

December 2014

**Manzanillo**

# SUN

Manzanillo's Lifestyle E-Magazine

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## Chimulco Parque Acuatico

Dear Ian,

I just read the latest edition of the Manzanillo sun and enjoyed it very much. It is always interesting. I thought we should add to the article on RVing in Mexico. We have RV'd from Calgary to Manzanillo and returned many times. We have taken almost every route possible over the years. We have stayed in numerous campgrounds. But, our favorite is located in Villa Corona, Jalisco. It is on the free road from Guadalajara to Manzanillo approximately 30 km. west of Guadalajara. We love it and have stayed there numerous times.

The big attraction for us in the wonderful naturally hot spring fed pools. They are very large, well maintained pools fed by 100 degree natural underground springs. The pools are drained every evening and scrubbed clean early every morning. They open the pools one by one starting at approximately 8AM. The grounds have beautifully maintained gardens with huge trees and plantings. There are two pools especially designed for the young ones with water slides and other attractions. There are even private pools that can be reserved by couples or families.

We are always surprised how many European travelers enjoy the Chimulco Parque Acuatico including several RV caravans mostly from Quebec, Canada.

If you want to stay at the park but don't have an RV, there are several very clean cottages equipped for short or weekly stays just next to the RV Park in a garden setting only steps from the pools.

We plan on a weekend getaway now we don't have our RV down in Manzanillo. We will choose a weekend and reserve a cottage and relax in this peaceful little park.

You can go on-line to [www.chimulco.com.mx](http://www.chimulco.com.mx) and enjoy their website. The park is owned by brothers and very well operated.

Have Fun!

Lynn and Larry

Las Brisas, Manzanillo

Link: <http://www.chimulco.com.mx/trailer-park/>

**Do you have a favorite stop enroute to or from Manzanillo, let us know your thoughts.**

Editor.



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**Agave, *Nephrolepis exaltata* - I**  
Family: Agavoideae  
(Also known as Century Plant, Maguay or American Aloe)

The Greek word *agauos* means “of kings and heroes, illustrious, hence noble” and, good full-time residents of Mexico as we are, we’ll drink to that! (Have you ever had one of Patty’s Mango Margaritas? If so, you’ll understand!)

The several varieties of Agave are native to Mexico, Central America, and the southwestern desert of the United. But as, perhaps, Mexico’s most iconic plant it most often thought of as being from the Land of the Aztecs, Mayans and Toltecs.

Arriving in “New Spain” in 1529, Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún described agave as looking like a giant artichoke and cited how the local farmers planted rows of them to anchor terraced farming fields. He was especially interested in the agaves’ medicinal properties and took note of its use in rituals.

In the 1843 published “The History of the Conquest of Mexico” by William H. Prescott, he, as well, referred to the agave with admiration. He cited how “the miracle of nature was the great Mexican aloe, or maguey, whose clustering pyramids of flowers, towering above their dark coronals of leaves. Its bruised leaves afforded a paste from which paper was manufactured, its juice was fermented into an intoxicating beverage, pulque; its leaves further supplied an impenetrable thatch for the



This Agave field is in Southern Jalisco.

more humble dwellings; thread, of which coarse stuffs were made, and strong cords, were drawn from its tough and twisted fibers; pins and needles were made from the thorns at the extremity of its leaves; and the root, when properly cooked, was converted

into a palatable and nutritious food. The agave, in short, was meat, drink, clothing and writing materials. Surely, never did Nature enclose in so compact a form so many of the elements of human comfort and civilization!” Now, there was a man who admired the Agave!

The twentieth-century Mexican historian Fernando Benítez described the maguey in this way, “Like a horse of the plant-world, it is capable of retaining a great quantity of water and making it through the worst of droughts. So as to not let go of a single drop, it armors itself like medieval warriors with an impermeable shield and numerous thorns to keep its enemies at bay.”

Its other name, Century Plant, isn’t quite correct with the life span of an Agave ranging from five to seventy years. However, a common trait of all the 200 species is that each plant flowers but once. After that, the mother plant dies, leaving her offspring to grow from its roots and

flower seeds. The flowers, however, are rather spectacular perched high atop the plant's stalk that, on the largest plants, may be 24 to 30 feet (eight to ten meters high).

Now here's an interesting fact! In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when farming boomed in the mid-west U.S., the three feet (one meter) long fibers from Henequen agave was used to make twine to bale hay. The fiber - known in the United States as sisal - was called that because it was shipped from the Yucatecan port of Sisal. The Henequen haciendas in the Yucatan provided a tremendous source of wealth. In fact, at the turn of the twentieth century, the city of Merida had the world's highest per-capita number of millionaires with these palatial mansions still lining Paseo de Montejo.

However and somewhat obviously, today's best-known agave products are tequila – most of which is made in the State of Jalisco with and mezcal mainly produced in Oaxaca. Both of these modern day drinks are produced through a European distillation process. The early Mesoamericans simply fermented the agave sap to produce pulque. This is a liquor with an alcoholic content similar to beer - a tradition still maintained today. But, in that the fermentation never stops one can't bottle pulque.

Probably the most recognized is the Blue Agave, often pictured on Tequila brand-labels. Some of the other well-known species are *Agave American*, *Agave American 'Variegata'* – often called the century plant in nurseries, *Agave parryi* (Mescal Agave) and *Agave Victoria-reginae*, or called by one of two common names, the Queen Victoria Century Plant and Royal Agave. Another favorite of mine is the Green Agave, *Agave salmiana 'Green Giant'*

Some of the most extensive plantations remain in the Yucatan Peninsula's henequen fields. In turn, perhaps the fastest growing agave thrives along the Texas border with Chihuahua and Coahuila where that species' flower stalk grows at the rate of a foot a day!

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My Sugar Plum Patty and a beast of an *Agave Americana*.



Agave "pineapples" ready to become tequila!



**Asparagus Fern**, *Protasparagus densiflorus 'Sprengeri'*  
**Family:** Strelitziaceae  
 (Known by no other names)

What we commonly call Asparagus Fern is, in fact, neither – not an asparagus as we think of them (though in the same family) and not a fern! If the truth be known, they are actually members of the Lily family. They are native to the coastal areas in the southeastern part of the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa.

The *Protasparagus densiflorus 'Sprengeri'* is one of the most popular. These are for visually enjoying as - the name notwithstanding - don't try to eat them because all parts have an unpleasant toxicity.

Regardless of that fact, several different varieties of Asparagus Fern have been grown as house plants since the late 19th century. They are favorites for such in that they grow fast and need little attention or maintenance. The *'Sprengeri'* has its dense fern-like foliage which forms an arching mound that matures to one to three feet (30 ½ - 91 ½ cm) tall spreading to three to four feet (91 ½ - 122 cm) wide and which can be trained to cascade down from a hanging planter, or to grow somewhat like a vine.

Upon first perusal of them one might wonder about those needle-like leaves. Actually, they are cladodes which perform the necessary process of the plants photosynthesis. Its actual leaves are quite tiny, scale-like and appear where the cladode meets the stem.



What we commonly call Asparagus Fern is, in fact, neither

Sprenger's Asparagus is a branching perennial with wiry green stems that are sparsely covered with clusters of three to four, ¾" (1.9 cm) in size, cladodes along the stem. They produce small white or pinkish-white flowers in the spring, followed by green berries that will turn red by mid-winter and which birds love!

Now if you are near a Sprenger's Fern please don't read the following out loud for fear of hurting its tender feelings. This particular variety has actually been declared a noxious weed in the States of Florida, Hawaii and in New Zealand.

But in locales like ours where we enjoy and appreciate them, they, like the more conventional ferns, requires the same basic care whether grown indoors or out. They prefer bright, indirect sun. Direct, hot sunlight will scorch its needles. Conversely, insufficient sunlight will cause theme to yellow and drop off. And, if given the choice, they would prefer temperatures between 70 -75 degrees Fahrenheit (21 -24 Celsius) during the day and ten degrees cooler at night.

Rich, well-draining (perhaps slightly acidic) soil is its preferred growing medium. It can tolerate short periods of drought but thrives when given plenty of water and occasionally misted. While in its growing mode they also

like a liquid all-purpose fertilizer. And remember that easy to maintain fact? To maintain the desired plant form merely pinch back stem tips as needed to promote dense foliage growth.

Be aware that, as a result of their developing large tuberous roots, Asparagus Fern can become pot bound rather quickly. While they will generally grow and flower more in this condition, it is imperative that they be given a regular drenching of water. Beyond that, plan on re-potting every three to four years.

If pruning is necessary, cut the entire stems back all the way to the base of the plant rather than merely shortening them.

While they have no major insect or disease problems, Asparagus Ferns are slightly susceptible to spider mites, scale insects and mealybugs. If an infestation has gotten out of control, simply cut off the stems all the way back to the soil line and carefully discard the infested foliage. New stems will then rapidly grow back from the bulbs.

They can develop yellow needles for many different reasons, including a change in light, rapid temperature change, over watering, under watering, and spider mites.

The easiest and fastest way to propagate new Asparagus Ferns is by division. Just slice the root ball into half or quarter sections with a sharp knife or pull the tubers apart by hand. Asparagus Sprengeri produces small bulblets which also can be planted.

These plants are dioecious (meaning that both male and female plants must be present to produce). If your plant has berries, you can harvest a single seed from each one. Remove the pulp and soak them in room temperature water overnight. Then plant them ½" ( 1 ¼ cm) deep in a tray or pots. Strive to maintain a temperature in the planting medium at 70°-80° until the seeds germinate. This takes about four weeks.

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They produce small white or pinkish-white flowers in the spring, followed by green berries



Don't try to eat them because all parts have an unpleasant toxicity.

## It's All So Good!

by Suzanne A. Marshall

This is a kind of retrospective about some of my personal experiences living in Manzanillo. It's been seven years since we stumbled upon our little beach front condo having no concept of whether we'd made a wise choice or not. We knew we loved the area and the people, we'd done the research, listed our criteria, visited a couple of times, but it still takes time to find the lay of the land and settle into something of a normal living pattern here in the winters. At first there was much we didn't understand. Now in retrospect I can honestly say we couldn't have done better considering our circumstances; we thank our lucky stars for our great location smack on the beach surrounded by congenial Mexican neighbors with the graces and manners that I can only remember as a child, from the old movies. They have made us feel welcomed and part of their familial community. Every year our Spanish is improving and they are very patient with us as they help us with pronunciation and chuckle at the odd 'play on words' that doesn't quite translate. (Or the constant, hand waving game of charades)



Winter was once a much beloved season for this Canadian. And I still adore the brilliant light on freshly fallen snow with crystal blue skies reflecting on heavily snow laden trees and roofs with chimney smoke curling into beyond. But as the decades have sped by, my poor old body enjoys the view and, of course, loves the family and friends, but not the frigid cold so much anymore. Having skied the Rocky Mountains, tobogganed the surrounding hills, cross-country skied in the back woods, skated on lakes and back yard rinks; some of the penalties of my lifestyle have caught up with me including having broken both legs, some localized arthritis and little minor ailments that wear you down over time. I think at this juncture I'll just have to admit to being older though far from dead on my

feet. I'm on the downward side of the hill, but haven't picked up too much speed yet. It's time to live with some abandon and believe me this is the place.

That brings me to some of the wonderful aspects of being a 'snowbird' in Manzanillo. The subtleties have become apparent and I can now actually call the annual sojourn a welcome health therapy! For the first two to three weeks, the heat and humidity are like breathing liquid air-- especially arriving from Alberta and its extreme dryness. Now that I am beyond the oddness of it, I welcome it.



Barcelo Karmina Palace - our first visit 8 years ago

You will need to go through the initiation each year of being a soggy drooling mess, donning the sweat bands, moving more slowly and never being too far away from fans and breezes. Air conditioning is OK for sleeping, but if you rely on it for total comfort you'll never leave your condo or vehicle. There are payoffs. The chronic sinusitis and headaches I suffer with have completely disappeared. This is a major result for a woman who has suffered chronically since I was eighteen and even succumbed to surgery. The salt sea air is a remedy I would highly recommend. I also know people with psoriasis problems that find their skin problems completely clear up. And while on the subject of skin, your skin becomes like satin and plumps up, which for



the elderly is a real bonus. And so does your hair! Apologies to those with thick natural curls, who may be challenged to tame it, but for many like me with fine baby-like hair, we've never had so much control and thickness. Yahoo!

Now let me tell you about the light here: It's golden, it's soft, it's flattering, it's like candlelight. Do you understand what this means to a woman? It means we look younger and therefore feel younger and this is a very good thing. I can't imagine the men mind it too much either. If you've contemplated a few nips and tucks, you might honestly not want to bother. That is until you return to the harsh white light of northern locations and see the difference as 'things' begin to shrivel and dry up again. There is so much to be said for the tropics.

I have so many positive things to share with you about being in the Manzanillo area, but I'll save some of that for future doling. But for now the last, and not the least by any stretch, is the slow washing away of joint pain. I haven't quite figured out why yet, but suspect the

combination of heat, humidity and sea-level all work together to ease the pain of arthritic joints and other ailments that cause stiffness and immobility. Although definitely not a total cure for me, I feel the pain melting away in my hands though they look the same. It is such a bonus to be able to walk away from pain medications and slowly find a bit more agility. This, of course, is not a scientific fact, but simply one woman's growing awareness backed by numerous friends having the same experiences.

Manzanillo is a 'certifiable' baby-boomer therapy retreat and there's plenty of room for more. Come visit and see for yourselves. As an ultimate bonus you'll discover a lack of tourist commercialism, an enviable police and military presence for confidence and safety, several lovely all-inclusive resorts, fine dining for reasonable prices because you mostly join the locals for entertainment, movies, concerts, dancing and socializing. I kid you not, this place really exists.



The view from my window!





# AT THE MOVIES

Suzanne A. Marshall

## Birdman

**Starring:** Michael Keaton, Emma Stone, Edward Norton, Zach Galifianakis, Naomi Watts

**Director:** Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

“Former cinema superhero, Riggan Thomson is mounting an ambitious Broadway production that he hopes will breathe new life into his stagnant career. It’s risky, but he hopes that his creative gamble will prove that he’s a real artist and not just a washed-up movie star.”

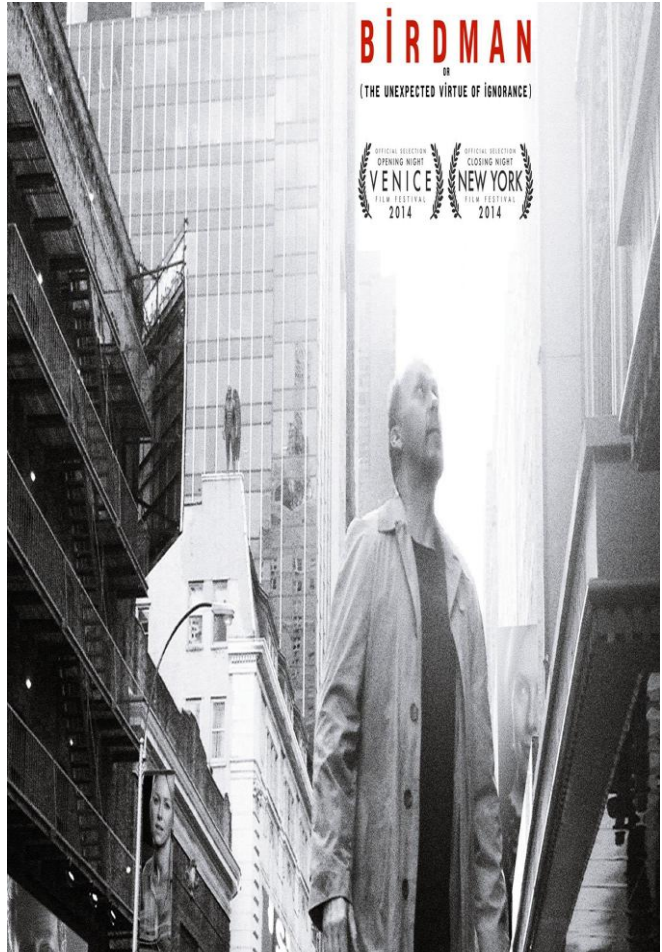
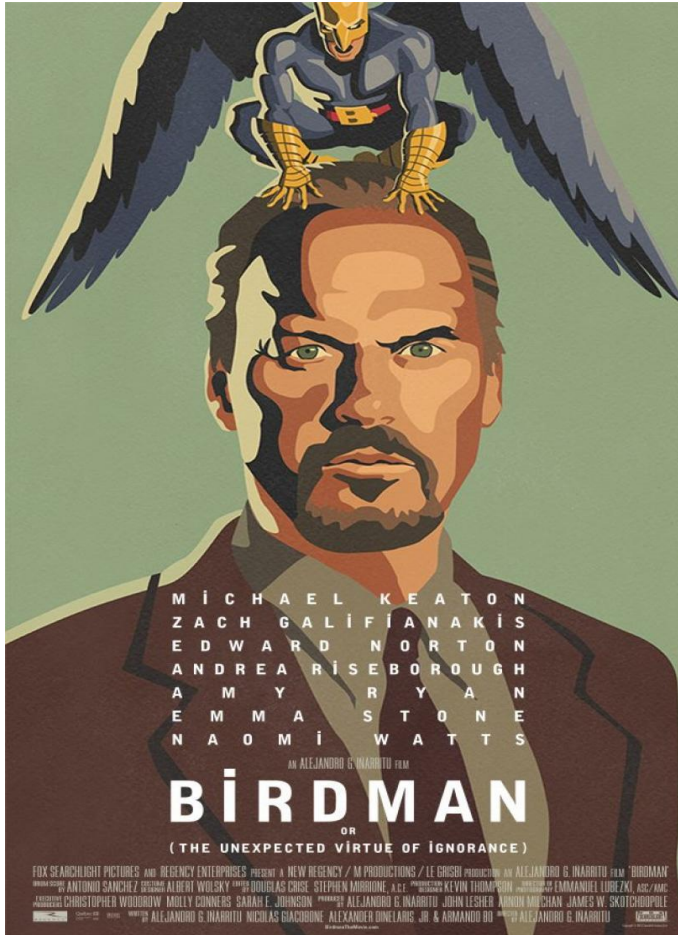
The acting is tremendous. The story is commendable. However, not having the benefit of a story synopsis, I admit to some serious confusion in the beginning as I tried to piece together the strangeness of the opening scenes. Eventually, I began to ‘get it’. The story works

very hard at drama, and jumps between backstage dialogue and on stage rehearsals with a couple of gambits out to the streets of Broadway.

There seemed to be so much needless ‘angst’ in the movie though I surmise that this is to underscore the stress and risk of the personal and production venture of the story. The sound track is mostly solo drum kit antics complete with the odd bash of cymbals and this of course adds to the tension and unusual vibe of the story. The lead character is fraught with doubts and battles an alter ego who speaks to him for the audience to hear.

There are some crazy little twists in this movie adding to its’ oddness. Still, many will be engaged with the acting and I could call it a movie for actors (As in a musician’s music).

Thus far IMDB is rating the movie at 8.8/10. It’s all about the acting.



## A Walk Among The Tombstones

**Starring:** Liam Neeson,

**Director:** Scott Frank

“Private Investigator Matthew Scudder is hired by a drug kingpin to find out who kidnapped and murdered his wife.”

Because this movie arrived among the many Halloween ‘ghoulish’ movie selections, we at first didn’t go to see it due to the unfortunately confusing title. It turns out to be a mystery crime drama and a fairly entertaining movie. Given the story line above, you can imagine for yourself that it is quite brutal in parts and a fictional insight into the lives of the rich drug dealers’ world. Liam Neeson is an ex-cop turned private investigator which allows him to work for the crime syndicate without compromising them.

It was a good movie, Liam Neeson plays a good part and I agree with the rating of 6.6/10 posted by IMDB from over 21,000 user reviews.



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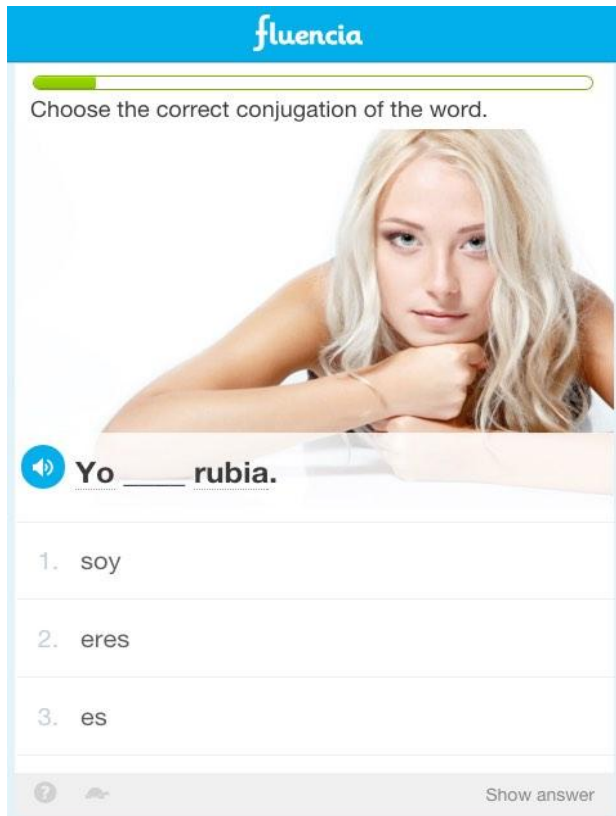
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## Mi español es malo, pero mi spanglish es excelente!

Señior Tech

My wife and I spend our winters in Manzanillo. This poses some problems when we try to speak with the locals because we are mostly English speaking. We are attempting to learn the language so we can better communicate without using hand gestures or adding "o" to the end of every word as we raise our voices. There are many ways to learn how to speak Spanish, one of them is to go to one of the local language schools and attend classes. This is an effective method, but it can be expensive and the class hours may not be convenient. We have tried a private tutor which is more convenient, but also expensive. Another method is to take the courses online at your convenience either on your computer or on a mobile device. This method is the cheapest and easiest way to learn at the speed you choose. I am writing about three different services, which offer different methodologies to help the user learn a new language.



Señiora Not-So-Techie uses a program called "Fluencia"

Fluencia has a free trial program (15 lessons), which must be upgraded to a monthly subscription after the trial. Fees are US\$6.95 per month on a 2-year plan, US\$7.95 on a yearly plan, or US\$14.95 on a monthly plan. The program can be used on the browser of your mobile devices or computer.

She has been using this program for over a year and is very happy with the overall ease of use. The program uses a repetitive algorithm to ensure the information sticks in your memory.

As this service requires the Internet, it is unavailable when there is no Internet service.

Fluencia offers 9 levels with 10 units per level. Each unit contains interactive lessons, which cover conversation, grammar, vocabulary, culture, communication, as well as pronunciation. They claim the material is equivalent to more than a year's worth of college Spanish. Since the first 15 lessons are free, it is worthwhile to try to determine if this fits your learning style. Fluencia only offers Spanish as a language.

The direct link to Fluencia is [www.fluencia.com](http://www.fluencia.com).

My preference for a Latin American Spanish learning program is Rosetta Stone.



Rosetta Stone has been in business for over 20 years and is typically known for their CD-ROM language programs. They offer over 30 different languages and have millions of users worldwide. In order to keep with the times, they now offer their language programs online.

The Latin American Spanish program has five levels and each level has four units. Each unit is made up of between 25 to 30 lessons. So in total there are over 500 lessons available in the whole course. Each lesson takes between 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

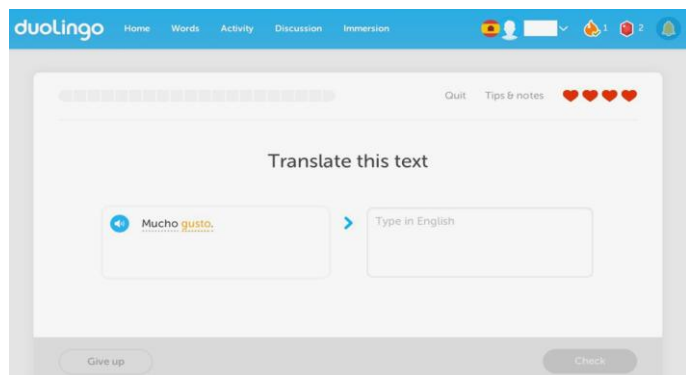
The lessons have different types of input. For instance, you may be asked to speak in Spanish into the microphone what you see on screen. Or you may have to type in Spanish what the displayed picture means to you. I have been practicing, and have noticed an improvement in the proper use of vowels and in my pronunciation. Although Rosetta Stone is listed for \$500 dollars for either online courses or for the CD set; they continue to offer deep discounts, I was able to get the three-year online course for \$220 US.

Rosetta Stone also offers apps for Android and Apple phones and tablets. If you use one of these devices the microphone is built in.

Rosetta Stone also offers live tutoring, either one-on-one or in groups of up to four. This is a fee for service. However if you purchase the computer version you get a 3-month trial with 4 sessions/month. The online version offers 1 per month when you hit specific milestones.

The direct link to Rosetta Stone is [www.rosettastone.com](http://www.rosettastone.com).

We have friends that use a program called DuoLingo. DuoLingo is completely free and can be used on mobile devices or your computer browser.



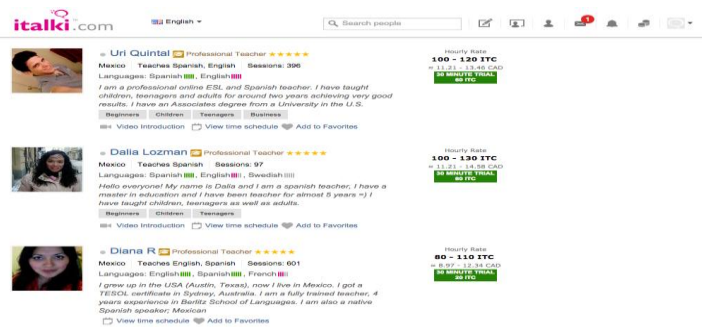
DuoLingo is able to offer this service for free because they use crowd sourcing to translate documents for a fee. The reviews of this service are mixed; who doesn't want to get something for free? The detractors claim that the program content does not teach the users to speak the language. DuoLingo has 343 lessons within 63 units.

If you look at the graphic, 'Immersion' is listed on the top menu of the DuoLingo page. Their interpretation of 'immersion' is to have their users translate written documents for their paying customers. To some this may be a small price to pay for using the service. The direct link to DuoLingo is [www.duolingo.com](http://www.duolingo.com).

All three programs use repetition and quizzes to burn the information into our brains.

One other option is live online tutoring. I found a service called 'italki'. With this service you can find a teacher to provide one-on-one tutoring. The site has a list of language instructors based on the following qualifications:

1. **Professional and Certified** - Professional Teachers teach as a job, or possess a degree or certificate in education.
2. **Experienced** - Trained to teach a foreign language to non-native speakers.
3. **Structured Learning** - Can teach using structured lesson plans and academic materials.



Students rate the instructors, and the number of sessions and ratings are displayed. The hourly rates vary but range from \$9.00 to \$30.00.

The direct link to Italki is [www.italki.com](http://www.italki.com).

If you are interested in communicating in Spanish, any of the above will help you. My goal is to be able to complain in fluent Spanish to Telecable when they screw-up my telephone and Internet access, but that is a story for another time.



# Travel

Part 1 of 2

Terry Sovil

The last couple of years I've spent a lot of time traveling. It certainly isn't exotic travel to new places, it's mundane travel! **Flights** back to Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA and frequently on a **bus** to Puerto Vallarta or Guadalajara to get the best airline ticket price. Also some extreme bus trips up to Guaymas, San Carlos, Sonora. Right now, let's just talk about air travel.

My last trip to Minneapolis I got the BEST ticket price possible using one of those internet flight booking companies. Odd, but it hadn't allowed me to book a seat. I logged on with my confirmation code and found the seat assignment page. WHAT? Every seat had a \$ sign on it and a price. The economy seats, that would be me, were priced at \$3.00 US\$. Dumbfounded. Does this mean my seat costs more money? The "better" seats with additional legroom are priced at \$40.00 US\$. When I finally regained consciousness from the explosion in my head I went ahead and picked seats for the 2 legs of my trip up and the 2 legs of my trip back. I pushed the "checkout" button and there is a problem. What problem? I don't know, don't raise your voice, it just says "a problem". So, I try again. Same error, "a problem". I tried calling customer service. WHAT? All lines were busy. I can do it tomorrow.

Tomorrow came. I tried again. WHAT? The cheap seats are now \$8.00 each, not \$3.00. After pounding holes in the concrete wall I washed my bloodied hands and tried one more time. It seemed to work! I was dizzy with elation! I got to the checkout area where I learned that I owed \$80.00 US\$ for 10 seat reservations. WHAT? Well that's not right! I start all over. This time I booked seats only for the flight up, not the 4 legs of the round trip. Now the checkout screen showed I owed for booking 12 seats. WHAT? Less than delighted I smashed the phone keys to dial customer service. I explained the problem. She explained that some computers seemed to be retaining the seat reservations from every session. She fixed it. I asked what the ticket price covered if it wasn't a seat on the airplane. She explained that it was free if I waited until I checked in and they could assign the seat. No doubt those nasty middle seats. Then, in a very serious voice, she assured me that this payment of \$16.00 for the two flights was not refundable under any conditions. Delightful.



Flight day was the "normal" bus trip at 12:30am arriving at the Vallarta airport about 6:30am. My flight wasn't until 12:30pm. There is nothing open. Immigration? Nope. First thing in the morning, 10:00am. Airline ticket counter? 10:00am. Carl's Jr? Nope. I had music on my phone and a small MP3 player. I had a book. I could manage. I walked to the nearby OXXO.

## Frontier Airlines now charging for carry-on bags

Published April 28, 2014

Associated Press





At 10:00am I was about the first in line. Cleared immigration. Got the boarding pass and checked the bag. WHAT? An extra cost of \$25.00! Would have been \$20.00 doing it online, ahead of time! Headed to security. Slight problem. The x-ray machine and attendant found I had a small multi-tool that had blades and pliers on it. I forgot it was in there. The security agent notes my dismay. It was, after all, a Bear Grylls (Man vs. Wild), 10 function multi tool. She suggested I take it back to the ticket counter. The baggage had already made it to the loading area. No way to get it back. I walked away sadly as one of the airline employees held his new multi-tool. Everyone was laughing. Good times!



At the gate I was giddy as I watched the airline ticket counter employees carefully check out 'carryon' baggage. You were allowed one personal item that had to be stored under the seat in front of you. Any roll around bag of correct size could be carried on but the cost was \$35.00 US\$ per bag. Many opted to have it checked for \$20.

As I entered the plane I was totally confused. Like I had into a Halloween display at a big department store. WHAT? There was smoke everywhere. I'm serious as a heart attack. It smelled funny. Turned out it was moisture coming out of the a/c from the outside heat. But it was totally weird and didn't stop until we were in the air. Walked down the aisle and noted huge signs on the overhead storage bins advising these seats had extra legroom. Yes, an entire 5" or 12.7 cm. \$40.00?

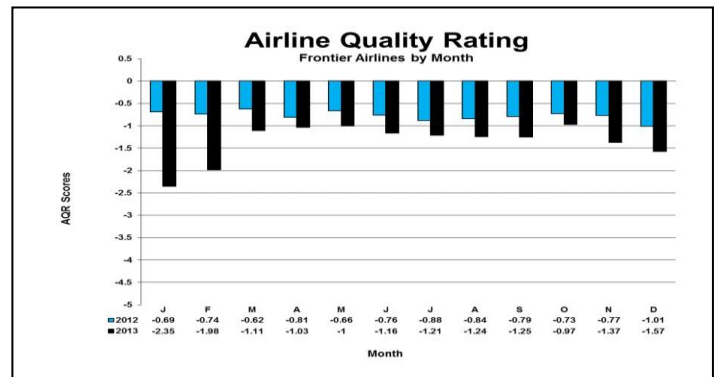
Finally. Safe in my window seat I explored the seat pocket in front of me. No magazine. But there was the card with beverages, amenities and other helpful information. WHAT? There was no free service. Credit cards only. I could have applied for their credit card and gotten 40,000 free miles. A soda, water or juice for \$3.00. Actual snacks with cheese etc. were in the \$8-10 range. A cocktail at \$7.00. WHAT? Did I want mixer with that rum? Only \$1.00 for a coke when purchased with the liquor. I could get the little bag of Chex Mix, Potato Chips or M&M's for \$3.00. TV and movies priced at \$2.99 for a 2 hour flight; \$5.99 for a 2-3.5 hours flight (mine) or \$7.99 for flights over 3.5 hours. I passed on everything.

On the return trip the flight out of Minneapolis was great but in Denver there was a problem. There were storms in our path and the airline had to put on extra fuel. The weight of that extra fuel meant that 7 passengers needed to "volunteer" to stay in Denver. WHAT? Oh, by the way, there wasn't another flight today, nor one tomorrow but you could fly out the day after tomorrow. WHAT? They were offering a \$400.00 flight voucher. Two sad folks rallied and took that offer. Now they needed 5 more passengers. Finally a big announcement that they would cover your hotel, meals and you would get an \$800.00 flight voucher. That produced the 5 passengers required.

I will never fly that airline again. Ever. Some young employee in Marketing decided it would be easy to nickel and dime folks to death rather than just add \$40.00 to the ticket price to cover seats, a soda and the first bag free. About two days after the flight I got a customer survey via email. All kinds of questions about uniforms, greetings, courtesy, prompt service. I finally found a spot where I could write in: "You are asking the wrong questions. I hated your airline because you don't advertise all of the hidden costs and just want to nickel and dime folks to death!"

Safe Travels!

(next month - Part 2)



## THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF NEW SPAIN

A Book Review  
By Kirby Vickery

THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF NEW SPAIN was written by Bernal Diaz del Castillo. On the very top this is a chronicle of the downfall of the Aztec Empire written by one of Cortez's own captains. Beyond that the book itself becomes a story within a story within another.

Professor Stuart B. Schwartz, Ph.D. is a College Master at Yale University and among other things is a specialist in Latin American historical studies. He wrote the book 'Victors and Vanquished in 2000 which was published in Boston by Bedford/St. Martins. This book tells the story that Bernal Diaz tells. As a matter of fact it is largely made up of quotes from Bernal's book. Professor Schwartz states of Captain Bernal Diaz:

"Bernal Díaz provides not only a description of the Spanish entry to the city, the encounter between Cortés and Moctezuma, and the reception by the population, but also an account of the life of the Mexica tlatoani and a great deal about his personality. Díaz's description of the buildings, gardens, the zoo, the temples, and religious practices convey a combination of appreciation and disgust, but his report of Moctezuma's defense of his religion and of the ruler's conversations with Cortes, are not unsympathetic."

On the back cover of this book jacket Professor Schwartz wrote:

"In 1519 Hernan Cortes and a small band of Spanish conquistadors overthrew the mighty Mexican empire of the Aztecs. Using excerpts primarily drawn from Bernal Diaz's 1632 account of the Spanish victory and testimonies - many recently uncovered - of indigenous Nahuatl survivors, *Victors and Vanquished* clearly demonstrates how personal interests, class and ethnic biases, and political considerations influenced the interpretation of these momentous events."

In today's academic world there are several conjectured and well researched school of thoughts relating just how a commander with only 550 men could capture the entire Aztec Empire of warlike people some 25 million strong. There's a great deal of speculation that Montezuma, the leader of the Aztecs thought Cortez was their returning God. I'm about three quarters through the book and Bernal Diaz has not mentioned anything like that. He tells of each battle and of Cortez's leadership in tactics and battle as he walks the reader in an almost daily "This is what we did," transcription.

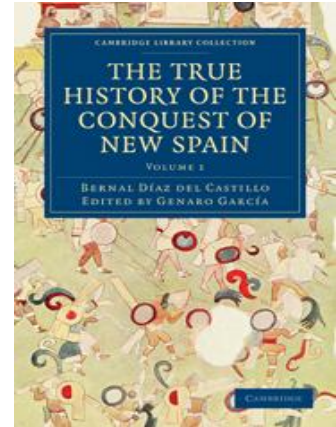
His delivery is smooth and rich in manner and detail and can be described as having a relaxed presentation. Something you can almost hear if you listen hard enough. He was 80 years old when he finished it and alluded to the fact that he was one of the fast five living conquistadores. His purpose for writing this 1,000 page book with 213 chapters was so history would get it right. Apparently there are other chroniclers of the conquest who for one reason or another got it all wrong and Diaz is not the least bit shy in telling the reader of that fact.

I purchased and have read most of this book at the request of a friend and am very sad that I have discovered that the entire thing is available as it was written (translated) on the internet. Interested people can pull it up on archive.org.

You should be warned that it is a difficult book to digest because of its age, the fact that it's been translated several times and it's archaic in composition. The table of contents is not just a list of chapters. Each chapter contains a synopsis of that chapter for example:







CHAPTER LX.

How Cortes went to where the ship was anchored and how we captured six of the soldiers and mariners who belonged to the ship, and what happened about it . .212

What really makes it difficult is the punctuation follows a different set of rules that we used today and there are historical editor notes through the manuscript. For example:

“This distinguished official had the kindness to reply on the first of the following month that on that very day he had decreed that **\*\*an exact and complete copy of the manuscript \*** should be made and sent . . .”

Another problem I had was that in the translation I am using (which is the same one digitized by Google), almost without exception the declaration of a new chapter would come mid-sentence. And in that declaration, which is always a long drawn out affair, there is often heavy use of seemingly meaningless symbols.

I don't attribute that to the author but to the eons of translations and edits which this manuscript has gone through. If your interest is intense enough or if your curiosity is heavy enough, this book can be enjoyed +6specially as its on-line for free.



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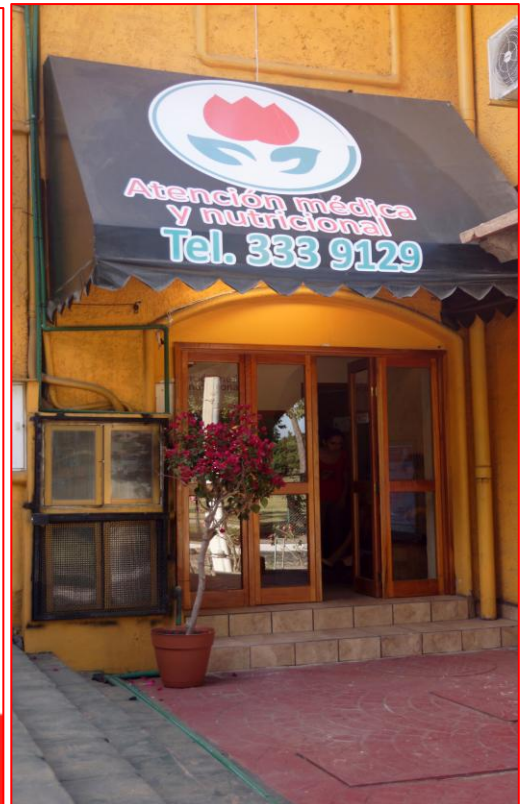
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## A Reluctant Thanksgiving Turkey

By Kirby Vickery  
(As told to him by his mother)



In 1949 people couldn't get frozen Thanksgiving turkey's at the market. Normally, when our family got together for a Thanksgiving feast, the sisters and daughters would sit down in two or three circles to pick the feathers and pin feathers out of each of the birds. Being the youngest of seven children while growing up I had the dubious honor of going after the real difficult pin feathers with a pair of tweezers. This time it was going to be different as my husband, Vic, and I had decided to have the family over to our place in Albuquerque for this holiday. We thought that getting a fresh turkey for Thanksgiving was so much better than getting one from the store. Enterprising families like ours knew someone who knew someone else who could get live turkeys from a farm for very little money. In this case we could only get one bird as there were a lot of people with the same idea.

We had worked hard for a couple of weeks to build a pen before Vic went to get the bird. When the turkey arrived we were amazed by how skinny it looked. The poor thing didn't look anything like those in Thanksgiving pictures with their tails all spread out and the feathers all ruffled up looking happy to dress down into a baking pan. Ours was jerky, molting around the neck, and looked anemic as well as slightly angry. It would fix its little beady eyes on whatever finger was stuck in its cage and attack with vigor. Vic said that we had plenty of time to fatten it up before the big day and our biggest problem would be keeping it from becoming a pet to the children. I remember I had asked Vic if it was a boy or a girl. The problem was neither of us knew what a tom or hen looked like, so we didn't know what we had until at a neighbor asked us why we had purchased a tom when hens were more tender. I was a little disappointed because I had heard the same thing. These days I know it doesn't make a difference but in those days Toms were, in fact, a lot more rangy.

Elaine, my daughter, was six years old and quickly learned that you don't put your fingers through the bird cage wire. Actually that was somewhat of a blessing because now we didn't have to worry about Mr. Turkey becoming a pet to anybody. As a matter of fact, I don't

believe it ever got any other name which was just as well. My two and a half year old son, Kirby, took his first look at it, judged that it was bigger, more agile, and meaner than he was, and he decided just to leave it alone completely and waddled away in his droopy diapers to find other things to do.

We made a weekly pilgrimage to the grain and feed store so that the pen was kept well-stocked with corn meal. The enclosure wasn't that big, and the bird always seemed to be hungry all the time. So it grew, and grew, and grew, until it looked like every first grader's picture of a fattened bird. Our Pilgrim father's would have been proud of us. It had become a magnificent specimen of its species. But, it was still very mean and I had problems with it every day trying to feed it. That was okay because I knew who was going to win in the end, although I wouldn't say I was vindictive or anything like that.

Finally the big day came in the turkey's life because its days had run out. We had put Elaine in the bathroom to keep her from seeing the ritual axe killing of 'The Bird' thinking a scene like that would not be good for one so young. I also had laid Kirby down for his nap. Vic had pulled out a short chunk of firewood for a chopping block from the winter supply, although it wasn't quite long or wide enough to accommodate the turkey.

Kirby was tucked away sound asleep blissfully dreaming about his next bottle and Kirby safe in the bathroom. Vic opened the pen and with everything but a bugle to announce the event, laid to and attacked that turkey. He was larger and stronger but it was quicker and although Vic won the battle of getting it out and tied up, he didn't do it without personal damage. He had known about the beak being a weapon and guarded against it. But, his shins were cut to ribbons because the bird was, in fact, a Tom, and not only had a nice set of spurs, but knew how

to use them too. Those puppies were a good three inches long and naturally very sharp. Vic, at the time,

was wearing sunglasses. These confused the bird so the turkey never went for his eyes. Finally, Vic was able to lay the bird down and get his feet tied together which immobilized it.

With the bird finally under control, I wanted Vic to stop for while I bandaged his legs. He may not have known it but, he had left a trail of blood to the tool shed to get the axe which wasn't the sharpest thing in there. To put it bluntly, it would lose a sharpness comparison to a old used ice skate. Some of the neighbors were smiling and pointing. I was able to doctor him up a little with some gauze bandages and 'monkey blood' which is what we called mercurochrome. I knew that it stung like hell and was thankful that he was wearing an old pair of pants because it stained everything it touched. These pants by that time had been shredded by the turkey below the knees and they were splotted with Vic's blood. They were way beyond anything Heloise could ever do for them.

Now they had met each other in battle for the first round and with Vic being a 'macho', can-do type the guy, I became aware of a reddish glint in his eye. He was no longer concerned with getting the bird ready for Thanksgiving dinner. He was out for Blood Revenge. 'The Bird' had made a mistake and fought him and 'The Bird' must pay the price. The fact that the price to the turkey was the same as it was before made no difference to my husband. I looked up and noticed that more neighbors gathered about and one of them even offered me a beer but I chose to just smile in their direction. Vic had started to growl a little as he re-approached the bird.

Placing the entire turkey on the chopping block was difficult because of its size and shape. Vic finally managed a good enough fit, as it were, but only when the bird would cooperate which it seemed to do every now and then. He would lay the bird down on one side. Then, after it struggled a little it would settle down. He then grabbed its head and slowly stretched its neck across the block of wood. Now, turkeys are not the smartest animals to come down the pike and sometimes it would leave well enough alone and not move for several moments. It was during these long, still,

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b moments that Vic had enough time to grab the axe and start a mighty back, overhead, leg lifting, swing. The bird apparently was on to what Vic was trying to do,

ecause right at the apex of each try, it would pull its head up from the wood and back towards its body. Sometimes Vic would be able to stop his swing and reset the bird only to wind up again, and sometimes not. At one point he actually succeeded in clipping a bit of the bird's beak off which added the turkey's blood to his own and made the bird very uncooperative for quite a while. The neighbors were all starting to chuckle at this point. Vic's eyes were not only getting very red now from anger, frustration, and exertion, his face had taken on a scarlet hue reminiscent of a desert sunset. After all, he was an office worker not a lumberman and I'm sure a little manic depression was setting in. He just knew 'The Bird' was doing it to spite him. Finally Vic said to me through jaws which were clenched real tight and lips that hardly move, "Barbara Jean, I want you to reach down and grab that [blankety, blank] turkey head and hold it out there for me."

"Listen!" I said. "You may be my husband and I love you dearly. But, if you think I'm going to put my hand down there while you're swinging that chunk of steel you call an axe, you are out of your skull!" Now the neighbors were moving around like they had to go to the bathroom real bad while the saga continued.

Since he had missed and his timing before so many times, Vic decided he would speed this process up and try to catch the bird before it pulled its head back. This would give him enough time to grab the ax and swing his mighty swing. So once more he leaned down and pulled what was left of the turkey's beak back across the chopping block. He held it with his left hand as he reached around and grabbed the axe with this right and put it on his shoulder ready for use. He then snatched his hand from the bird, grabbed the axe with both hands and pulled it straight up and then slashed downward with everything he had.

At last, the bird was cleaned, stuffed with grandmother's corn bread with giblet and mushroom dressing and roasted to a turn. The family said it was the tenderest bird of the three on the table they had ever tasted. (My brothers' Marshall and Sam had foreseen a possible shortage and brought in two more.) The rest of the dinner was scrumptious all away down to the rolls and

the four types of desserts. My sister Dana Sue, had even had a hand in grinding coffee and with John's homemade ice cream; the entire feast was well received by the entire family. The discussions during dinner and afterwards were of family things and remembrances of past events. Vic was moving a little slow and everyone was kind enough not to mention the limp that he didn't have the week before.



The subject of conversation at all the neighbors' dinner wasn't so much about their food as the scene they were exposed to when Vic swung that ax that very last time.

The turkey had jerked his head back just a little right in the middle of Vic's power swing and he couldn't and didn't stop the downward movement. The axe pushed halfway through the bird neck, severing several blood vessels while snapping the bird's neck and smashing everything else at the point of impact. The cord which was holding the bird's feet let go and the bird sprang up and started to run all over the backyard in uneven circles with its head flopping over this way and that, while spurting blood everywhere. Vic was chasing it with a hobble. He kept falling down because his shins were not only black and blue, he was leaving out another trail of blood to add to that of the turkey's because the gauze that I had so carefully wound around his legs was unwinding and it was not only all bloody but it started to trip him as well. He would get up and take a step then fall over.

Get up again and take another step or two then fall over again. I was trying to help but kept stopping to get sick, repeatedly. The neighbors were all howling when they could stand up and were no help at all.

While all this was going on, Mikey slept blissfully totally unaware of the battle transpiring in the backyard. His elder sister, Elaine, had pulled the tooth brushing stool from under the sink and placed it in the bathtub. She had climbed up and opened the bathroom window and was hanging halfway out of it while yelling at the top of her little voice over and over again, "Get'em! Daddy. Get'em!"

END



## Is it Time to Clean up Your Portfolio for The New Year?

Yann Kostic

For many of us, a portfolio of investments is like a junk closet: It starts out organized, but gradually collects random stuff until it needs some serious cleaning.

But unlike cleaning a closet, cleaning your portfolio can save (or even earn) you money.

The first step is to look at the number of accounts you have. Over our lives, we tend to accumulate accounts as we move and change jobs, leaving us with many we don't need. So, go through your accounts, and consolidate.

First, close down all but one brokerage account for taxable assets. Putting investments in one account makes it easier to monitor your asset allocation, which is your mix of stocks, bonds, and cash.

Additionally, doing so could lower fees. Ensure you are dealing with a stable brokerage that is or will quickly become familiar with your financial situation.

Then, roll all of your tax-deferred retirement assets into one plan. In addition to allowing you (or your advisor) to better monitor your asset allocation, consolidating 401(k) and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) will make it easier to calculate the required minimum distributions you must take from those accounts once you pass age 70 1/2.

Once your accounts are consolidated, you'll want to look at your investments, asking if they align with your long-term goals. At this point, it's important to discuss your objectives with your advisor, particularly when you're thinking about selling, as doing so can result in capital gains and losses, and a potential tax impact.

Yann Kostic is a Financial Advisor (RIA) and Money Manager with Atlantis Wealth Management, specializing in retirees (or soon to be), self-reliant women and Expats in Mexico. Due to a recent transition to an international custodian, firm clients are now allowed to hold multiple currencies in a single account, including US, Canadian dollars and Mexican pesos for instance. Yann splits his time between Florida and Lake Chapala/Manzanillo. Comments, questions or to request his Newsletter "News You Can Use". Contact him at [Yannk@AtlantisWealth.com](mailto:Yannk@AtlantisWealth.com), in Mexico: (376) 106-1613 or in the US: (321) 574-1529



## Great Food, Great Value at Las Abejas

Suzanne A. Marshall

On the suggestion of good friends, we visited a unique casual restaurant named Restaurante Las Abejas, for our breakfast last weekend. Actually it was more like brunch later in the morning but I am told they serve breakfast all day. Based on this meal we plan to return many more times. Our eggs, bacon, hash browns were delicious as was the coffee and really good bread. (My husband chose the pork chop on the side and loved it)

Las Abejas has a great casual menu offering everything from breakfasts to dinner with all the trimmings. The ambiance is bright and cheery with lots of yellow tones and a wall of beautiful tropical plants cascading to the floor and seats about 40 people. Having friendly, capable staff makes this place a great choice to eat. The pricing is extremely reasonable and the servings are generous. Meals at Las Abejas also include burgers, chicken, ribs, prime-rib and more.

Las Abejas is open daily from 7am to 10pm and closed on Wednesdays. It's easy to find just 3 blocks east of the corner at Wings when driving north on the main boulevard in Salahuá. Want to know more? Call (314) 119-7925.



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in the magazine, please send to the  
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