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Spicy Mexico City Trip - Tequila Mockingbird Hangover



My wife and I spent four wonderful days visiting one of her best friends and her husband last week at their posh suburban home. I previously had the the pleasure of meeting Señora Nogales on several occasions when she visited Costa Rica by herself.

The Humberto and Maria Nogales' residence is located within a bucolic, high-security compound located about thirty miles from the Mexico City International Airport. Situated well above the metropolis, their lovely home and the other \$1 million to \$3 million homes within the compound are surrounded by a pristine natural forest. It was evident that extra care and planning was rendered to design the residential development in order to envelope the homes within the forest as to preserve its natural state as much as possible.

The couple were perfect hosts who couldn't have been more congenial toward me personally throughout our stay. I am certain that I can speak for my wife in stating that neither one of us will ever forget the thrill of touring Mexico City and Teotihuacan with them for three full days and nights. Fortunately for us, Señor was free to tour us in and around the city during the latter part of the week.

I thought I knew something about Mexican cuisine before, but I was totally wrong in that assessment prior to dining with the Nogales's at their favorite restaurants. In fact, I was looking forward to enjoying a Tex-Mex kind of cuisine. However, the Mexican cuisine I had the pleasure to enjoy was amazingly different in both taste and texture. Imagine eating delicacies, such as ant egg tacos, and other dishes that warmed and nourished both the body and soul with every bite. The main courses typically featured sauces, or moles, that were exquisitely spiced with chile peppers in such a way that delightfully enhanced rather than overpowered the flavor of the base ingredient, such as pork, chicken or fish. I appreciated the deep and robust, yet subtle and complex flavours that sublimely burst forth from the cuisine that altogether avoids the use of dairy products in the main.

French culinary experts won't like this, but in my opinion Mexican cuisine is giving them a run for the money in terms of offering sophisticated palate a superior and unique dining experience; albeit blistering at times, which tequila or mexcal gratefully anesthetizes. (I was tempted to match our hosts' machismo in melding the hottest chili pepper sauces presented to us with our food, but my gratefully anesthetized, base instinct told me that if I did, I'd end up with a full-blown case of rosacea at the very least the next day--so beware, ye of Anglo dietary habits.) You must thus make a point of dining at El Refugio, San Angel Inn or Tacaba restaurants when you visit Mexico City. All are located within or near either Zona Rosa or Mexico City Metropolitan Cathedral.

You should also plan to spend an evening at the main bar of the Sheraton Hotel watching the dazzling and popular Mariachi band revue that's presented there every night (plan to arrive around 8:00 p.m. so you'll have a table near the stage after the show begins an hour later). We saw at least seven or eight bands one evening. Pastora Reyes was the lead singer for one band. I know this for certain because we bought one of her CD albums after we imbibed a full bottle of tequila. Our cherished memento that we acquired that evening is in front of me as I write.

THE WRITING OF STEVEN WOOD COLLINS - AUTHOR OF "PURAMORE - THE LUTE OF PYTHAGORAS"

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We were fortunate to visit Mexico City during Semana Santa (Easter Week). As a result, the traffic was light on the main thoroughfare arteries we traveled from Thursday through Sunday. Monday evening, however, it took over two and a half hours to travel from the

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inner city hotel, such as the grand old Geneve Hotel. We strolled through the historic lobby of the hotel one evening after dinner, and didn't encounter any problems, personal security-wise, whatsoever, either inside or around the establishment. Well-armed representatives of the municipal policia abounded everywhere we went in the area, so it's as safe as New York City for the tourist insofar as I could ascertain from that experience.

The historical importance of Mexico City in the development of the entire Western Hemisphere world we know today cannot be overestimated. True, it's palled somewhat in the morass of political and economic detail that economists term "prisoners' dilemma", but I know from my experience with the Nogales's, that they are committed to providing solutions to the social gridlock the city faces today. Nevertheless, Mexico City is the place where the Old World rubber met the New World road, so it's definitely worth visiting and enjoying its culturally unique and intriguing extant qualities that resulted from that fateful friction.

As uninvited as it probably is, one of my closing comment is that Mexican City would do well to gentrify the inner city as has been done in San Francisco and New York City. It would be an investment in their benefit for all future generations to enjoy, especially given its historical importance. I am certain it can be accomplished with support from the Municipalidad and the local business community (the transformation of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury to today's status is as remarkable as anything history can represent in that regard as I attest from experience).

The success of the renovation effort would also serve to lessen the workday commute congestion on the freeways for a number of salient practical reasons; not the least of which would be the incentive provided to inner-city office workers and the like to maintain living quarters close to their places of employment. It'll be a difficult and challenging task given the fact that most if not all the older buildings will require substantial foundation renovation. (You must know that the Mexico City was built upon the Lago Texcoco lakebed-- which means that many of the older buildings worth preserving for posterity's sake are continuously and irregularly sinking into the former lake's soft substrates). Fortunately, according to Señora Nogales, foundation stabilization techniques have already been developed and successfully employed to overcome this difficulty, beginning with the foundation of the Metropolitan Cathedral.

If I were a structural engineer or architect, I'd jump at the chance to contribute to the redesign the inner-city that would reflect both its awesome historical heritage and promise for the future. You say in response, "who's going to finance the project?" I say in reply, "the savings of countless pesos that are needlessly expended everyday by the deplorable consumption of petrochemicals, such as gasoline, currently necessary to fulfill the metropolitan population's average daily commute requirement." Actually, you, like myself, can't imagine the direct and indirect cost of inefficiently transporting citizens hither and yon both to themselves and the worldwide environmental health.

When you visit Mexico City, leave your preconceptions behind and truly open your eyes to the inherent beauty of of the area and its people. I guarantee you that if you do, you won't regret it



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