



*A Winter Getaway on the Coast of Mexico
A Beach Paradise that is still a Paradise
The Tiny Mexican Beach Town of Troncones*

by Stuart Wasserman

Writer/Photographer Stuart Wasserman began traveling in Mexico in 1973.

By 8 a.m. the Mexican sun has illuminated the tiny beach town of Troncones, splashing its early morning pink light across the town's three mile long sandy beach. Down in front of the Burro Borracho two white snowy egrets silently flirt with each other at the water's edge. A couple of early risers stroll hand in hand along the beach. The color bar on the horizon slowly changes from pink to tangerine to a deep tranquil blue. Temperatures are warming up and there is no need to put on anything more elaborate than a pair of shorts and a shirt, if you are so inclined, in order to begin the day in Troncones – a beach town on the Pacific Coast of Mexico located about 18 miles north of Ixtapa. West coast rush hour? Not here.

I personally have a problem each time I arrive in Troncones. That is, which way to turn once I reach the Y of the beachfront. Do I turn left and head for the Burro Borracho or the Tropic of Cancer in the historical section of town where the restaurants and inns are no more than 10 years old, or do I turn right and head to the newer section where the hotels are all less than five years old? No building in

Troncones is more than two stories high and several are located on little Manzanillo Bay and have restaurants that face smack dab in the center of the setting sun. Margarita anyone?

The Burro Borracho (or drunken donkey) is the granddaddy of the beach front restaurants. The Burro is a simple thatched roofed restaurant where a half-dozen early morning

risers, both locals and tourists, sip coffee, eat breakfast, trade local news (like who happens to be back in town), and then map out another day of perpetual siesta – some of it spent in the shade and some spent tanning under the heat of the Mexican sol.

Today the little hamlet of Troncones, long nestled in the shadow of Ixtapa is finally earning a spot on the tourist map. But make no mistake, Troncones is a different kind of mango. There are no high-rise hotels here, no oversized swimming pools and no discos. So what's the big attraction? Well, just a long beach with a cove at the far end that offers warm water waves, one section with rocks and tide pools that kids and adults may love to explore together, and more birds than your run-of-the-mill beach bum can identify. Simply said, there is little here that hampers serenity and today there are more than 30 different B&B's or bungalows to choose from. And much of the architecture has a Polynesian flair.

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The lovely lobby at the Hotel California

Three Faces of Cabo, Part II

by Robert B. Simmonds

Robert Simmonds, Ph.D., is a psychologist practicing in San Diego, the publisher of Mexico File, and the brother of Dave Simmonds, the editor. He muses on his first trip to Cabo. He can be reached at docbob@emotionalwellness.com

This is the second part of a two-part series.

"You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave..."

– The Eagles, from The Hotel California

Second Face: Tradition

My original intention in going down to Cabo, other than visiting with my friend, Carmel, was to do an article on San Jose del Cabo. Somehow, we at the *Mexico File* had failed to do anything on San Jose in the past, and I didn't know why. After all, the city is 300 years old and actually has some history and culture associated with it. And then I found out why – there's not all that

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más o menos

by David Simmonds

With all of the media discussion centered on who served in Viet Nam and who didn't, and if you didn't, why didn't you, I called a few of my old friends to see if they remember it the same as I do. It was unanimous; no one we knew wanted to go. This was late in the war and by then most of the country was opposed to it. We were all in that age group where you could keep a student deferment for four years, then you had to deal with it. And basically, you had a few clear options. You could volunteer and get in line. Or if your draft number came up (mine was 142) you could pass your physical and go where they sent you. Many of us went to a "draft" doctor to see if we qualified for a physical deferment (I had a double hernia... sorry, Sarge). Some people moved to Canada or just disappeared. Or, if you had connections, you tried to get in the National Guard, a safe place to be during that war.

That's the way it was, and it would be helpful if everyone would just admit it. It had become a very unpopular war that divided our country to a degree not seen since the Civil War. My dad, Air Force career man and WWII pilot, made it no secret that he didn't want me or my brother to go to Southeast Asia. The vast majority of those who are from that era, some now drawing taxpayer supported salaries in our Congress from both political parties and some of whom are now in the administration, did not serve in the armed forces or fight in that war. That said, those who did go have my total respect. I know a few who didn't come home and a few more who wished that they hadn't.

Which brings me to what I meant to focus on here – Mexico has finally agreed to accept the Peace Corps into their country. The first volunteers will arrive this summer, and unlike the usual tasks of working in construction, rural villages or training programs, this group will be sequestered in research centers working on technology, business and science development. They will intentionally not be a visible presence.

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Troncones *Continued*

Teri Terry, Jalaine Hogue and Patti Dooley, three friends from Central California, visited Troncones a year ago March and



Graceful beaches provide ideal walks

were pleasantly surprised. They had reservations for staying three days in Troncones and then moved, as planned, to an expensive Zihuatanejo beach front hotel. After the trip, Terry said all three wished that they had stayed in tiny Troncones.

Troncones is laid-back, but not without amenities. There are screens to keep insects out of the rooms, fans to keep cool and some inns have swimming pools. Bathrooms are clean and colorfully decorated with local Mexican hand-crafted tiles. Hammocks adorn most porches. There is cold beer.

Dewey McMillin, a Seattle native and ex-Alaska fisherman, founded the beach front Burro Borracho restaurant in 1992. At that time he had to hustle to keep it open. He would drive into Ixtapa and bring guests back with him for the afternoon. He advertised complete fish and lobster lunches, unlimited beer and return transportation for \$10US. McMillin was such a good salesman that people came for the afternoon, got the Troncones bug, and then returned to buy land.

That happened to Ed and Ellen Weston of Santa Cruz, California, present-day owners of Casa Ki, a complex of several well-appointed wooden bungalows and a



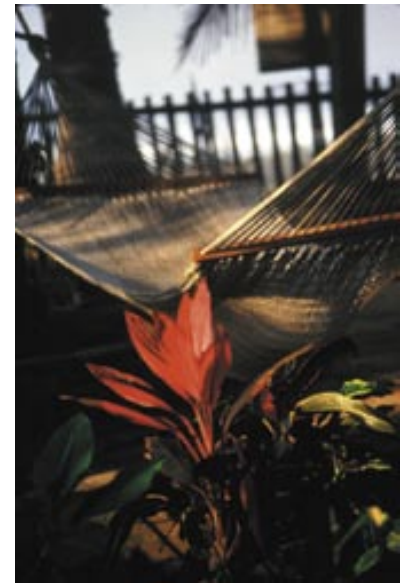
Signs of the times as Troncones grows



Bungalow Azul, a tempting hideaway

house, all set under a grove of coconut trees just steps from the Pacific Ocean. They came out with McMillan, fell in love with the town, and one month later returned to Mexico to begin building in a dream setting. In the six years they have operated Casa Ki, the Westons say they have had more than two dozen guests who now have built homes or B&Bs along the beach. To view some of the B&Bs in town just type the words "Troncones Mexico" in your computer web browser.

"For the small operators like all of us here," McMillin says, "the web is the big equalizer. We couldn't compete otherwise with the advertising dollars of the big hotel chains in Ixtapa." Troncones with its



Hammock among the flowers at Casa Ki

growing number of accommodations and assorted restaurants is having an impact on the local community. According to McMillin: "Ten years ago about 80 people from the town would walk the two and a half miles to the main road to go to work in Ixtapa or Zihuatanejo. Today 100 to 200 people come to Troncones everyday for work."

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Searching among the rocks for shells

Part of the attraction of Troncones is a *tranquillo* feeling between the village population and the newcomers. And that is due to the people who have located there. McMillin set the standard early on. Each year he throws a Christmas Party for the Mexican residents of the town which number about 400. He provides 30 piñatas for the community's boy and girls. He has done that for ten years running.

Casa Ki owner, Ellen Weston, worked for 20 years as a registered nurse in the Central Valley of California. Today she uses her nursing skills for the benefit the townspeople. Weston often finds families turning to her for medical care since Troncones is much too small for a government health clinic. Weston has even served at times as the town's veterinarian. Other B&B owners bring school supplies each time they return to Troncones and one resident has donated the money needed to build a library for the grammar school.

Longtime Santa Cruz resident Glen Novey owns the Smiling Dolphin. Located about a half mile north of Casa Ki, the Smiling Dolphin was the first B&B with a swimming pool. Up until a few years ago Novey was the self-described King

of the Road, but the road keeps expanding in Troncones. Novey is well known for the personal attention he shows his guests, going so far as organizing side trips in the area and volunteering as the chauffeur and guide if they so desire.

Among the newest B&B's on the scene are the Regalo de Mar and Posada de los Raqueros. Each offers uniquely appointed spaces and charge about \$100, depending on the season. Three years ago the Hotel Eden popped up, built by Jim Garritty and Eva Robbins, American émigrés from Hong Kong. She worked in a stock brokerage and he as corporate lawyer. They built a six-room hotel and found guests returning the very first year. Now they have added four one-story bungalows to the property. The Eden's Sunday Barbecue draws the local and tourist crowd who savor chef Christian Schirmer's free range chicken, tasty ribs and fresh fish. Schirmer's restaurant, the Cocina del Sol, serves hearty dinners and is a popular gathering spot in town at sunset. The view from here at sunset can't be beat. But next door the chef at the Inn at Manzanillo Bay makes killer jumbo shrimp cooked just right in garlic and butter.

Changes have come rapidly to Troncones. Last year the turnoff road from coastal Highway 200 to the beach was paved. Two years ago the town fathers built a water line that runs to the Eden Hotel and the Inn at Manzanillo Bay, making it cheaper for the Inn to fill its swimming pool. Electricity came to the town all of four years ago. Residents and inn owners there were happy to join the modern e-mail era. Yes, all of the modern conveniences have arrived, but no chain hotels yet – *gracias por Dios* – thank God.

Troncones is also attracting a yoga crowd because of its isolation and tranquility and because of the level of comfort the American and Canadian owned B&B's provide. At the Hotel Eden yoga students can take classes in the morning within earshot of the crashing waves, eat a lunch of fresh fish, perhaps tuna or red snapper, or feast on a large chicken burrito. Vegetarian? *No problema!* Christian will fill that burrito with plenty of ripe avocado and heaps of tasty and spicy salsa.

Troncones might not be for everybody. The beach front road, though improved, can still be dusty. Few places offer TV. There's a lack of night life. But there are other activities should one get bored with reading, swimming and sun worship. Dewey McMillan and a partner have added a Costa Rican like jungle ride through the top of the forest for ecological thrill seekers. And now on Sunday nights the Burro Borracho offers a traditional Mexican folk dance floor show. The dancers come from the neighboring high school. The show is free but Dewey passes the hat and all tips go directly to the school for textbooks and other supplies.

With a car Troncones can be seen in an afternoon on a journey from Zihuatanejo or Ixtapa but an overnight stay affords the time for an early morning or late afternoon walk along the coast. The place is ideal except that the prices are in U.S. dollars and not pesos. But \$80 to \$100 a night might not be any higher than a high-rise glass enclosed hotel in Ixtapa and look at what you get here – peace and tranquility – which some people may call priceless.

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Splendid food,

quiet shaded dining,

great transportation,

friendly faces,

and tranquil pools.



TIA ROSA

by Bruce McGovern

Tia Rosa, in her early seventies, lives in the dusty, little mountain village where my wife was born. She's the product of an era when one of the daughters was designated to remain home, illiterate and unwed, to care for her parents in their old age.

Hey, it worked! She was almost fifty, unwed and illiterate, when her father died. And, she was nearly sixty, still unwed and illiterate, when her mother died at age 99.

Your first impression of Tia would probably be the same as mine was. A bit disheveled; a face brown and wrinkled as an old shoe; and a twisted body. In the sixties, an earthquake caused the roof to fall on her. She was abandoned for dead, until everyone believed to be alive was rescued. When her body was extricated for burial, she was still alive, and had repeated surgery in DF. She was able to limp around, and cooked over a wood fire for a family of six men for at least another 35 years.

I no longer see a brown, wrinkled, old woman. I see a sweet, old aunt who wouldn't hurt a flea. A sweet, old aunt who loves to see a family enjoying a good meal she cooked. An aunt who grinned when I gave her a lollipop, and told her it was because she'd been a good girl. And, the next morning, she fried two eggs for me, and, smirking, told me it was because I'd been a good boy.

On November 3 we were eating breakfast, around the "stove" of stones where the cooking fire is. Suddenly, she vomited, and started to fall over. Someone grabbed her. My wife shouted they believed she was having a heart attack. I told her, QUICK, to give her two aspirin to suck.

We couldn't find the aspirin, so I tried to run 1/8 mile up the mountain to get mine. By the time I returned, thinking maybe I needed two aspirin myself, my wife had located her aspirin, but Tia simply swallowed them.

My wife said Tia's left eye was twisted, and her left hand was numb and useless. I

told her that means there is an obstruction in the circulation of blood to her brain.

My wife said, "Well, I'm not a doctor, so I don't have an opinion." She said it in that tone that implies "You're not a doctor, either."

I said, "I know I'm not a doctor, but when I see someone who has a crowbar in his chest, I know he's seriously injured."

The young uncle hurried off to get a doctor. My friend, the doctor, was away on vacation. Seventy minutes after the attack, Dr. Ulisses arrived. By that time, her left hand and eye were working again, but she still couldn't speak.

The doctor gave her a thorough examination, then explained how the blood circulated in the brain, and explained that something was blocking the circulation of the blood to part of her brain.

He had us put a thick blanket under her, and, holding the blanket by the edges, we carried her to a pickup truck and went bouncing on the rocky road to the hospital. She was in the closest IMSS (government) hospital two hours after the initial attack. The doctor there announced she needed to take aspirin right away. My wife told him we already gave her two, and he was pleased, so we were sure we hadn't done any harm giving them to her.

Two days later, she started speaking again.

The fifth day in the hospital, they took her in the hospital's ambulance to Puebla for x-rays, similar to a CAT scan, I think. The family had to pay about \$130 for this.

The next day, she was released. She has a restricted diet, with no fat and no spicy foods, such as chiles. My wife said it is possible in Mexico to find such foods.

She also is supposed to take 150 mg. of aspirin every 6 to 12 hours.

When she left, she was much as ever, except she is staying with a young nephew at the edge of the ranch, and his wife is doing the cooking. I do expect to see Tia Rosa cooking again. It's hard to keep a good woman down.

Three Faces of Cabo *Continued*



The Municipal Building on Boulevard Mijares

much to write about. So, my article had to focus on three different places in the Cabo region, San Lucas, Todos Santos, and San Jose – three faces of Cabo, each one quite different from the other two.

San Jose del Cabo is a thriving, small Mexican city (population about 25, 000). While San Lucas caters to a younger and partying crowd, a more sedate, perhaps more experienced, tourist presence is felt in San Jose. The Jesuits in the 18th century who founded San Jose located it a couple of kilometers away from the Sea of Cortez, up on a mesa and closer to the fresh water that flows down from the nearby mountains – which turned out to be fortuitous since now the hotels near the water don't block the view of the sea from the town (little did the Jesuits know!). Today you can see century-old buildings throughout the town and the lush greenery makes the town feel tropical (which is it, actually – it's below the Tropic of Cancer by several miles). Employment is provided in the public service and tourism sectors, and it lures people from all over Baja California. A good contingent of the population is composed of foreigners. The lands surrounding



The Iglesia on the Plaza in San Jose

San Jose are spotted with orchards of mangoes, citrus, avocados and bananas. As you get down nearer to the sea, the architecture turns modern (the houses look like they belong in very nice parts of California). And the hotels and time-shares are on the water. Some very impressive condominium buildings are going up on the hill just south of town. It has the feel of a laid-back town that's experiencing a busy period. And it has a quality feel about it. Things are well built and look nice (except on the road up to the airport, where you see lots of concrete blocks, corrugated steel, and dusty streets). There are many people out on the streets of the central district near the *iglesia* and the plaza.

Carmel got an urge to look at some condos while she was in San Jose, especially since I had been lukewarm on her idea of getting a time-share. And, coincidentally, as we got out of the car and headed toward the plaza, there was a Century 21 office. We looked at some pictures of properties for sale they had posted on the walls. And out came Paul Geisler to help us. Paul, a diver, has been living in Cabo for eight years, and he's now married to a Mexican and fully established in Mexico. He dives and makes a good living selling real estate. He has his own business, Dream Homes of Cabo (pgeisler@prodigy.net.mx; website at www.dreamhomesofcabo.com). Paul showed Carmel one condo while I wandered by myself up to the plaza, but she didn't seem very excited about it, claiming that it was too dark.



The Plaza in San Jose is decorated for Christmas

The plaza is surrounded by beautiful old buildings, many of them now converted to jewelry shops, a few food establishments and artisan shops. Several of the shops on the plaza have an impressive selection of high end crafts from Mexican artists – and true to Cabo's reputation, the prices are also on the high end. There's not much bargaining in San Jose, and to try is somewhat insulting. After Carmel and I met up again, we had lunch at the Tropicana, a palapa covered restaurant on Boulevard Mijares, just a block from the plaza. I had fish tacos (very good) and she had a shrimp cocktail (the very best).

The estuary (or Estero San Jose) is a large lagoon fed by the freshwater Rio San Jose and kept in place by a sandbar, in normal times. Unfortunately, Cabo was hit by two hurricanes

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A tropical ambience in the shopping district of San Jose

Posada La Poza – Slice of Heaven at the End of a Dirt Road

by Ann Hazard
Photo Credit: Terry Hauswirth

*Ann Hazard, a frequent contributor to Mexico File, is the author of **Cooking with Baja Magic, Cartwheels in the Sand**, and the more recently released **Agave Sunsets**. She has also written over 100 articles on Baja, Mexico, and Mexican cuisine. Visit her at <http://bajamagic.com>.*

There's a saying in Baja that the worst roads always lead to the best places. There's always a deserted beach involved. Privacy, beauty and ample wildlife are essential. Camping is the order of the day. Rarely is there a world-class hotel at the end of one of these very bad roads. There are a few scattered up and down the peninsula, but not many.

Baja California Sur's newest luxury outpost has only seven rooms. It's located in the artist colony of Todos Santos – 1.9 kilometers west of town on a predictably

The cries of the birds blend with the pounding of the surf, the steady splash of the pool's waterfall and the hum of dragonfly wings.

What else is there to do? Well, if you're hungry or thirsty, the bar and restaurant are only steps away. If you're feeling curious, take a walk through the gardens and try to identify the different types of flowers, trees and cacti. Hot? Jump in the saltwater pool. Want exercise? Take a walk through the jungle to the beach or work out at the gym next to the lagoon. Borrow a mountain bike and explore nearby beaches. Todos Santos is known for its secret surf spots and its art. At last count there were over 600 expatriate artsy types living in and around town. It's easy to lose an afternoon wandering through the town and exploring the galleries. At sunset, go back to the hotel, climb up to Whale Deck and count whale spouts, with a romantic candlelight dinner afterward.

This time of year standard rooms are \$150 per night. Junior suites are \$225 and the honeymoon suite is \$480. Rates are lower in the summer months. Posada

Poza hosts relax



Poza Palapa pool and rooms



The pool and lagoon



deserted stretch of beach, at the end of a bumpy, twisty, rock-strewn dirt road. Owned by a retired Swiss banker (who also happens to be a superb chef) and his Czech artist wife, it is an intensely personal place – a tropical palm-filled oasis of style and tranquility that's only an hour away from Cabo San Lucas.

The most popular form of entertainment here is relaxing on a chaise lounge and watching the 70 species of birds as they frolic in the lagoon. Pelicans soar by, riding the warm air currents. Occasionally they dive bomb, scooping fish out of the water. Frigate birds glide along the surface, touch down like seaplanes, snatch up a shrimp, fish or crab and sail off. Least terns, cranes and ducks share the waters with them.

La Poza is located one hour south of the La Paz Airport and an hour and a half from the Los Cabos Airport. For more information, visit www.lapoza.com or call 001-52-612-145-0400.



Más o Menos *Continued*

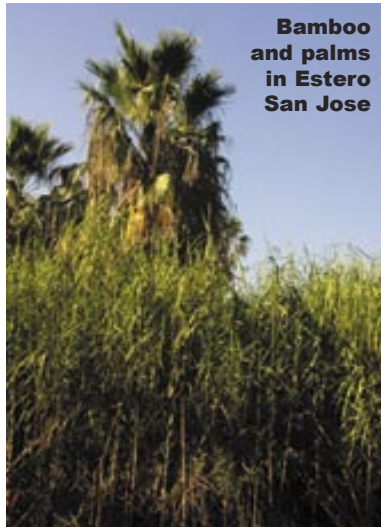
Mexico has historically shunned aid from the United States, wanting to keep its sovereignty and independence unquestioned. But in the wake of the divide created when Mexico would not support the U.S. invasion of Iraq, this is seen as an attempt at a reconciliation with Washington. We need all of the friends we can get these days, especially ones right across our border.





Street scene on Boulevard Mijares in San Jose

this past autumn and the sandbar was washed away...and there went the lagoon, into the Sea of Cortez. We had hoped to rent a kayak but the water wasn't deep enough, so we had to resort to renting horses instead. We found the perfect stable just across the street (Paseo San José) from the Presidente Inter-Continental Los Cabos, a very impressive resort hotel. Juan guided us on horseback up the river and through



Bamboo and palms in Estero San Jose

realtor who took her to the condominiums, Vista Encanto, in San Jose. This is an edifice of fabulous condos, brand new, on the hill south of San Jose. Up top is a pool with a panoramic view of the Sea of Cortez, as well as a restaurant and a holistic health center. Down below the

Third Face: Bliss

Todos Santos is one of those places on the planet that glows with spiritual energy, and I guess that's why so many artistic types make their home there. It's an old Mexican town founded in 1724 that is surrounded by orchards of avocados, citrus, mangoes, papayas, guavas and coconuts that are irrigated by the fresh water that comes in an underground stream from the Sierra de la Laguna to the east. It was originally established by the Jesuits as a farming community to supply the mission in La Paz with vegetables, fruits, sugarcane and wine. As is the case with San Jose, the town was built inland by a few miles, not directly on the ocean, to be closer, I assume, to the fresh water and for protection against storms that come off of the Pacific. Todos Santos is cooled by the Pacific breezes, so it's about ten degrees F cooler than other spots in Cabo that are influenced by the warmer Sea of Cortez.



Bird life abounds in the estuary in San Jose

groves of palms, bamboo, and marsh grasses. There are about 200 species of birds at the estuary and we saw birds unlike anything we had seen before (not that we're birders, although we both said we'd like to be).

One morning back in San Lucas I met up with Carmel at Plaza Las Glorias, her hotel, and she said that she had bought a framed photograph and ... uh ... a condo. She had spent the early morning with a



Carmel rents a horse from Juan at the stable across from the Presidente Inter-Continental Los Cabos in San Jose

pool is a mini-deli. Each condo has a patio with a jacuzzi. Carmel met Francisco Cedano, the architect, and was so taken with his Mexican honesty, trustworthiness, and goodness that she signed a contract for a small condo. (In all fairness, when she got back to New York, she was advised not to follow through with this...and since the contract had never been notarized, she was able to get out of it – and she did, although she still thinks about how happy she would have been there, a case of nonbuyer's remorse.) The web address of these condos is www.vistaencanto.com. When we went to see her condo on a separate trip to San Jose, I met Francisco and he made sure that I had a sample contract to take back to the States. Francisco is a shrewd businessman.



The Rio San Jose at the Estuary in San Jose

Most of the older buildings in town have been there for the past 100 to 150 years and the population today numbers about 6,000. A good number of those are *norteamericanos* who comprise the artist's colony – artists, surfers, organic farmers, and a seasonal contingent of Californians from the media world who come down for the winter. Joe Cummings, the author of the Moon Handbooks on Mexico and the American who knows more about

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What's left of the freshwater lagoon in Estero San Jose



Palms and marsh grasses in the Estero San Jose

The author and Carmel on horseback at the Estero San Jose (photo by Juan)



Mexico than almost anyone, made his home in Todos Santos before relocating to Australia – a testament to the special ambience of this small Mexican town.

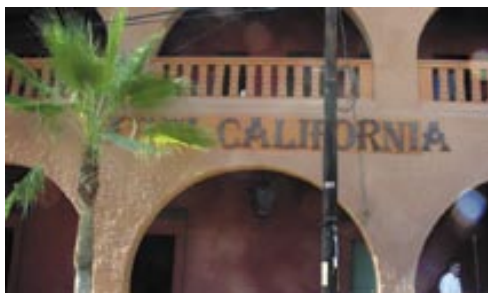
The Hotel California in Todos Santos has reopened, and it's spectacular. They say it's a myth that the Eagles song was based on the hotel in Todos Santos – but I choose to believe it's not myth, mainly because the ambience of the hotel is so reflective of the mood of the song. We went into the



A quiet street scene in Todos Santos

lobby and explored. Just as I was opening a door to the rooms, garden and pool area, thinking we were alone in the lobby, I heard a serene voice asking if I needed help. This was Debbie Stewart, a Canadian who recently bought and renovated the hotel with her husband, John. The hotel has a bar and La Coronela Restaurant and there are eleven recently renovated rooms

for rent, ranging in price from \$75 to \$125 in the summer season and from \$125 to \$175 during the winter. Contact Debbie and John at hotelcaliforniareervations@hotmail.com. During my conversation with Debbie and John, they described how at the Hotel California, you can check in but you can't check out, referring to a line from the Hotel California song by the Eagles, and that really stuck with me, even though that wasn't quite the line from the song. Once I got back to San Diego, I heard the



Outside the Hotel California... Where you can never leave

song on the clock radio in a half-dreamlike state as I waking up...but by the time I was fully awake, I had forgotten it. So I wrote to my good friend, Maryanne Wilson, a *MF* contributor living in Manhattan, and she sent me the real last lines from the song – “You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave.” And that's my true feeling about Todos Santos – a part of my spiritual being resides there and it won't leave. “Welcome to the Hotel California, such a lovely place, such a lovely place.”

It's amazing to find a world-class Italian restaurant in a small, isolated Mexican village. That's the Café Santa Fé located across from the plaza on Calle Centenario. Its eighteen inch adobe walls surround the indoor seating area – and the outdoor patio in the middle courtyard is a place to see and be seen. I opted for pizza with anchovies and Carmel had penne with a meat sauce. The cuisine lives up to its reputation. The

ambience is quiet and dignified and the service is peerless. Reservations at (612) 14-503-40.

Carmel and I took a walk through the streets of Todos Santos, gawking at views and talking with some of the Mexican and *norteamericano* residents of the village. The in-town scenery suggests an archetype of domesticity, laid back living and good times. We had a nice chat with Michael Cope, who, with his wife, Pat, owns the Galeria de Todos Santos. Michael showed us some of his huge portraits themed in white, as well as the paintings of other town residents, and he talked about some of his experiences living in Todos Santos for the past eight years. Email Michael at mpcope@prodigy.net.mx, or phone at (612) 14-505-00. We took a tour of the Todos Santos Inn, just up the street from Michael's gallery. Craig Sinel and his partner, John Stoltzfus, have transformed



The entrance to the World Class Café Santa Fe in Todos Santos



Carmel in bliss in Todos Santos

the former hacienda of a sugar baron into a sensitively-restored village inn. Their care with detail in exquisite rooms, in the pool and patio area in the courtyard, and in the wine bar has created an oasis for the traveler who appreciates quiet luxury.

I met a young Mexican man, Ricardo, who has recently married and built a shop on

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Old adobe walls on a street in Todos Santos



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About Mexico

Mexico City Festival

The 20th Annual Historic Downtown Festival of Mexico will be held in the nation's capital March 10 - 28, 2004. Over a million local and foreign visitors are expected to attend during the two weeks of events that include concerts, theater, art exhibits, dance productions, lectures, conferences and exciting gourmet fare. All of the money raised will go towards the rescue and restoration of the architecture and art of Mexico City's downtown area, a World Heritage site since 1987. For updated information visit www.fchmexico.com or email festival@fchmexico.com

Krispy Kreme Invades Mexico

As if there aren't enough carbs in the Mexican diet, carbohydrate and fat-laden Krispy Kreme doughnuts has opened their first store in Interlomas, a wealthy suburb just west of Mexico City. They have plans for at least 19 more stores in the country within six years. For those of us who have enjoyed the local *panaderias* for years for purchasing *pan dulce* and *bolillos*, this appears to be globalization gone too far.

Casinos May be Coming

After a 70-year prohibition, Mexico is considering, once again, the authorizing of gambling casinos at select locations throughout the country. The subject has come up every year for the last decade, but eventually gets shot down in the decision-making process. Driving the current interest is the obvious monetary benefit that would be derived, a mighty consideration in today's economic environment.

Ex-President Portillo Dies

Jose Luis Portillo, president of Mexico from 1976 to 1982, died recently of pneumonia at the age of 83. Apparently, few in Mexico were saddened by his passing, as he was seen as the leader who led the country into a cataclysmic economic crisis. Portillo took office shortly after Mexico had discovered vast oil reserves that promised vast wealth and development for the country, upon which Portillo borrowed billions of dollars against the future revenue. But when oil prices slumped and widespread corruption was uncovered, Mexico found itself in debt to

Three Faces of Cabo *Continued*

Calle Juarez. He was studying his English lesson when I came across him. He told me all about moving from the mainland, meeting up with family members in Todos Santos, and talked about his aspirations for the future. I liked him so much – his gentility, his integrity – that I bought a blanket from him, even though we must have ten of these things at home.

On the plaza at Calle Legaspi #3 is the Hotel Todos Santos, home to a small hotel, a gallery and the Restaurante Santanas. All of this has been created by Brad Baer, who has lived in Todos Santos for the past three years (he moved up from Cabo San Lucas). Brad is related to Max Baer (the boxer, and also to the actor from the Beverly Hillbillies). Brad is starting a nonprofit corporation to promote the town, and he also wants to start bringing music festivals to Todos Santos. The hotel rooms are on the plaza with a view of the Iglesia del Pilar, the huge church on the plaza. The rooms are light and breezy and furnished with colonial pieces. The hotel retains the old adobe walls of a sugar mill owner's hacienda and its vaulted ceilings with black palm beams. Prices are excellent, starting at \$55 in the off season and at \$65 during the November - May high season. Contact Brad at brad@hoteltodosantos.com or visit the website at www.hoteltodosantos.com, telephone (612) 14-500-09.

We had been told not to drive in Baja after dark. It's just too dangerous. We made a point to leave Todos Santos well before dark. Carmel, however, did see a little shrine to St. Jude by the side of the highway on the drive up and wanted to stop there on the drive back to San Lucas. This was a magical little place, hot from

The Teatro on the Plaza in Todos Santos



the tune of \$80 billion. When the currency devalued by nearly 42 percent in 1982, many families' life savings were lost. At the completion of his six-year term, Portillo fled to Spain and Italy to live.



The Plaza in Todos Santos

the hundreds of candles lit within the small shrine – and she spent some prayer time in there while I explored the trail through the brush out back. Back driving again, it was getting dark – and darker. Screeeeecchhhh...there was a cow ambling lazily across the road, in the dark, and I didn't see it until we were almost right on top of it. We veered a bit to the right in the car, off the road, and we missed the cow. Carmel said that we were being watched over by St. Jude. And after our blissful day in Todos Santos, I wasn't inclined to disagree.



Posada La Poza *Continued*

To Go: Many American airlines now fly directly to the Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo International Airport. Troncones is just a short bus trip or car rental ride away. Several of the inns and B&B's will arrange taxi pick-up for guests. Air conditioned rooms are available.

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