



UFO Has Landed in Baja?

The Sand Man Mystery

BY MARTINA DOBESH

The music of a strolling minstrel plays across the sunlit patio of the iconic La Fonda Restaurant. Dimitri's La Fonda is a favorite tourist destination as well as a go to place for the locales. There has always been a feeling of the mystery of Baja here on this patio overlooking the Pacific. It was visited long ago by the Hollywood stars and when it began to really shine was when Demitri and Sarah bought it decades ago. On this pristine morning with a rich Mexican coffee to savor,

it was like being on a movie set. And oh the evenings, one could conjure many dreamscapes with candlelight, and the fat moon hanging above the sparkling sea. Today was one of those dream days as I sat waiting for my order to arrive.

I glanced down to the sandy beach below and was flabbergasted by what I saw. It was as if an alien ship had created a flawless "crop" circle in the sand. The circle and design within it were perfect in every way. I just couldn't believe my

eyes. No one was around tending the art form, but I knew there was a story waiting to reveal itself. Walking toward me was a dark man of average height, his skin almost leathery from the sun. He paused at each table, holding out a tin can collecting tips from the guests. He was the artist and the story. We all wanted to know how he created such precision with a rake, stick and a shovel. I love it when a story walks right up to my table. His name was Rama and I requested an interview for the following day. He was pleased by the invitation, and then took his leave saying he had to get back to the beach to continue the expansion of the circle he had started.

Looking down from the patio he was a tiny figure next to the inner circle. I watch amazed. He did not measure.

He simply began to walk swiftly around the outer circumference with the rake, and began a new pattern at the outer edge. He then when back into the design with the stick and the shove to give detail and definition. My mind could not register the ease with which he created the ever expanding circumference; I had no frame of reference. He worked against the advancing tide. I contemplated how unattached he was to losing his creation, a quality that most of us might find difficult letting go of something beautiful we have created. I wondered, would we create something wonderful, knowing we could not be saved? The mystery deepened. My mind turned to the memories of reading Carlos Castaneda and his Don Juan. The fog began to roll in making the scene ever more mystical. As I was leaving

I knew what I was seeing today would be gone tomorrow.

The next day Rama was busy with a new pattern. The weather was clear and gorgeous. He was finishing up an outline of a gigantic fish, appearing to have washed up on shore. It lay next to yet unbelievable Sand Circle. He came up to collect the tips from the astounded breakfast guests and then he sat down to reveal his story. Rama Morales came to Baja from Sonora. Right way I linked that with the Yaki Indians and Don Juan's escapades. The storyteller in me can't help myself. We all have a story to share. Stories when told do more than inform us, they can inspire us and the words can also set a tone that can be felt. Rama held a story far beyond what I can recount; yet leaving the mystery in a story can be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Magical Neighborhoods Program in the Planning Stages

BY DAVID FLORES

Mexico's tourism secretary Miguel Torruco, announced the tourism secretariat (SECTUR) will launch the Magical Neighborhoods program to reinforce the existing Magical Towns, which started 21 years ago and has become a successful program.

Once the neighborhood

in hand with residents of the area so that everyone is happy and agrees with the proposed improvements.

That is how Tecate (here in the north, Todos Santos and the El Triunfo town north of La Paz were restored and look like old, well-preserved gems. The embellishment attracts hundreds



cal neighborhoods, one in every state of the nation.

The head of SECTUR stated: "Let us take advantage of our enormous tourist heritage

UFO HAS LANDED IN BAJA...

continued from page 1

luscious.

Rama, 26, came to Baja two years ago leaving his family of Mayo Indian artists, going all the way back to his great grandfather who developed his craft from the organics of the land. However, the sand art of Rama is his original idea and designs emerging from his mind. One of the questions everyone had was how could he be so precise when he didn't measure. As if it was nothing unusual he grinned and pointed to his feet, he mimed his stride, which did the measuring. I still questioned how he worked so swiftly, never stopping as the design apparently flowed from his mind to the rake and was committed it to the sand without reserve.

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is designated, federal funds will start flowing to aid in the embellishment of the area with freshly painted facades, improvement to water sewage and pavement, new street lighting and tourism promotion. The Tourism agency works hand

of tourists and residents from all over Baja and neighboring areas.

It is gentrification, but to maintain the old look of the towns. So far, Mexico has 132 magical towns and this new program aims to add 32 Magi-

to make Mexico an increasingly competitive destination. We have to reaffirm its position in the world ranking, mainly in terms of foreign exchange earnings from international visitors, which is how the tourist potential of a nation is measured." ✍

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Maybe his explanation was true, but I suspected there was something a little more mystical going on. Most artists would not have a problem confirming that there is a muse which creates, and which is difficult to describe. For now he is camping while he does his beach art and it appears that most guest of La Fonda gladly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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What Mexico Has Taught Me

BY THE UNKNOWN GRINGO



I WAS A FISH And I got caught. Plain and simple. It takes two steps to catch a fish. First you have to HOOK it. Then you have to LAND it. You "set" the hook in the fish and then you pull it out of the water onto land or the boat you're in. Mexico did that to me. Mexico was the fisherman and I was the dumb, innocent FISH.

It was 1988 and I was with a bunch of friends at a motorcycle rally in a private campground close to the town of Tecate. A few miles from the border, it was sponsored by the San Diego BMW motorcycle club. My friends and I had gone to several local club rallies all over the state for years. We went to this one and somebody got the smart idea that we should all ride into Tecate and do.....something. None of us had ever been to Mexico before. It changed

my life.

We found the open-air Saturday swap meet and ate delicious tacos 2-for-a-dollar. We found the Tecate brewery and got a free beer in their beer garden. (One free beer per adult per day = great local public relations) We ate ice cream on a stick at a paleteria. We discovered the cute plaza/jardin in the middle of town. And then decided to get a sit down meal. We cruised up and down the main street, Juarez, until we saw an open-air restaurant on a hillside with a view of the town. Nice. While riding up and down the street looking for enough room to park all our motorcycles, a very large, solid steel door on the side of the building magically rolled open and waiters motioned us to ride our bikes into their hidden courtyard to park.

Side note -- You have to

understand. Motorcyclists are terrified to park their bikes on sloped streets in fear they will fall over and instinctively want to watch them at all times in public in case someone backs into them and knocks them over. They are truly happy if they can park their baby INSIDE the hotel room they are staying in. I've seen some big, bad boys VERY nervous in a restaurant, eating their food, as they constantly watch their bikes out the window in a busy, crowded parking lot.

Those folks won us over instantly. We got a table with a view and ordered beers and food. They quickly brought all the beers in a large bucket filled with ice. It shook me to my core. The most elegant way to serve beer I had ever seen. Drink it now...or wait for your food. I've since seen that in many places. It's called a cubeta. A group of four,

What To Do If You're Stopped By The Police

Ed Note. We have received comments from the local community asking us what do we have against the local police force. The answer is nothing, there are several great elements among the force, but unfortunately it is also common to find cases like the one we report below, specially with tourists or expats, which we feel is part of our duty to educate and protect. This is why we print this note on every edition of the Gringo Gazette.

We recently got a report from a local Gringo who was walking back home and a police cruiser stopped him and took money from him to let him go. That's extortion anywhere, and there are bad hombres anywhere. If you are stopped for an alleged traffic violation, ask for a ticket and go down to the police station later on or the next day, and pay it. They will take your driver's license to ensure that you show up, and that's OK. They do not want your license, and there's nothing they can do with it. You will get it back. And no, do not give them money if they ask you to pay the ticket to them right there. Just keep asking for a ticket, "Dar may un teeket por favor." Be polite and firm.

If they get nasty, write down their last name from their name badge, or pull out your cell phone and take a photo of him, her, or them. No, it's not illegal to photograph or record a police officer doing it's job. That's like holding a mirror up to a vampire, and they will jump in their vehicle and scurry away like cockroaches when you turn on the light.

It's extremely rare for them to write a ticket, and for sure they will not cite you when you haven't done anything wrong. And, if you have broken a law, the ticket is ridiculously small. Man up and fo down and pay it.

This police extortion would stop in a week if everyone would grow a back bone and stand up to them. 🐔



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for example, can order ten beers at once and the waitress doesn't have to ask you every five minutes if someone wants another beer. And it's sold at a discounted price versus one bottle at a time. Ahhhhhh.

The food comes. My chile relleno was delicious. The

whole pepper with the stem attached. Dipped in an egg batter. Not like some places in the states that have a bizarre idea of what a relleno is. I once got a relleno that looked like a Halloween jack-o-lantern. It was just a big bell

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Cooking Like a Mexican

BY ALEJANDRA BORBOLLA



One of my favorite places in Mexico is Yucatan; it is not only blessed by breathtaking beaches and stunning natural sites but was also once a very significant region for the ancient Mayan civilization, which reached the highest point of its development here. Many archeological sites can be found there, such as the world-famous ruins of Chichén Itzá. Because it was relatively isolated from the rest of Mexico until not too long ago, Yucatán developed its own unique culture. Life is different in Yucatán, slower, richer somehow; as if time passed gently through and it shows in many ways, one of them is the people, how much of their original dialects and traditions were kept, another is food.

One of the leading indigenous cultures of the ancient Americas, the Mayans, began as hunter-gatherers and migrated into the Yucatán peninsula

spectacular being Chichén Itzá and Uxmal.

In 987, the Toltec people (believing they were following their god Quetzalcóatl's vision) arrived in the region. According to Toltec mythology, Quetzalcóatl demanded human hearts as a sacrifice, and the Toltecs obeyed by conducting mass human sacrifices. The Toltec's cultural influence on the Mayans in Yucatán was profound, and their architectural influences are unmistakable at Chichén-Itzá. While the Toltecs mixed with the Mayans and other groups, their culture eventually dominated the area.

During the 12th century, the Mayan city-state of Mayapán clashed against and defeated the citizens of Chichén Itzá. Mayapán took over the region, and the Mayan Cocom dynasty ruled until the mid-13th century. When the post-classic

Then 1513, Juan Ponce de León sailed near Yucatán but never docked there, while he was on an expedition to Florida. In 1517, while on a crusade to procure slaves, a Spanish conquistador named Francisco Hernández de Córdoba made it to the Peninsula and asked some of the indigenous people where he was. When they responded, "Tetec dtan. Ma t natic a dtan" ("You speak very rap-



idly; we don't understand your language"), he assumed they were answering his question. Having difficulty pronouncing their words, Córdoba ultimately called the land Yucatán. In 1519, Hernán Cortés led an expedition that briefly stopped at Yucatán to rescue Jerónimo de Aguilar, a shipwrecked Franciscan priest, before heading north to land in Veracruz.

In 1527, Francisco de Montejo set out to conquer Yucatán but was overpowered by the natives. Three years later, he returned with his son Francisco de Montejo y León but again failed to conquer the indigenous population. Finally, the third attempt in 1537 was successful, and de Montejo founded the cities of Campeche in 1540 and Mérida, the present capital, in 1542. Gaspar Pacheco, known for his cruel treatment of the natives, completed Spain's conquest of the area.



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In an effort to convert the indigenous people to the Catholic faith, Franciscan priests built more than 30 convents in Yucatán (over the traditional temples, mind you) and tried to replace Mayan culture with Christianity. In 1562, Franciscan monk Fray Diego De Landa ordered that all handmade Mayan books and statues be destroyed. Few of these rare and important cultur-

tary system of government was instituted in Mexico and given authority over Yucatán. A mutiny advocating Yucatecan independence erupted in Tizimin in May 1838; in 1840, the local Congress approved Yucatán's declaration of independence-Yucatexit. Hoping to settle the differences, Mexico's President Antonio López de Santa Anna sent Andrés Quintana Roo to Mérida in 1841. Quintana Roo signed a treaty with the local government, which Santa Anna ignored. Hostilities continued, and Governor Méndez ordered all Mexican flags removed from Yucatán buildings and ships in favor of the flag of the "Sovereign Nation of the Republic of Yucatán."

Refusing to recognize Yucatán's independence, Santa Anna ordered that Yucatán's ports be blockaded. He also sent an army to invade Yucatán in 1843. The Yucatecans defeated the Mexican force, but the loss of economic ties to Mexico deeply hurt Yucatecan commerce. Yucatán's governor, Miguel Barbachano, decided to use the victory as a time to negotiate with Santa Anna's government from a position of strength. During the negotiations, it was agreed that Yucatán would rejoin Mexico, as long as their constitution and their right to self-rule were observed by Mexico City. The treaty reincorporating Yucatán into Mexico was signed in December 1843. However, the central government rescinded earlier concessions, and Yucatán again renounced the Mexican government in 1845, declaring independence on January 1, 1846.

During the Mexican-American War (1846 to 1848), Yucatán, which considered itself an independent nation, declared its neutrality. However, in 1847, the

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around 2500 B.C. During the pre-classic period (500 B.C.-250 A.D.) they appeared in Quintana Roo, where they founded ceremonial centers at Coba, Dzibanche and Kohunlich. Quintana Roo was considered to be the gateway to the Mayan world. Between 300 and 900, the Mayans built several cities in the Yucatán region, two of the most

Mayan period ended around 1250, most cities were deserted. Those that remained continued to engage in inter-city military conflicts. The disappearance of these great Mayan civilizations remains a mystery; had the Spanish not destroyed the majority of Mayan codices and other writings, the Mayans' destiny might be known today.

10 No-Nonsense, Practical Tips for Moving to Mexico

BY JENNIFER JENNINGS

Welcome to Mexico! We've compiled 10 no-nonsense, practical tips to make your transition to the good life easier. Whether you're staying for a month, staying for a season, or making Mexico your full-time home, these tips will make your move south of the border easier.

Join the local Facebook groups

Yes, sometimes Facebook groups can dissolve into pointless arguing and name calling - but they also offer a wealth of information. Join local Facebook groups so you can ask for recommendations, stay abreast of the latest news, and learn about local events.

Being a member of the neighborhood Facebook can be

important for finding out when garbage day is, being aware of any suspicious activities in the area, participating in luncheons, events, fundraisers, or other cultural events, and connecting with potential friends.

Find a social circle

Moving to a new country (and possibly having limited Spanish-speaking skills) can be very isolating. To make the transition easier, find your tribe.

Make friends with your neighbors or find a group that you enjoy spending time with. Spending time with people in a similar lifestyle or stage of life can fill your day with activities and socialization and take the edge off of missing your family and friends back home.

Learn the basics

One way to make the move easier is to learn the language! Start off with simple words and phrases to make regular day-to-day activities like shopping and dining out easier.

Knowing even the basics of the language can change your experience interacting with locals. People are going to be pleasantly surprised when you make an attempt to speak to them in their native language.

As your confidence and vocabulary grow, you can expand your social circle to locals and experience authentic life here in Baja.

Develop a routine

Just because you moved to Mexico doesn't mean you moved to an all-inclusive resort. Laying in the sun and drinking margaritas will *eventually* get old.

Establish a routine to add structure to your days. Morning walks, coffee with friends, shopping, volunteering, and even some email checking will give your day purpose.

Get involved with the community

Speaking of volunteering, that's a great way to get involved with your community. There are tons of amazing groups in Baja looking for volunteers. You may even be able to use your existing work skills to help the community.

If volunteering is not your thing, getting involved in the community can be as simple as helping with a community clean-up, attending local events, or talking to your neighbors. If Mexico is going to be your long-term home, weaving yourself into the fabric of the community will positively impact your experience.

Leave the trailer and suitcases at home

It may surprise you, but Mexico has everything you need for your new home. There are department stores with the same high-end goods you're used to at home. So, leave the luggage and shop local for your linens,



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towels, flatware, kitchen appliances, and house decor.

Some things you may need to bring? Bringing some prescription medications may be a good idea until you find a local pharmacy and doctor. Your favorite skin care may be tricky to find if you have a set regime. And if you get really homesick, you may find yourself bringing random foodstuff that you just can't live without.

Cash is king

While most larger stores and restaurants will accept credit cards, cash is king in Mexico.

Pro tip: when using the ATMs, decline the conversion rate. While you might still get dinged with the use fee, you'll get a better conversion rate from your bank.

It's also helpful to figure out how much money you're spend-

ing per month and which ATMs allow you to pull large sums out. This saves you from hitting the ATM multiple times per month (and racking up fees).

Know the law

You've probably heard that there are some crooked cops who will pull you over because of your gringo status or foreign-plated car... well, if you do get pulled over, know the law!

The cops are not allowed to take your license. If you do get pulled over, ask the cop for the ticket or follow them to the local police department to pay your fee.

Don't hand over your license or cash. Paying a bribe or *morditas* is illegal for you and for the cop.

Feel like you've been taken
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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continued from page 2

gifted his tip jar.

He is making no plans at this time as he is quite seriously governed by weather and tides. Rama had a number of unique ideas about how to utilize his art. For a beach wedding, he could create something for the bride and groom, or create a



order now for a great holiday gift for family and friends.

Sand Man was first published in the Baja Bound bulletin. See more of Martina's Baja StoryTeller articles at Baja Bound.com. 🐾

WHAT MEXICO HAS TAUGHT...

continued from page 3

pepper, uncooked and unbattered, sitting on a plate with the top cut out. Filled with Velveeta cheese and ground round, I stared at it for several minutes. I did NOT have a camera with me.

That first day into Mexico set the hook. We went to that rally for a few years and when they stopped we started camping by ourselves at the San Diego County campground called Potrero that is just five miles from the Tecate border crossing. We got to know Tecate real good. Then.....one day my ex-wife and I were supposed to go to Catalina Island for the weekend but the weather looked bad. The rain storm was supposed to only go as far south as San Diego or so. I got the idea.....and I don't know where it came from.....maybe we should try Ensenada. Got a AAA map and off we went on an early Saturday morning. San Ysidro scared us. Tijuana scared us. We drove through the center of the huge city on surface

streets. (I didn't learn about the toll road that starts at Playas de Tijuana on the coast for a couple years.) We got to Ensenada and stayed at a AAA recommended hotel and ate at a AAA recommended restaurant. And fell in love with Ensenada. Forgot about Tecate for a while. Went to Ensenada several times a year and found OUR hotel and OUR favorite restaurants and shops. Bought Christmas presents there. Discovered tequila then mezcal. Mexican rugs, pottery, basketry, glassware, wooden masks.

I WAS A FISH. Tecate hooked me but Ensenada landed me. And why not. Ensenada is so much bigger so it naturally has so much more to offer. And it's on the beautiful ocean. I've said for decades....I like Tecate but I LOVE Ensenada.

I've been privileged to visit Guadalajara plus its surrounding areas, Puebla, Mexico City, and the states of Michoacan and Oaxaca. I want to see more but I am taking care of my 98 year old father. I have to stay close. The triangle I've written about -- Tijuana to Ensenada to Tecate and back to Tijuana -- is doable for me under my circumstances. And it is a HUGE blessing. A single day off? I head south from Los Angeles to Tecate. Two days off? Oh, God, thank you. Ensenada. 🐾

GRUPO DE DANZA FOLKLÓRICA MEXICANA

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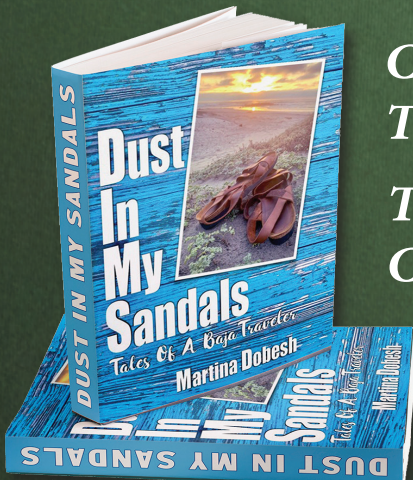
design for someone's garden. Or even surprise a friend with a Happy Birthday! in the sand. You can reach Rama by email: moralesrama770@mail.com and if you have limited Spanish it is best to use a translator to help the communication. When you are in the neighborhood, visit La Fonda at low tide and be prepared to be amazed.

Editor's Note:

Martina is a freelance writer and author of her popular *Dust in My Sandals*, *Tales from a Baja Traveler*.

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Ask a Mexican

If someone from another country was to go to Mexico, which part of the country is considered to have the richest cuisine in the country and, if so, what should they eat there?

Rommel Cosío, 22, author.

I really like food from Cuicacán since I was raised with it. Other northern food is the most similar, but I wouldn't recommend it since you'll get the best tourist experience in general from the center-south as the north is more dispersed and Americanized. Food from the whole country is great so travel it all, and in a few years of coming regularly, you would have experienced the country more than most Mexicans. Try to take the road less travelled.

Viviana Tellez, 20, swimming instructor.

Mexico City's street food is the greatest food I've had and what I would recommend to anyone. Just watch out for the salsas, and anywhere you can find a molcajete It's basically melted cheese with the meat of your choice. My favorite is chuleta and bistec. It also comes with avocado and cactus slices. Tortillas on the side and many types of salsas are perfect to assemble your own tacos and have a great happy belly at the end.

Eugenia Hernandez, 42, shop assistant.

Mexico is food Paradise

ahogada, birria, pozole tapatio, frijoles charros, barbacoa jalisciense)... makes my mouth water just to think about it!

David Palomera, 24, electrician.

I honestly love all the Mexican food I have tried from all different regions. I can't pick a favorite. Even driving 30 minutes to the next town you'll find different food. It's so diverse. My recommendation: in any town or city go to the local market and you may find the best food from that place.

Rosa Alvarez, 36, accountant.

I don't know about the rest of the country but at least TJ is sort of the Singapore of Mexico when it comes to food. Because the city is a border city and also a migrant city, you often see restaurants from different states and even countries right next to each other. On the routes, I take the bus is a

D.C., where the matter was debated in Congress. However, the only action taken by the United States was to warn European powers not to interfere in the peninsula.

At the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, Yucatecan Governor Barbachano appealed to Mexican President José Joaquín de Herrera for help in suppressing the revolt. Mexico agreed, and Yucatán again recognized the Mexican government's authority, reuniting with Mexico on August 17, 1848. Fighting continued between the forces of the Yu-

1950s and by highway a decade later. Today, Yucatán's culture remains unique from that of other Mexican states.

In the 1960s, the first commercial jet airplanes arrived in Mérida. International airports were built in Cozumel and Cancún in the 1980s, bringing significant tourist income to the region. The Yucatán peninsula, which supports one of the largest indigenous populations in Mexico, also holds the state's largest tourist volume.

For centuries, gubernatorial elections were based primarily on the purity of the candidates' Hispanic ancestry. However, this led to corruption and the oppression of Yucatán's majority population — those of indigenous ancestry. The first governor of Yucatán born of pure Mayan descent, Francisco Luna Kan, was elected in 1976. His victory represented a political break from tradition.

I recommend some Mole from Oaxaca or Puebla, Tamales, Tlayudas, Chapulines, Chiles en Nogada, Molotes, and the list is huge but, in my experience, offering Mole Poblano to very different nationalities for the first time, is, unfortunately, an acquired taste and might not be appreciated.

Roberto Briseño, 45, engineer.

and there are so many places one could visit: Puebla (mole poblano, cemitas, chiles en nogada, tacos árabes, chalupas, pipian, camotes) Yucatán (cocinita pibil, papadzules, frijol con puerco, relleno negro, huevos motuleños, sopa de lima) Guerrero (pozole verde, pozole blanco, elpozole, pulpo enamorado, chilate, pescado a la talla) Jalisco (torta

major road connection between various bus routes. In that place, you often see sea food, birria tacos, burritos and Chinese food, often in the same place. ✂

COOKING LIKE A MEXICAN...

continued from page 4

Caste War (Guerra de Castas) broke out on the peninsula. This war was a major revolt by the Mayan people against the Hispanic population in political and economic control. By 1848, the revolt had driven all Hispanic Yucatecans out of the peninsula except for those in the walled cities of Mérida and Campeche.

Hoping to suppress the revolt, Governor Méndez sent letters to Britain, Spain and the United States, offering sovereignty over Yucatán to whichever nation could help stop the Mayans. The proposal received serious attention in Washington,

catecan government and the independent Mayans through

1901 when the Mexican army occupied the Maya capital of Chán Santa Cruz. Some Mayan communities in Quintana Roo refused to acknowledge Ladino (Jews of Spanish origin) or Mexican sovereignty into the next decade.

Until the mid-1900s, Yucatán's only contact with the outside world was by sea. As a result, Yucatán's trade with the United States, Europe and Caribbean islands was far more lucrative than that of all other Mexican states. Yucatán was linked to the rest of Mexico by railway in the

To this day, the people of Yucatan remain rebellious and do not care much for Mexican tourists, especially those not from Mexico City, but are nice and friendly anyway. They do, however, know when a tourist is being respectful and appreciating of their culture and will welcome them with open arms.

This edition's recipe is an ode to Yucatan, its culture, ingredients and people, Sikil Pak (see-kheel pack) is a quick and delicious recipe for a dip. If you are a frequent reader, it will **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

10 NO-NONSENSE...

continued from page 5

advantage of? *Sindicatura* is an organization run by the Mexican government that investigates corrupt police interactions.

Prepare for hurricane season

If you're from somewhere that doesn't get hammered with hurricanes and they're more of a foreign concept to you, listen up!

Hurricane season comes every year. It's from May 15 to November 30 with most storms active from August to October. Whether or not the peninsula gets hit by a hurricane or tropical storm is a toss-up, but you still need to know how to prepare.

- Stock up on food and fresh water.

- Gas up your vehicle and get an extra fuel can to fill your generator or car.

- Look around your casa

and consider that anything that isn't embedded in the concrete can (and will) become a flying projectile. Have a plan for where all those items are going to go in the event of a storm.

- If you're here all year, investing in a generator to keep your AC running might also be a good idea.

Keep in mind that the power infrastructure in Mexico is likely not as robust as you're used to. A thunderstorm can knock out the power for a couple of minutes to a couple of days.

Yes, you need insurance

After purchasing your new home, you definitely want insurance to protect your investment. Your homeowner's policy (or rental policy) should cover you for the essentials like fire, debris removal, loss of use, glass breakage, theft inside your home, hurricanes, and more.

You also need to insure your vehicles and boats. Your regular

insurance likely will not extend south of the border so purchase a separate policy to cover your vehicle and toys while they're down here. ✈

COOKING LIKE A MEXICAN...

continued from page 7

be no news that pumpkins are ancient Mexican ingredients; better said: Mayan ingredients. Sikil Pak means seed and tomato, which is essentially what this recipe is.

Ingredients:

1 cup of pumpkin seeds

2 tomatoes

2 green chiles (jalapeños or serranos, if you're feeling adventurous you can try with habanero)

¼ of an onion or 3 green onions

A bunch of cilantro

Salt to taste

Procedure:

Grill the tomatoes until the

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skin is charred and peels off easily.

In a blender, puree the tomatoes, chiles (can be fewer or more, depends on your liking) cilantro onion or green onions, and salt. Make sure you don't add too much water but blend well, we want a paste consistency at the end.

Roast the pumpkin seeds slowly, making sure you don't burn them.

Grind the pumpkin seeds into a powder (extra points if you do it in a molcajete)

Strain the tomato mixture and combine with the pumpkin seed powder and mix into a dip!

Serve with totopos (tortilla chips)

I am always so happy to hear from you guys at ale.borbolla@gringogazette.com and lately, I've been getting more and more fan mail, stories and pictures! It truly does warm my heart to know you share my pieces with your family and take the time to write me emails and snail mail letters. You are why I am here and have been for the past 7 years! Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. ✈