



MindStormPhoto
Ecuador
2012 pt 3

Burt and Evelyn Johnson

Ecuador 2012 pt 3

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It Won't Rain Today...

It Won't Rain Today...

We left Quito yesterday morning. Neither of us was feeling very well -- it appears that the 1200 additional feet of altitude from Cuenca to Quito was harder on us than we had expected. We decided to splurge and hired a taxi for \$55 to take us to Cotacachi, rather than face the hassle of a \$2/person bus. As we stepped out of our hotel in Quito, we found there was a concert going on in the square.



There was some confusion finding the hotel in Cotacachi, since the name we were given was not the name on the door (*The Land of the Sun*). After the driver asked several locals, we found it though. A quaint 140 year old governor's mansion converted into a hotel, with all proceeds going to the local indigenous people, on the edge of a park. We were already feeling better, having dropped to 7800 ft in this town. The room was great -- it even has a proper writing desk and decent wifi. Wow! It even comes with a heater! Too bad the heater didn't work though... or the replacement... or the replacement after that. Oh well, the covers are extra thick and warm, so once we are in bed, all will be OK again.

It Won't Rain Today...

We settled in, and headed out for a walk around town. "*It won't rain today.*" So said Cindy, as we passed her and Dennis about half a block from the hotel, almost as soon as we had started walking. "*Do you promise?*" I replied. So began our adoption by this pair of retirees from Missouri. We talked for a few minutes... until it started raining... We then walked over to their rented apartment and spent the next several hours enjoying their company and stories. We left well after dark, and they invited us to join them for breakfast.

We had breakfast at our hotel this morning. During the meal, we talked about going to Otavalo today, and we decided to go together. After a short walk to the bus station, we found that busses leave every 10 minutes, and only cost 25 cents. We hopped on the first one and it left almost immediately.



Dennis and Cindy refer to themselves as "farmers from Missouri," but that was actually their 2nd career, which was itself followed by a career owning a 50-room lake resort, before retiring in 2006.

It Won't Rain Today...



We were the only gringos on the fully loaded bus.

After a 25 minute ride, we arrived in Otavalo and walked over the the famous artesian market. The big market days are Wednesday and Saturday. Dennis told us the market is so crowded you can barely move on those days. Today it was largely deserted, with only a couple dozen people browsing.

It Won't Rain Today...



Vendors were mostly waiting for someone to walk by and show interest in their products. One held a baby on a leash, since women here pretty much take their babies with them everywhere.

It Won't Rain Today...



Evelyn enjoyed buying small items, including a unique "white elephant" for a party exchange back home.

After a few hours, we decided to head back to Cotacachi for lunch. On the way back to the bus station, we saw more of the local lifestyle. School was just letting out, and we again saw the phenomenon of girls walking 5-abreast, clearing the sidewalk in front of them. Dennis commented *"girls that age want attention, and this is one surefire way to get it."* I think he nailed it...

It Won't Rain Today...

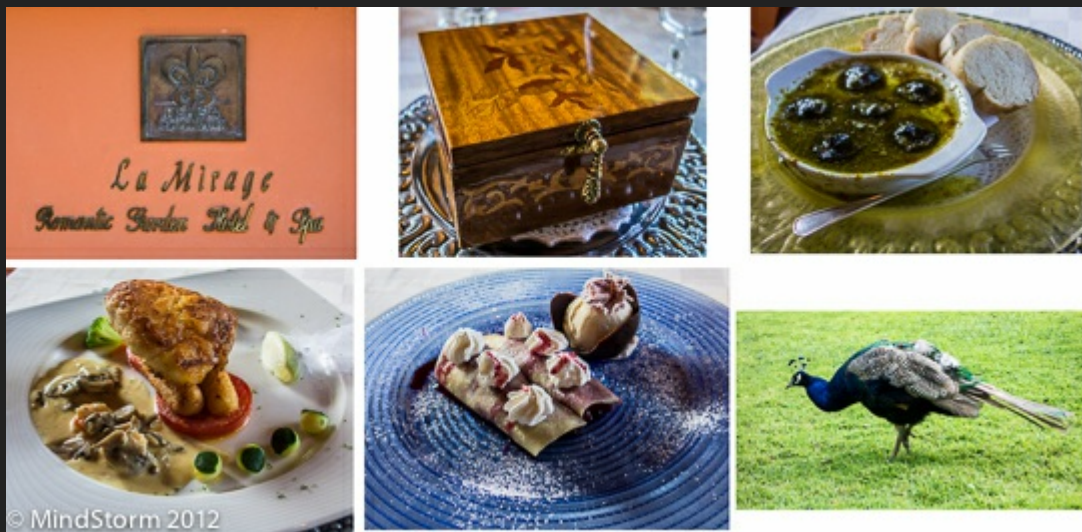


A woman dropped a few kernels of corn and was scooping them back up. The local people appear happy, but they are clearly mired deep in poverty.

Back in Cotacachi, we walked a few blocks to *La Mirage*, and had an unbelievably delicious lunch. This is a hotel that charges \$400/night for a room, with a restaurant that is rated 5 stars. We entered with high hopes... and an open wallet....)

It Won't Rain Today...

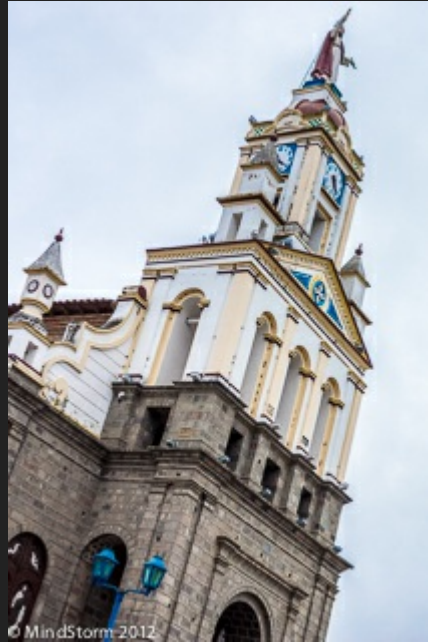
They first brought each of us a beautiful wooden music box. When opened, there was a single fried wonton. The taste told us that we were in the right place! Our ordered "white escargot" came next. It was served in the traditional garlic butter, and was one of the best we have experienced. Evelyn and I split a sea bass meal, while Dennis had shrimp ravioli and Cindy had ceviche. All the meals were world-class, and (given a sufficient budget), I would recommend this restaurant to anyone.



After lunch, we wandered the yard, which included half a dozen peacocks

It Won't Rain Today...

The Chain of Buses



I woke up this morning with the first real allergy attack I have had on this trip. Cotacachi is a veritable garden of flowers. We will probably not settle here, both due to the allergy issue and the small size of the town would probably leave us bored after a couple months. We decided to end our trip to Cotacachi by going down "leather street" where Evelyn bought a new belt, since her old ones are now too big.

The Chain of Buses



Many of the leather shops in town were modern, clean, and priced low.

While walking around town for the last time, we did more people watching. There are many indigenous people here in traditional garb, existing side-by-side with those in dress that would look at home in any American city.

The Chain of Buses



The Chain of Buses



The Chain of Buses

We then walked over to the bus terminal and started our journey from Cotacachi to *Banos de los Aqua*. This turned out to be bigger effort than we had expected.

The first leg started at 10:15AM when we boarded a bus from Cotacachi to Otavalo for 25 cents. We then caught a bus for \$2 that took us from Otavalo to Quito. We were surprised to find ourselves dumped at a tiny bus station in Quito, and found we next needed to board a \$1.20 bus to Quitumbe. That was the major hub we had expected. The Banos Express was leaving in 10 minutes, so Evelyn made a quick rest stop and we raced to catch the final bus to Banos for \$3.50. We arrived in Banos at 6:30, having taken four busses in a little over 8 hours, costing us just under \$7 each.

The Chain of Buses



When we got off the bus at Bano, we were swarmed by hawkers trying to get us to come to their hostel, We had already decided on a hotel, based on Trip Advisor, so grabbed a taxi to *La Posado del Arte*. We had no reservations, but the hotel was nearly empty. This has been our experience on the entire trip. Seems like all the hotels and restaurants are vacant. This is the "high season," so it would seem tourism must be down this year.

The Chain of Buses

After settling in, we took a walk around town. They really go all out with Christmas decorations in this town! When I commented on that to the hotel owner, she said the current mayor is big on decorations -- much more so than prior mayors



, December 8, 2012

[Ecuador, Travel](#)

The Chain of Buses

They Lied!

All the guide books state that *Bano de la Aqua* is 4 hours driving from Quito and 4 hours from Cuenca. We figured that made it a nice stop-over on the way back from Cotacachi (two hours North of Quito). We found yesterday that it took over 8 hours from Cotacachi to Bano, which means Bano is really more like 6 hours South of Quito. Last night we were talking with Marsha (the owner of our hotel -- *La Posada del Arte*), when she said it would take 8 hours to reach Cuenca, and that the guide books all lie... and she was right...

We woke this morning to the sound of birds calling and the waterfall across the street. We also heard some drums further in the distance. When I asked Marsha about it, she told us that this was the week they were celebrating the Canonization of Banos. It started yesterday with a "fun parade" (we came into town too late to catch it) and will end in one week with a "civic parade" on December 16 (our anniversary!).



They Lied!

La Posada del Arte is a great location, with a waterfall across the street, and an excellent restaurant



The marching band was practicing for next week's parade

Evelyn decided to get her first massage in Ecuador, and what an experience at the Yerba Buena Spa located next to our hote! Evelyn combined a therapeutic massage with their Yerba Buena herb special. After a deep Swedish massage using warm oils and a menthol finishing oil, she was beaten with an Ortiga herbal plant, which felt like millions of tiny burning daggers, then wrapped with an icy cold towel, which made her entire body painfully itchy (like poison ivy). They assured her that afterwards, this massage would increase circulation, and she would be cured of arthritis, cancer, insomnia, stress, and any other diseases.



They Lied!

We then walked to the bus station. Though it only took two buses this time, the total duration was over 8 hours again. Considering it will take us 10 hours to get from Guayaquil to San Francisco next month, that bus ride seemed awfully long...

, December 9, 2012

[Ecuador](#), [Travel](#)

They Lied!

Random Walk Through Cuenca #3

The weather is dreary today, and after a week of travel, we are just staying inside. Figured it might be time for the third installment of random thoughts about Cuenca, and about Ecuador in general.

Bus System: The bus system throughout Ecuador is cheap, efficient, and heavily utilized. You can travel within any city for 25 cents, and can cross the entire country for about \$7. Within town, the buses run every 5-6 minutes. When we took a long chain of buses to cross the country, we never had to wait more than 10 minutes to catch the next bus once we were dropped off from the prior one. The buses are almost always more than 50% full, and frequently 90%, yet it is rare for anyone to have to stand. Coming from California, I continue to be amazed by how well it works.

Poverty and Kids: Cuenca is the most prosperous city per capita in Ecuador, but there are many people here living on \$5 per day. As you go out into smaller communities, it is clear that many (perhaps most) people live with less than almost anyone in America. Children are everywhere, and watching the interaction between the kids and parents, it is obvious they are loved. Despite the poverty, children here are universally well clothed, well fed, and clean (well, as clean as any kid playing outside can ever be...). I have never seen a parent here be impatient with a child, as is often witnessed back in America. Perhaps even more surprising, kids here are curious and active, but I have never seen one really misbehave in public. (Yes, babies cry, but not for long, as their mothers respond by comforting them.)

Car Horns Only in Cuenca: I have mentioned before that drivers honk their horns milliseconds after a light changes, or anytime the traffic is not moving as fast as they would like. This is despite the obvious fact that the horn will have no effect on the traffic. Surprisingly, this seems only true in Cuenca though. I almost never heard a horn in Salinas, Puerto Lopez, Quito, Cotacachi, or Bano.

Random Walk Through Cuenca #3

Free College: The current president has made a lot of changes that have helped improve the lives of Ecuadorians. One such change was the elimination of tuition for college in 2010. Students must pass a competitive exam to attend university. A score of 650 earns free tuition for any field. 800 is needed for free tuition to medical school. We have been told that students who obtain a score of 1000 are given free tuition to a university in America, in exchange for an equal number of years working in under-served areas in Ecuador upon graduation.

Sweet Tooth: I have stated before that I was surprised to see how overweight many Ecuadorians are. Though the extreme obesity of America is rare here, a large part of the population is jiggling down the street. One reason seems to be their universal sweet tooth. The number of ice cream shops and pastry shops is astonishing. Downtown there is one or more on almost every block. The local Coral grocery store has 5 full isles devoted solely to packaged candy, plus another 150 sq ft area for bulk candy. People here also drink a *lot* of sugared drinks. Diet drinks (or “Light” as they are called here) are hard to find, and cost 50 cents extra if you want one with lunch.

Sidewalks: The sidewalks here are very uneven, and have numerous tripping hazards. It is common to have small pipes cut off a few inches above the ground - - apparently left over from a prior use and not cleanly removed. There are heavy support cables embedded in the concrete in some areas, left over from when a telephone pole must have been there before. When walking, always look down, or risk a face-plant. Definitely not a good place for a blind person -- I’ve only seen two people with white canes, and both were holding the arm of a sighted person to guide them through the obstacle course.

Random Walk Through Cuenca #3

Language: There are enough expats living in Cuenca that you can have comfortable conversations in English. However, enter any store, or leave Cuenca, and Spanish is pretty much the only language spoken. There are expats that have been here for years and speak no Spanish, but they are missing out in many ways. Our Spanish is very rudimentary -- probably about equal to a 3 year old child. If we decide to move here long term, we will definitely need to improve our Spanish skills. I have always considered those that came to live in America and speak no English after years to be second-class people. I don't want to be that person in reverse when living here...

Learning Spanish: We have a series of 80 Pimsleur lessons, but neither of us has been very good at using them. I find myself looking at the clock after 10 minutes and wondering how I will last the full 30 minute lesson. Not good... We both had tutors for awhile from *Simon Bolivar* school here. Neither of our instructors were very good -- the best instructors were already committed. Yet I found my language skill definitely did improve in the short time I was there. If we decide to come back and live here, it looks like having a tutor will be the fastest way to achieve modest fluency.

Plaza Otorongo: This is a plaza a couple blocks from our apartment. They have various shows and displays there most weekends, and often during the week. These all use the same type of tents you would see at a street art fair in America. The odd thing is we see the tents going up in the morning, a show often lasts just a single day, then the tents are all taken down... to be put back up the next day for a different show. It sure seems to me that it would be more efficient for the shows to coordinate and use the same tents rather than spend all that time and cost of setting up and tearing down each time...

Home?: We have been here for six weeks, with another four until we return to California. When I talk about "going home" now, I mean "back to our apartment in Cuenca" more often than I mean "back to Berkeley." Amazing how fast we can adapt to new situations and environments...

Random Walk Through Cuenca #3

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...



This weekend the Christmas lights went up along *12 de Abril* (the street we are living on) and *Plaza Otorongo* (about two blocks from our apartment), so we went over to have a look late last night.



It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...

Plaza Otorongo has a super-size Nativity scene in lights which draws crowds of families



The static images were rather boring, so I decided to try to be a little more creative...

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...



The streets of Cuenca and along the Tomebamba river were decorated in lights too

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...



The churches were lit normally, but no Christmas decorations around them at all



Surprisingly, this was the sole Christmas decoration around Parque Calderon



The lights reflect in the Tomebamba river near our apartment as we headed home

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas...

Church Festivity Schedule!

We have been trying to find out the schedule of church festivities since we got here in October. Everyone we ask says they don't know, but "you might try xxx" and each of those has come up empty. We finally had a breakthrough today, and now have the schedule!

Regina responded to my GringoTree request back when we were still in California, saying she was interested too, and might have an idea of where to get such a list. We got together for lunch our first week here, but she had to go back to Chicago for awhile to handle some family matters, and didn't have time then. She offered to help us when she got back if we had not already found what we were after.

We got together today and went to the Catholic Archdiocese to ask. Nobody there speaks any English, and our Spanish was never good enough to make the breakthrough. Regina is an American that lived in Mexico for 23 years before moving to Cuenca three years ago, and speaks excellent Spanish. Her language skill, plus her persistence and her charming personality got us into the main office, where some more encouragement from Regina got an office staff to open up and give us the Golden Keys.

As it turns out, they didn't have this information earlier anyway. They had only started gathering the information from the parishes in the last couple weeks. They are gathering the info to put on a web site they are now creating. The web site is entirely in Spanish, and doesn't yet have this info, but here is a source to bookmark for the future if you are interested: <http://www.arquicuencaec.org/>

I have three pages of printout from the visit today. I will be scanning those and making them available on my web site for download in the next day or so. In the meantime, here are the church festivities between now and early January, when we return to California.

Church Festivity Schedule!

Dec 16 at 14:00 -- San Rogue

Dec 22 at 18:00 -- San Alfonso

Dec 23 at 10:00 -- Nstra Sra Del Carmen / V. del Bronce

Dec 23 at 09:00 -- San Luis de Gonzaga / Quinta Chica

Dec 24 from 18:00 to 20:00 -- Nuestra Senora de Fatima celebrates Christmas and Pase del Nino

Dec 25 at 10:00 -- San Francisco

Dec 24 -- Pase del Nino Viejo. This is the biggest celebration of the moving Jesus statue. Details of time and route can be found on <http://cuencaexpress.com/e19-82.htm>.

Dec 24 -- prior to Midnight Mass, many churches will have nativity scenes and other displays in front of the churches.

Dec 28 -- Cuenca's version of April Fools day. When the kids get out of school, they start playing pranks, and floats and costumes can be seen all afternoon. At 18:00, a parade starts near Solano y Huayna-Capac, works its way over the Benigno Malo bridge, and then I kinda lost track of the route conversation going on... The parade will have floats and people in clown costumes, men dressed as women, etc.



Church Festivity Schedule!

Dec 31 -- People burn effigies at midnight, symbolizing burning away all of the old year's problems. The effigies are put up in the afternoon, and contents occur in many places around town for the best effigy. The best places to see this are at San Rogue, San Sebastian, and "the blacksmith street" (along De Las Herrerias).

Jan 6 -- Feast of the King Baby is a major celebration in Cuenca. The parade starts at 7:00 (AM!) at the church at Tarquis y Simon Bolivar. We were warned that there will be lots of people, with many starting to camp out at midnight to claim their viewing spots.

Rooftop Christmas Party

Rooftop Christmas Party

I read an interesting article today on *The Weather in Cuenca*. It talks about the issue of the internet weather forecasts always being identical (and wrong), why there is no weather on the news programs here, and what makes the weather so unpredictable. Good reading at

<http://www.gringotree.com/cuenca/articles/cuenca-news-stories/weather.php>.



There are an estimated 4,000 expats living in Cuenca. In a city of 400,000 residents, that isn't enough to change the nature of the city, but it does mean there are plenty of gringos to meet and hang around with. Tonight we went to a Christmas party by Sterling Kerr on the roof of his apartment. Regina was at the front door, making sure everyone could get past the front locks and knew where to head once inside. (She is the person that helped us get the church festivities schedule a couple days ago)

Rooftop Christmas Party



Evelyn went shopping for Christmas hats for the both of us last week. The largest hats available were way to small for me, so we then went to a local tailor to have a gusset added to make the hat about 30% larger. The tailor kept measuring my head and shaking his head, obviously not believing the size he was reading....:) He did a great job on the hat though, and charged us \$2 for the alteration.



Rooftop Christmas Party

When we got up to the party, we found only one other person wearing the "Norwegian Pigtail" hat like Evelyn had. Turns out her name was Evelyn too, which got a big laugh from everyone at the party.



The Santo Domingo church is only about a block away, and is lit for the Christmas season. One of the highlights was watching the church as the scene evolved after dusk.

Rooftop Christmas Party

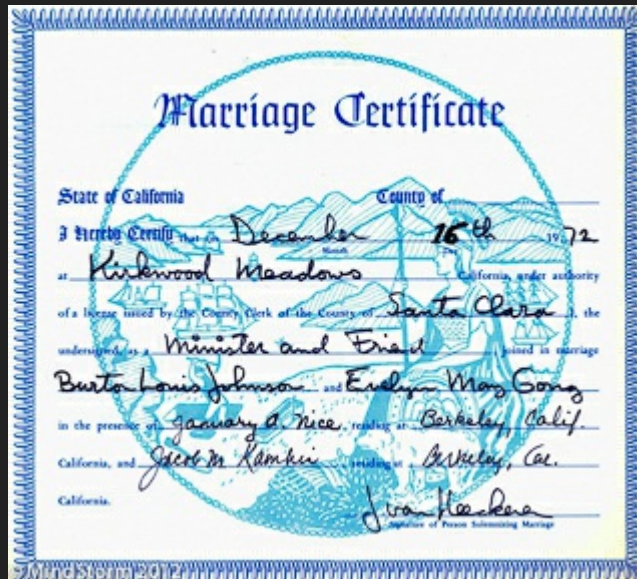


, December 16, 2012

Ecuador, Event, Festival, Food, Travel

40 Years And Still Having Fun

40 Years And Still Having Fun



40 years ago today, we drove to Kirkwood Meadows near Lake Tahoe, mounted skis and got married. Kirkwood Meadows was a new ski resort that we had not been to before, so we thought it would be a good place to start our new lives. We didn't realize ahead of time that Dec 16, 1972 was the official Grand Opening of the resort.

Word got out that we were going to get married on the slopes, and the entire ski patrol team was waiting for us at the agreed location, along with TV and newspaper photographers who were there for the grand opening. We did not own a TV in those days (our first TV was in 1984 when my Apple II monitor was switched to TV use after I got my first Apple Mac). My parents told me that we were on the news that night though, and we managed to get prints from the newspaper photographer.

40 Years And Still Having Fun



We look like novices doing the "snow plow" because the photographer kept saying we went too fast, so we had to stop midway between the raised poles of the ski patrol. This photo was in our local newspaper.

My boss from Ampex (where I had worked my way through college) was our minister, and we used *The French Way of Skiing* as our bible.

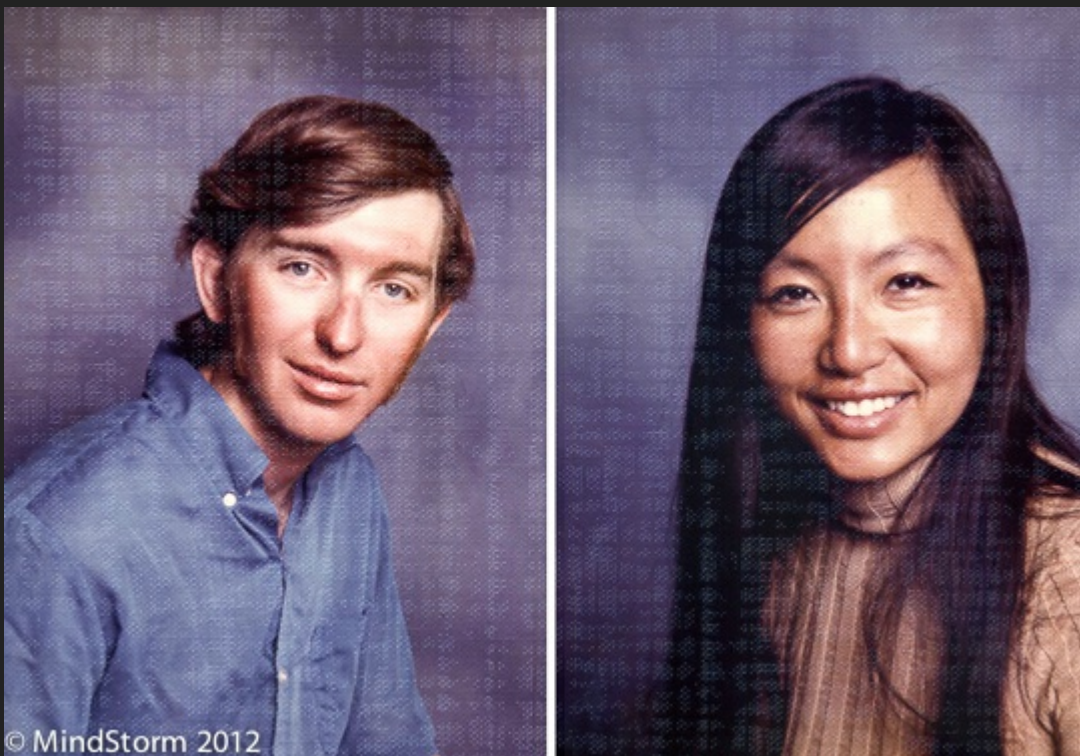


When looking up these photos, I came across some others from the same time period. It's hard to believe we were ever so young!

40 Years And Still Having Fun



Photos we took of each other right around the time of our marriage.



40 Years And Still Having Fun

A year later we hired a professional photographer to come to our house for these portraits. We had just come back from a weekend skiing on Mt Hood, so we were both a bit sunburned.

And here we are, 40 years later, on another adventure -- this time exploring Ecuador for three months. Having travelled to more than 50 countries so far, we are making plans now for more adventures to come. Stay tuned for the next few decades, as we continue to try new things and go new places. The last 40 years have just been a warm-up for what is still to come!

, December 16, 2012

[Brag](#), [Ecuador](#), [Event](#), [Travel](#)

Everything's Blurry

Everything's Blurry



1/2 second hand-held experiment of police bike getting ready to lead the running Santas in a 10K race

Last week we were invited to the home of Emanuela for dinner and to review her photography. She had commented that she liked my stuff (see www.mindstormphoto.com for mine), but that hers were "at the opposite extreme" of mine.

She then proceeded to show us hundreds of fascinating abstract photos. Her photos were all hand-held long exposures, most being of dancers, rushing water, or other topics with a lots of movement. There was an ethereal quality to them, and she was right -- they were very different from the precise captures I tend to make.

Everything's Blurry

I decided to give her technique a try. Yesterday we first went to the *Pase del Nino Parroquial* at San Rogue church a couple blocks from our apartment. A few shots from that children's parade showed some promise. We then went to the 10K titled *Run, Santa, Run* which started at Parque San Blas. A few more images from that show initial promise too.



The left two images were from the Santa 10K, while the right two were from the high school parade

Everything's Blurry

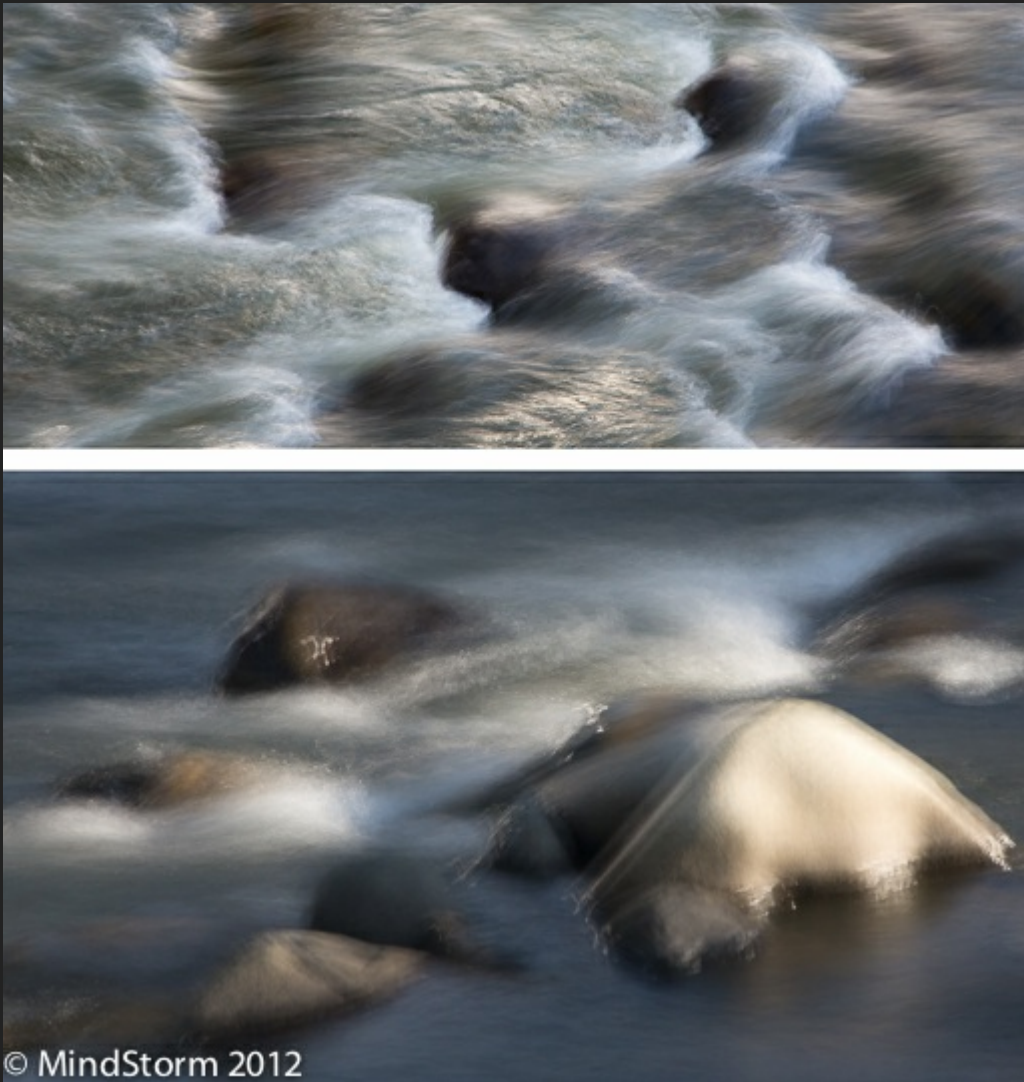


Roughly 100 Santas rush at us at the start of the 10K race

After the race, we walked along the Tomabamba river on our way home. I have had trouble finding anything very photographically interesting about this urban river, so thought I would try the same experiments there. We walked down to the edge of the river, and I looked for small sections that would show white water and rocks in an interesting pattern.



Everything's Blurry



It is clear I am going to have to do some more experimenting before I can create the level of art that Emanuela has reached. Of course, learning new techniques is a large part of what keeps photography interesting!

As we were walking from San Blas down to the river, we passed Parque Calderon. The sun was gorgeous on the domes of the New Cathedral, and I couldn't help cheating on my "all long exposure motion shots today" promise. I captured the dome "normally."

Everything's Blurry



, December 17, 2012

[Art](#), [Ecuador](#), [Event](#), [Festival](#), [Photography](#), [Travel](#)

Tiestro, More Church Schedule Info & Google Maps

Tiestro, More Church Schedule Info & Google Maps

Tiestro is our favorite high-end restaurant in Cuenca. They are not open on either Sunday or Monday though, so we decided to extend our anniversary celebrations to having dinner there tonight. Their Loma Fino con Tocina (filet mignon with bacon) is probably the best we have had anywhere in the world. We also had langostino, which they often refer here as lobster, but is really more of a crayfish.



We told Juan Carlos (the chef & owner) that it was our anniversary, and he gave us a special desert. That is a white plate on which he painted the flowers and candle with raspberry and chocolot sauce.

I gave a schedule of church festivities a few days ago, courtesy of Regina talking to the local archdiocese. That included several children parades, but did not include the movement of the Baby Jesus statue we had heard of. As we walked into a church recently, we discovered they had the entire schedule on the wall of their vestibule! It showed 67 churches, with each church having the statue for 4 days.

Tiestro, More Church Schedule Info & Google Maps

No.	PARROQUIAS - CAPILLAS	D I A S	FECHA	MESES
1.	CATEDRAL METROPOLITANA "LA INMACULADA CONCEPCIÓN"	L M M J	21 22 23 24	MAYO - 2012
2.	Iglesia de "San Sebastián"	V S D L	25 26 27 28	"
3.	Capilla "El Hogar de Nazaret"	M M J V	29 30 31 01	"
4.	Iglesia Ntra. Sra. del Carmen de Verdillo (Vía Sincay-El Carmen)	S D L M	02 03 04 05	JUNIO
5.	Cristo Rey de Culca	M J V S	06 07 08 09	"
6.	Capilla "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe" (Cofa, Roldán)	D L M M	10 11 12 13	"
7.	PARROQUIA "SANTA TERESA DE JESUS" (Seminario de Moray)	J V S D	14 15 16 17	"
8.	Capilla "El Carmen de Guicho"	L M M J	18 19 20 21	"
9.	PARROQUIA "SAN JOSE DEL VECINO"	V S D L	22 23 24 25	"
10.	PARROQUIA "SAN FRANCISCO"	M M J V	26 27 28 29	"
11.	Capilla "El Patriarca San José" (Vía Lacareto - El Carmen)	S D L M	30 01 02 03	JULIO
12.	Capilla de la Sociedad "Santa Teresita"	M J V S	04 05 06 07	"
13.	Capilla de las Viras "Misioneros de María Comendadora"	D L M M	08 09 10 11	"
14.	PARROQUIA "SAN PEDRO DEL CEBOLLAR"	J V S D	12 13 14 15	"
15.	Capilla "La Trinidad de Raca"	L M M J	16 17 18 19	"
16.	PARROQUIA "SAN BLAS"	V S D L	20 21 22 23	"
17.	Capilla de "El Buen Pastor"	M M J V	24 25 26 27	"
18.	PARROQUIA "DOMINGO SAVIO" (Ciudadela Católica)	S D L M	28 29 30 31	"
19.	Aullo "Cristo Rey"	M J V S	01 02 03 04	AGOSTO
20.	Capilla de la Sociedad "Obreros de la Salle"	D L M M	05 06 07 08	"
21.	PARROQUIA "SAN LUIS GONZAGA" (Quinta Chica)	J V S D	09 10 11 12	"
22.	Capilla "Niño Jesús de Machángara"	L M M J	13 14 15 16	"
23.	PARROQUIA SANTA MARIA DE "EL VERGEL"	V S D L	17 18 19 20	"
24.	PARROQUIA "SAN ALFONSO"	M M J V	21 22 23 24	"
25.	Iglesia Ntra. Sra. del Auxilio (Cruce del Carmen)	S D L M	25 26 27 28	"
26.	Capilla del Hogar "Miguel León"	M J V S	29 30 31 01	SEPTIEMBRE
27.	Capilla de la Virgen del Tránsito (MM. Dominicas del Lacareto)	D L M M	02 03 04 05	"
28.	PARROQUIA "SANTISIMO SACRAMENTO" (Chilcagamba)	J V S D	06 07 08 09	"
29.	Capilla "María Guardadora de la Fe" (Jrs. Jardines del Río-Vía Sincay)	L M M J	10 11 12 13	"
30.	Capilla de "La Virgen del Milagro"	V S D L	14 15 16 17	"
31.	Iglesia "Santo Domingo de Guzmán"	M M J V	18 19 20 21	"
32.	PARROQUIA "NUESTRA SEÑORA DE FATIMA"	S D L M	22 23 24 25	"
33.	PARROQUIA "SANTO HERMANO MIGUEL" (Las Orquídeas)	M J V S	26 27 28 29	"
34.	Capilla "Nuestra Señora de Lourdes" (Cofa, Cellerón)	D L M M	30 01 02 03	OCTUBRE
35.	PARROQUIA "SAN PABLO" (Totoraococho)	J V S D	04 05 06 07	"
36.	Capilla de San José (Escuela de Trabajo)	L M M J	08 09 10 11	"
37.	PARROQUIA "SAN JUAN BOSCO"	V S D L	12 13 14 15	"
38.	Capilla "Nuestra Señora del Tajar"	M M J V	16 17 18 19	"
39.	PARROQUIA "NTRA. SRA. DE MARAFLORES" (B. Sta. Fe UPC 15)	S D L M	20 21 22 23	"
40.	Capilla "Señor de la Agradación" (Puerto de Palca - Ax. Lijal)	M J V S	24 25 26 27	"
41.	PARROQUIA NTRA. SRA. DEL CARMEN (Virgen de Bronce)	D L M M	28 29 30 31	"
42.	PARROQUIA "CRISTO SALVADOR"	J V S D	01 02 03 04	NOVIEMBRE
43.	Escuela Pro XII DE MACHANGARA (MM. Dominicas)	L M M J	05 06 07 08	"
44.	PARROQUIA "CRISTO DEL CONSUELO"	V S D L	09 10 11 12	"
45.	Basílica "La Santísima Trinidad"	M M J V	13 14 15 16	"
46.	PARROQUIA "NTRA. SRA. DEL CARMEN DE SIDCAY"	S D L M	17 18 19 20	"
47.	Capilla de "La Virgen del Cónce" (Vía al Valle)	M J V S	21 22 23 24	"
48.	Capilla "La Inmaculada de Vicos" (Sector Gasolera Snd. de Chofemes)	D L M M	25 26 27 28	"
49.	PARROQUIA "SAN ROGUE"	J V S D	29 30 31 02	DICIEMBRE
50.	Capilla del Hogar "Seminario Valdivieso"	L M M J	03 04 05 06	"
51.	PARROQUIA "MARIA REINA DE LA PAZ" (Totoraococho)	V S D L	07 08 09 10	"
52.	PARROQUIA "MARIA AUXILIADORA"	M M J V	11 12 13 14	"
53.	Capilla "San Miguel del Cebollar" (Ax. del Choler)	S D L M	15 16 17 18	"
54.	Capilla "María Madre de La Iglesia" (Cruce de Moray)	M J V S	19 20 21 22	"
55.	Monasterio "El Carmen de San José"	D L M M	23 24 25 26	"
56.	Vicaría "La Merced" (JPP. Obispos)	J V S D	27 28 29 30	"
57.	Monasterio "La Inmaculada Concepción" (Conceptos)	L M M J	31 01 02 03	ENERO - 2013
58.	Capilla "María Auxiliadora de Yantuturi" (Vía al Lacareto)	V S D L	04 05 06 07	"
59.	Capilla "Corazón de María" (MM. Salesianas)	M M J V	08 09 10 11	"
60.	Capilla "Corazón de Jesús" de Píntipata	S D L M	12 13 14 15	"
61.	PARROQUIA "SAN JOSE DE BALZAY"	M J V S	16 17 18 19	"
62.	PARROQUIA "SANTA MARIANITA DE EL ARENAL"	D L M M	20 21 22 23	"
63.	PARROQUIA "CORAZON DE JESUS"	J V S D	24 25 26 27	"
64.	Colegio "Sagrados Corazones"	L M M J	28 29 30 31	"
65.	Iglesia "Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Morayores"	V S D L	01 02 03 04	FEBRERO
66.	Colegio "Corazón de María" (MM. Oblatas)	M M J V	05 06 07 08	"
67.	SANTUARIO MARIANO "EL CARMEN DE LA ASUNCION"	S D L M	09 10 11 12	"

"La renovación litúrgica exige un esfuerzo continuado (continuo) de catequesis, preparación de las celebraciones, formación de los equipos litúrgicos o responsables de la liturgia, en sus diferentes campos: bíblico, histórico, teológico, comunitario, sacramental y pastoral" (PPA, 126a).

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• Fr. Luis Gerardo Cabrera Herrera, OFM.
ARZOBISPO DE CUENCA

Cuenca, abril de 2012

This is pretty hard to read here on the blog, so I combined all the 2012 and 2013 info I have found and put it together as a zip file. You can download it and see the files more clearly at:

www.mindstormphoto.com/xfr/cuenca_church_2012.zip

Tiestro, More Church Schedule Info & Google Maps

Also, I read a tech story this week saying that *Google Maps* has returned to the iPhone as a free app. I downloaded it and tried it out today. Much to my surprise, they have Cuenca! None of the other map services we had tested before coming included Ecuador. As a test, I put in the address of *Tiestro* (the restaurant we went to tonight) and told it that we wanted to walk there. Google Maps found where we were properly (in our apartment) and showed the same route we would normally take. It also said that we would need 18 minutes to get there. We left at 6:03 and arrived at 6:21, so it was right on the money.

Sweet! Now maybe I won't get as lost in town as often...

I've Got a Monkey On My Back!

I've Got a Monkey On My Back!



This pocket monkey decided to ride the back of my neck for awhile

We had heard there was a zoo here in Cuenca, but nobody we talked to had ever been to it, and most didn't even know it existed. We decided to visit the [Amaru Zoo](#) today. It was an interesting experience, and one of the more unique zoos we have visited around the world.

I've Got a Monkey On My Back!

I've Got a Monkey On My Back!

For nine years, Amaru was a tiny zoo with only a half dozen animals. About a year ago they moved to their current quarters, in the hills outside town, just across from *Hospital Del Rio*. It was a \$4 taxi ride from our apartment. After turning off the highway, the driver went up approximately another kilometer of rough, steep, ravined dirt road. After he dropped us off, we had another couple hundred feet of steep vertical dirt trail to reach the ticket office. The office has a gorgeous panoramic view of the city.



Their web site warns that the trails are not suitable for wheel-chairs or strollers. That turns out to be a massive understatement. They are not suitable for anyone not in fairly good shape. And don't even think of going there if it is raining, or has recently rained. I'm not sure we could have climbed some of those trails if they were muddy!

The lions and pumas were inside behind heavy wire cages, and were probably the least interesting exhibit.



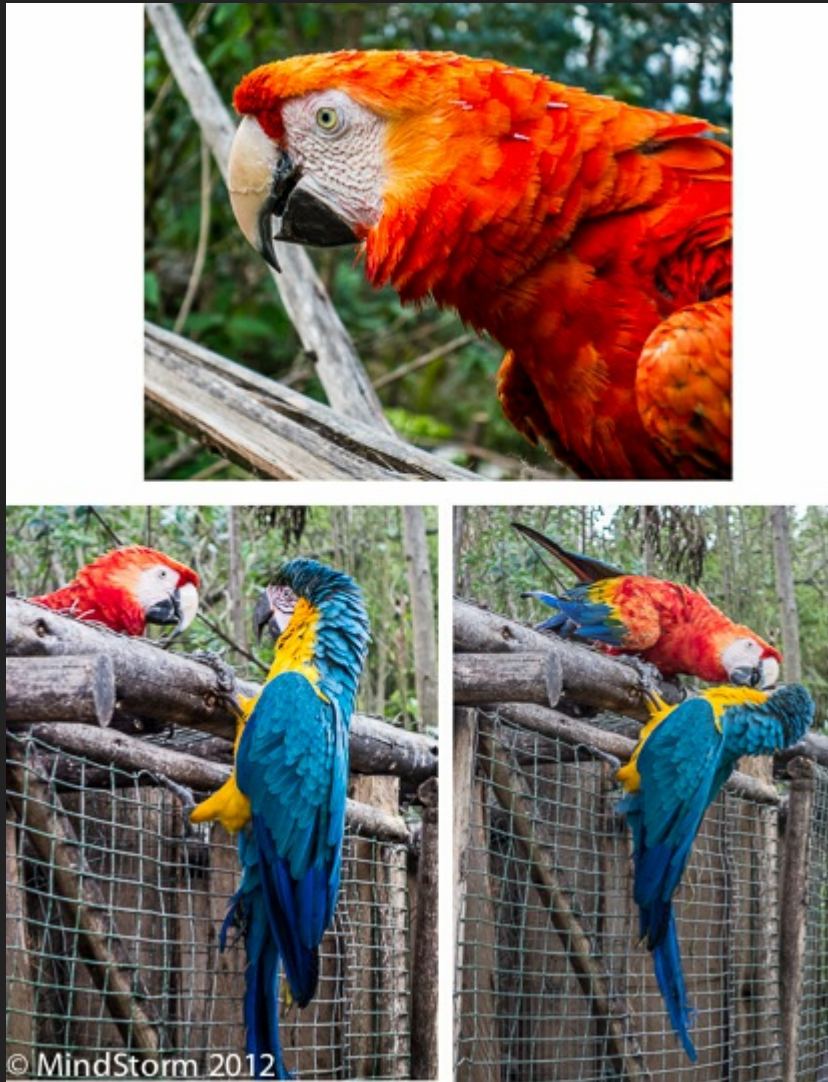
I've Got a Monkey On My Back!

Most of the other animals were in open spaces. There were a few spaces where we could not see any animals at all, so they were probably hiding or sleeping in the rear areas. Others were easily seen, often with water moats around them to keep them inside.



When we reached the Macaw and Parrot section, the birds were free to move around at will, and we sometimes would turn in surprise to find a macaw inches from our faces. At one point, two macaws started fighting, apparently both wanting the same perch.

I've Got a Monkey On My Back!



Probably the most interesting was the monkey area though. Initially we were photographing monkeys on an island, much like they would be in any zoo in the world. Suddenly I turned and saw this cute tiny monkey about the size of my hand, sitting on a post about 3 feet from me. I cautiously took a photo, then moved closer, then another photo, then closer, then... he jumped on my leg when I kneeled down in front of him for a better angle!

I've Got a Monkey On My Back!

This was a "pocket monkey", so called because it is small enough to be put in your pocket. They used to be commonly bought as pets and carried around town. When I stood up, he jumped from my leg to my waist pack, and then onto the back of my neck (top photo of this blog entry). While he was there, we continued to photograph some other small monkeys that had come onto the road and were as curious about us as we were about them. I thought I might have to carry this monkey all the way back to the entrance, but he leaped off my neck just as we were leaving the monkey area. Seems he knew where home was...



Dancers in Motion

Dancers in Motion



© MindStorm 2012

Last week I tried using hand-held long exposure photography for the first time. Tonight we visited [The Jazz Society](#) again at Nektar. On Thursday nights they have dancers in addition to the jazz music, and I was anxious to try this technique on dancers, where their motion can be captured. For a first attempt, I was rather pleased with the results.

Dancers in Motion



As we left to go home, we were reminded again how friendly the local people are. We flagged down a taxi to drive us home, and didn't notice two teenage boys had also hailed a taxi. The cab actually stopped in front of them, but the two boys waved us in and let us take the taxi instead. This is just plain a nice town to live in...

We're Still Here...

We're Still Here...



The Mayan calendar has expired, but we are still here. If only those that thought this would end the world would just go jump off a cliff, our national IQ could would experience a nice jump...

We spent the Winter Solstice visiting Saraguro to photograph their solstice celebrations. We paid for a guide to take us there, but he turned out to be nearly worthless. For starters, he said we needed two hours to get there, but it was really three. We arrived in town just as a children's parade was underway. We had about five minutes to gather our stuff and grab a couple of shots before we were herded off to the official celebration in a neighboring town (Llincho? Not really positive of the name of the village).

We're Still Here...



The Saraguro children's parade had dozens of kids dressed as Santa

We then rushed off to the ceremony site... only to then be told we were not allowed to take any photographs at all...!? Huh? We had hired this guide specifically for a *photo tour*, and he was now telling us we could not take any photos???

After some rather vigorous pressure on the guide, he finally arranged with the local elder that we could photograph the setting up of the next ceremony in a couple hours, but could not photograph the ceremony itself. Though this was still not the outcome intended, at least we weren't forced to return home empty-handed.

We're Still Here...



Village members arrived in a loose procession, and then entered a Holy circle.

We're Still Here...



The Holy circle was on a plateau overlooking the valley. Village members not part of the ceremony sat on the surrounding hills to watch.

We're Still Here...



During the ceremony, kids played nearby, while music was provided by a drum and accordion.

Once the ceremony started, we were kicked out, so headed back to town. Saraguro is a typical Ecuadorian small town, with very little going on. Due to the Winter Solstice, there was a small parade -- as in one float and the entire parade taking just over one minute!



The kids on the float seemed very unhappy to be there, with frowns all around

Orchestra Sinfonica de Cuenca

Orchestra Sinfonica de Cuenca



The *Cuenca Symphony* put on a free *Conciertos Navidenos* (Christmas Concert) tonight, so we decided to go see them. We had passed the theater many times while walking in the past couple months, but never realized what it was. They were playing at the University theater, about 6 blocks from our apartment.



Orchestra Sinfonica de Cuenca

The announcement said that the show started at 7:00, so we got there about 6:40. To our surprise, the doors were not open yet. Even more surprising, we saw symphony players entering the theater as late as 6:45. We figured we must have been wrong about the time.

Nope. At 6:50 the doors opened, and the show started at 7:00. I have never seen such an organized and quickly filled theater. I estimate the capacity at approximately 1000 people, and it was roughly 2/3 filled tonight.



There were 14 pieces played in the hour-long program, only three of which I recognized. After four instrumental-only tunes, Veronica Tola came out as a vocalist. After three songs, she was joined by Jorge Regalado, and the remainder of the program included their duets.

Orchestra Sinfonica de Cuenca



All in all, a very enjoyable short evening.

, December 23, 2012

[Art](#), [Ecuador](#), [Event](#), [Music](#), [Travel](#)

Procession of the Jesus Statue

Procession of the Jesus Statue



This is the statue that is moved from church to church every four days

Prior to arriving in Cuenca, we had read in various sources that there were 50, 52 and 55 Catholic churches here. Everyone seemed to have a different number. The actual number turns out to be 67, as evidenced by the official schedule of processions of a statue of Jesus moving to each parish in turn. Today we caught the procession of the statue being brought to *Iglesia de la Virgen del Bronce* (Church of the Bronze Virgin).

Procession of the Jesus Statue



The parade consisted of a sound truck, one float, and hundreds of kids mostly in angel or shepherd costumes.

As the parade approached us from a distance, we could hear the blaring sound truck that led the parade. The parish priest walked alongside, as it pounded out *Jingle Bells* -- in English!?

Procession of the Jesus Statue



Procession of the Jesus Statue



The single float was a car draped in cloth with costumed kids riding along. At the end of the parade, parishioners waited,



Procession of the Jesus Statue

The parade ended at the Iglesia de la Virgen del Bronce. The new church on the right is used for masses, while the original old church on the left is used for other purposes.



The old church was being used today for about a dozen Nativity scenes created by the kids

, December 24, 2012

Ecuador, Event, Festival, Travel

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



As the the parade wore on, most of the kids became bored or plain unhappy

Today was *Pase del Nino Viajero*, or *Parade of the Traveling Child*. It is the largest celebration and parade of the year, taking place on Christmas Eve day each year. All the towns of Ecuador have such a parade, but Cuenca has the largest. It was estimated that this year there were 800 floats and 60,000 participants. That is quite an undertaking in a city of 400,000 people -- about the size of Oakland, high in the Andes in a country with half the population of California.

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

Evelyn and I started out at 9:00 this morning, an hour before the parade started, by taking photographs of the revelers setting up and preparing. We then posted ourselves on various street corners letting the parade go by, then walking along with the parade for a few blocks until stopping again. Parades here are not cordoned off, as in the States, and it was easy to walk into the middle of any group and photograph, or just plain join the parade for awhile. The number of people in the parade easily outnumbered those standing on the side watching it go by.

Trying to make sense of the more than 1500 photos between us, I decided to let this become our longest post to date, showing our favorite images in various categories.



This statue is the star of the parade, and had an honor guard. It was taken to the Vatican and consecrated by the Pope in 1961.

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Angel costumes were the most prevalent

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Roman soldiers were the second most common theme

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Kings and shepherds were also a common theme

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



There were also several Santas



Each school group was preceded by a banner

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



There were bands galore



Lots of dancers too

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Lots of kids on horses



800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

Military were on horseback too



Where there are horses, there is ...



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800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

Floats and horses were often adorned with massive amounts of food



All the news crews were on one block, with people being interviewed on-camera



There were plenty of police around, though I never saw any signs of trouble

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



There were lots of Christ statues

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Many young kids rode on their father's shoulders

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



While babies slept or played, unaware that they were the center of attention



800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

Almost everybody was happy to be photographed



Kids were getting pretty tired by the end of the parade

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Kids would often perk up at the sight of a camera, then go back to a bored stupor...

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



The spectators were often as interesting as the parade participants

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



Those with balconies along the route had prime viewing

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!



We spent a couple hours on a 4th floor balcony, which gave an overview of the parade stretching to the horizon

800 Floats! 60,000 Participants! What a Parade!!

Two Parades, a Party, and a Deluge

Two Parades, a Party, and a Deluge

Christmas Day was different here than back at home in Berkeley. We started with a parade we knew about (from our earlier trip to the Catholic Archdiocese). While taking a nap (ah... the life of Riley!), we heard a band and ran outside to find another parade going by our front door. Later, we attended a party about 5 feet from our front door, of residents of our apartment building, organized by one of the gringos here.

In the middle of that party, the weather turned from warm & sunny to dark and cloudy. A few minutes later it started raining... and then hailing (almost unheard of here, but it didn't last long)... then the rain turned into a deluge... and then into a monsoon! While we were all watching the rain fall over the awning in amazement, lightning struck a tree about 20 feet away, knocking off a large branch. Wow! What a way to end Christmas Day!

Two Parades, a Party, and a Deluge



The first (scheduled) parade was a standard *Pase de Nino* parade at *Iglesia San Francisco*. It was scheduled for 10:00, so we arrived a bit early... and found no indications of any celebration about to happen? We walked around the plaza for awhile and pretty much gave up. We then walked into the church and saw a schedule on the vestibule board saying that there would be a parade at 10:00. It was 10:10 at the time, and we were just wondering if we misread the Spanish when we saw the priest and some parishioners coming out. The parade had started!

Two Parades, a Party, and a Deluge

They walked out of the church, circled a few blocks and returned to the same church. Apparently these are not passing the statue from parish to parish, but rather just walking it around the block and returning. We haven't quite figured out the details of how this all works yet. That understanding will probably have to wait until our Spanish improves a fair amount...



As I mentioned earlier, we then had lunch, went back to our apartment, and laid down for a short nap (yesterday was exhausting!). Around 2:00, we heard the band and I ran out with my camera (of course...) to see what was up.

Two Parades, a Party, and a Deluge



This was a fairly small Pase de Nino parade. We were later told that this was from a neighboring village that had been in yesterday's parade, and they decided on one last fling before returning home. Same small car-floats, donkeys and costumes as before.

Two Parades, a Party, and a Deluge



, December 26, 2012

Ecuador, Event, Festival, Travel

Yet Another Unexpected Parade

Yet Another Unexpected Parade



There are celebrations and parades all over Cuenca this time of year. The trick is finding out where and when they will be ahead of time. There have been many nights that we hear fireworks, step outside and see them glowing from one direction or another. The times and locations vary all over the map, with fireworks being seen at 7:00, 8:00, 9:30, 10:30, midnight, and even 2:00AM once. The shows are all over in 5 minutes or less, so no time to grab a camera and head that direction once they have started.

Yet Another Unexpected Parade

This morning we were eating breakfast and heard a brass band out front. Sure enough, another unexpected small parade was rolling by our front door. I put on some shoes, grabbed a camera, and went out for some quick grab shots.

This was another *Pase de Nino* parade again, with a small Christ doll carried in a car. There were three cars covered with cloth for make-shift floats, and one motorcycle with a Santa sleigh cover.



The small parade consisted of roughly 50 people dressed in the usual angel and wise men costumes, along with a brass band.

Yet Another Unexpected Parade



, December 29, 2012

[Ecuador](#), [Event](#), [Festival](#), [Travel](#)

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



We finally got into a local theater tonight to watch *The Hobbit*. If you are fans of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, as we are, then you will love this movie. We saw the 2D version, largely because it was in English with Spanish subtitles, while the 3D version was purely Spanish. Our command of the language is nowhere near enough to let us enjoy a film like this yet. Sigh... maybe someday...

However, when this film is seen in America, there are subtitles when the characters speak in Elven or Orcish. Here in Ecuador, the subtitles continue in Spanish. For a moment I thought I would have to miss that part of the movie... then... slowly... I realized I could read the subtitles well enough to understand what was being said! I still can't speak Spanish worth a darn, but I am starting to get so I can read it surprisingly well. (We were at a local museum a few days ago and I found myself reading the Spanish description to Evelyn...)

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



We took the bus to Gualaceo this morning to see both the Sunday Animal Market and the daily food market. The ride took about an hour, but only cost us 60 cents each. The bus was packed -- the mass transit around Ecuador is heavily used...

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



The market was smaller than the one in Cuenca, which surprised us. It consisted mostly of pigs, with only a few cows.

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



It was occasionally comical watching the farmers trying to get their pigs to go where they wanted

After the animal market, we took a \$2.50 taxi over to the farmers market, which runs every day.

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



The church dome was just visible over the awnings of the market



Fruit vendors were spread throughout the market area

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



Vegetables, eggs and even sugar cane were also plentiful

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



The interactions of vendors was interesting to watch



Many people just sat in small groups watching the world go by

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)

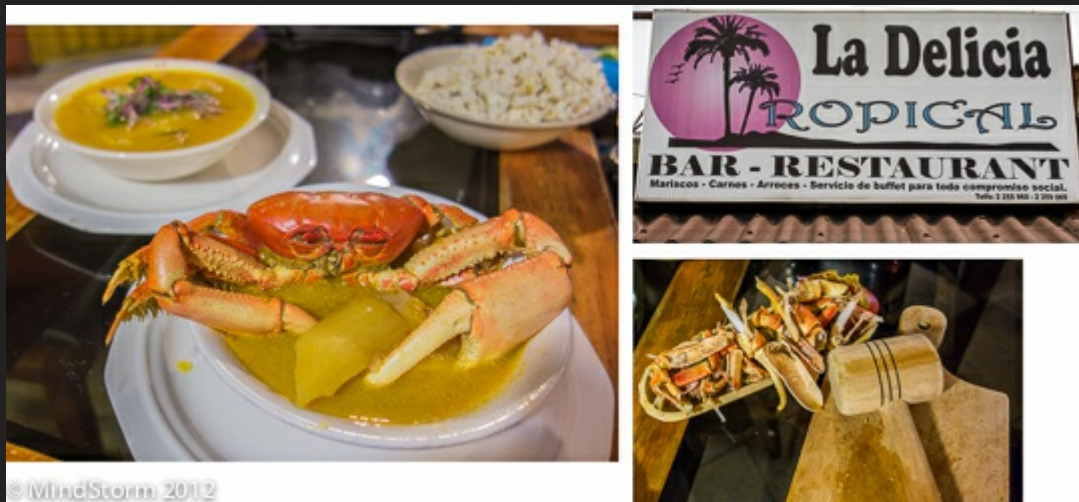


There were plenty of interesting faces in the crowd too

We were getting hungry around 2:00 so decided to go find a lunch place. Of course, I was ready to go into the first place we saw, but Evelyn was more choosy. She went into a pharmacy, on the theory that pharmacists have more money and would be pickier about food. The pharmacist behind the counter knew no English, but was glad to help and gave Evelyn two recommendations, saying one had good seafood.

Off we went. Should I eat my crow now or later? She was right, of course. The recommendation was fabulous.

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



I had crab soup, which included a whole crab sitting in a delicious broth

After we ate and paid, we asked the restaurant owner where to pick up the bus for Cuenca. He said to just flag down the red & yellow bus outside the door. We did so... and found it filled to overflowing. Standing room only.

So, what would you expect to happen in America in that case? How about the conductor giving up his seat for Evelyn, and a young man offering me his seat a couple minutes later? No, you say? Yes, in Ecuador. Not only that, but the driver noticed that Evelyn was shooting photographs of many of the effigies we passed. He then actually stopped the bus and opened the door beside her, so that she could photograph some of the more interesting effigies we passed.

And remember, we are visitors to this country, and can barely answer the simplest of questions about where we come from, and how long we have been here. The people here continue to amaze me in how welcoming they are.

I Can Read Elven! (Plus Gualaceo Market)



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