



The Tijuana sign in Playas the Tijuana "The Homeland Starts Here" it states.

Which Works Best for Buying Mexican Property?

A Mexican company or FIDEICOMISO, the Mexican bank trust?

BY LINDA JONES NEIL

Article 27 of the Mexican constitution requires that any foreigner buying residential property in the restricted zone (an area 50 kilometers wide along the coastlines and 100 kilometers along the borders) must acquire the rights to the property through a Mexican bank trust, known as a *fideicomiso*.

Pursuant to the Foreign

Investment Law of 1994, any company established in Mexico is considered as Mexican even if all the shareholders are foreigners. This applies to corporations, limited liability companies and partnerships.

Thus, many think that by establishing a Mexican company, a Mexican bank trust (*fideicomiso*) can be avoided. It can be, but it is important to

consider other aspects before making a final decision as to how to title your Mexican property.

The Mexican corporation, limited liability company, or partnership should be established if the primary objective is business whether it is to open and run a business, to hold multiple properties for rental, or to achieve another type of money-making goal.

The fiscal responsibility for the Mexican company involves filing monthly and annual tax declarations.

The benefits: the administrator of the company may be able to obtain permission from the Immigration Department to work in the business activities of the company.

The negatives: the Mexican company will cost \$2,000
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My Favourite Pemex Gringo Rip-Offs

BY POBLANO ESCA-BARR

While the news of pipeline gasoline thefts has been in the headlines recently, the practice of scamming customers who are refueling at gas stations is old news. In a place where the minimum wage is roughly US\$5.25 a day, everyday transactions are opportunities for workers to supplement their income. Gas station attendants routinely take advantage of those opportunities and that's why they often sport a big smile when a gringo drives in.

Opportunity knocks loudly when you pull your rental car up to the gas pump and

tell the guy to "fill it up". Although many stations here have implemented "attendant controls" including required smartphone input of pump number, amount to fill and employee code, not all attendants will draw your attention to the pump to show it has been reset to zero before they start pumping. You may be paying for fuel someone else already paid for and those extra pesos are destined for the attendant's pocket.

While the gas is pumping attendants will quickly ask to
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Que Pasa In Baja?

BY OLIVER QUINTERO



Ensenada Working Towards Free Beach Access.

After many complaints by the local community who organized in a group to protest the limited access that some local beaches have that go against the federal constitution, Mayor Armando Ayala has stated that the city is working in an strategy along the federal government in order to guarantee free beach access for everyone.

beaches that have had their access controlled by private parties.

"Since I've been in office, I have fought to regain free access to all our beaches, nevertheless we continue to have cases where private individuals or corporations are impeding citizens to exercise their right to free access to the beaches, that's why we are working on a strategy that will allow us to

counted.

Health authorities are insisting the community to get their flu vaccines, as the number of cases have been increasing every year.

The influenza virus is especially dangerous to people over 60, pregnant woman and kids. Getting your shot will not eliminate the possibility of get-

Are In. The widely acclaim wine and spirits competition Mexico Selection organized by the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, celebrated this year in Coahuila gave 72 medals to our local wines, Coahuila got the second place with 30 medals and Queretaro and Guanajuato tied with 16 each. Baja and Coahuila did tie in the number of Grand Gold Medals, with 4 medals each.

Spirits from Coahuila, Oaxaca, Jalisco and Queretaro were also awarded with medals, with Oaxaca winning a whooping 20 medals for its famous mezcales.

Land Fight Between Ensenada and Rosarito Carries On. Although Rosarito's Mayor Araceli Brown Figuero recently stated that the fight for Santa Anita had already been resolved in favor of Rosarito, Ensenada is saying that it isn't so.

Alfonso García Quiñones, lawyer, and member of the Interdisciplinary Group for Territorial Defense from Ensenada stated that there was a confusion because the court dismissed a habeas corpus filed by Ensenada, that was wrongly integrated.

According to García, state congress has not complied with the Supreme Court, that since 2019 stated that it was them who had to resolve this issue definitively.

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In 2020, the Senate confirmed the right for all the population to access, transit and enjoy all of the beaches in the national territory freely.

Mayor Ayala stated that during his administration they have already been able to grant access to three different

regain access to every beach", stated Ayala. Let's just hope Rosarito follows soon!

Flu season is upon us! After two months of entering the flu season, our state has already reported 222 confirmed cases of influenza A, with 8 deaths

ting the virus, but it will lighten the symptoms very much. If you haven't gotten yours in the states, you can always ask for the shot in your local public hospital or healthcare center here in Mexico, it's free.

Mexico Selection Results

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In the meantime, and all over the years, the most affected party is the Santa Anita community who don't have certainty of their adscription.

New Hospital Confirmed. The new IMSS (Mexican Social Security) Hospital for Ensenada that was previously announced but then not accounted for in the budget for 2023, has already been confirmed by Governor Marina del Pilar.

The hospital will cost approximately 142 million USD, which will include specialty healthcare facilities, a family medicine unit with 14 offices, a social security center and a baseball field.

The lack of a specialty's hospital in Ensenada, has had affected individuals traveling to Tijuana and Mexicali to receive healthcare, or even

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What Mexico Has Taught Me

BY THE UNKNOWN GRINGO



This is a story of betrayal. Of trust shattered. It's not my usual happy story, but....oh boy....I learned a valuable lesson. Neil Peart, musician and author, wrote that "Adventures suck when you're having them." Well, what happened to me truly sucked. And I guess now, over a year later, I can try to call it an adventure. But it will always be a story of betrayal.

This happened over a year ago when Covid was still going very strong. I wasn't going to Ensenada because I didn't feel safe staying in a hotel or going into dozens of shops in the city for two or three days. Plan B at that time was to drive my van, with a bicycle on the back, and park in the States across the border from Tecate. Then ride my bicycle into Tecate for the day and spend the night in the San Diego County campground close to the border. The American border crossing hours were

drastically different then because of Covid. You could only get back into the States between 8am and 4pm.

I was having a ball that day on my bicycle. I crossed into Mexico at 6:45am and hit all the places I like. Bought some olive oil and salsa macha and took them back to my van parked in the States. Went back for pastries and hauled them back to the van. Several purchases of pottery. Botanica shops for candles. Mexican beer. Back to the van. Crossed the border three or four times. Then the flea market. My favorite shrimp taco place. Some ice cream. Got a lot done with a big grin on my face. Finished all that I wanted to do and headed back to the border at 2:20. Lots of time left to go hiking in that beautiful campground with cold Mexican beers as my reward.

The US border crossing

was CLOSED. No if 's, and's, or but's. Not a person in sight. I go over to the border crossing into Mexico to talk to the Mexicans. Of course you can't get back into the States, they say. It closes at 4:00. My watch now says 2:30. Theirs says 4:45.

I wonder what my face looked like. Disbelief replaced with shock? A vacant stare while my brain starts spinning? It's pretty obvious.....I'm spending the night in Tecate. My cell phone is in the van. My two prescribed meds are in the van. I've paid for 24 hours of parking that will expire the next day at 6:35am and I can't get back into the States any earlier than 8. Will my van get towed? The money I paid in advance for the camping reservation is wasted. I'm in shorts and a t-shirt and I need to find a hotel for the night.

Adventure? Oh.....just starting. Along with lots of stress.

What To Do If You're Stopped By The Police

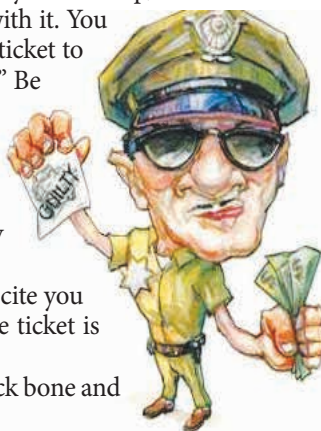
Ed Note. We have received comments from the local community asking us what do we have against the local police force. The answer is nothing, there are several great elements among the force, but unfortunately it is also common to find cases like the one we report below, specially with tourists or expats, 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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that morning at the front door of the Calimax supermarket at 7am when they opened. What are the odds? Betrayed!!

Ok. I know a good hotel west of downtown called The Estancia Inn. I rode there on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Cooking Like a Mexican

BY ALEJANDRA BORBOLLA



Walking around Mexico around Christmas time is a wonderful experience, and if you've had the chance your nose will pick up a distinct scent that triggers all the Merry bells: Buñuelos. Buñuelos are a nationwide treat; even when the recipe may vary a little from state to state, every single Mexican has eaten buñuelos at some point in their life- they are so popular, a famous industrial bread brand makes them.

Buñuelos are a Mexican recipe that was introduced by the Spaniards from the old world, but the origin is quite unclear. Similar treats exist around the world under different names, for example: beignets in France, loukomades in Greece, cioffe in Italy, rosettes in Poland, jalebi in India, and we could even compare buñuelos to funnel

recipe record shows an ancestor of buñuelos dating back as far as the twelfth century, where isfany was a sort of fried dough introduced in boiling honey. The first actual recipe where buñuelos are recorded and called by the name we know today was published in a book titled "Arte de cocina, pastelería, vizcochería y conservería" by Francisco Martínez Montañón the King's major cook, published in Madrid in 1790.

Like many of our beloved and traditional recipes, buñuelos were introduced by the Spanish convents in Nueva España (how Mexico used to be called before the independence), were colonial adaptations were made. One of the most famous convents in that time was the San Jerónimo convent, where Sor Juana Inés de la

Latin to other children by the time she was 13. As a female, she had little access to formal education and would be almost entirely self-taught, she wanted to disguise herself as a boy so as to be able to attend university, but her family forbade it. Juana was born out of wedlock to a family of modest means in either 1651 or, according to a baptismal certificate, 1648 (since she was born out of wedlock, records are unclear). Her mother was a Creole and her father Spanish. Juana's mother sent the gifted child to live with relatives in Mexico City, where her prodigious intelligence attracted the attention of the viceroy, Antonio Sebastián de Toledo, marquis de Mancera. He invited her to court as a lady-in-waiting in 1664 and later had her knowledge tested by some 40 noted scholars. In 1667, given what she called her "total disinclination to marriage" and her wish "to have no fixed occupation which might curtail my freedom to study," Sor (Spanish: "Sister") Juana began her life as a nun with a brief stay in the order of the Barefoot Carmelites. She moved in 1669 to the more lenient Convent of Santa Paula in Mexico City, and

there she took her vows. Convent life afforded Sor Juana her own apartment, time to study and write, and the opportunity



to teach music and drama to the girls in Santa Paula's school. She was also the convent's archivist and accountant since she had arithmetic knowledge which was rare. In her convent cell, Sor Juana had one of the largest private libraries in the New World, along with a collection of musical and scientific instruments (she gave the money she earned from selling her library to the poor). She was able to continue her contact with other scholars and powerful members of the court. The patronage of the viceroy and vicereine of New Spain, notably that of the

marquis and marquise de la Laguna from 1680 to 1688, helped her maintain her exceptional freedom. They visited her, favored her, and had her works published in Spain. Sor Juana, though cloistered, became the unofficial court poet in the 1680s. Her plays in verse, occasional poetry, commissioned religious services, and writings for state festivals all contributed magnificently to the world outside the convent. Sor Juana's success in the colonial era and her enduring significance are due at least in part to her mastery of the full range of poetic forms and themes of the Spanish Golden Age. She was the last great writer of the Hispanic Baroque and the first great exemplar of colonial Mexican culture. Her writings display the boundless inventive and witty, Sor Juana mastered all of the poetic models in fashion back then, including sonnets, romances (ballad form), and so on. She drew on a vast stock of Classical, biblical, philosophical, and mythological sources. She wrote moral, satiric, and religious lyrics, along with many poems of praise to court

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cakes. Truth is, it's another one of those recipes that has a close relative in almost -if not every-culture out there, which blows my mind but at the same time makes total sense since we all love some fried dough with some sort of sugar or syrup. The recipe is said to have Arab roots taken to Spain during the crusades, becoming a traditional treat during lent. A very early

Cruz spent the last days of her life. And who is that lady with such a large name? Well no less than poet, dramatist, scholar, and nun, an outstanding writer of the Latin American colonial period and of the Hispanic Baroque. She thirsted for knowledge from her earliest years and throughout her life; wrote her first poem when she was eight years old, and she was teaching

Maria Luisa

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WHICH WORKS BEST FOR...

continued from page 1

to \$5,000 USD to establish and to register in the public records. Any properties which will be held by the company require a permit from the foreign relations department and must be necessary to the operation of the company.

Once established, the cost to maintain the company can be \$150 USD, or more, per month to pay an accountant for handling the books and filing the declarations. There will also be additional charges for the annual declaration before tax authorities.

If the business activities and projected income will support this type of expense, then a Mexican company makes sense.

If, however, the goal is to acquire and enjoy a vacation or retirement home, renting it occasionally when the owner is not using it, it may be far simpler to place the property title in trust (*fideicomiso*).

If the property being pur-

chased is for personal use, if it is residential property, then it must be held in the Mexican bank trust (the *fideicomiso*). Not only will it be less expensive in the long run but also it may also be simpler to sell should the owner wish to do so. Bank fees range from \$350 to \$550 USD per year, far less than the operations and maintenance expenses of a Mexican company. Should you choose to rent your property when you are not using it, this too is permitted and can be simpler than the mandatory monthly declaration required for the Mexican company.

Mexico is an incredible land and rich in many aspects. It does make sense to keep life simple and enjoy the properties acquired, not to become entangled in compliance with tax laws.

SIDEBARS:

Declarations need to be filed monthly if property is held in a Mexican corporation, generally a startup cost of \$3,000 USD and 1,000 or more per year.

The Mexican company,

by law, should acquire only the property required for its business purpose. Residential property is not generally included in this definition.

Fees for the Mexican bank trust, the *fideicomiso*, generally run from \$350 to \$500 USD, per year.

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LINDA NEIL is the founder of *The Settlement Company*®, which has many years of experience in real estate transfers and escrows, and specializes in the *Virtual Closing*®. Licensed as a California real estate broker, Ms. Neil has pursued her profession in Mexico for more than thirty years. Her skills in negotiating contracts between parties from three distinct cultures have placed her services in demand as a consultant and for speaking engagements on Mexican law and customs in Mexico, the United States and Canada. She has been widely published on the subject of real property in Mexico. Memberships: FI-ABCI, AMPI and NAR. Linda is a former member of the National Advisory Council of The Mexican Association of Real Estate Professionals (AMPI) and has served as AMPI Coordinator for the state of Baja California Sur

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MY FAVOURITE PEMEX...

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check the oil. Say yes and pop the hood for the next opportunity: after a minute at the front of the car screened by the open hood the attendant holds up an empty oil container to show you the car took a whole litre. You're feeling good for doing the right thing, but he likely didn't show you the dipstick



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beforehand. You didn't need any oil; he just showed you an empty container he keeps on the side rack and charged you 150 pesos. Too late now, but at least make sure you ask for a receipt in case you get lucky and have a rental car company that reimburses the expense.

Whether you're in a rental or your own car, paying cash for the gas opens a couple more doors. The number one rip-off by far is by "palming". Palming happens when the gas station attendant sees you

pulling US\$50's out of your wallet for your fill up and he pulls a US\$20 from his left pocket as he takes your US\$50 in his right hand - all the while chatting you up about your wonderful stay here. He'll turn quickly to look at the pump to double-check the amount and then turn back to you showing you the US\$20 and apologetically tell you it's not enough. You immediately think you messed up because you weren't paying attention (after all, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**



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QUE PASA IN BAJA?...

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relocating to those cities.

Minimum Wage Increases 20%. Starting January 1st, 2023, the minimum wage in the border zone of Mexico will increase from 260 to 312 pesos (From 13.70 to 16.40 USD) per day, which was announced as a fundamental benefit for local families that have the least.

Although authorities touted the increase as a win for the community, local business groups were not so happy about it as they said this will probably just increase inflation, as there were other increases in taxes for corporations too.

Although not a lot of people get paid minimum wage in Baja, for those that get it, this increase will surely make a difference. Minimum wage is established differently in the border zone of Mexico than in the mainland, with the difference being about 50% more for the border zone where, of course, life is a lot more expensive than in the mainland.

New Passport Office in Airport. A new Mexican passport office was inaugurated in Tijuana's airport by chancellor Marcelo Ebrard and Governor Marina del Pilar.

The office will be able to expedite up to 1,000 passports per day and will be highly

inclusive, having a play area for kids, lactation room and comfortable waiting rooms for its users.

The office will be open with an extended schedule from 8:00 to 20:00 hours every day of the week.

Punta Colonet Megaport on Schedule. According to the head of the economic office in Baja California, Kurt Honold, the Punta Colonet mega port project is currently advancing on schedule.

"We will have the environmental impact manifesto in about 10 months, it's the most important thing in order to start construction, in 4 years we expect to have the first stage of the port finished", stated Honold.

Rosarito Pier Being Remodeled. Hugo Antonio Torres Ramirez, head of the Rosarito Beach Hotel Council, stated that the renovation of the first 200 meters of the Rosarito pier will be finished this year, with 100% private funds.

Torres stated that the last 100 meters will be finished during 2023, which will include an attractive restaurant at the end of the pier.

Baja's Christmas Security Plan Started. From December 1, 2022, and until January 10, 2023, Baja's Christmas Security Plan will go into effect.

The plan has the objective of strengthening the current work on security and prevent-

ing crimes during Christmas.

This means that we will be seeing more police officers patrolling in commercial zones, banks, the border, airports, and tourism attractions in order to maintain a greater sense of security for the population. ✈

WHAT MEXICO HAS TAUGHT...

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my bicycle. I had calmed down by then. I can skip my meds for a day. No big deal. I bet they wouldn't tow my van if it was only a few hours past due on my 24 hour payment. The receipt was on the windshield. And I didn't really need to call anyone to say I was going to be a few hours late in getting home. No big deal.

I get to The Estancia Inn. They're full. OK. I go next door to the newer and larger hotel. They're full. I ask the desk clerk. Why? There's a big wedding this weekend. OK. I know where there are other hotels, stashed away, not on the main road, Avenida Juarez, that won't be full. You wanna guess? More adventure. All seven hotels that I went to were full. It must have been a really BIG wedding. And I was getting worried. The heated bus station was closed so I couldn't spend the night there. I thought of going to the police station and asking them what to do. I was thinking I should try

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to buy a coat or blanket somewhere if I was going to have to walk all night. With a bicycle. But, the very last hotel that I know about.....tiny.....hidden on a side street...had a room. I grabbed the reservation card and signed it. Then went to

my room. No toilet seat. No shower head. The knob on the side stand drawer was missing. The TV was broken. And the bottom sheet on the bed was black. Pure black from the factory. (Just like at the Playboy
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

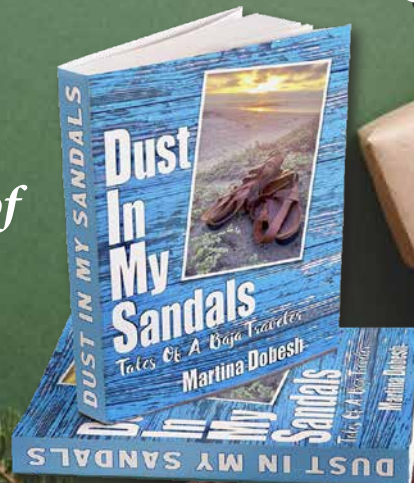
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Ask a Mexican

Since the FIFA World cup started, Mexican player Andrés Guardado was exposed in social media for taking his kid's nanny on the trip. Opinions are divided between the nanny being the luckiest alive and the family being classist and racist. **What do you think?**



Illustration by danjazzia

Mateo Cortez, 18, baker. I think I want to become a nanny now! She is seen in pictures enjoying the games with the family, wearing a national jersey, smiling and being a part of the whole trip. People are criticizing because they are jealous; of course, they are a family that can not only afford the trip for themselves, but for the nanny too, and I bet they pay her well.

Ana Solares, 32, teacher. I think it's not necessary to have her posing in all photos, it looks a little artificial. Of course, she is the help and she is loved since she deals with the kids, but that is a job that is often not completely regularized; nannies often have no health insurance, retirement funds, paid vacations and have to spend important dates away from their families. She is from

a small community and most likely has not seen her own family because she has been taking care of another one.

Andrés Román, 25, health-care. I think we live in a very hypocritical society and nothing will ever make us happy, I bet she lives better than a person with a degree and gets treated like a member of the family, I've seen some more photos online where she interacts with the family like another member and gets no different treatment, sits at the same table and everything. I know many nannies get treated poorly by way less wealthy people, so she really is living the dream.

Esteban Fernandez, 30, secretary. People started calling her "the Mary" and I think that is super low as a country with such a big indigenous

background. She has her own name, not just a generic name used for "service people". And most of those nasty comments come from people who can't even afford a nanny, so I think it's all just jealousy.

David Ruiz, 45, researcher. As long as she is happy and has a fair salary, benefits and is treated with dignity I think we should all mind our own businesses. There are jobs for everything, and no job is less than another, at least she is having the time of her life, seeing the world, being a part of a massive historic event.

Lucía Martín, 47, trainer. I think this gives us an opportunity to think about how we treat people in service at our homes, if we have any. To know if we were in the same position, would we take them to our family trips, cover their expenses and let them enjoy? I think the family is doing an amazing thing and it looks pretty fair from what I can see but it is too little to judge. ✍

COOKING LIKE A MEXICAN...

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figures. Though it is impossible to date much of her poetry, it is clear that, even after she became a nun, Sor Juana wrote secular love lyrics. Her wide range—from the serious to the comical and the scholarly to the popular—is extremely unusual for a nun. Sor Juana wrote both allegorical religious dramas and entertaining cloak-and-dagger plays. Notable in the popular vein are the villancicos (carols) that she composed to be sung in the cathedrals of Mexico City, Puebla, and Oaxaca. Sor Juana was as prolific as she was encyclopedic. The authoritative modern edition of her complete works, edited by Alfonso Méndez Plancarte and Alberto G. Salceda, runs to four lengthy volumes. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is remembered as the first published feminist of the New World (the Americas) and stands as a national icon of Mexico, which commemorated her on the 200-peso bill.

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PRIZE INSIDE!

She is recognized for both her outstanding writing and her influential perspectives on women and scholarship.

The San Jeronimo Convent published their own recipe book, all recipes picked and hand written by Sor Juana, but it's unclear if she actually cooked too. Along with verses and her autograph, the book has 36 recipes, of which only ten are not sweet; which makes me want to believe she had a sweet tooth, just like me. Three of those recipes are for buñuelos, but they are written in old Spanish and with no clear ingredient amounts- lucky for you, I have found the present-day adaptation. I bring to you the recipe that I think is the most delicious of the three and also different from what you might typically find as buñuelos.

Cheese buñuelos:

Ingredients:

6 oz of cream cheese or unsalted requesón
2 cups of flour
5 oz of unsalted butter at room temperature
1 pinch of salt
Enough oil for frying (or pork lard)

1 cup of sugar

3 tablespoons of cinnamon

Procedure:

Place cream cheese or requesón, flour, butter, and salt in a bowl and knead into a dough. Once incorporated, knead for an extra five minutes and cover with plastic, let rest for half an hour.

Roll on to a flat surface and with the help of a mug or a round 3-4" cookie cutter, cut the dough in circles and fry until golden.

Mix sugar and cinnamon to make cinnamon sugar.

Roll around in cinnamon sugar and serve warm.

Enjoy! I am always available at ale.borbolla@gringogazette.

com and happy to hear from you all. ✍

MY FAVOURITE PEMEX...

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greenbacks are all green) and hand him more. That trick is big money.

Next on the hit list is expecting change from your U.S. dollar payment. You've likely noticed that each gas station posts a sign with a single rate on it, for example "CAMBIO 18.60". That's the USD/MXN exchange rate – the number of pesos they will give you for each dollar. All pumps ring up in pesos. The attendant sees your U.S. dollars and keys in the 750 peso pump amount on his phone and turns the phone around and shows you \$42.61. You hand him \$45 with a smile and say keep the change. You might do a quick mental calculation using an easy 20 peso conversion rate to rationalize the amount and figure it's close enough. Meanwhile, the attendant keyed in 17.60 (not 18.60) to calculate the U.S. amount and has now supplemented his pay with your transaction by US\$2.29 plus the tip. The pay is good today.

Using pesos only? Palming also works with the local currency, by gaming the number of notes you hand over. Pass the attendant two or more notes of the same denomination along with some change and he may fumble and accidentally drop the handful and come up showing you that you came up short by 100 or 200 pesos, then it's his word against yours. Get out more pesos.

Think paying with a credit card is a better bet? Think again, especially if the attendant takes the card out of sight **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

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MY FAVOURITE PEMEX...

continued from page 7

to process. Always keep the receipts to remind you of the transaction dates and check your credit card statements for unknown transactions.

The gaming is not limited to individual attendants either. Pemex stations are privately owned and the corporation or government isn't diligent about measuring whether each pump is correctly calibrated to meter out the correct volume of gas for each transaction. It is possible you are getting only 30 oz. of gas when a litre is 35 oz. A few station owners use this tactic, but you'll never know which ones are and which aren't unless you're on empty and fill right up. If your tank holds 50 litres and gas is priced at 20 pesos per litre and the pump total shows 1,300 pesos then the math doesn't

add up and you are being taken, again.

So to sum it all up, you'll unknowingly donate to the local economy just by driving a vehicle....who knew? The best advice is to get those US greenbacks converted to pesos and pay attention to what you are doing. Get out of the car, look at the dipstick, watch the oil get added, count out your bills as you pass them over and take the time to calculate your USD exchange on your own phone. And just before you turn the ignition key and drive off, count your change. The last time I gassed up the attendant tried to short me 100 pesos thinking I wouldn't notice. When I called him out on it guess what he did? - he gave me that great big Pemex smile and handed me the extra 100 pesos. The best part of a good scam is you never knew it happened! Just keep smiling. ✍

WHAT MEXICO HAS TAUGHT...

continued from page 6

Mansion?)

Side note #1 The toilet and shower were in the same 3' x 5' room, no shower curtain, so that you could theoretically sit and shower at the same time. Multi-tasking at it's finest.

Side note #2 There actually was one more hotel with a vacancy. Rates were not by the week or day, but by the hour. I wonder what color their sheets are?

Damage control went into effect. I had a good meal of shrimp aquachile with some beers and a shot of mezcal. Enjoyed the lovely downtown plaza / jardin. Went to bed early since I didn't have a jacket, but I got up at 1am to see what sweet, little Tecate looks like after dark. Some food stands on Juarez were still open and my hotel's block had lots of street cats

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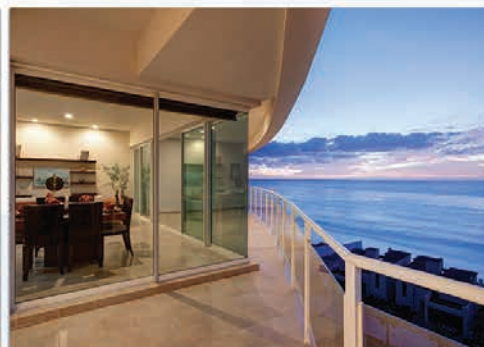


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roaming around. I love cats.

As I checked out the next morning I was refunded a 100 peso deposit after the desk clerk inspected my room to make sure I hadn't stolen anything. What was left to take? I bicycled to the border early at 7:15am to find 35 people waiting to cross ahead of me. My van hadn't been towed and I took my meds. And I had delicious pastries from the day before waiting in the van for a rolling breakfast on Highway 94 as I headed home 4 hours later than usually. When I got home my own cat didn't say anything. She just wanted her food.

So, what's the lesson that this "adventure" into Mexico taught me? Don't trust an ANALOG watch even if the hands are moving. I bought a cheap DIGITAL watch the next day and will never travel without one because even if its battery is failing you will be able to instantly tell by seeing the display weaken or disappear. And if any of you are planning to buy me a Rolex watch for this Christmas.....please do. You will get a chance to see it again on Ebay. ✍