

SOL AZTECA

MEXICO NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 52 OCT 2011

Projects *Abroad*



VIA
RECREATIVA

MEXICAN
DRINK
TEPACHE
&
FRIED
TACOS!

Editor's Notes

*A Word from the Editor
Hello!*

I want to let you know that we are already on Twitter! If you are a user then I invite you to follow us:

@Proj_AbroadMEXI

I hope you enjoy our October edition!

Special thanks for this newsletter go to:

- Valerie Luxembourg for her Volunteer Story.

- Oliver Garcia for his update on the Turtle Conservation programme.

- Alejandro Soto for his collaboration on the mexican recipes section...

I also want to invite you to join our Facebook community where we share our pictures, happenings and news. The name of our network is:

Projects Abroad Mexico-The Official Group
We also encourage everyone to write their stories for us to publish in our newsletters.

If you want to write something about your current, past or future experience with us, please do not hesitate to send it along with your pictures to:

carlosochoa@projects-abroad.org

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Carlos Ochoa
Social Manager
Projects Abroad Mexico

Volunteer Story

My experience as a volunteer

The decision to take a « time out » to work abroad as a volunteer, was the best I've ever made ! Exploring a new country, learning about its whole culture, being involved in social working, getting in touch with people... this is a life experience ! I must admit I felt absolutely lost the first days: everything is new, impressive, you have lots of new inputs every day, and of course, there is the language barrier ! I didn't take any courses at home, but I would recommend every new volunteer to do it, even if it's just basic. It's not a must, but it makes it a lot easier ! After the first week, I got lost many times with the buses, I also lost my wallet with all my important documents, some money and my VISA card, and I was ready to fly back home ! But a member of the Project Abroad team told me : « It's not time for giving up now, it's time to show that you are able to play the game of life ! » And he was right, thanks for those words ☺

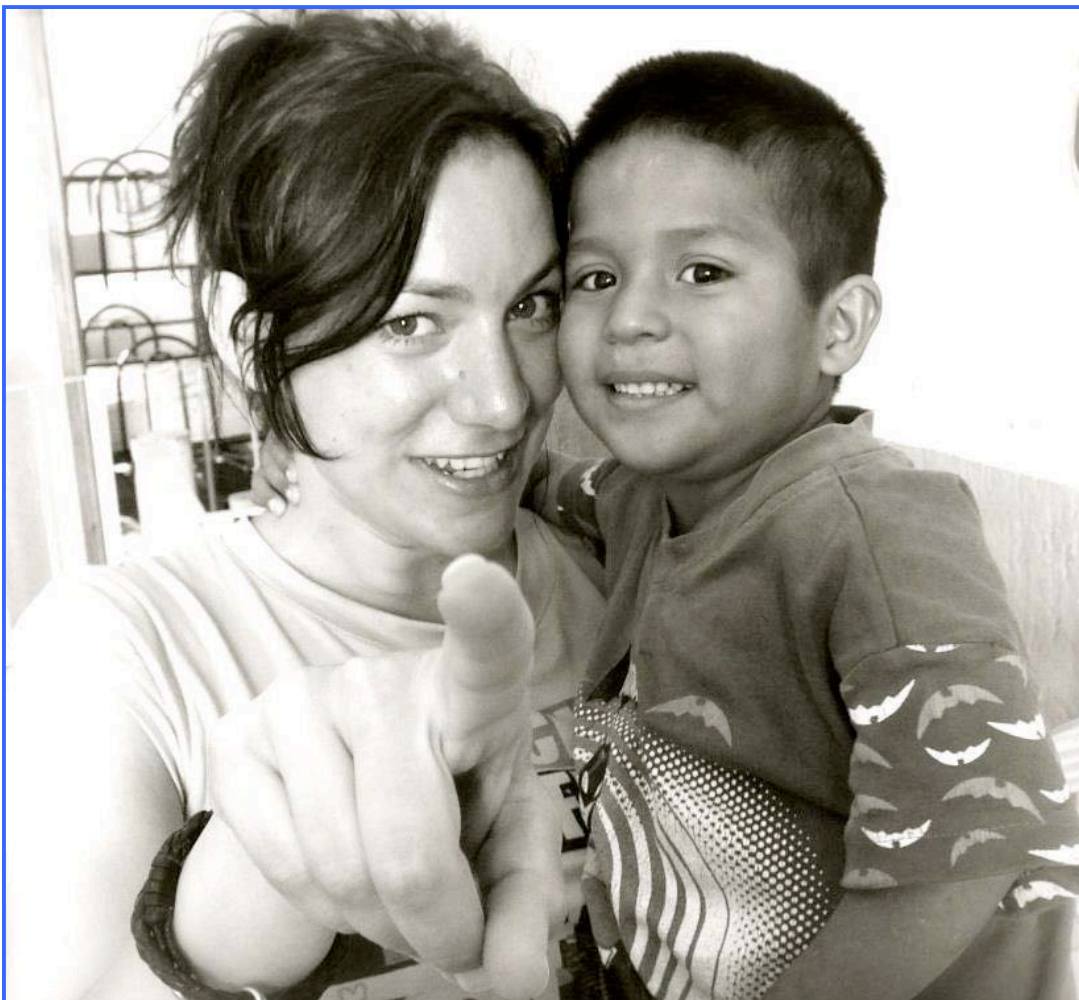
Fortunately, people in here are really friendly, very patient and helpful ! I had the chance to be the first volunteer in a lovely family, who speaks only Spanish, but made me feel like a member of their family until the day I left. It was a very interesting experience for both sides, and it still is. Living here doesn't mean only to share a house with strangers, it is taking part of their everyday life, which is the best way to learn a lot about Mexican culture. I taste great food, they tell me a lot about the Mexican way of living, and they brought me to a few special family events, as for example the « Dios de la muerte » (Day of the Dead). It's amazing to see how different the customs are in here : the whole day is a real celebration ! No people wearing black (except the older generations), and standing in silence in front of gray graves, as I'm used to it in my country. We arrived at the cemetery, which was huge and crowded, people brought flowers, things to eat, and musicians went with us to the family grave to play some Mexican songs, in exchange for a little donation. It was a very interesting experience !

In general, even if you're shy or afraid of making mistakes concerning the language people here in Mexico are grateful about every effort you make!

My working place is the orphanage *Un cielo para un angel* (Sky for an Angel), which is run by a local family. My first day at work was really interesting, but kind of sad at the same time. It's amazing how things can be different in a foreign country, even though we all live in the 21st Century.

They have a different culture but also different ways of functioning, mostly because of the fact that there is a huge lack of money everywhere, which definitely limits their choices concerning how to deal with everyday life. I think the best approach you can have as a volunteer, is simply to be there for these kids, giving them a lot of attention and care, playing with them and trying to share good moments. The kids are also happy to be taught in English and lots of them progress really well! Although you can't change the system that's already in place you can bring a warm smile to the everyday lives of the people you are working with, and that's definitely worth the effort! Giving somebody else the feeling that they exist in your eyes and you in theirs, is the reason that keeps us all alive, no matter what age, which culture or social standing we have. Just spread the love!

A french quote says: 'Votre visage souriant est mon plus beau paysage, votre rire ma plus belle mélodie!' (Your smiling face is my most beautiful landscape, your laugh my sweetest melody)



**Valérie,
Luxembourg**

CD GUZMAN PROJECTS

Cd Guzman is a small city nearby Guadalajara, more of a traditional town where strolls across the park or the typical Sunday ice cream are still happening every week, a beautiful place that hosts some of our projects too. These are some of our projects in Cd Guzman:

Infal

Nursery - Kindergarten Care Placement -
The volunteer's role is to assist the teacher in the classroom by helping to keep the interest and control of the children. It's very important for the volunteers to have a skill so the teachers can give them a chance to teach the kids. Basic English lessons are also an essential role of the volunteer.

Nursery - The volunteers role is to take care of the babies by helping to feed them, change them and to take care of them.



Corazon de Angel - Orphanage

The volunteers role is to help with the kids in general, as well as joining in with activities like playing games and some basic English classes. During lunch time Corazon de angel is linked with Infal volunteers who usually work at the Kindergarten. These volunteers will go on the school bus at the end of classes to help bring the children back to Corazon de Angel and help with the activities there.



Centro De Integracion Juvenil

The role of the volunteer is to do activities with the kids, playing sports, teaching English and getting involved in the programmed activities of the center - if the volunteer had a specific skill that involves Art, Education, Sports or Culture it is always welcome.



VIA RECREATIVA

Via Recreativa is a relatively new social program in the city of Guadalajara that encourages people to spend half a day away from electronic or motorized elements, a program where the biggest avenues and parks in the city are activated every Sunday by making them only available for walks, bikes, skateboards, and many other recreational activities that don't involve any cars, motorcycles or urban transportation.

The program starts every Sunday at 8:00am and finishes at 2:00pm, and it was inaugurated on 12th September 2004; at the beginning it only covered an area of 11 kilometers but now it has been extended all the way to the municipalities Tlaquepaque, Zapopan, Tonalá and Tlajomulco de Zúñiga.

The main goal behind this project is to recover the public areas in the city, to promote the coexistence, communication and social action between the citizens, and promote the use of alternative transportation options.



Even if you don't have a bicycle or skateboard or a dog to walk on the Via Recreativa, you can always join and take part by walking around and stopping by some of the typical breakfast places located all around the Via; You won't regret it!

It's a great way to draw a line with your tv, computer, iphone and witness how the city of Guadalajara comes to life with no motor help!



TEPACHE

Historically, the tepache was made with corn and used as a tribute for those that were important.

Little by little, the ancient natives started adding different kinds of fruits in order to make it a bit sweeter. With time, the entrance of the pineapple into the country gave the people the opportunity to start cultivating this fruit and prepare the tepache of this.

In our days, you can find this drink in some restaurants, street stands and some typical bars.

Tepache is an alcoholic drink made of pineapple husk and brown sugar. After some days in a barrel, the juice becomes sweet and fermented. The brown sugar gives the tepache a very unique, incomparable flavor.

Once you are in Mexico, don't forget to try this lovely drink.
Live the experience...Mexico is yours!



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<http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/groups/255/mexico>



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Mexican Kitchen

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Chilaquiles

Chilaquiles is a typical dish in México; the kind of classic breakfast you can find in every tiny eatery, and it is a great Mexican energy booster to help you with your daily tasks. Mexican chilaquiles are excellent for holiday breakfasts or party munchies.

Ingredients

Mexican

5 to 10 guajillo peppers, stemmed and seeded
2 cloves garlic
1 (8-oz.) can tomato sauce
1 cup water
1 chicken stock cube
3 tbsp. oil
12 corn tortillas, cut into 1-inch strips
1/2 white onion, chopped (optional)
4 oz. shredded Jack cheese



Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 15 to 20 minutes

Place the peppers, garlic, tomato sauce, water and stock cube in a blender or food processor; blend until smooth. Heat the oil in a large non-stick skillet over a medium-high heat. Fry the tortillas until lightly browned and crispy. Add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until tender. Top with the sauce and the cheese. Lower the heat and cook, covered, for 10 to 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and the tortillas have soaked up the sauce.

You can also add beans, 1 or 2 fried eggs and some Mexican green or red salsa to make it a real Mexican power breakfast!

LAS FIESTAS DE OCTUBRE

Las Fiestas de Octubre or October Parties is an annual festival in the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco gathering some of the most famous Mexican artists and arts; like music, handcrafts and Mexican cuisine.

The festival takes place throughout October (1st Saturday of October to the 1st Sunday of November) and made its debut back in 1965, the year of the first Fiestas de Octubre celebration. It's considered to be one of the most important cultural festivities in the state of Jalisco.



The roster includes many exhibitions like classical dance, concerts, ballet, films screening, workshops and the very traditional Palenque, which is a round stage limited by a concrete or wooden fence where an artist performs or it was a word commonly used to make reference to cock fights.

Each year the festival has a different theme, this year it was "America lives in Guadalajara", making reference to the PanAmerican Games which were hosted by the city this year.

These are some of the other themes that have taken place at the festival:

2002 - World Wonders.

2003 - Tales and Legends.

2004 - The Magic of Laughter.

2005 - 40 Years of Parties.

2006 - Magic México.

2007 - The Colors of Jalisco.

2008 - Fantastical Myths.

2009 - Carnivals of the World.

2010 - Mexican Traditions.

2011 - America Vive En Guadalajara.



OCTOBER CELEBRATIONS!

October is a busy month in this country, a time witness many very traditional events.

To start with, we have the biggest Catholic celebration in the whole world happening on October 12th. It takes place in Guadalajara and finishes in Zapopan, the biggest of the Guadalajara's suburbs. This celebration is called "Romeria de la Virgen de Zapopan".

The Virgin of Zapopan, patron saint of Guadalajara since 1734, is considered throughout Jalisco and many other parts of the country, as a miracle maker. After her long pilgrimage through most of the churches in the city, on her birthday (October 12), she begins the 7km journey back home. The *Llevada de la Virgen* takes her from the Guadalajara Cathedral back to the Basilica de Zapopan. Because of her innate gift for helping people, near 2 million people gather for the procession to escort her back, accompanied by prayer, chanting and songs.



Another important celebration is "El Día de la Raza" also celebrated on October 12th and it's traditionally celebrated throughout the Americas as the day Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492.

In English speaking countries, the day is celebrated as Columbus Day or Native American Day. In Spanish speaking countries and communities, it is known as *Día de la Raza*, the Day of the Race.

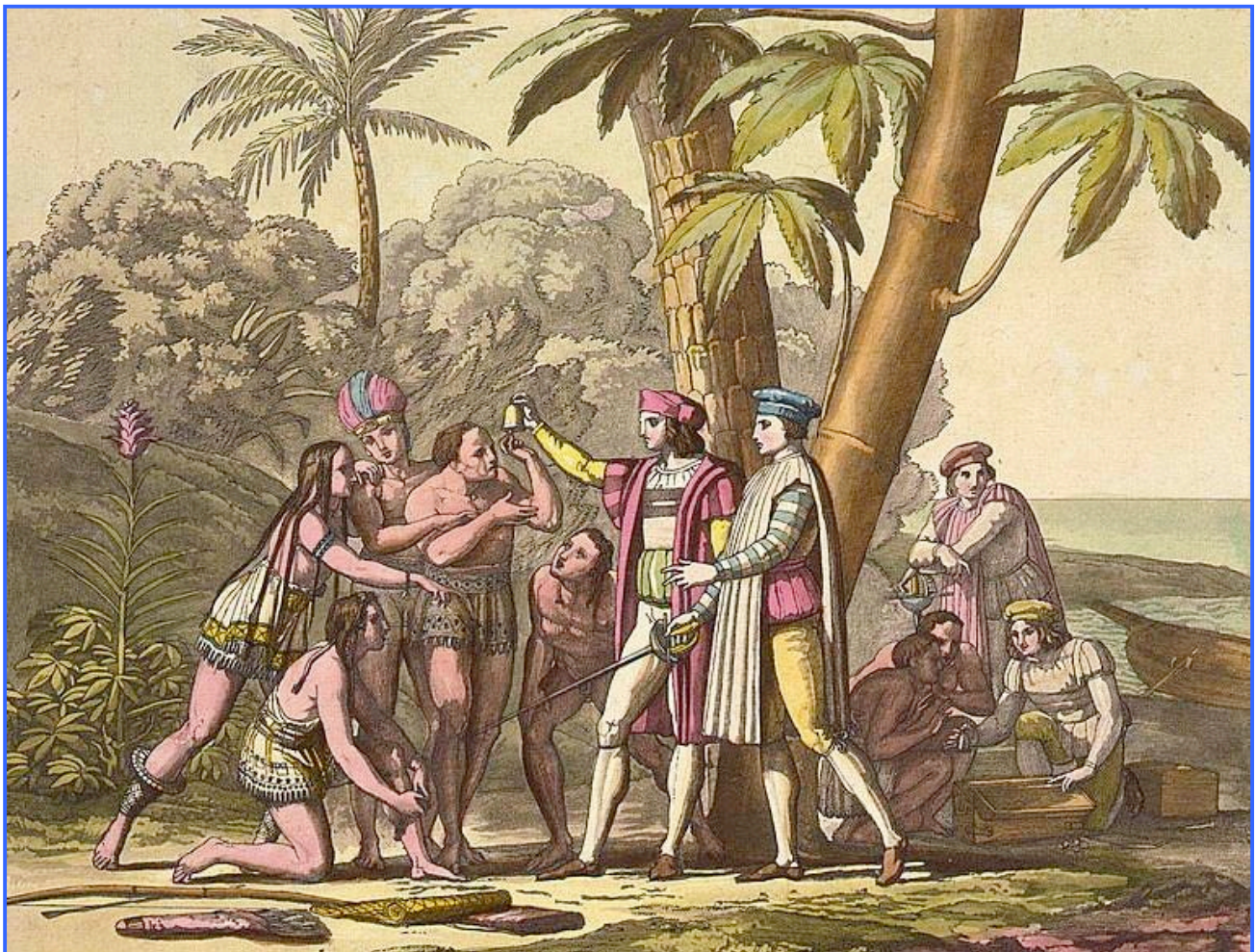
Día de la Raza is the celebration of the Hispanic heritage of Latin America and brings it all into the ethnic and cultural influences making it distinctive.

It is celebrated on October 12th in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Now, 500 plus years later, we recall his deeds and celebrate not Columbus the man, but the actions and influences of all the people who came after him, who blended their European culture with the indigenous cultures and, with difficulty, blood and years of

battle, misunderstandings and treachery, have created the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society we now celebrate with the **Día de la Raza**.

But is this a Curse or blessing? For some people it is the time when our culture and past were lost forever, to others it was a time when the Americas started to evolve! I'll leave it up to you to come up with a personal conclusion.



CONSERVATION UPDATE

It is every now and then that a meteorological phenomenon surprises us as much as this last month of October, when the Hurricane Jova hit the Mexican shores on October 10th. Formed all of a sudden reaching the category 3 out of 5 in the saffir- simpson scale, with sustained winds of 185 km/h, luckily for us the trajectory indicated that the hurricane was due to touch the shores in an area of 120km north from camp. Nevertheless the repercussions caused by the hurricane took effect in a wide radio of the Mexican coast, including the camp area of course.



The effects in camp were not that serious, but the areas surrounding camp suffered considerably as the rains would not stop for several days, the floods took the toll by blocking roads and bringing down constructions, both lagoons opened to sea making patrol impossible for a couple of weeks as a result from the heavy rains that hit higher areas in the state being the only way out for the water.

Even as the camp did not suffered any damages, we had to abandon the facilities by order of the local authorities, Volunteers and staff checked in a hotel in Tecoman, where they had to stay for a couple of days until they were aloud to return to camp.

The reconstruction work earlier this year really paid off, as the facilities could stand against the strong winds and tidal waves. The work in maintenance that our volunteers made proved to be worthy, we know sometimes it is really not their favorite activity but we are truly grateful for their effort.

OLIVER GARCIA
CONSERVATION MANAGER
OCTOBER 2011