hear the siren? For more information contact Leticia Fernández at [letyfdz54@gmail.com](mailto:letyfdz54@gmail.com) or at 415 152 4225





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## San Miguel Jack

### Insiders' Social Scene

**Around Town:** A name most of the local crowd knows is **Michael Solof** aka *'The Adventure Hound'*. Not only does he introduce and entertain our visitors and regular expats to different restaurants around San Miguel, he also offers 'iPhone photo' tours (alook him up on Facebook).

Then there is the **San Miguel de Allende Hope Harmon Croquet Club**, what? You say... Yes indeed, full regulation-size grass courts with 30+members. Guests are welcome on *'Open House'* Mondays and at their monthly birthday celebration get-togethers referred to as *"Wine & Wickets"*. For all the info and to get on their mailing list, WhatsApp President, **Robert LeVine**: 52-415 180 6404. This is as I call it, *"Polo without ponies and about as much fun as you can have with your whites on!"* Seen about town, the author of the book, *Fire Weather*, **John Vaillant** at Jacques Cafe on Pueblita. San Antonio residents, **Steven & Jenni Sonnen** are back in town from their Colorado winter. **Alan Dell**, owner of Katz NYC no less,

was singing high praises after breakfast at **Silveyra's**. Three-times International Best-Selling Author/Badass Intuitive, **Jo Davis** is one lady you absolutely want to run into around town. Last month was the Modernism Week Trina Turk Fashion Show at Marrakesh Country Club in Palm Desert, which local social-butterfly **Brenda Sexton** flew back for. Mexican actress, **Adriana Paz** looked radiant in local designer, **Neithan Herbert's** dress on the red carpet at the Oscars last month.

**Music:** The **Felecia Ford and Soul Fame** concert out at Foro El Obraje Amphitheater was a great success attended by faithful fans and sponsors **Sophia** of Mata de Monte. El Monarca General Manager, **Frankie Cruz-Aedo**, last month organized two Parque Juárez jam fest benefit concerts with local musicians in solidarity with their music venue being shut down. Dedicated owner, **Kim Knight** kept staff on payroll and fingers crossed, they will have reopend by now.

**El Señor de la Conquista** (The

Lord of the Conquest) is the vibrant pre-Hispanic-influenced festival in San Miguel de Allende which was celebrated early last month.

**Food and Beverage:** Isaac del Castillo is busy at work, what with rebranding his Spanish place (formerly Aquí Castilla) at Jesus 5, now **Zaki's Mediterraneo**. He is also expanding next door to his NY Style Deli, the Marketplace Restaurant - Opening to be announced. **Hank's**, one of the busiest watering holes and consistently great dining experiences in our town, recently celebrated their founder's birthday in memoriam. **Bob Thieman**, an iconic restaurateur and developer in San Miguel, passed about one year ago. **Hank's** (open every day and featuring a daily 2-for-1 happy hour from 5pm to 8pm) is running strong under the guidance of his widow **Lisa** and his only daughter, **Amanda**. A 'hidden gem' **Agavia 115** restaurant on Hernández Macías 115, this creative and unique modern take on traditional Mexican food makes it a worthy visit. Local, organic dishes cater to meat lovers & vegetarians. Reservations are a must in this minuscule multilevel establishment: 52 415 1030933

**The Last Word:** Let's not forget

a shout out to our own **Insiders News** wonderful writer, **Aundria** and publisher of two books and her **slowdowngranny.com** blog, which is anything but! As some of you will know I/we have been down in Zihuatanejo. For those who might want to escape for some fun in the sun by the seaside, here are a few places we've enjoyed. **Thompson Beach Resort** at La Ropa. Nestled into the rocky outcrop of Zihua is one of only 600 "Small Luxury Hotels of the World", **La Casa Que Canta**, with just twenty-five rooms, it is the perfect hideaway. North of Ixtapa is the former lux Capella Resort, now known as **Cala del Mar**. An absolutely stunning architectural marvel built into the side of the hillside. There is everything in-between along this coastline, with moderate and *'all inclusives'*. For the really laid-back places, you are just half an hour north up to Troncones. The tres amigos favorite was a lovely little yoga retreat & boutique hotel called **Present Moment**, which pretty much sums up our frame of mind living down on the coast. For list of restaurant recommendations, don't hesitate to drop me a line here. **Note:** an especial *muchísimas gracias* to **Lady Sexton** of 'Hidden Gems' fame for her contributions.



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## As Eye See It

Easter In San Miguel: A Time Of Reflection

By Bill Wilson

*“Más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo”* (A Mexican dicho about being older and respecting elders)

It was a hot Spring Sunday, my first Easter in our new home more than 20 years ago. And it happened to be the first anniversary of my Mother’s death on Holy Saturday. As a Quaker, I often said if you live in México you kinda become Catholic. Catholic traditions and indigenous beliefs collide here. It’s part of the rhythm and melody of México.

I decided that being Easter I should go to church. Being hale and healthy back then I hiked up the Ancha to the iconic Jardín in San Miguel de Allende. The striking Parroquia was decked out, the church packed, and the garden was absolutely magical. I managed to grab a seat in the back of the church. I knew a lot of the liturgy of the Mass so I was somewhat comfortable. An elderly gentleman next to me tapped my shoulder and handed me a printed sheet with the service in Spanish.

Here I was alone and somewhat maudlin worshiping in another language.

(I came down that Spring to set up our home before our epic move from Philadelphia to San Miguel de Allende— a 2,500-mile trip with two cars, two dogs and a trailer.) Selfishly, I was wrapped up with details of the move, the memory of my parents and leaving our family behind, and this old gentleman showed me the kindness and Christian love that exemplifies the Church. My religious background is

somewhat convoluted, a mixture of Jewish, Lutheran, and Catholic faiths. As I grew older, I became a Seeker and eventually sought *“The Light”* which is part of Quakerism. During the service, I was filled with the magic of México, the grandeur of the Parroquia and the power of the Catholic Mass. After the service, I returned the paper to the old man, thanked him and as we shook hands he asked me in Spanish if I were Catholic. I told him that I was a Quaker and explained that *“The Light”* we sought was in fact Christ.

He smiled and we left the church. I sat for a moment on a Jardín park bench and reflected. The day before I had witnessed my first exploding Judases. What a tradition, I thought. Indeed, I was a stranger in a strange land, but I learned quickly that kind souls were everywhere. Especially in the Church and the Jardín. The bells of the churches were ringing out. Vendors were hawking. *Mariachis* seemed everywhere. Add some barking dogs and fireworks and you have what I call *“The Music of México.”* This music is everywhere especially in my heart. All thanks to a kind old man who taught me to listen with my heart.

### BITS AND PIECES

#### Sandra Cisneros Gains Honor

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker has announced the 2025 recipients of the Order of Lincoln, the state’s highest honor for professional achievement and public service. **Sandra Cisneros** is one of the six recipients join more than 350 distinguished Illinois residents who have joined the

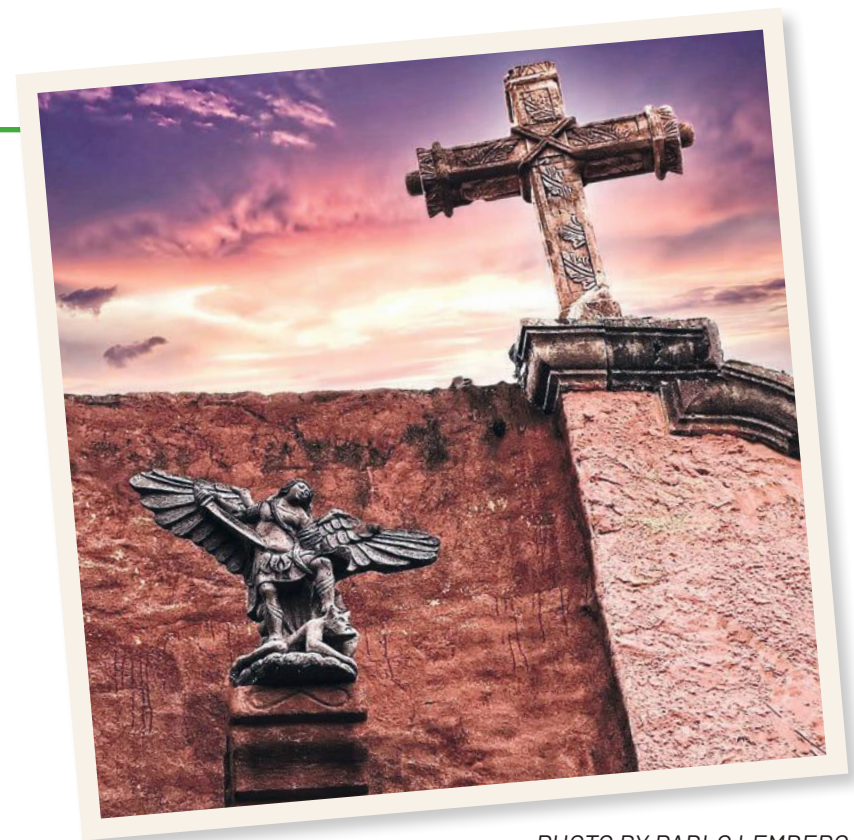


PHOTO BY PABLO LEMBERG

Order of Lincoln over the last five decades. Cisneros, poet, short story writer, novelist, and essayist whose work explores the lives of the working-class. She lives here in San Miguel de Allende and the US.

#### Day of The Dead’s La Catrina Was Created as a Satire

Another interesting fact about México is the history of the celebrations for The Day of The Dead. It was actually originally designed by **José Guadalupe Posada** as a satire referencing the high-society European obessions of Porfirio Díaz.

#### The Flag is Full of Symbolism

The Mexican flag has three vertical stripes that have had different meanings throughout history. Some say that green represents hope, white represents unity and red represents the blood shed by national heroes.

The flag symbolizes the legend of the eagle and the cactus of the Mexica Empire, which tells how Tenochtitlan, present-day Méxi-

co City, was founded. The fable relates the path that the citizens of Aztlán had to walk until they found the eagle (the reincarnation of the god Huitzilopochtli) devouring a snake perched on a cactus.

#### Tip of the Hat

**Kudos** to the men and women who sweep the highways and the garden and other public spaces. They keep our town looking perfect.

**A mil gracias** to the *tránsitos* (our traffic cops) that have a tough and often thankless job keeping traffic moving. Handling traffic in centro especially of weekends and holidays often seems impossible.

*Hasta el próximo mes!*

Bill Wilson, 20-year San Miguel resident has a journalism career spanning 50 years covering everything the United Nations to Cub Scout news. He’s also a weather buff and first responder.



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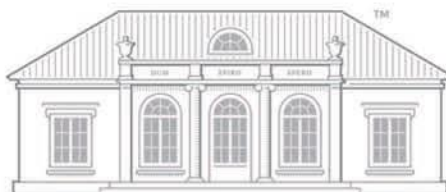
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# A New Play Starring José Guadalupe Posada And The Calavera Catrina

Coming To San Miguel De Allende?

By Jim Nikas

After more than thirty years I can easily recall first seeing the engravings of the Mexican artist **José Guadalupe Posada**. I remember being struck by his artistry. I thought, “*What talent!*” Yet few people knew his name or even that he created the **Calavera Catrina**. That has changed a bit today, and although arguably the biggest part of his legacy would be the popularization of the calavera, the inspiration contained in the thousands of images he created lives on in many ways. It is not enough to ask what would the Day of the Dead look like without the images inspired by the skeletons and skulls he drew? There is much more to Posada. As an illustrator working mainly for the México City based publisher Antonio Vanegas Arroyo between 1890 and 1912, Posada captured not only the essence of his times but provided us with a timeless reflection of our humanity.

After that early encounter with

Posada’s images, I began to acquire his work. Those acquisitions by my partner and I became a collection containing thousands of images, engravings, acid etchings, woodcuts and printing plates. Then in 2013, a documentary about Posada was borne, *Searching for Posada—Art and Revolutions*, followed by dozens of exhibitions and lectures since. The Internet allowed for the introduction of a site dedicated to Posada’s works, the **Posada-Art-Foundation.com**. What next?

People often ask me why I had such an interest in Posada. Maybe it is in response to honoring the Mexican roots of my grandmother Martha Gomez Nikas. There may be something to that but as the writer/reviewer, Willy Lizárraga, points out, perhaps I see through Posada also “*the question of artistic legacy*” in that there is a boundless enigma, mainly because it involves attempting to control what is beyond our reach. The assessment and interpretation of what we ac-

complish in our lives will always fall into the hands of others, usually after we are dead. And they would unfailingly judge us, not informed by our own passions and prejudices, but theirs.

This topic fascinated me so much that I wrote a play, **La Catrina & Posada - A Grave Dance**, attempting to explore it while incorporating one of my favorite subjects, José Guadalupe Posada and the Calavera Catrina. Aside from my bias towards Posada, I imagined the sixty-year-old Posada, living alone and doggedly pursued by photomechanical technology replacing the need for his engravings. I pictured Posada sitting there questioning the worth of his life’s work and having a bit of an existential crisis, when he is suddenly visited by a mysterious yet familiar messenger, who better than his creation known now as the Calavera Catrina?

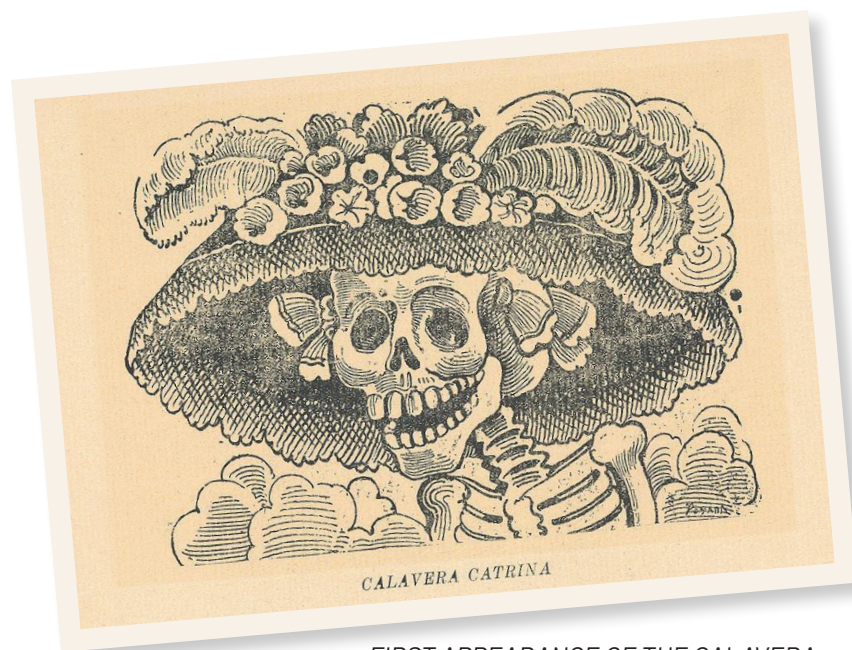
In reality, on January 20, 1913, José Guadalupe Posada died alone in his México City apartment from alcohol related enteritis. There is little known about him except for the imagery he left behind. We don’t really know his opinion on many points, there are no known diaries, notes or interviews. Instead, we rely on deductions and inferences from researchers and historians delving mainly into the vast body of work he produced.

This play is an attempt to give a fair account of what a dream in the last period of Posada’s life might have been like. Perhaps this dream occurred in a day or a flash of seconds. What might he have thought about? Some content is a summation of what might reasonably be deduced

from studies by various historians who have detailed Don Lupe’s life. The idea was to pay homage but also to give people a chance to learn a little about Posada’s life. No one knows what his last few days or hours were like. For certain, some artistic license has been taken, but it is with good intent and with the ultimate respect that this story was written.

The result of my academic and creative endeavor had its first staged reading in San Francisco, CA at the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts in November 2023. It is a work in progress and hopefully ever improving. Might it be performed in English and Spanish, perhaps in San Miguel de Allende? I am hopeful. We’d need only a few from the village! Director, musicians and some dedicated support. There are only two actors: José Guadalupe Posada (Male) and La Calavera Catrina (Female). The performance time, as is, runs about one hour.

Jim Nikas, educator, producer, paleontologist and screenwriter, Nikas, is founder and Executive Director of the privately held **Posada Art Foundation**, dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy Mexican artists José Guadalupe Posada and Manuel Manilla. In 2023, he co-produced the documentary, *The Needle and the Thread*, about the life of the mystic Franciscan nun María de Jesús de Ágreda, Spain. His most recent project is a work in progress in the form of a stage play entitled *La Catrina and Posada or Grave Dancing*. Nikas is a former member of the Advisory Board of the Documentary Film Institute Board at San Francisco State University and served on the board of directors of the Coro Hispano de San Francisco.  
[posadaartfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:posadaartfoundation@gmail.com)



FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE CALAVERA CATRINA, BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN 1912



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## San Miguel Taste

### Spring Calls For A Seafood Symphony

By Amy G. Rothlin

Spring is in full bloom in our beautiful town, and the jacaranda trees are showering us with purple splendor, a gentle reminder to savor each passing season. As the warmth of spring awakens our senses, so too does our craving for delectable Seafood. Who can resist the temptation of a crisp shrimp cocktail paired perfectly with an ice-cold Mexican lager?

Even in the heart of México, we have wonderful options offering fresh, safe, and diverse seafood dishes. From simple salads to the grandeur of *paellas* and rice dishes, there's a culinary mood to satisfy every palate that will guarantee a memorable dining experience. Keep in mind that these restaurants cater to other dietary needs by offering vegetarian and vegan options as well.

If you're looking for great seafood that will whisk you away to the coast, these three restaurants are worth checking out:

#### Fishers: Hidalgo 24, Centro

A popular Mexican chain restaurant with locations in the US and Spain, boasting a reputation for "Excellence in seafood since 1989". This is our go-to seafood destination when in Centro as they offer rich traditional Mexican recipes combined with modern culinary artistry. Their extensive menu offers a diverse array of dishes and showcases culinary creativity. **Fisher's** has a vibrant and festive scene for your friends or family to feast. The menu features appetizers, baked dishes, octopus, salads, a cold bar, soups, rice dishes, pasta, fish, shrimp, and lobster, promising a

delightful experience with every visit, they pride themselves on sourcing the highest quality ingredients, meticulously selecting seafood from coast to coast. Indulge in their Oriental tacos, rock spicy shrimp, pescadillas, and tostadas, and be prepared for their generous pour, Fishers delivers!

#### Don Camarón: Libramiento Manuel Zavala Zavala 117, Big Palapa next to San Javier and Bodega Aurrera

From the moment you arrive, **Don Camarón's** friendly staff treats you to a soul-warming shrimp broth, a perfect start to your meal. Beyond its clean and varied menu, Don Camarón creates a chill, family-friendly vibe, enhanced by a lively DJ on the weekends. A standout favorite is their *aguachile*, a Mexican seafood dish akin to ceviche. Here, the *aguachile* is prepared table-side, allowing you to customize your ingredients, this dish is heavenly. Another must-try is the *Arroz Marinero*, a hearty rice dish brimming with seafood and vegetables, perfectly spiced. Pair it with a Michelada for a scrumptious dining experience that will have you coming back for more.

#### Mar 13: Stirling Dickinson 15, Colonia San Antonio

Many locals claim that Mar 13 serves the best ceviche in town. This restaurant embraces the concept of seafood cuisine from various Mexican states, curating the finest recipes to bring the essence of the sea to your table. We highly recommend their seafood molcajete and any of their tostadas; each dish is a testament to the restaurant's commitment to quality and taste.

DISHES AT FISHER'S : TRY THEIR SHRIMP COCKTAIL



AGUACHILE AND TACOS AT DON CAMARÓN



BLACK AGUACHILE AND A CEVICHE AT MAR 13



If you wish to invite the San Miguel Taste Insiders Team to visit your place, please contact Amy: [amy.grothlin@gmail.com](mailto:amy.grothlin@gmail.com) and follow on Instagram @sanmiguel taste



# Mezcal:

## Beginning Your Mezcal Journey

By Jonathan Lockwood

In my last article I discussed what mezcal is, a brief history and why it's popularity has surged. That covered, where do you begin? With so many varieties, ordering mezcal can feel overwhelming. Let's simplify how to choose one.

### Ordering Mezcal By Agave Variety

Unlike tequila, mezcal is made from 30 to 50 agave varieties, though about 85% comes from *Espadín*. It matures in 6–8 years and has high sugar content, making it the most practical choice. But for a range of flavors, consider trying:

**Tobalá** – Light, mildly sweet, floral

**Tepextate** – Green, herbal, hints of sweet and spicy peppers

**Madrecuixe** – Mineral, earthy, complex

There are many more, but this is a great starting point.

### Ordering Mezcal by Profile

Like cigars, mezcal has profiles ranging from soft to bold. Many new drinkers start with softer varieties, while others prefer full-flavored, higher-proof mezcals. Oaxacans recommend drinking mezcal in *besitos* (little kisses) to fully appreciate its strength and depth. A mezcal at 47%–50% ABV can offer incredible complexity without overwhelming the palate. Some

even at 52% can be surprisingly smooth. If you prefer a gentler experience, opt for something under 47%. But below 42%, the flavors may lack depth.

### Joven vs. Reposado or Añejo

A joven mezcal is clear and unaged, while light brown reposados rest in wood barrels for 2 to 12 months and darker brown añejos for a year or more. Most serious mezcal drinkers favor joven for its pure agave expression. However, if you enjoy whiskey or bourbon, try a reposado or añejo for their mellowed flavors.

### The Bottom Line

I haven't touched on cocktails, as mezcal is best understood neat. That said, a mezcal you love straight will enhance a cocktail dramatically.

### The best way to order mezcal?

Find a bar with a strong selection and knowledgeable staff. While this primer gives you a foundation—agave varieties, flavor profiles, and aging—an expert bartender can guide you to the perfect pour. Next I'll spotlight a few great mezcal hotspots here in San Miguel de Allende. Cheers to your mezcal journey!

Jonathan Lockwood is an American Voice Talent living in San Miguel de Allende, México. He is also a Mezcal lover, explorer, and collector and writes the Mezcal Maniac Substack. Read and subscribe here: [mezcalmaniac.substack.com](http://mezcalmaniac.substack.com)



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## Real Estate Curious?

A Thriving Market For Buyers And Investors

By Erwit Reichert

San Miguel de Allende is one of México's most desirable real estate markets, celebrated for its old-world charm, vibrant artistic community, and strong investment appeal. Nestled in the heart of México, this UNESCO World Heritage city boasts stunning colonial architecture, a rich cultural scene, and a quality of life that attracts both locals and expatriates alike. Whether you're in search of a second home, a retirement haven, or an income-generating rental, San Miguel presents a wealth of opportunities. Here's a deeper look at the market trends and factors driving its real estate boom.

### Market Performance and Growth

The real estate market in San Miguel de Allende is experiencing an extraordinary surge. As of early 2025:

- Home sales have increased by nearly 50% compared to 2024, underscoring strong demand and investor confidence.
- The average transaction value has risen by 30%, reflecting rising property prices and a competitive market.
- Short-term rental properties yield an average annual return of 8%, making San Miguel an attractive choice for those looking to capitalize on its thriving tourism industry.

The combination of robust demand and limited inventory—particularly in the historic center—has resulted in sustained property appreciation, making now an excellent time to buy.

### Why is San Miguel de Allende a Hotspot for Buyers and Investors?

#### 1. Strong Foreign Demand

San Miguel de Allende has long been a magnet for American, Canadian, and European buyers who are enchanted by its colonial ambiance, cobblestone streets, thriving arts scene, and warm community. The town offers an enviable lifestyle at a fraction of the cost of major cities in the U.S. and Canada, making it a popular relocation destination.

#### 2. A Premier Retirement Destination

Ranked among the best places to retire, SMA offers year-round sunshine, high-quality yet affordable healthcare, and a welcoming expatriate community. With a charming blend of modern amenities and historic beauty, it provides a comfortable, inspiring setting for those looking to enjoy their golden years.

#### 3. A Tourism Hotspot with High Rental Yields

San Miguel enjoys a constant influx of tourists drawn by its vibrant festivals, art exhibitions, and rich history. This steady stream of visitors fuels the vacation rental market, allowing investors to enjoy lucrative returns on platforms like Airbnb and VRBO. Some properties see occupancy rates of over 75% year-round, ensuring a solid investment proposition.

#### 4. Limited Inventory in the Historic Center

Strict regulations protect San Miguel's historic integrity, limiting new developments in the town's core. This controlled growth ensures a high demand for existing properties, steadily

pushing values upward and making real estate here a sound long-term investment.

### Types of Properties Available

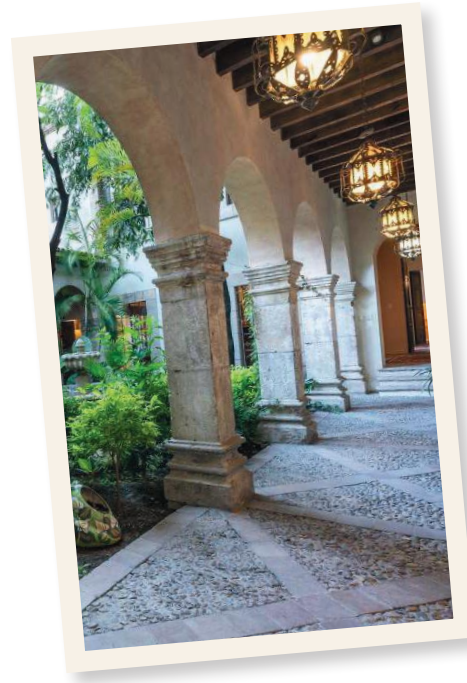
San Miguel de Allende's real estate market is diverse, offering everything from cozy colonial-style homes to luxurious estates. Here are some of the most sought-after options:

- **Colonial-Style Homes:** Traditional residences featuring charming courtyards, cantera stonework, and colorful facades that exude the city's historical allure.
- **Luxury Villas:** Opulent properties in gated communities, boasting contemporary designs, breathtaking views, and high-end amenities.
- **Condos and Apartments:** A rapidly growing segment, perfect for those seeking low-maintenance living or a rental investment with strong returns.
- **Country Estates and Ranches:** Located on the outskirts, these properties offer expansive spaces, serene landscapes, and an escape from the city's bustle.

### Best Neighborhoods to Buy Property

If you're considering investing in San Miguel, here are some of the most desirable areas:

- **Centro Histórico:** The cultural heart of the city, featuring exquisite colonial architecture, boutique shops, and a lively atmosphere. Properties here are highly coveted and command premium prices.
- **Guadiana & Ojo de Agua:** Exclusive residential enclaves near the city center, offering modern comforts in a tranquil setting.
- **San Antonio:** A favorite among expats, this neighbor-



SAN MIGUEL IS A VERY DESIRABLE DESTINATION FOR REAL ESTATE

hood strikes a balance between traditional charm and contemporary convenience.

- **Atascadero & Balcones:** Elevated locations with sweeping city views, perfect for buyers seeking privacy and scenic beauty.

### Price Trends and Investment Outlook

Real estate prices in San Miguel vary significantly based on location and property type:

- Entry-level homes and condos start around \$285,000 USD.
- Luxury estates in premium locations can exceed \$3 million USD.
- Market analysts project a 7% annual appreciation in 2025, reinforcing San Miguel de Allende's status as a reliable and profitable investment destination.

Next month's topic: **Considerations Before Buying and Navigating the buying process.**

Erwit Reichert, Broker, San Miguel Properties and current Vice President of AMPI (Professional Association Of Realtors) San Miguel de Allende, 415 153 5255  
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## Sandi's Pink Hot Picks

### An Expansion Of Our Lives

By Sandi Roy

Family is everything. We cherish our children and grandchildren, hold them close in our hearts, and look forward to every moment spent together. Yet, for part of the year, we have chosen to make our home in San Miguel de Allende—not as an escape, but as an expansion of our lives.

Here, in this high desert town, we have found something rare: a sense of community that extends beyond blood ties. San Miguel is a gathering place for the curious, the creative, and the adventurous—people drawn from all corners of the world by something they can't quite explain but instantly recognize.

Consider the sheer abundance of experiences waiting to be enjoyed. Food, for example, is an art form here, and the culinary scene reflects the town's rich, multicultural mix. Within the city limits, you can find everything from street tacos made with generations-old family recipes to elegant, world-class restaurants serving dishes as creative as the artists who frequent them. Venture a little farther to the outskirts, and you'll discover countryside haciendas with farm-to-table dining, open-air garden cafes, and rustic wineries where long lunches stretch into sunset, shared with friends old and new.

The people who call this place

home, whether for a season or a lifetime, are alive in a way that defies age. In their 70s, 80s, and beyond, they are still dancing, laughing, exploring, and embracing every moment with the energy of teenagers. They fill the dance floors at live music venues, hike the surrounding hills, and gather for endless conversations over coffee or cocktails. It is a place that proves we are never too old for new adventures, never too late to form deep friendships, and never past the age of falling in love with life all over again.

As we move through another season here, we are reminded of the richness of this chosen family. We weave our lives into the fabric of this town. San Miguel offers more than a beautiful setting—it offers belonging, a gift as valuable as any other. Wherever we spend our time in the



THE TOWN'S STREETS INSPIRE  
FALLING IN LOVE WITH LIFE

world, may we always recognize and appreciate the communities that lift us, embrace us, and make life richer than we ever imagined.

Oh: **Pink Hot Pick?** – Check out varied musical entertainment at Rain Dog Lounge!



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brother, dying of cancer, was afforded such care in the final stages. Lee saw the difference in these passings—his brother died a “good death”—at home, free of pain, and surrounded by family. It was a stark contrast to those friends whom he saw pass in the 1980s. In 2005, in San Miguel, he witnessed a friend dying in a painful way, without the support of end-of-life palliative care, because nothing of the sort was available in México.

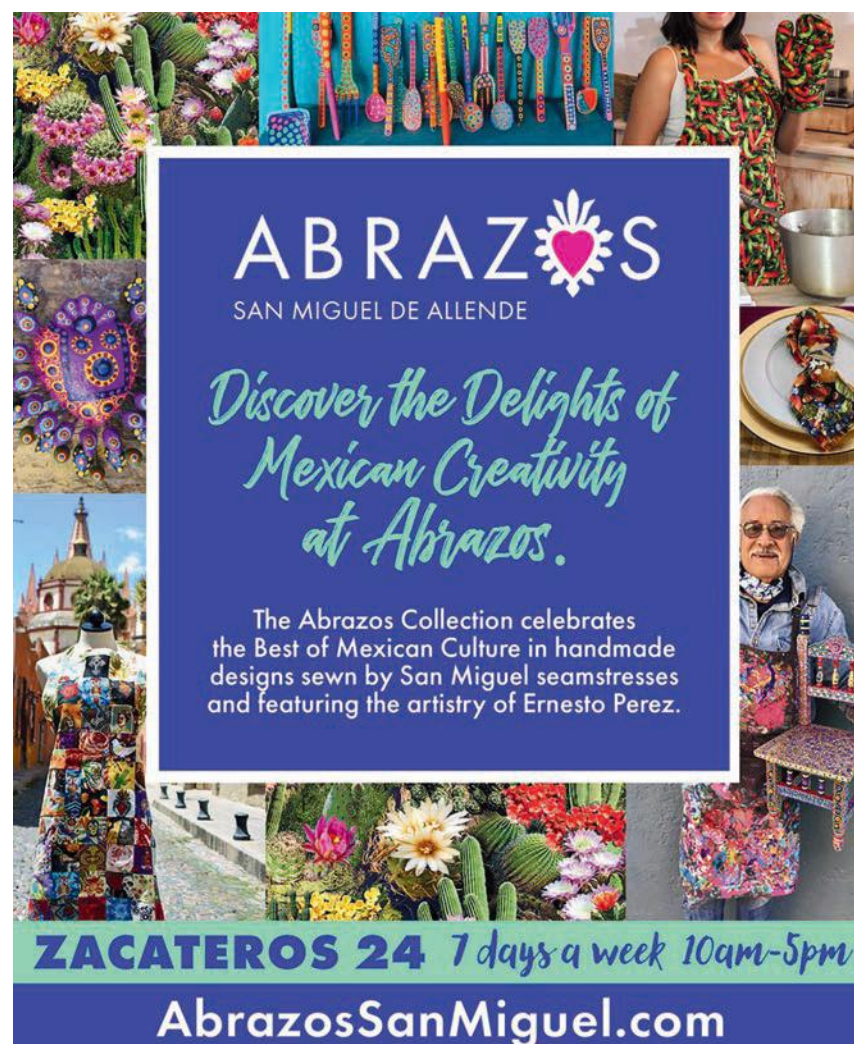
One year later Lee stayed with his father during the last part of his life. In this case, hospice care was involved, and once again he saw what “dying well” meant. His father passed without pain, aware of his surroundings, and sharing precious moments with loved ones. Lee said that many evening the gatherings around his father turned into “a party.”

These contrasting experiences highlighted the importance of hospice care in the last stages of dying. In 2007 Carter, and two others started **Hospice SMA**—the first hospice care center in México. Dr. María Lourdes Tejeda was on the staff, and she spent a year training in palliative care at the National Cancer Institute in México City.

Carter’s dream had always been to create an even better hospice care center, and in 2014 **Mitigare Hospice Care** was launched. In 2016 they received a grant from a Hospice organization in the US, and began talks with the city of San Miguel de Allende to acquire land to build a physical presence. This came true when the municipality granted a plot of soil in Atascadero, and construction of the center finally began.

The new **Mitigare Hospice, Lee Carter Center** offers high quality care in the final stages of life, regardless of financial circumstances. It is meant to serve the entire community of San Miguel—locals, and foreigners. It is an airy, beautiful space with state of the arts facilities, including a lovely garden that offers peace, and a breath of fresh air. The center will eventually have on-site training facilities in palliative care for doctors and other medical personnel.

Although hospice care is meant as an at home management of the final stages of life, the Center provides a few rooms if in-home care is not possible. It offers a



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THE MITIGARE HOSPICE CARE, LEE CARTER CENTER

space for those who need shelter and care during their endmost days, including space for family members who might be at their side.

Lee Carter, a Founding Board Member and former president of the organization, exemplifies someone’s dedication to a dream; a work almost 18 years in the making, for the benefit of the entire San Miguel Community. Since 2005 when he led the construction committee of a Palliative Center in Shenandoah Valley, to his building of relationships with hospices worldwide, he never abandoned his vision for such a center here. **Mitigare Hospice Care, the Lee Carter Center** is an invaluable addition to our city, a trailblazing place any one of us might need some day. The team members are

extremely competent in their specific areas—public relations, psychological support, nutrition, and other ancillary services. Dr. Lourdes Tejeda continues her involvement as executive and medical director; she heads a first-rate medical team with doctors and nurses specifically trained in palliative care. The concept and space offer a way to transition from life to death without pain, with caring and competent professionals. As the first of its kind in México it is a true pioneer in showing the way toward “dying well.”

More than anything, it is the achievement of a man who saw something he was not happy with, and decided to make a change. San Miguel de Allende is the better for the realization of Lee Carter’s dream.

[www.natalietaylor.org](http://www.natalietaylor.org)





## Fearless Women, Champions Of Change

Beatriz Zapata, Shining A Light Through Her Art

By Carolina de la Cajiga

When **Beatriz Zapata Medinilla** visited her aunt as a child, she went straight to her closet, pulled out a coat, a dress, and high heels—each enormous for her five-year-old frame. Nevertheless, she dressed up, haphazardly wobbled around the house, waved her tiny hand, and declared to everyone that she was going to the theater.

Coincidence or fate? Either way, **Beatriz** is now a renowned actor in México and Switzerland. She may not be physically imposing, but her stage presence is undeniable. It takes courage to deliver complex dialogues with the power and poise that Beatriz brings to every performance. *"I never imagined becoming an actor until the '70s when I joined a*

*theater workshop at Pedro Loredo's modeling school, a famous Mexican fashion designer. I was hooked, and my life was forever changed,"* she recalls.

Next, she attended UNAM's (México National Autonomous University) Culture University Center, where she studied under Maestro Roberto Sen and eventually joined his theater company, Lepanto. *"Meeting Sen—an extraordinary actor and teacher—was a turning point in my life. From there, it was all about practice—lots and lots of practice."*

Her latest performance, **Yo, Anna Politkovskaya**, by Jean Greneau, which Beatriz translated, tells the story of the fearless Russian journalist who, despite relentless threats and violence, reported tirelessly on

the Chechen war in the late '90s until her assassination in 2006. Beatriz recently performed the play at Shelter Theater and El Sindicato, here in San Miguel. *"Politkovskaya's fearless fight for justice, even at the cost of her life, has deeply influenced me,"* Beatriz says emphatically. She has also lived an adventure straight out of one of her plays—absurd, unexpected, and unforgettable. While visiting a friend in Lausanne, Switzerland, a stranger sat uninvited at her café table. *"Out of nowhere, he asked for my phone number. I ignored him, but he persisted. Eventually, I relented. I told him I was returning to México and gave him my contact information. For months, he called—until one day, he knocked on my door and asked me to marry him. We lived happily—not forever, but for ten memorable years."* Upon returning to México, Beatriz searched for a place to settle near México City, where her daughter and grandchildren live. Guanajuato City was her first choice, but she didn't feel the "fire" or connection she was hoping for. Disillusioned, she stopped in San Miguel de Allende to rethink her plans.

*"From the moment I arrived, I knew San Miguel had that special something—plus the culture I had been longing for. And on my very first day, I found my home!"* she says, a twinkle in her eye. That was eight years ago. Since then, Beatriz has become a fiercely happy sanmiguelense. She strikes up conversations with strangers on the street or on the bus—many of whom become lifelong friends. *"My son says I didn't choose San Miguel—it chose me."*

But her passion isn't limited to performing. Beatriz also writes, adapts, and directs. She's currently reworking three plays she wrote and presented in Switzerland. **Pero si bailo con Pepe (But If I Dance with Pepe)** tells the story of two childhood friends who reconnect decades later. As they reminisce about their marriages, they make a shocking discovery—they have both been victims of physical and psychological abuse. *"This is a reality for 70% of women worldwide, regardless of social status or nationality,"* Beatriz explains. *"My goal is to shine a light on this terrible reality. It's essential for women to seek help at the first sign of violence, and for men to break free from the toxic patterns they may have grown up with."*

Though Beatriz prefers dramas, she's also working on **Tommy Died**, a comedy of misunderstandings with an unexpected twist, and **The Patio**, another sharp-witted play. *"I'm looking for experienced actors to bring these works to life: two women, 45 to 60, and two men in the same age group, plus a woman and a man, 25 to 30."* Beatriz is eager and ready to direct again.

But there's more to Beatriz than theater. Before COVID, she taught poetry at the Municipal Library, free of charge. She is also deeply engaged in social and political causes, as an active member of Morena and a passionate advocate for environmental protection—fighting against an open-pit mine in Dolores. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has devastated her, and she has joined the **'San Miguel for Palestine'** group to promote a peaceful resolution.

For inquiries, you can contact Beatriz at [beatrizap1011@gmail.com](mailto:beatrizap1011@gmail.com) or via WhatsApp at +52 561 381 3366



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## Celebrating Earth Day: Ferrocement Cisterns For Rainwater Harvesting

By Aundria McMillan Humphrey

For over a decade, the **Rotary Club of San Miguel de Allende-Midday** has been dedicated to addressing the urgent need for clean and accessible water in rural communities. One of its most impactful projects is the Rain Harvesting System. This initiative has improved water access and empowered local families with skills and knowledge for self-sufficiency.

The rain harvesting system is designed to capture and store rainwater during the wet season, providing a reliable source of clean water for families throughout the year. The system is built directly into homes, where rainwater is channeled from the roof through PVC pipes into a ferrocement cistern. Before collection, the roof undergoes a thorough cleaning to ensure water purity. The stored water is primarily used for drinking and cooking, significantly enhancing the quality of life for participating families.

Each ferrocement cistern has a storage capacity of 12,000 liters, sufficient to supply a household of up to seven people with drinking and cooking water for an entire year. Families receive training on proper maintenance to keep the water clean and fresh, ensuring the system remains sustainable for years to come.

Education plays a crucial role in maintaining the safety and effectiveness of the rain harvesting system. Families are trained in best practices for roof maintenance, cistern cleaning, and the "first flush" technique, which discards the first rainfall to remove contaminants. Additionally, follow-up visits are conducted six

months after installation to assess the system's performance and reinforce good maintenance habits.

The introduction of ferrocement cisterns has brought a profound change to rural communities. Aside from providing a sustainable water source, the project has had far-reaching social and health benefits.

Women, many of whom are heads of households, receive hands-on training in construction, learning to mix cement and build cisterns as a team. This empowerment fosters independence and strengthens community ties.

Health improvements have been particularly striking. The availability of safe drinking water has led to a decrease in conditions linked to contaminated groundwater, including dental fluorosis, bone pain, kidney disease, cognitive impairments in children, and chronic headaches. Families that once struggled to access even small amounts of potable water now have a reliable, safe, and sustainable solution.

The need for a safe water solution was first identified in 2008 through an extensive study conducted by Rotary Club members. Their research revealed that municipal efforts and existing NGOs were not adequately addressing the issue of water scarcity in the

region. Recognizing the potential of rainwater harvesting, the club partnered with CEDESA, a local organization specializing in water security and rural development. Since launching the initiative in 2009, the Rotary Club of San Miguel de Allende-Midday has been a pioneer in ferrocement cistern construction, investing over \$900,000 USD through global grants from The Rotary Foundation. These funds cover construction materials, training, education, monitoring, and follow-up services. To date, nearly 1,500 cisterns have been built, positively impacting thousands of lives.

Despite the project's success, government incentives for rain harvesting remain nonexistent, underscoring the importance of continued Rotary support and community involvement. As the project grows, the focus remains on sustainability, education, and expanding access to more families in need.



THE ROTARY CLUB OF SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE-MIDDAY HAS BEEN A PIONEER IN FERROCEMENT CISTERN CONSTRUCTION

The Rain Harvesting System exemplifies the Rotary mission: uniting people with a shared vision to create lasting, positive change. By harnessing the natural resource of rainwater, this initiative not only alleviates water scarcity but also uplifts communities, proving that with the right support, simple solutions can have life-changing impacts.

For more information contact **Lee Carter, President, Rotary Club of San Miguel de Allende-Midday**. Lee has been integrally involved in the development and management of the Rain Harvesting Water Cisterns (since 2008) and Dry Composting Toilets (since 2018) projects and securing global grants from The Rotary Foundation for these projects. **Carla Cadena** has been Project Team Leader for the Rain Harvesting Water Cisterns since 2016.

[www.rotarysmamidday.org](http://www.rotarysmamidday.org)

Aundria McMillan Humphrey  
[www.slowdowngranny.com](http://www.slowdowngranny.com)



## The Lexicon of Creativity

The Art Of José Pascual Hijuelos

By Staff Writer

Every artist develops his or her own visual lexicon that constantly manifests itself in a variety of ways; whether it be our choice of color, shape, texture, or the use of space. One of Hijuelos's inclinations is to juxtapose shapes in such a way that an intrusive wedge is created. One day he realized that this intrusive wedge made him think of the thorn. After some thought, he found that concept quite interesting and acceptable. (Over the centuries the symbol of the thorn has meant, not only the quest for spirituality, but in a larger context, it has represented joy and sadness, grief and affliction.) The subliminal value of these icons or images add to the open ended experience of the painting, not only for the viewer, but for him as well.

*"In the painting **Canto Tremor**, presently on display at **Intersección Arte Contemporáneo**, I use the wedge as the piercing force one must experience the moment an earthquake impacts."* he mentions.




SEE "CANTO TREMOR" AT INTERSECCIÓN ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO


Cuban-American **José Pascual Hijuelos** was born and raised on the Upper West Side of New York City. After serving four years of military service in England, he returned home and went on to complete an MFA in Painting. He studied with Philip Pearlstein, Lucas Samaras, Jimmy Ernst, Lee Bontecou and Alan D'Arcangelo. For several years he was the assistant to the abstract painter Al Held. Mr. Hijuelos was nurtured on Post-war American Abstract Painting, influenced by such notables as Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Ben Nicholson and Al Held. Mr. Hijuelos has traveled extensively. For many years, he worked as an archaeological site supervisor and illustrator in Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus. He now divides his time between San Miguel de Allende, which has been his home for over twenty years, and New York City.

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INSIDERS' NEWS SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

25



# A Garden in San Miguel

## The Last Call For Planting And Preparing For The Heat

By Rob Johnson

April is the last safe window for establishing new plants before the dry season tightens its grip. The soil still retains some coolness from the earlier months, allowing roots to settle in before the punishing heat of May and June. Any later, and new plantings will struggle against the relentless sun, requiring excessive water and care to survive. When choosing plants, prioritize species that are well-suited such as agaves, salvias, and huizaches.

### The Art of Fertilization

April is also a key time to nourish the soil. With the growing season gaining momentum, plants will benefit immensely from an infusion of nutrients.

**Compost:** Rich in organic matter, compost enhances soil structure, retains moisture, and provides a slow release of nutrients.

**Slow-Release Fertilizers:** Help prevent nutrient loss and reduce the risk of over-fertilization, which can stress plants.

**Mulching:** A generous layer of mulch around plants not only conserves moisture but also keeps the soil temperature stable and suppresses weeds.

### Preparing for the Heat

With summer approaching, preparation is key to keeping gardens healthy and thriving. Some essential steps include:

**Deep Watering Practices:** Training plants to grow deeper roots by watering less frequently

but more thoroughly. This will help them access underground moisture reserves when surface water becomes scarce.

**Soil Health Maintenance:** Checking soil composition and ensuring proper aeration will improve water absorption and retention, making the most of every drop.

### A Spiritual Connection to the Land

In Mexican tradition, the cycles of the earth are deeply intertwined with spiritual and cultural life. Ancient civilizations such as the Maya and Aztecs understood the importance of seasonal shifts, planting and harvesting according to celestial patterns and respecting the land's natural rhythms. By working with, rather than against, nature's timeline, we ensure that our gardens remain not just aesthetically beautiful but also deeply connected to the wisdom of the land.



ROB JOHNSON AND JHONNY GUTIÉRREZ OF ARTFUL GARDENS LANDSCAPE PLANNING

As we move through April, let us embrace the urgency and opportunity it presents. With careful planning and mindful stewardship, our gardens will not only endure the coming season but will thrive in harmony with the spirit of San Miguel de Allende.



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# Insiders' Vibrant Living

## The Creative Edge: Music, Art, And Language For A Sharper Mind

By Carla Maria Perez

San Miguel de Allende's lively arts scene offers more than visual beauty—it nurtures brain health, sharpens cognition, and strengthens social connections. It's also a chance to dive into painting, music, or language in a creatively rich town. Whether living in or visiting this enchanting destination, engaging in music, art, and language fosters joy while supporting mental acuity, especially with age. Creativity unlocks new pathways for well-being, resilience, and personal growth.

### Music: The Power of Sound and Rhythm

Music is a powerful cognitive tool. Listening, singing, or playing an instrument stimulates brain areas linked to memory, emotion, and motor control. Studies show musical engagement enhances neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to adapt and form new connections. Moreover, music can enhance emotional regulation, reduce anxiety, and promote relaxation. San Miguel offers ample musical opportunities. Join a choir, take music classes, or attend concerts. Learning an instrument improves memory and focus, while group activities like choirs foster socialization and emotional well-being. Studies indicate that playing an instrument or singing regularly can help slow cognitive decline. Music can serve as a bridge between the past and present, connecting generations and preserving memories.

### Art: Creativity for Cognitive Health

Art preserves cognitive function by stimulating critical thinking,

spatial awareness, and problem-solving. Painting, sculpture, or photography activate both brain hemispheres, improving coordination and emotional processing. Additionally, creating art helps develop fine motor skills—so maybe your messy doodles are a sign of brilliance. San Miguel provides diverse art classes for all skill levels. From watercolor workshops to pottery sessions, these activities engage the brain in fresh ways. Visiting galleries and museums also sparks creativity and mental stimulation. Art-related activities encourage mindfulness and reduce stress, essential for brain health.

### Language: A Mental Workout

Learning a language keeps the mind agile. Whether improving Spanish for daily life or tackling a new language, acquiring vocabulary and grammar enhances executive function, memory, and attention. Bilingualism can even delay cognitive decline, as it requires constant mental switching and adaptation. In addition, mastering a new language opens new worlds, both intellectually and culturally, offering fresh perspectives on communication and connection. San Miguel's expat community makes it ideal for language learning. Spanish schools and private tutors cater to all levels, and language exchange groups provide practice and social interaction. The process of learning a new language not only boosts cognitive abilities but also provides a deeper connection to the culture and history of the region.

### Creativity and Social Connection

Beyond cognitive benefits, creative activities enhance so-

cial bonds, crucial for mental health. Social engagement improves brain function, reduces stress, and combats loneliness. Group music lessons, art classes, and language exchanges in San Miguel blend creativity with community. Nothing connects faster than laughing over a missed note or crooked clay pot. Joining a creative group fosters shared experiences, friendships, and support networks. This sense of belonging significantly impacts mental well-being and helps counter social isolation. In addition to providing cognitive benefits, these activities help build a sense of purpose, which is key for emotional resilience.

### Practical Steps to Get Started

San Miguel offers abundant opportunities to explore creativity. Whether a novice or experienced artist, musician, or language learner, there's something for everyone:

**Take Local Classes:** Community centers, galleries, and schools host workshops in painting, music, and language. Structured classes provide guided learning and a chance to develop skills in a supportive environment.

**Join a Group:** Choirs, language exchanges, and art collectives boost motivation and social interaction. Being part of a group fosters a sense of shared purpose.

### Attend Cultural

**Events:** Concerts, art exhibitions, and language gatherings immerse you in the creative scene. Exposure to diverse artistic expressions can inspire

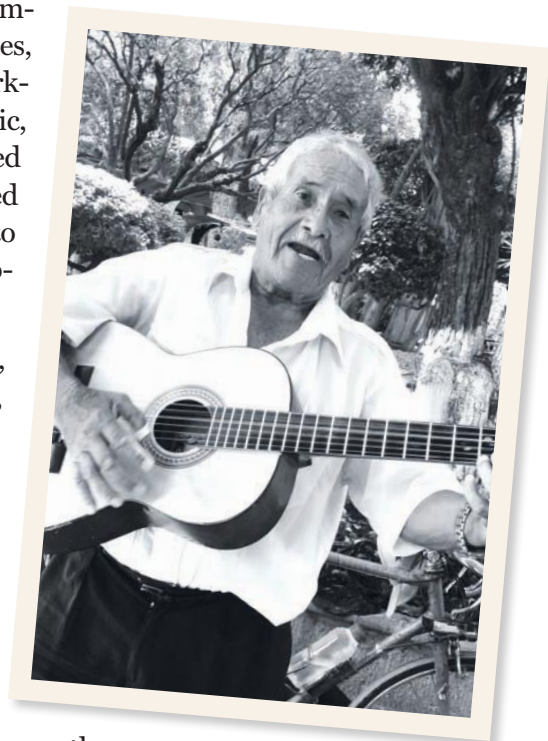
new ideas and broaden perspectives.

**Make Creativity a Habit:** Dedicate weekly time to music, art, or language learning for lasting cognitive benefits. Regular engagement ensures continual progress and long-term rewards.

**Reflect and Relax:** Creativity encourages mindfulness—take time to enjoy the process and its stress-reducing effects.

Music, art, and language are powerful tools for brain health. A rich creative scene boosts cognition and social connections. Whether through music, painting, or learning a new language, these activities sharpen the mind, reduce stress, and enhance life. The blend of mental stimulation, creativity, and social engagement supports overall well-being. **Embrace the creative edge—it's good for your brain.**

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THE POWER OF SOUND AND RHYTHM FOUND IN OUR STREETS DAILY. PHOTO BY CAMIE FENTON



## Insiders' Creative Couples

Ana Thiel And Paul Louis

*By Judith Jenya*

**Ana Thiel** is an internationally recognized glass artist who lives and works in Colonia Guadalupe. She is one of a handful of notable sand casting glass sculptors in the world. Born and raised in México City, her Swedish-born father led an accordion orchestra and her Mexican mother was a member of the orchestra. Ana also played the accordion as a child. After graduation Ana traveled in Europe, immersing herself in the arts. She also studied Industrial Design in México City.

At the end of her studies, she attended a glass lecture where she was introduced to glass blowing. Then Ana attended the World Craft Conference in Vienna to learn more about glass. She then attended a summer course at Pilchuck Glass School, cofounded by Dale Chihuly in Stanwood, Washington. There she was introduced by the Swedish artist Bertil Vallien to the art of sand casting, where she found her life's work.

Ana has had art glass residencies in Japan, the United States, France, Spain, and Egypt. In 2008, Ana was awarded a residency at the Musée-Atelier du Verre at Sars-Poteries in the north of France. During that stay she met her life partner, **Paul Louis**. He is an art photographer specializing in glass photography, among other art forms. Today, they each say their life would not be the same without the other and that chance meeting.

In 1992, Ana moved to San Miguel de Allende where she turned a large property into

her studio and home. The building that houses her glass furnace was once a chicken coop. There are months of preparation before the lighting of the furnace, the first step in making glass sculpture.

Paul, her partner, built the furnace and knows everything about how it functions.

He is always present when the furnace is on. From the moment that the furnace is lit, it takes 3 to 4 days to attain the optimal temperature. It is a very intense process and requires great technical precision. The furnace must be at over 2000 degrees F and must remain at high temperatures during the entire three to four-week period when it is in use.

Casting takes only a few weeks. What follows are months of finishing the sculptures.

Ana sometimes casts glass into wood or metal. She also incorporates it into books and other objects. She sometimes changes the shape of the glass by twisting it. Her work can be architectural in sections or in a whole sculpture. All of this requires a steadiness and sense of calm that Ana possesses.

She attributes this largely to her study and practice with Víctor González, a Mexican-born Chinese martial arts master with whom she has studied since 2005. Her classes in Tai Chi and Tao Yin give her balance



ANA THIEL AND PAUL LOUIS.  
PHOTO BY DAN WILEY

and a sense of well-being. She prepares herself each day and then she prepares her work for months into the future.

As an example, Ana visited Antarctica and she studied the way ice flows, which she incorporated into a project that was commissioned in San Miguel. This installation looks like ice floes in the ocean.

Ana will have an exhibition at the Art Museum in Queretaro, opening May 9<sup>th</sup> and continuing through July. This September she will have a retrospective exhibit here at Bellas Artes featuring her 45 years as a glass artist.

Paul Louis was born in Brussels, Belgium. He is one of the few renowned glass art photographers in the world today. He sees photography primarily as his own vision: what his eyes see and how he frames and lights an image. It is his vision that makes his photographs, not his camera, although he is a superb technician with cameras.

He searches for the poetry in what he sees. Paul has had exhibits in Querétaro, at Galería Yam in the Instituto Allende and in other countries.

From April through November, Paul lives and works in Europe on commissioned work, and from November through April, Paul is in San Miguel with Ana. Ana travels in May to France where Paul has a home. They are marvelous collaborators. Paul helps Ana with technical matters, since he knows the glass process, as he has worked with many glass artists. Ana helps Paul with contacts and the work of organizing shows in México.

She encourages him to show more of his own artistic photos. Together they have a beautiful, loving, creative life.

You can see more of Ana's work at [www.anathiel.art](http://www.anathiel.art)

If you want to suggest a couple that both are involved in their own creative process, for a future column please send an email at [judith58sma@gmail.com](mailto:judith58sma@gmail.com)





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## Powerful Stories

"Can You Hold For The Pope?"

By Aundria McMillan Humphrey

**Xóchitl Franco**, born in Sonora, and now residing in San Miguel de Allende, describes herself as an *Artista Plástica*. This translates to "Visual Artist." And indeed, walking into her home, one immediately sees that her passion is palpable, capturing the world as she sees it through her unique creative lens on very large canvases. "I don't paint small," she laughs.

Xóchitl has traveled and lived all over the world, but her favorite is the state of Chiapas. Wherever she has lived, she has had the privilege of spending her life doing what she loves to do. Paint. Many of her paintings have been published in art books.

In March 2024, Xóchitl received an unexpected call from Castell Gandolfo in Roma, calling from the private office of Pope Francis. Her first response was to hang up, not believing the call to be authentic. They called back. This

time she took the call, and much to her chagrin and delight, The Pope was requesting one of her paintings for his private office in a dwelling, outside of the Vatican. The Pope's request was specific. "I need something that represents *México City...the people. Who is México?*"

So much of Xóchitl's huge body of work has focused on depicting the lives of indigenous women... "The hard-working women who take care of everything...the home, the family, the husband." Xóchitl is passionate about how she portrays Mexican women. It was one of these painting that she donated to the private residence of The Pope.

Influenced by the great Mexican Artist, Rufino Tamayo, she says, "I've been painting all my life." As we entered her studio, I could see that decades of painting had not dimmed the light on her enthusiasm.

Aundria McMillan Humphrey  
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THE POPE REQUESTED THIS PAINTING, 'VENDIMIA'



# Poets Corner

Judyth Hill

With Judith Jenya

Judyth Hill is a poet, editor, “wild writing” teacher and a beloved workshop teacher in San Miguel and around the U.S. She teaches each year at the San Miguel Writers Conference.

She is currently Director, Women Writers of International Pen and the past president of Pen San Miguel de Allende. She has several books of poetry and her poem “Waging Peace”. has been widely shared since 2001. Here we present “Occupy Love”.



## Occupy Love

Let the seeds fall  
Golden peony and Chinese poppy, that rattling word  
gourd.  
Let the seeds of Love cascade through you,  
grow the heart of a fishmonger, a baker, a lily.  
Dive into Love,  
that space inside the skin of start.  
Clap your hands three times,  
make peace  
with your sister, your neighbor, your memories.  
Go and tell the bees.  
Occupy Love. You are safe.  
Let that be your story. Wake to a morning dizzy with  
cowbells,  
purple rampion, forget-me-nots.  
Breathe in this day, this glamour of now.  
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## Insiders' Fashion

### Fashion For The Warmer Months

By Isabel Castrejón Pascacio

It has begun. Warm weather is upon us. Typically from April to August, San Miguel's warmest months can be overwhelming for anyone that is interested in fashion. When the temperature soars, it can feel impossible to stay both fashionable and comfortable. The key is to choose loose, airy silhouettes that allow the skin to breathe while still making a statement. Avoid overly tight clothing and heavy fabrics that trap heat. Fashion should work with the weather, not against it!

Having experienced these warm months myself I've come to understand that *"local designers know best."* Just as eating seasonally and locally ensures fresher, more sustainable meals, dressing in locally made fashion aligns with the climate, culture, and craftsmanship of a place. Local designers create clothing with the region's weather and lifestyle in mind, using materials that suit the warm climate while incorporating traditional

techniques and infusing them with a rich cultural heritage. By choosing locally designed garments, you support artisans, reduce environmental impact, and wear pieces that naturally fit San Miguel's atmosphere and aesthetic. Just as fresh produce enhances a meal, locally crafted clothing enhances your wardrobe in an authentic, meaningful way.

When the sun is strong and the heat is relentless, it's easy to feel like fashion takes a backseat to comfort. However, with the right styling, you can maintain a chic look without overheating. Here are some key elements that you can incorporate to your weather-proof wardrobe and where you can find them locally:

**Opt for light colors and breathable fabrics.** This might seem obvious but keeping cool in the summer months is seriously dependent on the kind of fabrics you are wearing. Steer clear of synthetic fabrics like nylon and polyester as they tend to trap heat and instead opt for breathable, lightweight options such as

linen, cotton, and jersey. White, beige, and light shades reflect sunlight and keep you feeling cooler. Local designers, **Christopher Fallon** and **Neithan Herbert** work phenomenally with these kinds of fabrics. They provide the intricate design elements and fabulous colors while using quality fabrics that will keep you fresh and stylish.

**Accessorize with statement pieces.** A bold pair of sunglasses, a stylish woven hat, or handcrafted jewelry can elevate even the simplest outfit. Rely on these elements to give your outfit dimension without having to add layers. The intense midday sun calls for proper protection. A chic, handwoven hat from a local brand like **Suki Palomina** is both practical and stylish. Wear breathable footwear. Ditch heavy sneakers or boots for elegant yet practical sandals or espadrilles. Locally handcrafted sandals like the ones at **San Miguel Shoes** ensure comfort and style.

When it comes to silhouettes, the keyword, and I can't emphasize this enough, is breezy. Anything form-fitting or clingy is just going to make you hotter so put that body-con dress back in the closet for now. Choose flowy looks like loose kaftans,

maxi dresses, and oversized linen shirts that can keep you cool while looking effortlessly stylish. Go to **José Yáñez** or **Raúl del Castillo** for comfortable, breezy and breathable looks, ideal for day to night transitions. As temperatures drop slightly in the evening, layering becomes key. A lightweight shawl or a structured cotton blazer from a local designer adds just the right amount of warmth while maintaining an elegant look.

While I always encourage you to shop locally, that doesn't mean that your inspiration must be drawn from what's directly in front of you. Whenever I need style inspiration I tend to rely on movies to provide the right vibes. What are your favorite summer-coded movies? Who are your favorite characters that have a fantastic warm-weather wardrobe? Maybe Gwyneth Paltrow in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Audrey Hepburn in *Roman Holiday* or Leonardo DiCaprio's print shirts in *Romeo + Juliet*. Then think if that character would wear the outfit you have concocted in downtown San Miguel, and have fun with it!

Dressing for the warm months in San Miguel de Allende is an opportunity to celebrate both comfort and local craftsmanship. By incorporating pieces from local designers, you not only support the city's creative community but also curate a unique wardrobe that reflects the soul of this vibrant town. Whether it's a flowing linen dress, a handcrafted leather accessory, or an embroidered blouse, embracing locally made fashion is the perfect way to blend style and weather with cultural appreciation.

PHOTOS BY ZACHARY POPOVSKY  
RED AND STRIPED BLUE DRESSES  
BY CHRISTOPHER FALLON,  
WHITE DRESS BY JOSÉ YÁÑEZ





## Music Man About Town

Meet Frank De La Cruz-Aedo

By Philip Barrington

**Frank de la Cruz-Aedo** - he's everywhere it seems, with a finger on the pulse of musicians all around town. A little backstory. Originally from Fort Hood Texas, he was born with music coursing through his veins. Picking up his first guitar at age 10, plus a never-ending energy, and add a passion for tennis, music, and the restaurant business.

Working at TGIFs, his mentor, President, Dan Scoggins taught him a lot about the restaurant work ethic. Then he went on to study at USC getting his music and business degree, while working at A&M Records. He is a proud papa to his son Joe, who after his Military service is now working in the film industry. His lovely daughter, Sophia is an accomplished cellist, and ballet dancer.

Fast-forward to his move to México in 2019, where he was operations and restaurant pro-

motions for **Mi Lindo Sinaloa**, in México City.

Then it was on to San Miguel to open **Borriol Bistro**, followed by music and dining hot spot such as General Manager at **Cafe Rama, Conde**, to his currently running music venue, bar, and restaurant as General Manager at **El Monarco**. He takes exceptional pride in encouraging and teaching newbies to cook and prepare food.

One of the natural talents of a man like Frankie, is his knowing what needs to be done and predicting the next '*Hit Bound Sound*', as he puts it.

He lost his mother recently, his greatest cheerleader, with her never-ending mantra, "*You can do anything you put your mind to, my son*," words he lives by.

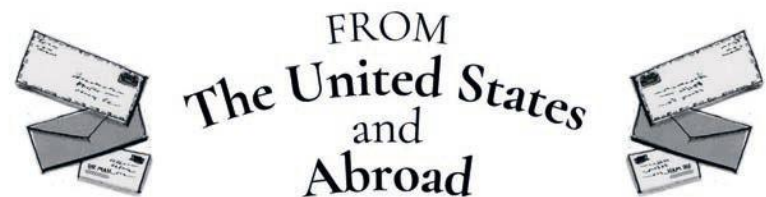
For those in the music biz here in San Miguel de Allende, Frank, who has touched so many people in this community, know him to be a man of true colors and one who can turn his hand to just about anything.

If it has anything to do with music or food he'll be there. Frank de la Cruz, "*Frankie*" to his friends, together with his rocking Crazy Horse Promotions, is a fun and dynamic character, our music man about town.

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## Who Is Who In Our Streets:

### Highlighting The Wonderful Street Entrepreneurs

By Natalie Taylor

If you are a regular *sanmiguelense*, you most likely enjoy wandering the streets, taking in the sights, running into friends and acquaintances, and simply watching the city unfold. And if you do that, you will most certainly run into some folks who sell wares, or services, or simply entertain with their music for a few pesos. So, yes, you see them here and there, the “*vanilla guy*” or the “*guy with a dozen hats on his head*,” or the fellow lugging rugs on his bicycle along Quebrada, or the knife sharpener whose arrival is always preceded by several sharp whistles you hear blocks away. What about the people who lug their carts filled with

products each morning to position them around the Jardín? Or the ones who stand in front of their food carts cooking *tamales*, or *tacos*, or *churros*, and pouring *café de olla* from a giant pot?

These people are much more than what they sell. They are human beings with a past, a present, and dreams for the future. They are either from here or they came from elsewhere, they have partners or not, they have children, or not, they had a formal education or not... yet I would bet you don't even know their names!

Each of these individuals has a story to tell, and I will be introducing them. You will learn from their own lips who they are, why they do what they do, what led



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them to do it, and what they plan for the future. From them to you, in their own words, with perhaps a personal message they wish to impart to the people whom they serve.

Starting with May's issue I will highlight one of these wonderful

street entrepreneurs, to enrich your life and theirs with a better understanding of who they are. I think you will love meeting them; they are due great respect for the special services they provide, and the unique flavor they bring to San Miguel de Allende.



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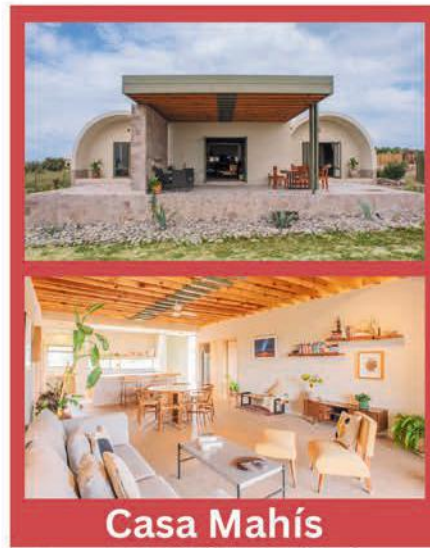


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## Through My Lens

Capturing Easter In San Miguel De Allende

By Bill Wilson

Photos by Todd McIntosh

No stranger to México and photography, **Todd McIntosh** has been behind the lens of his camera here for more than 20 years. Here are some of his pictures of Easter in San Miguel de Allende.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, McIntosh began his photographic journey apprenticing under commercial photographer Gary Wildman.

He moved to México full-time in 2006 and has since immersed himself in capturing the vibrant architecture, lively cultural events, and genuine warmth of local communities.

Splitting his time between picturesque Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, and colorful San Miguel de Allende, Todd's photography reflects his deep appreciation for México's rich traditions and welcoming spirit.



THE SOLEMNITY, BEAUTY AND DEVOTION OF THE SEMANA SANTA TRADITIONAL PROCESSIONS IS CAPTURED ON THE SPLENDID IMAGES BY TODD MCINTOSH.

SEE MORE OF TODD'S WORK ON HIS INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT, @MCINTOSHTODD



# Hot Weather Spa Visits: Mental Benefits

By Staff Writer

San Miguel's streets really start to heat up by mid-April. It's a time to remember that emotional and mental benefits come from taking time off the hot streets and sneaking in a visit to **The Spa**. Consider how it can benefit your day:

Treatments like massages can stimulate the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good hormones, which can enhance your mood and promote feelings of happiness. Also expect reduced anxiety (and who is not seeking that?) as engaging in self-care at a spa can help combat feelings of anxiety and depression, providing a serene space to unwind and recharge.

If you are needing enhanced focus and clarity realize that receiving spa treatments can serve as a mental reset, helping to clear your mind and improve focus. The tranquil environment allows you to step away from distractions, leading to greater mental clarity. Plus, so many of us in San Miguel are 'creatives' and could use a spa visit for creative inspiration as a relaxed mind, filled with endorphins can foster creativity and new ideas. The peaceful setting may inspire creative thinking and problem-solving.

Also know that mental rejuvenation is paramount – getting off the dusty streets, the hot cobble stones and heat reflected off cement and rock walls is

needed as an oasis during the day and especially within San Miguel's original spa- where a most tranquil environment can provide a mental break, allowing you to recharge and rejuvenate.

**The Spa's** calming Colonia setting and individual treatment rooms can really take stress out of a day.

Plus, when you choose your treatments at **The Spa**, know that a portion of your payment goes to support **So Others May Eat, SOME**, feeding some of the most elderly and needy people who we often see sitting on the street curbs with hands out - they need a break too with **SOME**. In a real way, your treatment for hot weather skin and body care helps provide that nourishment for others.

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## Expat Life

### Silver Connections: Building Your Global Tribe After 55+

By Doreen Cumberford

Just unpacked your shipping container or been here for years? It's never too late to find your tribe! This guide is your treasure map to connections, adventures, and diving headfirst into an exciting new chapter.

We all land on the Expat Lane differently. Some of us are wide-eyed first-timers, while "*next-pats*" have passport stamps from multiple countries and can pack a suitcase in their sleep. San Miguel is also home to plenty of "*lovepats*" – romantics who followed their hearts across borders! Few of us arrive thinking we'll ever be "*repats*" – those who eventually boomerang back "*home*."

Embarking on international adventures in our golden years is both thrilling and challenging for our seasoned brains. Here's the fascinating part: science shows that tackling new languages, navigating unfamiliar streets, and forging fresh friendships creates "*productive engagement*" – brain-boosting activity that helps keep our minds sharp! Those social connections aren't just fun – they're powerful medicine against depression, heart problems, and cognitive decline. Let's be honest – leaving behind decades-old friendships takes serious emotional muscle. The friends who knew you when your hair wasn't silver, the neighbors who watched your kids grow up – that's tough

to walk away from! Creating a robust social network isn't just about finding dinner companions. When you relocate to San Miguel de Allende or any international destination, you're not just changing addresses – you're rebuilding your entire support system while juggling language barriers and cultural curveballs!

The silver lining? International communities often roll out the welcome mat more enthusiastically than back home. In places like San Miguel, where everyone remembers being the newcomer, you'll find doors (and hearts) wide open. The empathy flows freely as yesterday's newbies become today's welcomers.

Ready to grow your vibrant new social network? Try these friendship-building strategies:

- Dive into groups matching your passions – book lovers, walking enthusiasts, or volunteer squads.
- Let shared interests be your universal language across cultural divides
- Find a cultural mentor – your personal guide through local customs and unspoken rules

San Miguel overflows with volunteer opportunities where your career skills can shine while you make meaningful connections. These activities deliver both purpose and community to your third chapter. You'll absorb delightful cultural gems like "*sobremesa*" – the Mexican art of lingering after meals for soul-nourishing conversation.

While digital tools help bridge distances, nothing beats the magic of face-to-face connections. WhatsApp groups and local social platforms aren't just

for the grandkids – they're your gateway to discovering events and meeting potential friends! These tools also keep you connected with loved ones back home while you're building your new social ecosystem. Don't dismiss these platforms as "*too techy*" – they're essential social currency at any age!

Here's perhaps the most valuable tip: be gentle with yourself during this adventure. Your brain is juggling multiple challenges – new language patterns, unfamiliar cultural norms, and different social cues. This mental workout, while ultimately beneficial, can leave you exhausted! The expat lifestyle throws so much at you simultaneously – there's no "*pause button*" when you need to consult a cultural manual or learn a new phrase on the spot.

Start small – aim for one quality connection monthly rather than trying to build an instant social circle. Remember that meaningful friendships need time to bloom, whether you're 16 or 60. Create a diverse network of fellow expatriates who understand your journey and locals who can help you fall in love with your new home.

The adventure of international friendship-building after 60 isn't always easy, but it might be one of the most rewarding journeys of your life. Your new connections won't just enrich your social calendar – they'll expand your worldview, challenge your thinking, and quite possibly, help keep your brain younger than your passport suggests!

Doreen Cumberford, author of "*Life in the Camel Lane: Embrace the Adventure*" and "*Arriving Well*," currently writing "*Unsettled: When Home Doesn't Feel Like Home*," a guide to repatriation after living abroad and host of "*Nomadic Diaries Podcast*."

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## Volunteer Works

The Lifeblood Of Every Nonprofit

By Danita Brisson

Welcome to our new column dedicated to volunteers, without whom nonprofit organizations could not exist. We will focus on the act of volunteering and the vast unpaid workforce who facilitate and deliver key services that enhance the standard of living for us all. What do they do? Why did they choose their causes? How has volunteering impacted them? We will not feature aggrandizing profiles of the "Volunteer of the Year" that portray philanthropy as a competition, creating more losers than winners.

Our sister column, **Charity Works**, profiles local groups that provide humanitarian aid including the necessities, and sometimes the niceties of life, to our most disadvantaged citizens.

However, while all charities are nonprofits, not all nonprofits are charities. Some address issues of health, education, religion, active lifestyle, professional de-

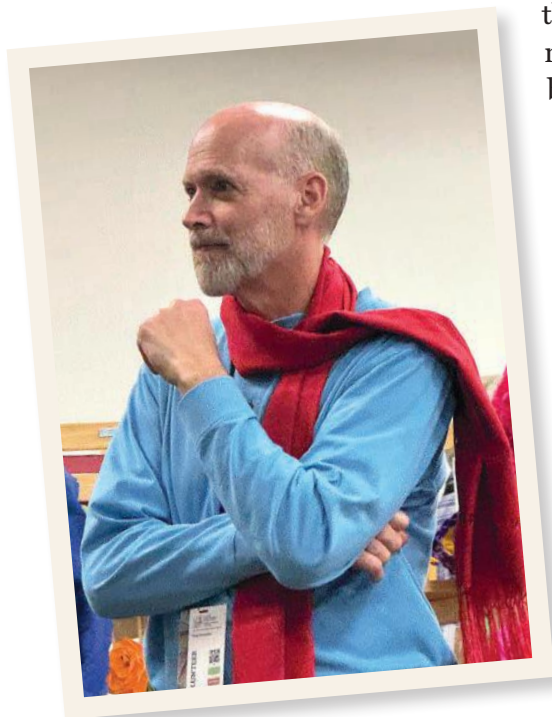
velopment, the environment, and the prevention of cruelty to humans or animals. Because of them, we enjoy rapturous opera, and classical music concerts while local students are exposed to careers in the performing arts. We encounter native flora and fauna on a comfortable stroll through an historic botanical preserve.

We are visited by world-class authors who entertain us with their stories and inspire us to write our own. We and our properties are protected by well-trained and equipped fire fighters and paramedics. The value of that volunteer work bears no relation to its cost. No community, certainly not one the size of San Miguel, could afford to pay the army of staff required to provide that quality of life.

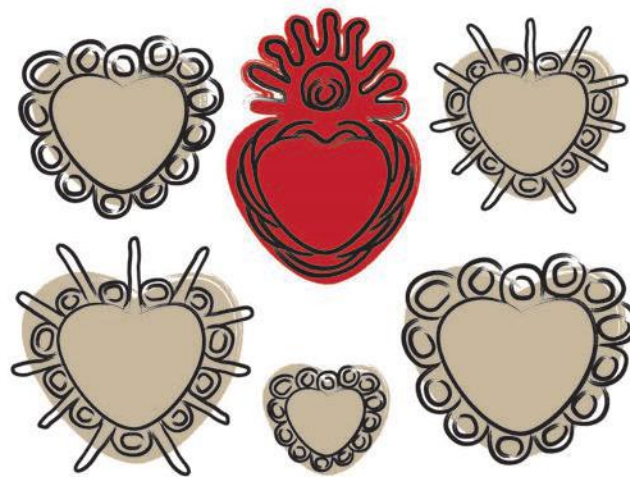
We will be expanding the Directory of Charities we are compiling to include these groups, so if you are involved with a nonprofit, please contact me by email at 11855e@gmail.com to be featured in that resource as well as this column. The directory and these columns will be available in print and digitally on our website.

Volunteering is a fulfilling way of life for many expats. Is it for you? Our community's needs are great, and while no one can do everything, everyone can do something. What can you do?

TIM FOURNIER,  
VOLUNTEER USHER,  
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# Honoring the Legacy of Albert Coffee

## Saying Goodbye To A Friend Of The Community

By Meagan Burns  
On behalf of Sophia Trapp  
and Alexander Trapp

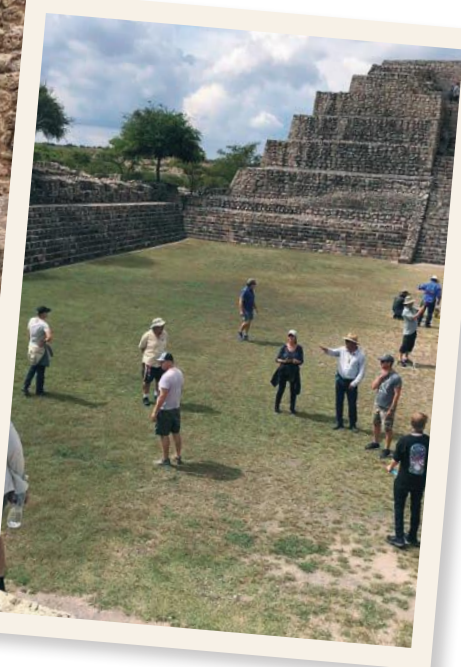
San Miguel de Allende has lost a true scholar, storyteller, and guardian of history with the passing of **Albert Coffee**. A skilled archaeologist, historian, and tour guide, Albert shared the heart and soul of the **Cañada de la Virgen** archaeological site, where he spent decades bringing the past to life for thousands of visitors.

Albert's journey with the Cañada de la Virgen archaeological site began in 2004, when he was invited to help excavate the pre-Hispanic pyramid complex. With deep expertise and unwavering passion, he dedicated

himself to sharing the significance of this sacred site, guiding more than 30,000 visitors on interactive tours. His knowledge, warmth, and Cajun-in-flected storytelling made every tour unforgettable, bridging ancient history with modern understanding. Beyond his work at the archaeological site, Albert was a well-respected anthropologist and federally licensed tour guide, leading excursions throughout México, from the ruins of Oaxaca to the pyramids of the Yucatán. His approach was educational yet accessible, making complex histories engaging for everyone, from first-time visitors to seasoned scholars.

Albert was not just a tour guide—he was a guardian of

A COMMITTED, PASSIONATE  
ARCHAEOLOGIST AND  
SCHOLAR, ALBERTO KNEW  
CAÑADA DE LA VIRGEN  
INTIMATELY AND CARED  
DEEPLY ABOUT IT.  
HE WILL BE MISSED



oral histories, a collector of wisdom, and a bridge between cultures. He respectfully wove together the indigenous knowledge of the region with academic research, ensuring that the voices of the past were never forgotten.

His passing leaves a profound void in the historical and archaeological community of San Miguel de Allende. To those who had the privilege of joining his tours, he was more than a guide—he was an inspiration.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Albert's family, friends, and all who were touched by his work. His legacy will live on in the stories he told, the history he preserved, and the many lives he enriched through his dedication to the Cañada de la Virgen.

**Rest in Peace, Albert.** You will be missed. Cañada de la Virgen.

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## Insiders' Emerging Artists

Galería Potranca: Art For Today

By Iven Kelley-Dobson

In April, four new artists and their work will be introduced at Galería Potranca, with eight artists returning, introducing new work. Among the artists this month you will meet:

**Oscar:** Oscar Carrera Soria is a native *sanmiguelense*. From an early age, he displayed a great passion for the visual arts, particularly excelling in painting. His passion led him to study Visual Communication. Oscar's primary medium is acrylic, which allows him full expression in detail of his creative vision. His detailed approach to the representation of animals and the human body; exploring beauty, emotion, and anatomy with a unique style will draw you into his work and his world. He has diversified his media, working with various materials creating sculptural representation to interpret his vision of the world. Oscar exhibits a drive for exploring his emotions and creativity to express his world-view in constantly evolving ways.

Oscar is an artist to watch at Galería Potranca.

**Kristos:** Kristos Lezama, originally from México City, has become one of the most popular artists at Galería Potranca. He has been engulfed in the creative worlds of music, graphic arts, and creative arts his entire life. What started as doodling on napkins to pass time evolved to his work on paper and canvas. His work is whimsical, fantastical, humorous, and take you on his wild journey through his imagination. He starts his work with no expectations and allows his subconscious creative process to frantically flow from start to finish in one session. Kristos has developed a following of collectors, once you see his work and converse with him you will discover why!

**Mark:** Since his first visit to San Miguel de Allende in 1995, Mark Rewarts made his dream of living in our beautiful town a reality in 2018 and truly feels San Miguel is now his forever home. His life-long career in the creative arts with combined his

extensive international travels have strongly influenced his work. A ceramicist, Mark's technique is hand-building. He delights in the challenge of creating light and delicate work that defies the appearance of hand-building. You will be in awe of his detailed work and design. Mark has established himself as one of the most popular artists at Galería Potranca.

Approximately 50% of the artists at Galería Potranca are Mexican, many could be considered "outsider artists" in that they have not had formal art training but their talent and creativity are natural and readily apparent. Other artists have had studied art and techniques (some having art degrees). Our goal is to give artists a platform to show their work and meet the public, giving them the opportunity to receive feedback and encouragement.

You have two opportunities to view new art, meet the artists and enjoy wine & cheese at both events every second and final Friday from 5:00 P.M. to 8:00



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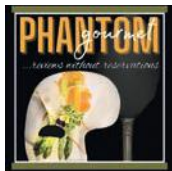
P.M., and the following Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Galería Potranca is open by appointment guided by Iven Kelley-Dobson who brings a lifelong career as an entrepreneur in the creative fields of floral, art, and interior design. With his husband, Jim, he has called San Miguel home since 2011. His work in Galería Potranca is called FACES, mixed media sculptures created from found objects.

Galería Potranca  
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## The Phantom Gourmet

### ...Reviews Without Reservations

#### El Manantial: margaritas muy especiales y fuertes: 🍸🍸🍸's

Like most finds in San Miguel you never know what's behind, in this case, the turquoise swinging saloon bar doors up on Barranca #78. Our Diners Drive-Ins & Dives, Guy Fieri, would love all the Living Dead black and white murals on the walls. A tiny bar (some say the oldest in San Miguel). The shrimp tacos are some of the best, along with their unique take on guacamole, and the chips delicioso to the max. But their killer strong margaritas, I had two that nearly knocked me on my \*\*\*. Thanks to our waiting driver, it was a happy and painless drive home to Casa Bella for, 'an out-like-a-light' siesta. Don't forget their 2<sup>nd</sup> location, just off the Jardin on Calle Correo, **La Hija del Manantial**. In either case, be forewarned, hang on to your hat, three margs will have you flat out on the mat.

#### LIMA 'an emotional standout' 🍸🍸🍸's

Peru is famous for its iconic landmarks, including Machu Picchu, Colca Canyon, Rainbow Mountains, Nazca Lines, the historic city of Cusco, and Lima, its capital. The culinary scene in Peru is renowned for dishes like ceviche, pisco sour cocktail (brandy, egg white, lemon juice, and simple syrup), quinoa and potatoes, and chocolate. The nice thing about living or visiting San Miguel de Allende, is you have the best of Peru right here with **Lima** - we were a party of eight world travelers hailing from Kentucky, Houston, Dallas, Vancouver, and Uru-

guay. Our waiter Alfredo made ordering and service seamless. We dove in without hesitation, Pisco sours, vino blanco & tinto. Lomo saltado - beef and thick-cut fried potatoes - ceviche Nikkei: shrimp & chicken arroz *chaufa* (fried rice & noodles) - 2 for 1 sushi, the Dragon & Samurai - torched ever so slightly. Something chocolatey was called for along with a Sambuca Negro, Baileys, and a couple of Spanish Licor 43's to round out the night.

One might wonder about the Chinese-Japanese fusion but it is as a result of their immigration as sugarcane and cotton laborers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The melding of flavors works deliciously. The chef obviously has this cuisine down-pat. Reservations are a good idea as popular with locals, ex-pats, and visitors +52 415 152 7868. *An emotional standout, good eats and feels good* three shiny silver's from The Phantom Gourmet. *Muchísimas gracias* - a visit to Lima, while in San Miguel is a worthwhile trip.

#### FARI ~ Bella, tastes and feels good 🍸🍸🍸's

Like so many restaurants in San Miguel, their reputations proceed them always with mixed reviews. However, when friends say, "We've been at least eight times", you join them. **Fari** (which means lighthouse) the little Italian trattoria on 'restaurant row' on Salida Celaya, gets consistent top-drawer reviews.

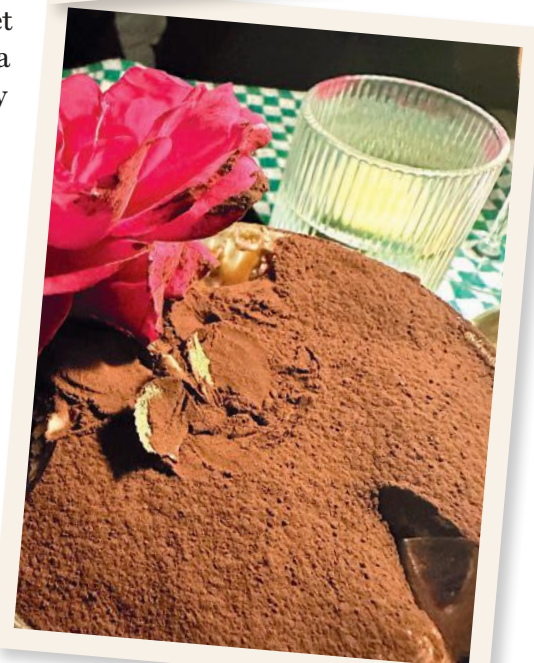
The other evening was a sheer delight. Cocktails, Martini's, Negroni's, and Bellini's jump off the mini-drinks menu, high-

lighted by little table lamps adding to the ambiance. The wine list is limited but fair. The complementary, home-baked bread with the burrata, olive oil, and balsamic will disappear before your eyes with everybody diving in... more is called for, *pronto - por favor*. There are antipasti and ensaladas to tempt you before the pasta. The favorite at our table was the filet Ragú pappardelle. Others, like grilled chicken skewers or the grilled filet in a mushroom Marsala wine sauce, were equally tempting.

Postres? Crêpes con gelato or Tiramisú, heads or tails, you decide. This Chef has honed his craft and his customers keep coming back for more. Overall feel, very European street-side cafe-like with busy traffic whizzing by, which somehow adds to its appeal. Service is a well-trained, very friendly, and attentive staff.

This is part of the Quattro family of restaurants, the others being Tostevere, La Chope, and Bocaciega. There is always more to taste in this fair town. *An emotional standout, good eats and just feels good, with more to go back for!*

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: THE SHRIMP CEVICHE AT LIMA, TIRAMISU AT FARI AND ASIAN INSPIRED FRIED CHICKEN NOODLES AT LIMA





# Urban Sketchers San Miguel de Allende: A Lively Creative Community

By Meagan Burns

San Miguel de Allende has long been a welcoming place for artists, and the **Urban Sketchers (USk) Regional Chapter** is no exception. Our local sketchers and visiting artists gather every Wednesday from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. to sketch the streets, plazas, architecture, and people of the city.

In 2016, I helped organize our local art group, working with fellow admins Judy Plummer and Rhoda Draws to establish it as an official Regional Chapter of Urban Sketchers, a global organization dedicated to on-location drawing. Since then, the group has grown steadily, especially in the winter months when snowbirds swell our at-

tendance to 40-50 sketchers. In the hot summer months, a core group of about 12 locals keeps it going.

Urban Sketchers follows a simple but meaningful manifesto: we draw on location, from direct observation, and share our work in a community setting. There's no formal instruction at our gatherings, but it's a great way to connect and network, whether you're looking for inspiration, recommendations on tools, or information on upcoming art workshops and travel sketching opportunities.

México's Urban Sketchers scene is expanding, with local chapters in México City (the oldest México chapter), Querétaro, Morelia, Cuernavaca, San Luis Potosí,



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The appeal of Urban Sketchers is more than just drawing. It creates a sense of community and encourages people to slow down and observe the world in a way they may not otherwise. In today's fast-moving, tech-laden,

and often stressful times, taking a couple of hours to sit and sketch can be both grounding and rewarding.

If you'd like to join, bring your sketchbook and meet us every Wednesday from 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Join our Facebook group to stay updated: [www.facebook.com/groups/USkSanMigueldeAllende](https://www.facebook.com/groups/USkSanMigueldeAllende)  
Learn more about Urban Sketchers International at [www.urbansketchers.org](http://www.urbansketchers.org)





## Insiders' Weekend Tours

Experience Uruapan's Excellent Easter Market

By Frank "Sugar" Hudson

**Uruapan** is the second largest city in the Mexican state of Michoacán. It is located at the Western edge of the Purépecha highlands. Since the colonial period, it has been an important city economically due to its location. If you are going to drive from San Miguel de Allende to Uruapan it is 292 km. by road and takes approximately 4 hours.

**The Easter Market in Uruapan** is a vibrant cultural experience that draws both locals and tourists. The Easter Market takes place during Holy Week, which starts on Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, and ends on Sunday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. The market showcases the traditional crafts, foods, and cultural ex-

pressions of the region. Uruapan is known for lush landscapes and rich history, providing a perfect backdrop for this vibrant event.

As you enter the market, the aromas of freshly cooked foods, sweet treats and candies overwhelm your senses. Colorful banners and decorations create a festive atmosphere, hinting at the rich cultural significance of Easter. You will find booths and stalls lined up, showcasing an array of goods and selling traditional Michoacán crafts, including intricately woven baskets, vibrant pottery, and detailed wooden carvings. You will also find fine beautifully embroidered clothing and fabric items, reflecting the indigenous heritage of the area.

Enjoy the vibrant performances from local artists and traditional music and dance, reflecting the cultural identity of Michoacán. Witness craftsmen at work, demonstrating the techniques behind their art, from pottery making to weaving. Depending on the specific year, there may be special events or processions held in conjunction with the market, celebrating Easter through religious and cultural observances.

As the day winds down, enjoy a leisurely stroll through town up to the Barranca del Cupatitzio National Park. The park is a magical place for those who wish



ENJOY THIS WEEKEND TOUR TO THE EASTER MARKET IN URUAPAN

to reconnect with nature, surrounded by the serenity of one of Michoacán's most enchanting landscapes. Whether walking along its trails, listening to the murmur of the river or exploring its flora and fauna, this park offers a unique and memorable experience for all of its visitors.

Don't forget to try the tasty rainbow trout that you can find here at one of the many restaurants located inside the National Park!



### CULTURAL EVENTS IN LA BIBLIOTECA - APRIL

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**FRI 4 | 6:00 pm**

*Cantos de Pasión "Semana Santa"*  
Coro de La Biblioteca Pública  
Entrada libre

**TUES 8 | 5:30 pm**

*Facetas de la Guitarra*  
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**FRI 11 | 3:00 pm**

*Concierto de música de cámara*  
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**SAT 12 | 5:15 pm**

*Cantos para el Alma*  
Por Yaya Fuentes Project  
\$280 pesos 10% cash discount

**TUE 15 | 6:00 pm**

*Guitarra Clásica: Selección especial "Sonatas"*  
Por Miguel Omaña  
\$220 pesos 10% cash discount

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**WED 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 | 1:00 pm**

*Series World Cinema:*  
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2 | *The Lives of Others*  
Dir. Florian Henckel  
9 | *The Shining*  
Dir. Stanley Kubrick  
16 | *Code Unknown*  
Dir. Michael Haneke  
23 | *Fellini's Clowns*  
Dir. Federico Fellini  
30 | *Everybody's fine*  
Dir. Giuseppe Tornatore

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#### DANCE

**FRI 4 | 6:00 pm**

*Tablao Flamenco*  
Por PINA Arte+ Espacio  
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**FRI 25 & SAT 26**

*Música y danza a la luz de las velas*  
*Flamenco Candlelight*  
FRI 25 | 6:00 pm  
SAT 26 | 2:00 pm  
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#### THEATER

**23 & 24 | 6:00 pm**

*San Miguel Playreaders*  
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before each show

#### TALK

**WEDS 30 | 4:00 pm**

*A Celebration of Teachers:*  
In support of today's  
teachers who work under  
duress  
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## The Wheels On The Bus...

### Short Day Trip To Jalpa

By Bill Wilson with  
Mary Timmons

Looking for a short bus adventure? Here's **Mary Timmons'** latest excursion to Jalpa. Whether you are a newcomer to México or seasoned traveler, bus travel is one of the easiest and most inexpensive ways to get around. Today, figuring out bus travel/adventures in and around San Miguel has become easier thanks to a trio of dedicated folks led Mary Timmons and RC Leo.

That team produced a digitalized map of routes. The SubUrbano buses will take you outside of San Miguel. These buses list many colonias and neighborhoods on the windshield.

As Mary Timmons explains, *"The bus originated at Mercado Juan del Dios and travels to this small town (less than 1,000 persons) approximately 20 miles outside of SMA off the highway to Querétaro. But always look for "Jalpa" on the windshield to get the right bus and it's good to confirm with the driver when boarding.*

*"The approximate travel time is one hour and 20 minutes. I caught the bus at 12:30 and arrived at the Jalpa church at 1:45. The bus continued past the church after I got off and went down the hill to what I presume is the actual community of Jalpa.*

*"The route passes by the access roads to Pavo Real and Via Or-*

*ganica which are short walks from the main road. It's very scenic on the road into the Jalpa valley. I went specifically to see the Church there, but discovered it is only open on weekends. I was told the church was designed by the same person who designed the church at the main Jardin in San Miguel de Allende. I know it must be fabulous inside!*

*"About 20 minutes later the same bus brought me back to San Miguel. I'm told (but have not confirmed) the bus makes 3 round trips per day so be careful about asking the driver when the last bus returns if you go."*



You can find the free, digital map of routes scanning this QR Code



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# Hi México: Let's Talk!

What Is An "Escuincle"! (Es-Kween-Kleh)

By Francisco J. Báez

A quick-laugh, a frown, and an eye-roll for a boy: This is the face of a typical Mexican "escuincle". You'll be surprised to know that this noun, which is generally used to describe a small boy, girl or group of children (in plural) derives from the Nahuatl word *Itzcuintli*, which means dog. It's from this Nahuatl that the name of the acclaimed Mexican furless *Xoloitzcuintle* or *Xoloescuincle* dog derives; where *Xólotl* means strange, slave or buffoon, compounding it into "strange buffoon dog". In this regard, there are still a few folks who associate the idea that both infants and *Xoloitzcuintles* are small-hairless creatures that lack body hair, although nobody knows when the two terms became one.

The fact is that when used by people in Central México, it will derogatorily and informally refer to a disobedient, ill-mannered and impolite child, be it one's kid or someone else's. As a result of such behavior, so here go some well deserved utterances: "When would you pick up your escuincle?"; "The escuincle never stopped crying"; "Your escuincle

broke my stuff", "I can't stand escuincles any longer". Yet *escuincle* can also be a term of affection. Another scenario could be that the child in question may be hyperactive, boisterous and restless... a rabble-rouser.

The attitude of such a kid may be similar to that of a dog wagging his tail to play with the approaching soul regardless of the time, place or circumstance.

The overheard phrases may be: "At home I always play with my escuincles", "That escuincle is mischievous", "The escuincles were all over the place!".

It doesn't take long to realize that in every family, city or country, there will always be an "escuincle" who gives zest and energy to a household. Rumor has it that if we hold children close to our hearts on children's day - April 30<sup>th</sup> - and every day for that matter, they might blossom as they find their purpose in life.

Francisco J. Báez is 'The Immersion Guy from Hi-México!' English & Spanish Programs by Voluntary-fee Accelerated English for your House's staff and Mastering Spanish Sounds for English Speakers:  
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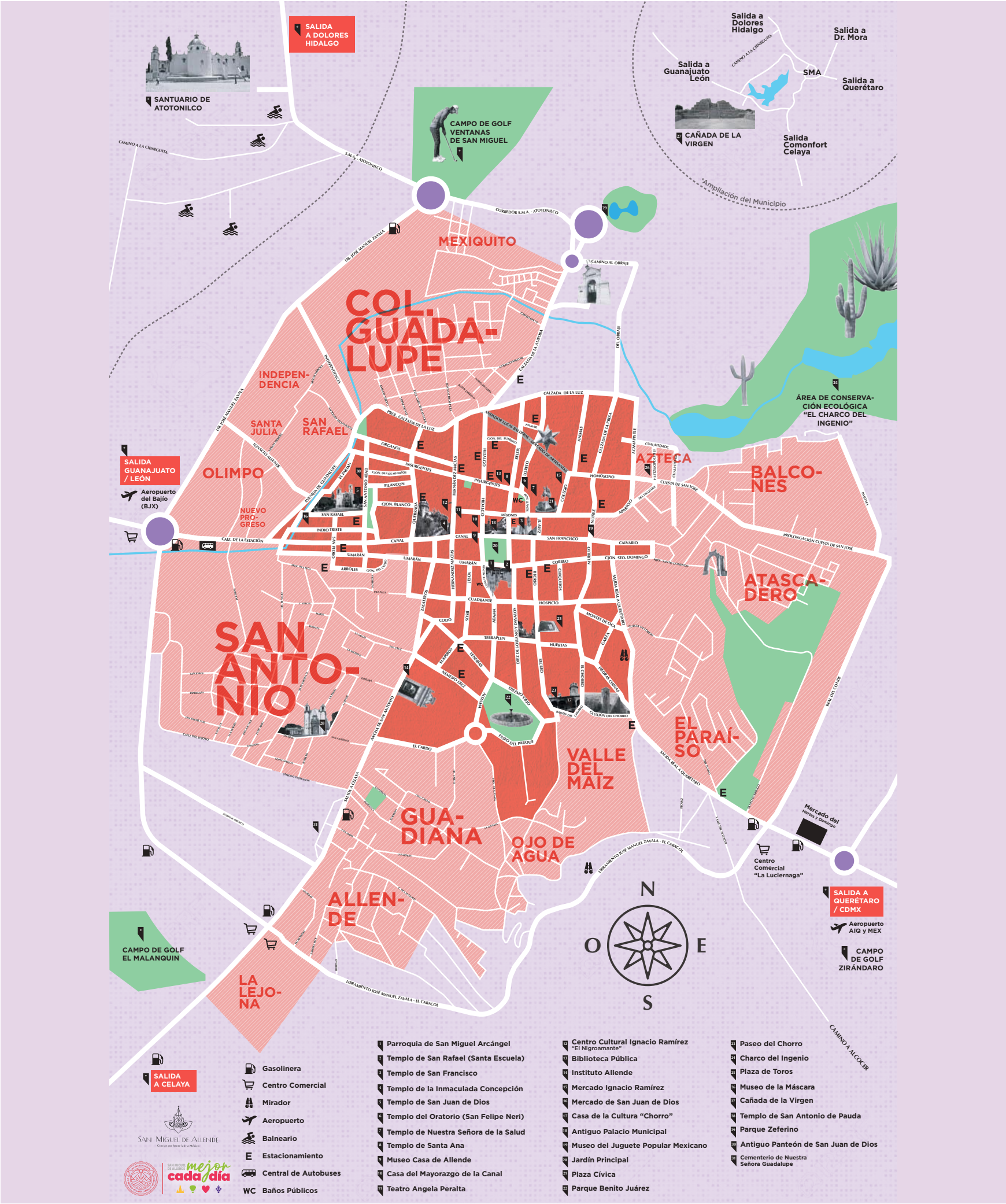
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"La clave del éxito es anticiparse al futuro y adaptarse más rápido que nadie", afirma el equipo de Insider San Miguel. Por eso, integramos tarjetas de presentación inteligentes con tecnología NFC, eliminando el papel y llevando la conexión a otro nivel.

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# The Insiders' News Crossword

Test Your Abiities And Have Some Fun

## ACROSS

- 1. "Sometimes \_\_\_\_ is more"
- 5. Word with boot or spaghetti
- 10. Weaver's device
- 14. Crooked
- 15. Instruct
- 16. Red Muppet
- 17. "The Lion King" queen
- 18. They're often served with red or green sauce
- 20. San Miguel street corn
- 22. "Get the picture?"
- 23. Like argon and neon
- 24. Sicker than yesterday
- 26. Try 18, 20, 27 across
- 27. Foods often served in corn husks
- 30. On the way
- 34. Protective charm
- 35. Tate Gallery collection
- 36. Huff
- 37. Curiosity's victim
- 38. Falls on US and Canada border
- 41. Bit of butter
- 42. White Monopoly bills
- 44. "The Waste Land" poet's monogram
- 45. "One more song!"
- 47. South Seas wrapped garments
- 49. Sizzling hot meat, peppers, and onion dish
- 50. First chairman of China
- 51. Ducks, in San Miguel
- 52. "Coal Miner's Daughter" director Michael
- 55. Bro
- 56. Say out loud
- 60. Cheese-stuffed tortilla
- 63. Lake where 38 across's wa-ter comes from
- 64. \_\_ Major
- 65. Risk a ticket

- 66. Tear
  - 67. Pretentiously creative
  - 68. Small shore birds
  - 69. Monster loch
- ## DOWN
- 1. Penny or Nathan follower
  - 2. Israeli airline
  - 3. Unescorted
  - 4. Three-dimensional
  - 5. Sault \_\_\_\_ Marie, Michigan
  - 6. Past, present and future
  - 7. Indy 500 competitor
  - 8. Heating pad target
  - 9. \_\_\_\_ Beta Kappa
  - 10. Simple shelters
  - 11. Ye \_\_ shoppe
  - 12. Actor Epps
  - 13. More than half
  - 19. Whopper maker
  - 21. Burstyn or DeGeneres
  - 25. "Just move on"
  - 26. Beg
  - 27. They might be "al pastor"
  - 28. Maytag rival
  - 29. Less apt to speak
  - 30. Distinctive period
  - 31. Begin a plant relocation
  - 32. Princess topper
  - 33. Ending with Rock
  - 35. Mature
  - 39. Idiot
  - 40. Pear variety
  - 43. "The rumor is ... "
  - 46. Water storage tank
  - 48. Nothing, in San Miguel
  - 49. Like some angels and arches
  - 51. More ashen
  - 52. Blue-green hue
  - 53. Happy kitty sound
  - 54. Try out
  - 55. Organ part

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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60					61				62		63			
64					65						66			
67					68						69			

- 57. Peach or apple
- 58. One, in Berlin
- 59. Merlot and Beaujolais
- 61. Sun-saving plan, briefly
- 62. They pop up a lot

**ABOUT OUR PUZZLER Sheridan Sansegundo** was born in England, lived in Spain for many years, mainly on the island of Ibiza, and moved to eastern Long Island, N.Y. in 1980, where she was the arts editor, restaurant critic, and cruciverbalist (a person who creates or solves crossword puzzles) for The East Hampton Star for 20 years. She settled fulltime in San Miguel in 2007.

We are happy to share her crossword talent with **Insiders' News** players. **Find answers at insidersnews.net (after you are finished with your puzzle, please!).**

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