

SOL AZTECA

MEXICO NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 55 JAN 2012

ProjectsAbroad

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 January edition!

Special thanks for this newsletter go to:

- William Pryor and Trine Friis for their Volunteer Story.

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

- Two new mexican recipes!

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

Contents

VOLUNTEER STORY

*William Pryor
Trine Friis*

JANUARY CELEBRATIONS

*Three Wise Men
Rosca de Reyes*

PROJECTS ABROAD MEXICO NEWS

Festival Alfonso Ortiz Tirado

*MEXICAN KITCHEN
Mushroom Quesadillas
Pico de Gallo*

CONSERVATION PROJECT UPDATE



*Carlos Ochoa
Social Manager
Projects Abroad Mexico*

Volunteer Story

My experience as a volunteer

There is something quite amazing about living at the turtle camp. Some might call it roughing it but believe me it is paradise, to call the beach your home and to see the sun go down in front of your eyes each day is a real experience: one I would highly recommend. Some nights we travel across the sandy beach on quad bikes in search of Turtle nests in order to protect the unborn 'Tortugas' from predators - human and animal alike. On a fortunate night one will see a mother Turtle giving birth to her offspring and it is breath taking! Our duty is to collect these eggs and the following morning to bury them in one of our man made nesting areas so they can hatch out of harms way. Later in the day we will clean out previously dug nests from weeks before and the feeling of joy when you start to pull out squirming little baby turtles from out of the sand can not be equaled, it is fantastic! On my first dig we uncovered no less than three hundred of them. It was an amazing feeling, one which did not lessen with each further nest cleaning. After we have rounded up the babies it is time to set them free into the ocean. We would lay the tiny green angels across the sand just in front of the lashing waves, with their natural instinct they shuffle their way toward the water and then start to swim which is very heart warming indeed. However not all have this instinct and some waddle back to you (just as heart warming) in which case you pick them up and help them on their way on the next departing wave.



The crocodiles at the crocodile farm may not be as cute to some (not me I love them!) but it certainly is exciting sailing in a little boat in the darkness to try and capture them, all the while knowing you are completely safe in the care of the experienced and friendly staff. Once in captivity there are duties such as cleaning their living areas which can be rather mucky but is no less exciting than the boat trip as these fascinating creatures must be restrained before cleaning can commence. The baby crocodiles are so sweet, equal to the turtles if you ask me, and with the trainers help holding them is awesome and makes for an unique photo (don't forget your cameras guys!). There is much more to be discovered, both at the camp and at the farm, including great new friends from all over the globe but I shall leave the rest for your own discovery. Have fun and enjoy, all the best.

Will Pryor
UK



My experience with working at the orphanage in Guadalajara

By

Trine Friis - Denmark

Working at the orphanage can sometimes have its challenges. Once you start working there you quickly learn how different everything is compared to what you are used to from your everyday life in Europe.



I am used to a world where I was always provided with everything that I needed; clothes, education and food. I never missed anything that I really needed, but exploring such a different life makes you realize even more that not everyone is as lucky as I have been. It makes you appreciate what you have got, and also suddenly your problems, which before seemed so big, become small and insignificant. At same time it also makes you want to help these kids even more in any way you can.

You don't normally want to go around cleaning up after other people, washing dishes for hours and cleaning the floor, but you do it anyway if it means that the children won't have to do it. A lot of these children are forced to grow up so fast, because they have to help around the orphanage. This means that a lot of the older children don't get to be children for very long, because they have to make the food and keep an eye on the younger ones. So if picking up trash and other kinds of stuff from the ground with your bare hands means that they get to be children for just 2 minutes more you just do it.

But of course not all of the work in the project is about cleaning, you also get to spend time with the orphans and give them care. The look and smile on their faces once you give them some attention is priceless. When I first arrived in Mexico my Spanish was almost non-existent. I wasn't able to say anything and didn't understand that much, but they don't care about that. Taking the time to spend with them, play and care about them is all that they need.

Speaking Spanish does make it easier because you are able to talk with the children, which some of them really need, but it is not a requirement. It is all about the body language, so if you smile and play with them, they will come to you, and you will end up caring about them just as I have, and I know that I will miss them much once I leave Mexico.

English lessons are also something that we have to do at the orphanage. Not speaking Spanish also makes this more difficult, but all we can do is try to teach them the Basic English and give them some extra tools so that they are a bit more prepared for the life outside the orphanage. Some of them really want to learn. They do it really quickly, and every day when they see you they you ask “how are you” in English. This always puts a smile on my face, because it means that I am actually making a bit of a difference. There are, unfortunately, also some children, who seem to not really want to learn because they don’t care about it. That can be a bit frustrating, as English might be something that they will need in the future, and might help them to get all the opportunities that they deserve. But we can’t force them to learn, so all that you can do is keep trying and hope that one day their interest will turn, and they will start to pay attention to what you are saying.

Working at the orphanage defiantly has it challenges, but we do it anyway in the hope of that we are making a difference for the kids.



ROSCA DE REYES

"La Rosca de Reyes" (King Cake) in Mexico is traditionally eaten on January 6th during the celebration of the "Día de Reyes" (Wise Men Day). In central and southern Mexico, this is the day when children get presents from the Three Wise Men (not from Santa).

The Mexican "rosca de reyes" has an oval shape. For decoration Mexican people use dried and candied figs, quinces, cherries, etc. The cakes have a small trinket (often a small plastic baby, sometimes said to represent Baby Jesus) inside, and the person who gets the piece of cake with the trinket has various privileges and obligations like throwing a small party on February 2nd (candlemass day) with tamales and atole.



February 2nd represents the presentation of baby Jesus at the temple 40 days after his birth, to complete Mary's purification.

The tradition of placing a candy or a bean inside the fruitcake is followed. Whoever finds the bean or candy is forced to spiritually take a "niño Dios" (a representation of baby Jesus) to the nearest church on February 2nd (Día de la Candelaria).

The replacement of the bean or candy for a plastic or ceramic "niño Dios" emerged to prevent people avoiding their responsibility by swallowing the bean or candy.

Last week we had our own Rosca de Reyes celebration here in the office and we invited our volunteers to join us, traditionally accompanied by a delicious cup of hot chocolate, a great way to soothe the body during these cold days of January. Everybody enjoyed it and especially all of our volunteers as this was something new.

The lucky person who got the figurines was actually a volunteer, Nina, the sad thing is that she already left so we won't be getting the tamales and atole. I guess we'll have to wait until next year's Rosca de Reyes.



Stay in touch with



Projects Abroad Mexico – The Official Group

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.mexico>



Projects Abroad Blog - Mexico

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



Read our monthly newsletter

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteerdestinations/mexico/newsletters-from-mexico/>

twitter



Follow us on Twitter!

http://twitter.com/Proj_AbroadMEXI

Mexican Kitchen

MEXICAN RECIPE – MUSHROOMS QUESADILLAS

Ingredients

3 tablespoons butter
10 ounces white button mushrooms, sliced
1 cup fresh spinach leaves (de-stemmed)
½ to 1 full teaspoon chili powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped coarsely
4 ten inch flour tortillas
8 ounces grated Monterey jack, or about two and a half cups
4 ounces goat cheese
Garnishes: salsa, cilantro, sour cream (optional)

Preparation:

Melt two tablespoons of butter over medium high heat in a medium sized skillet. Add mushrooms and distribute evenly, then cook until browned. Then add the spinach and cook on medium heat until spinach is wilted. Add remaining butter if pan seems dry and toss mushrooms, cooking until brown. Season with salt and chili powder, stir in the cilantro and set aside.

Toast tortillas over a gas burner or in a dry heavy skillet and then place on prepared baking sheet. Spread cheeses on one half of the tortilla and top with mushrooms, and then fold over into a half moon.

Lay a sheet of foil over the top of the quesadillas and bake until the cheese melts.

Serve whole or in wedge shaped slices.



PICO DE GALLO RECIPE

Ingredients:

- 4 ripe plum tomatoes, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 small white onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup cilantro leaf, chopped (or more to taste)
- 2 -3 jalapeno peppers, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- Salt

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients; cover and refrigerate for at least an hour.
2. This tastes best the same day that it's made, but is okay the next day.



Three Wise Men or The Magi

Legends, myths, sagas, ancient stories or folktales; call them whatever you want, but we have all heard stories like King Arthur's quest for the Holy Grail, Richard The Lionheart or Odin's search for wisdom.

I can go on and on naming more stories like these, revolving all of them around a main character's crusade to become/achieve a certain heroic deed, accompanied in most cases by a group of loyal followers willing always to sacrifice the most beloved and precious elements in their lives for the noble cause and circumstances their leader/master/messiah should overcome.

This time, we are focusing on those loyal followers my friends, the ones that add a certain touch of magic and mystery and sometimes even become the cornerstone of a specific chapter.

One of the most popular stories around the world is the one of Jesus, keystone of Christianity, the son of God sent to earth to redeem men from their sins, and around him we will find several people involved in the saga, like the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, Magdalene, the Devil, Pontius Pilatus, and Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, also known as The Three Wise Men or Magi.

In Christian tradition the Magi, Three Wise Men, Three Kings or Kings from the East are said to have visited Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts, coming from the east to Jerusalem to worship Christ, born King of the Jews.

The word *Magi* is a Latinization of the plural of the Greek word *magos*, itself from Old Persian *maguš* from the Avestan *moyu*. According to the Gospel of Matthew, the magi found Jesus by following a star. The Biblical text indicates that they found Jesus around two years after his birth, rather than on the exact day, offering him three symbolic gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.



Christianity celebrates the Magi on the day of Epiphany, January 6, the last of the *twelve days of Christmas*, particularly in the Spanish-speaking parts of the world. In these Spanish-speaking areas, the three kings (Sp. "*los Reyes Magos de Oriente*", also "Los Tres Reyes Magos") receive wish letters from children and magically bring them gifts on the night before Epiphany. Each one of the Magi is supposed to represent one different continent, Europe (Caspar), Asia (Melchior) and Africa (Balthasar). According to the tradition, the Magi come from the Orient on their camels to visit the houses of all the children; much like Santa Claus with his reindeer, they visit everyone in one night.

In some areas, children prepare a drink for each of the Magi, it is also traditional to prepare food and drink for the camels, because this is the only night of the year when they eat. Who really were these three wise men? What happened to them afterwards? I guess we will never know, probably they just vanished from the face of the earth or probably their destinies laid on a different journey of which we will never find out...who knows. Time is still the best storyteller to date, witness to all battles, prophecies, lives, deaths and situations humankind can confront, sadly, most of these exciting events will forever remain lost to human ears and hearts...three magi coming to meet the son of God...truth or lie? Well at least it serves as a good appetizer for a stargazing night around a bonfire.

Some of this Info was taken from Wikipedia



FESTIVAL ALFONSO ORTIZ TIRADO

The Alfonso Ortiz Tirado Festival is an annual celebration that takes place in the small town of Alamos, located in the Northern state of Sonora.

Named after the famous Tenor and Pathologist, Alfonso Ortiz Tirado was born in the city of Alamos on January 24th, 1893, recognized by his medical and artistic skills, especially as a national recognized surgeon and one of the most important teachers at the prestigious University of Mexico (UNAM). As an artist he showed a warm Tenor voice, that gave him the chance to tour around Central and South America as well as the USA and Europe. He died in Mexico city on September 6th, 1960.

The festival is focused mainly on the musical side of art, a place for both national and International acts and one of Mexico's most important festivals, it's even considered to be one of the top musical festivities in the country along with the well renowned Festival Internacional Cervantino.



CONSERVATION UPDATE

This last month of the year flew by really fast. It is by this time that the Leatherback Turtles start to arrive ashore to lay their precious eggs in our beach. This magnificent animal is the largest Sea Turtle on earth, their length reaches the 7 feet and they can weigh around 2000 pounds! The Leatherback Turtle is considered an endangered species in Mexico where it is protected by the law.

This is not a surprise as they are extremely fragile as it is estimated that only one in a thousand survives, this is why we are really excited every time we have a chance to lay our sight on them and every time we have a chance to protect their eggs in our designated areas in camp.

While the activities are getting back to normal in the Crocodile farm after the inconveniences that the hurricane Jova brought, we are proud to inform that most of the Crocodiles that used to inhabit the pools have been recaptured, only a few are still elusive and we expect that will be spotted anytime soon.



An interesting fact is that they have been returning on their own, apparently the local wild crocodile population had already designated their areas for this mating season, making the escaped specimens unwanted intruders in the rather small lagoon. Thus their only choice was to get back home.



Death of Tigre.

Since I know that some of you that have had a chance to come to help us in camp read this article every now and then, I am really sad to inform the passing away of the camp dog, Tigre; he got a disease and could not make it. He was no one's dog, he was truly free, actually free, he used to come and go whenever he pleased and he was the volunteer's favorite. He will be missed.

Tigre 2001-2011

OLIVER GARCIA
CONSERVATION MANAGER
JANUARY 2012