

The Eye

Beach, Village + Urban Living in Mexico

Huatulco · Issue 161

October 2026

FREE

Memory

**What Huatulco Remembers:
The Lavariega Family Before FONATUR**

**The Curious Case of
Mexican Nebbiolo**

**First Morning in Huatulco:
The Map, The Mirror and The Mind**





Layne Ulmer Bianca Corona Lindsay Harder Erin May Brent May Leah Guzmán Hector Cisneros Mario Devcic



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Editor's Letter

You pile up associations the way you pile up bricks. Memory itself is a form of architecture.
-Louise Bourgeois

Who would you be without your memories? Without the ideas you have collected about yourself, about others and the world around you? I have thought a lot about this in the last couple of years as I cared for my mother who was shedding her memories the way a tree loses its leaves when winter is coming. At first there was a panic as to what would happen, what would be left and how would we cope if we got to the point where I was a stranger.

Of course there was a resistance, a desire to hold on to every moment and remembrance, but that resistance itself was a form of disease built by fear and the unknown. Eventually the path we chose was acceptance and the world around us loosened, tension slackened and we made space for new things. My mother never forgot who I was but sometimes she didn't know that I was her daughter, I was maybe a sister or a friend or even her mother. I, in turn, had to release my resistance to the idea of her as my mother. Whoever she thought I was, I wanted her to associate me with love and safety and I let that dictate my reaction to each situation we faced.

She saw the environment around us with new eyes each day and she took me along for the ride. Without the clutter of the past we would marvel at the new green shoots of leaves on a plant or the rising of the moon. How miraculous to see the rising of the moon as though for the first time!

Our memories can be tools. They can transport us to a moment in time in the past and we can feel the texture of an object we haven't held for years or conjure up the smell of our childhood bedroom. Our memories can also be weapons. Some people hold on to grudges like they are precious riches. Our memories can also be unreliable. Women who experience childbirth often say in the moment they will never do it again only to do it again once the pain has passed and they are holding a newborn in their arms.

And perhaps memory reaches beyond what we consciously remember. Like the complex networks beneath forests, where trees exchange resources and information through their roots and fungal partners, we too are connected to what came before us. Scientists are exploring whether some effects of our ancestors' experiences may be carried through epigenetic mechanisms – chemical changes that affect how genes are expressed without changing the DNA sequence itself. In animals, there is compelling evidence that some of these effects can cross generations; in humans, the science is still unfolding. What we inherit may be more complicated than the stories we have been told. None of us is an island.

This month our writers explore memory in many different forms. Thank you for reading.

See you next month,

Jane



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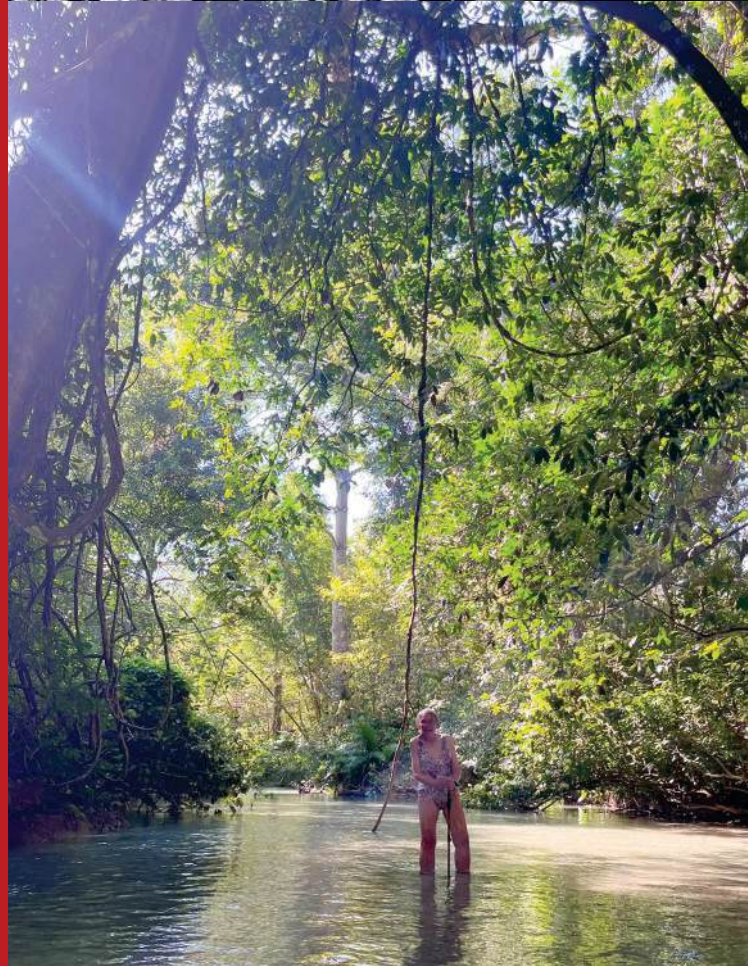
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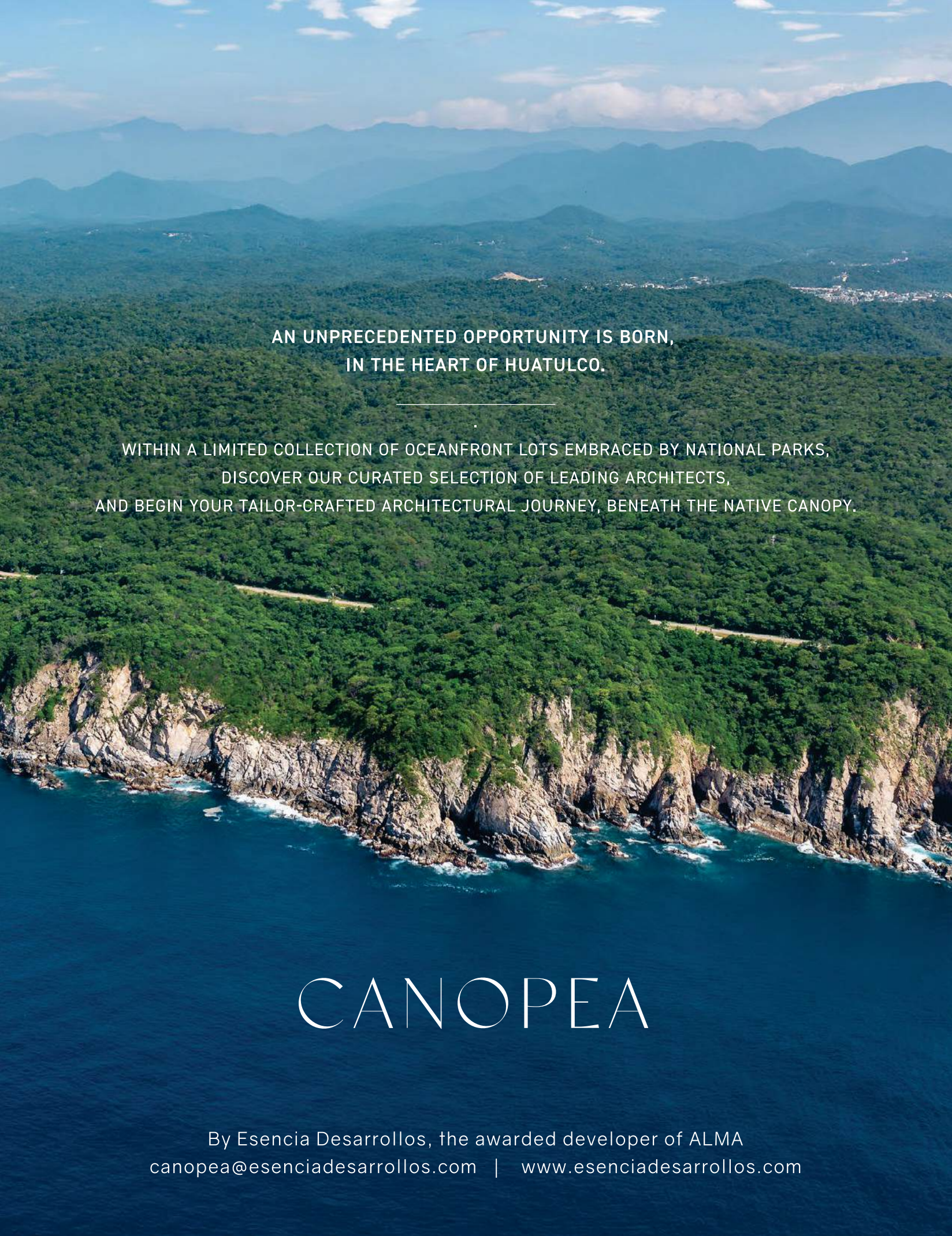
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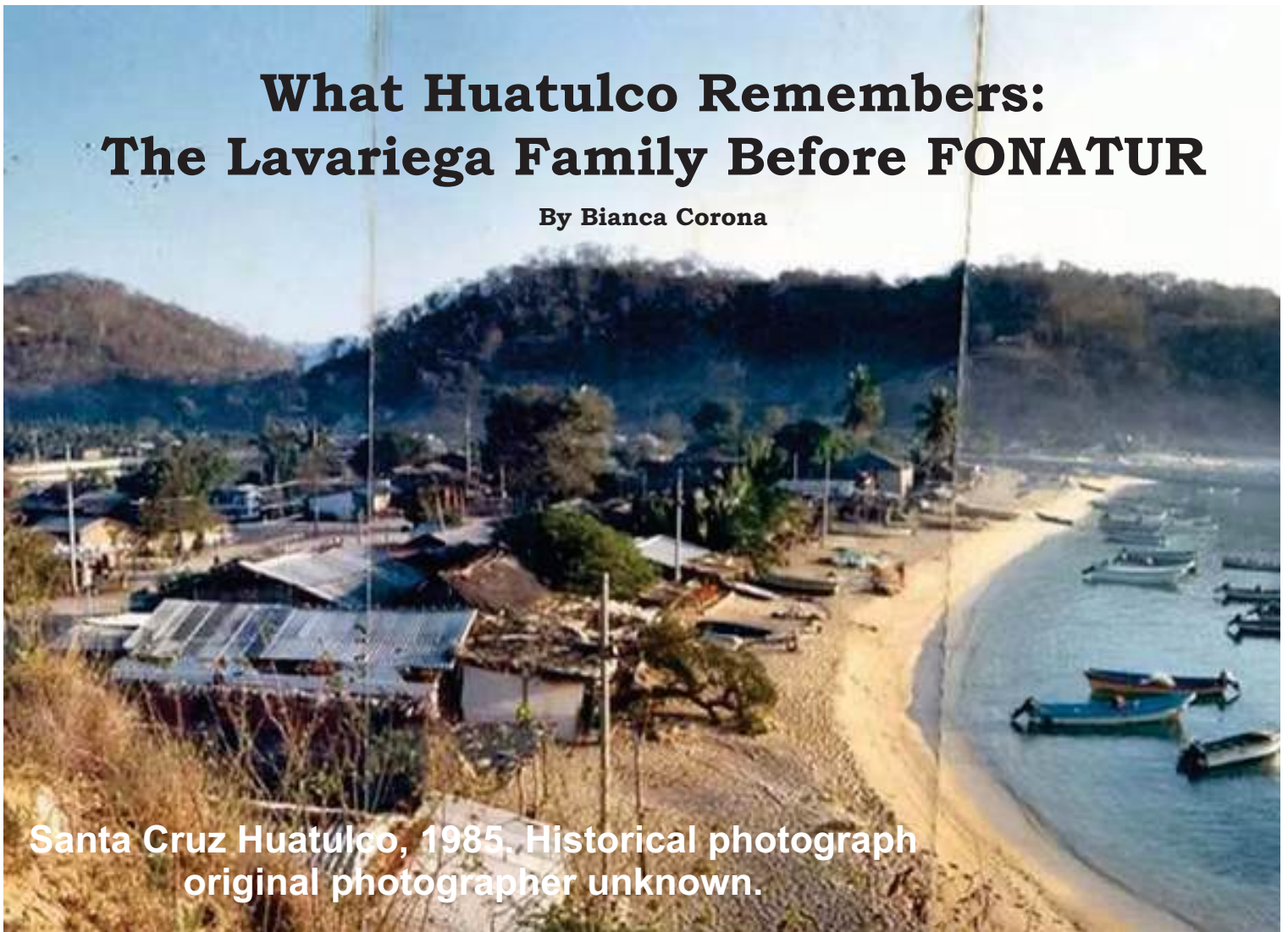
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What Huatulco Remembers: The Lavariega Family Before FONATUR

By Bianca Corona



Santa Cruz Huatulco, 1985. Historical photograph original photographer unknown.

There is a version of Huatulco that now exists mostly in memory. Before the paved streets. Before the hotels. Before boundaries were drawn across maps and land was divided by paperwork. Before anyone imagined what this coastline would look like forty years into the future.

There are few photographs from that time. Most fishing families did not have cameras to capture ordinary life by the sea. What remains lives in stories. In names. In the memory of where a river once deepened, where animals grazed freely, and where families gathered when the moon was full.

I asked Abdon Lavariega Arista and his sister Oliva what Huatulco looked like before FONATUR arrived. Not the official version. Not the hectares or the decrees, although those came too, unprompted, because Abdon carries dates the way some people carry scripture. I asked them what they remembered.

Santa Cruz is where their family's memory runs deepest, so that is where much of this story lives. But the same transformation, with its own local details, unfolded across this entire stretch of coast. In Bajos de Coyula. In Bajos del Arenal. On ranches near Tangolunda and along the Copalita River. This is Huatulco's story, told through one family's corner of it.

Before the Order

“Antes de la expropiación había libertad,” Abdon told me. Before the expropriation, there was freedom.

The land was communal, and that freedom was not an abstract idea. It was physical. You could camp on any beach or open plain, and nobody stopped you. Cattle, goats, pigs, and pack animals moved freely across the hillsides. The hills themselves looked different then. They were sabanas. Open. Grassy. Almost without trees because the animals kept them that way. Today, Abdon points out, grazing is restricted, and those same hills have grown into something closer to forest. It is one of the unexpected contradictions of development.

Santa María Huatulco, the municipal seat, moved according to its own rhythm. Monday was market day. Residents from the surrounding rancherías arrived on donkeys and mules to buy produce and dry goods at what is still known as the mercado antiguo, across from the old Palacio Municipal. Abdon remembers the shopkeepers by name: Don Antonio Salinas Gutiérrez, Doña Hortencia Martínez, Don Polo Galán. The way you remember the people who fed your family.

There were no restaurants. There were fondas. Small, informal kitchens where people sat together after finishing their shopping. Fishing required no permits. There was no capitania de puerto watching the water. What you caught, you sold to your neighbors.

Oliva's childhood followed a slightly different rhythm. She grew up mostly on the family ranch, Piedra de Moros, and came to Santa Cruz with her parents during visits until she was around twelve. She remembers dirt streets. No pavement anywhere. And one great spectacle: a traveling fair that arrived in Santa Cruz on the first Friday of the month. Against a village that small, the rides must have looked enormous.

She also carries stories of teenagers playing on the beach beneath the full moon. Those memories originally belonged to her sister-in-law, who lived them directly, but Oliva tells them now. Because that is how memory moves through a family. Hand to hand. Voice to voice. Until it becomes difficult to know exactly where one person's memory ends and another begins.

When the News Arrived

Abdon remembers hearing news of the development project over the radio near the end of José López Portillo's presidency. The official expropriation came during the presidency of Miguel de la Madrid. The decree was signed on May 28, 1984, and published in the Diario Oficial de la Federación the following day.

But for Oliva, the beginning was not about documents. It was a feeling. "Era como una emoción," she said. It felt like excitement.

Huatulco was going to grow. More people would arrive. There would be jobs and opportunities, and they were told the project would benefit the comuneros. Huatulco would become like Cancún. Nobody she knew was preparing for loss. They were preparing for a future that sounded, for a moment, as though it belonged to them.

What It Took

What that future required arrived slowly, and not evenly. The agency behind that decree was FONATUR, the Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo. It was created in 1974, folding together two earlier federal tourism funds, with a specific job: acquire undeveloped coastline, draw a master plan across it, build the roads and the utilities, then sell the serviced lots to hotel investors and developers. Huatulco was one of five major Centros Integralmente Planeados, large-scale tourism destinations developed according to federal master plans, alongside Cancún, Ixtapa, Los Cabos, and Loreto. Cancún came first, in the early 1970s, and became the template everything after it was measured against. Huatulco followed roughly a decade later, when a 1984 federal expropriation transformed nearly 21,000 hectares of communal territory into the land base for a new planned tourism destination.

Oliva remembers the noise of the dársena being built near her family's home. The house was part concrete block and part varitas, sticks and cane. She remembers watching the beaches change. "Se empezó a ver mucha gente extraña, muchos albañiles." There were strangers. Construction workers. People arriving everywhere, all at once.

And she remembers what she misses most. "Las playas vírgenes, las playas solas." The untouched beaches. The empty beaches.

For Abdon, the greatest loss was not a single beach or piece of land. It was movement itself. "Éramos libres de caminar, cruzar los ríos y pescar," he said. They were free to walk. To cross the rivers. To fish. To let an animal wander without encountering a fence, a permit, or an invisible boundary drawn somewhere on a map. It was an entire way of moving through a landscape that had once seemed to answer to no one.

Abdon also spoke about the unease of suddenly living among people whose histories nobody in Santa Cruz knew. "Gente extraña que no sabemos qué antecedentes traen." Strangers whose backgrounds were unknown. It is not an easy observation, but it reveals something about what rapid growth can do to a small community. Development does not only bring new people. It changes the quiet structure a village may not realize it depends on until it is gone, the fact that everyone knows everyone.

What It Gave

Abdon is careful not to tell only one side of the story. The development brought employment closer to home. It brought money into the region and exposed many families to a world beyond the coast. Some families recognized the opportunity and built rooms to rent. Roads and infrastructure improved.

Education came closer too. His children, and the generations after them, could attend COBAO and universities without making the same journey he had made. Abdon had to leave home to study. Secondary school in Salina Cruz. High school in Oaxaca City. A childhood shaped by migration simply to receive an education.



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“Así es como se sufrió antes,” he said. That was how people suffered before. He does not say this to erase what was lost. He says it because no story is only one thing. Growth took. Growth gave. And sometimes the same family carries gratitude and grief at once.

What Only Memory Keeps

Some of what disappeared cannot be measured in hectares. It is texture. Rhythm. The feeling of a place before anyone thought to document it.

Abdon remembers full-moon nights when he played a las escondidas and el encantado. Games that continued until the children made their way to the river to swim in the honduras, the deep pools carved into the riverbed by years of moving water.

He listed the fruit as though he could still taste it: chía, cachayumba, papaya, piñuela, nanche de sabana, coconut, watermelon, cucumber. “Todo era natural.” Everything was natural. Everything simply grew.

He remembers Día de Muertos too. Not as a celebration performed for visitors, but as something intimate. Tamales from November 1 through November 2. Neighbors inviting one another inside for bread and chocolate. A village briefly becoming one household to receive its dead.

“Huatulco antes se veía como una familia. Todos éramos conocidos.” Before, Huatulco felt like a family. Everyone knew everyone.

Oliva remembers a deep communal well where people went to wash clothing and collect water before pipes reached their homes. She only visited it a few times herself. By the time her life settled in Santa Cruz, that world had already begun to change. It sounds like a small detail, but a communal well is never only a source of water. It is where a village speaks to itself.

What I Keep Asking

On a personal note, and as someone who came after the fact, this story has its own thread running through my own family. My father arrived in Huatulco years before any of this had a name most people recognized, and bought land here early, a quiet bet that this coast was going somewhere. My mother arrived differently. She had been working in Cancún, selling tours from the hotels there, when a major hurricane tore through the city and her coworkers began talking about a new tourism boom farther south, in Huatulco. She followed the work. In 1994, she and my father met at the Sheraton, the hotel that is now the Barceló. I exist, in a literal sense, because tourism brought two strangers to the same stretch of beach.

I did not grow up here. I grew up returning here, and there is something full-circle about that. The same tourism industry this piece keeps circling back to—the one that transformed Huatulco—is also the reason my own family has a story here at all. But there is a difference between benefiting from what came afterward and having lived through what the Lavariegas experienced, and I try to remain aware of it.



I cannot pretend to know what it felt like for the Lavariega family or others like them to watch an open hillside become part of someone else's map. Or to exchange a communal well for a metered municipal line. Or to learn that a place they had always crossed freely now required permission.

What I can do is listen and sit with the final thing Abdon told me, because it has continued to follow me. He spoke about the fees now connected to accessing and using protected coastal areas and the feeling that local people are asked to pay without seeing anything returned to them. "Sin tener nada a cambio," he said. Without receiving anything in return.

Land becomes claimed through a map somewhere. A boundary drawn in an office. Sometimes, he says, without even a mojónera, a physical marker on the ground showing the people who live there where one territory ends and another begins. "Se adjudica ser propietario de territorios que ni siquiera dan la identidad del trazo." Someone claims ownership of territory without clearly identifying the boundary itself.

I work in real estate on this coast. I sell the version of Huatulco that comes with a survey, a fideicomiso, a notary, and a clean paper trail. It is, in almost every way, the opposite of an open plain that once belonged to whoever needed it that season. I cannot pretend that does not place me somewhere inside this story. Not only reporting on it, but living inside its contradiction.

And the institution that began much of this transformation is changing too. Beginning in 2024, responsibility for much of the CIP's infrastructure and public services—including water, sanitation, waste collection and routine urban maintenance—shifted from FONATUR to the State of Oaxaca and local authorities.

The question is not whether Huatulco should have grown. It did. It is. It will continue to. The question is who gets to hold the paper now, and whether growth, more than forty years later, still owes something to the people whose land it grew from.



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The Curious Case of Mexican Nebbiolo

By Melissa Lyon

Spend an afternoon tasting wine in Mexico's Valle de Guadalupe and sooner rather than later, someone will pour you a Nebbiolo. That may not sound particularly unusual. After all, Nebbiolo is one of Italy's most celebrated red grapes, responsible for the legendary Barolo and Barbaresco wines of Piedmont. But there is something decidedly strange about encountering it in Baja California. Among other things, Valle de Guadalupe is thousands of kilometers from northern Italy, and its climate is considerably sunnier and drier. And yet Nebbiolo has become one of the valley's predominant varieties.



In contrast, Baja's "Nebbiolo" tends to be much darker and more deeply colored, with riper fruit, greater tannic weight and a more powerful profile.

Magoni, now 83 years old, recently remarked on his surprise encountering the vines upon arrival, "Of course," he said, "I had my ideas. But I shut my mouth and just observed and didn't talk." Acknowledging the difference, Magoni specifically calls the grape *Nebbiolo de Baja*. So, what do others think of the Mexican "Nebbiolo"? "It's not Italian. There's more color, more intensity," said

Paolo Paoloni, an Italian winemaker working with Baja's Villa Montefiori. Paoloni calls his version *Nebbiolo de Guadalupe*, emphasizing the wine's relationship with its regional identity.

There is just one problem. Some of the grapes being called Nebbiolo in Baja California may not actually be *Nebbiolo*.

The story begins more than eighty years ago, when Italian-born winemaker Esteban Ferro brought vine cuttings from northern Italy to Bodegas Santo Tomás in Baja California in the 1940s. But the journey from Italy to Mexico was not always an orderly one. Legend has it that in transit, vine labels were damaged or lost while moving through the port of Veracruz. Upon arrival in Baja, rather than discarding the unidentified vines, growers planted them. Robust harvests followed, with vines identified as Nebbiolo and others simply known as "Italian varieties" thriving in their new home.

Fast forward to 1965, when Italian viticulturist Camillo Magoni, who would go on to become one of the most influential figures in Mexican wine, arrived in Baja to work with L.A. Cetto. Having grown up surrounded by viticulture in northern Italy, and having studied winemaking in Piedmont, Magoni was uniquely qualified to recognize that something unusual was going on.

The grape being called Nebbiolo in Baja did not look or taste like the Nebbiolo he knew in Italy. Italian Nebbiolo wines, like the Barolo and Barbaresco wines of Piedmont, are famously pale in color but intensely aromatic, with high acidity, firm tannins and characteristic aromas of cherries, roses and violets.

So what exactly is growing in those vineyards? Modern DNA analysis has provided a clue. José Vouillamoz, one of the world's leading grape geneticists and co-author of *Wine Grapes*, has reported that at least one sample of the mysterious Baja vine tested as potentially being Lambrusca di Alessandria. If confirmed more broadly, this would mean that at least some of the vines long identified in Mexico as Nebbiolo may actually belong to another Italian variety.

However, the evidence is far from conclusive. The sample represented only a limited number of vines, and additional genetic testing would be required before the identity of the broader population of Baja vines could be established. Unquestionably, there are genuine Nebbiolo vines growing in Baja as well, sharing the beautiful valley with the older, mysterious population of vines historically labeled Nebbiolo.

This certainly isn't the only case of mistaken grape identity to happen in the New World. Consider the more recent case of Mourvèdre in Paso Robles, California. In 2018, the wine world learned that beginning in 2012, more than 200,000 vines sold by a California nursery as Monastrell, the Spanish name for Mourvèdre, were planted in vineyards throughout the region.

As they harvested and bottled their wines, winemakers increasingly noticed that something was not quite right. The vines grew differently from their established Mourvèdre, and the resulting grapes produced wines with unusually deep color and higher acidity.

Genetic testing eventually revealed the answer: the vines weren't Mourvèdre at all. They were Graciano, a relatively obscure Spanish variety associated particularly with Rioja. In other words, hundreds of thousands of vines, and years of wine production, had been given the wrong label. Even so, the Paso Robles Graciano was praised for its color, fruit and acidity, and its curious origin story has only enhanced its consumer appeal.

Similarly, the Nebbiolo of Baja has won over wine enthusiasts the world over. Of course, while the Paso Robles vines were ultimately confirmed as Graciano through genetic testing, the identity of the Mexican Nebbiolo remains unclear.

So, does the name really matter? For some winemakers and oenophiles, absolutely. For others, perhaps not so much. Kristin Magnussen of Vinos Lechuza takes a refreshingly pragmatic view. "Is it really Nebbiolo? Well, it's Mexican Nebbiolo."

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To Delay the Third Death

By Tonya Harmon

I'm writing a memoir. It's an exploration of the generations of my father's Slovak family and what I inherited from them. I certainly don't speak Slovak, and I wasn't born in Slovakia. What, then, exactly did I inherit?

In conducting research for the book over the last 20 years, I became immersed in the past lives of relatives who were long gone and, in many cases, people I'd never even met. Their names appeared in a church registry for a birth or baptism, marriage or death, and little else. I wanted to know so much more about them: how they lived, what they ate, what they stood for, and what they believed in.

Where do you go to find these details, and can you even unearth them for a person who died nearly a century ago on another continent?

I decided to start with the living. I studied the picture of my family on the day they left Yugoslavia in 1938 and tracked down a woman who was a teenager at the time.

Julka was 14 when our families emigrated to Canada together and was in her late eighties when we met. She remembered my great-grandfather's bakery and how she would walk past the other bakeries to go to his, the best in town. Every day at the end of the school day, my great-uncle Andy would ride his bike to the schoolyard and ring his bell. His basket was filled with baguettes and zemle, plump round rolls, and kifle, the crescent-shaped rolls said to have inspired the croissant.

Julka remembered the taste of the kifle and how she had spent her whole life searching for one that tasted as good as she remembered but never found it. Julka died a few months after our interview.

She remembered the day the picture was taken, that it was raining, and that her boyfriend had arranged the send-off. My great-grandmother had stood behind the camera, taking one last picture of her son, daughter-in-law, and only granddaughter, Datka. "My eyes will never see you again," she said.



I traveled to Yugoslavia to meet relatives and learned about my great-uncle Stefan, the family jokester. Once at a wedding, he'd sprinkled hot paprika on the toilet paper and sat back laughing as people came out of the outhouse hopping and itching. He also hid ammunition in the water well for partisans fighting against fascists in WWII.

On the internet I found a website in Slovak written by an elderly man who had lived his whole life in the same village as my family. He had written about the history of the town and my family. I tracked Jan down and we began a decade-long conversation through Facebook, him in Slovak, me in English. We traded stories and genealogical facts and became friends. I was devastated when he

died suddenly two years ago.

As I traveled to meet people and collected historical facts about the places and times they lived in, the lives of my long-gone relatives slowly started to come alive for me. I found the family recipe for the kifle Julka remembered and made them, enjoying the taste as much as Julka did. I saw bundles of drying peppers hanging from the porches in the village where Stefan had lived. I wrote to the German government requesting details about family members who had been arrested and read bureaucratic records containing unanswered letters from relatives begging for information about their loved ones.

In 2011, Jaro Miklović took me from house to house in my family's hometown. At each stop, food appeared before we had finished asking questions: sausage, bread, cakes, glasses raised in welcome. Albums came out. I took pictures of photographs hanging on walls and held family samplers stitched more than a hundred years earlier.

Again and again, someone who had been a stranger, appearing only as a name in the family tree, stopped feeling like one.

Over the years, recipes crossed oceans. Photographs resurfaced. Distant relatives found one another. Objects and stories moved from one branch of the family to another.

Living in Mexico has made me think differently about what it means to remember the dead. Here people sometimes speak of *Las Tres Muertes*, the Three Deaths.



My family leaving Yugoslavia before WWII

The first death is when the body stops working and the heart stops beating. The second is when the body is buried. The third comes when the last living person who remembers you forgets your name. That is when you disappear completely.

The idea is often connected to *Día de Muertos*. Families build an *ofrenda* and place photographs on it, lighting candles, telling stories, and putting out the favorite foods of the people who have died, believing this may entice them to come home for the day.

It is one of the most beautiful things about living in Mexico. It is colorful and joyful, but underneath it is something very serious. Remembering is an act of love, and perhaps also an act of preservation.

I thought about this when I received an email from a woman looking for an old friend named Juan Carlos. She had known him in the early 1970s. He was the first cousin of my aunt's former husband, part of another Slovak immigrant family whose members had settled in both Canada and Argentina. She found me because of something I had written about the death of my aunt's twenty-three-year-old daughter, Karla, in 1993.

I vaguely remembered Juan Carlos. He had visited our family in Montreal once. He was tall and thin and very kind and was studying to become a pediatrician.

I had to tell her that he had died young, more than forty years earlier.

A few years later, she wrote again.

This time she wanted to speak to his sister.

I sat looking at the email.

After all those years, she still remembered him.

His body had died, he had been buried, but his name had not disappeared.

She still remembered.

Maybe Slovak families have been doing the same thing in their own way all along, not with marigolds and sugar skulls, but with recipes, family trees, photographs kept in drawers and hung on walls. And with names repeated at our kitchen tables. With a woman writing to me more than forty years later asking about a young man she had once known. Memory, it appears, traveled farther than the people themselves.

I came to Mexico believing I had followed my own route very far from home. Instead, I found myself living in a place that understood what I had been doing for years.

My great-grandmother's crystal bowls in my armoire are part of that *ofrenda*. So is the kifle, the family tree, the photographs I copied from albums, and the stories told at the kitchen table. So is this book.

For a long time, I thought I was collecting evidence.

I understand now that I was also collecting people.

Julka. Andy. Stefan. Jan. Jaro. Karla. Juan Carlos.

Each time I recover a name from a church register, identify someone in a photograph, translate a letter, or repeat a story, that person is back with us for a little while.

Perhaps that is what family history is for.

To delay the third death.

Tonya Harmon lives in SMA and is a wealth of knowledge about food and cheese:
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A Year of Learning and New Opportunities for Rural Education

**2025–2026 School Year Annual Report |
Fundación El Sueño Zapoteco A.C. / Bacaanda Foundation**

By Britt Jarnryd

In a rural school, access to technology opens up new possibilities for teaching and learning. For a young person finishing middle school far from the nearest high school, receiving a scholarship and ongoing support can make it possible to continue their education. During the 2025–2026 school year, Fundación El Sueño Zapoteco A.C. / Bacaanda Foundation worked toward both goals through its Smart Rural School and Continuing My Dream projects.



Continuing My Dream: Supporting Young People Through a New Stage

For many young people from rural communities, starting high school means much more than changing schools. It involves traveling, living in a different place, adapting to new academic demands, and learning to manage daily life away from familiar surroundings. The Continuing My Dream scholarship aims to help students navigate this transition

through financial assistance, school supplies, and ongoing personal support.

Smart Rural School: Technology in the Service of Learning

The Smart Rural School project reached communities along the coast and in Oaxaca's Sierra Sur region, providing technological equipment, internet connectivity, Spanish and mathematics curricula, and activities designed to strengthen reading and writing skills. These resources expanded learning opportunities for children and adolescents in rural schools facing challenges related to access and the availability of educational materials.

Educational guidance and ongoing teacher training were fundamental to the project. Our team of trainers worked closely with teachers to plan lessons, answer questions, and make the most of the technological tools and curricula provided. This support helps ensure that resources are used effectively and respond to the needs of each group. During the school year, rural teachers also received financial support in recognition of their commitment and the challenges involved in teaching in their communities.

Assessments and monitoring conducted throughout the year showed considerable, gradual progress in Spanish, mathematics, and reading and writing skills. Students strengthened their knowledge and developed skills through activities suited to their learning levels. Each achievement reflects the collective efforts of teachers, trainers, students, and families. We know that consolidating these gains requires practice and consistency, which is why we will continue supporting the schools.

During the school year, we observed gradual improvements in scholarship recipients' adjustment to high school and their academic performance. We also identified areas that require continued attention, including study habits, submitting assignments on time, and developing confidence in their own abilities. Helping students remain in school means listening to their difficulties and working with them to find ways to overcome those challenges.

Throughout this process, the work of our mentors is especially valuable. With dedication and personal attention, they support, guide, and prepare scholarship recipients to navigate daily life, both at school and in their new place of residence. Their guidance extends beyond academic subjects, helping students develop independence, confidence, and decision-making skills. For these young people, knowing that someone is there to offer guidance can make a significant difference.

We are grateful to the donors who made these projects possible; to rural teachers and CONAFE for their collaboration; to the mentors for their dedication; to families for their trust; and to the entire foundation team for its continued hard work.

We invite you to be part of this dream. Through your support of Smart Rural School and Continuing My Dream, we can continue assisting students and teachers while opening up more educational opportunities for Oaxaca's rural communities.



Transform a Child's Future in Rural Oaxaca



For nearly 17 years, El Sueño Zapoteco A.C. / Bacaanda Foundation has been creating Smart Rural Schools—equipping classrooms with technology, training teachers, and connecting communities through education. Your donation helps provide satellite internet, digital tools, and ongoing support for rural teachers—giving hundreds of children access to opportunity.

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Xandú: A Celebration of Memory, Art and Tradition

By José Palacios y Román

Across Mesoamerica, communities have honored the connection between the living and the dead for centuries. In Mexico, these traditions have become intertwined with the Catholic observances of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. Each year, on November 1 and 2, Día de Muertos brings families together to remember loved ones through altars, offerings, food, music and celebration.

In Zapotec tradition, Xandú is associated with Día de Muertos and the remembrance of those who have died. Drawing on this heritage, the Huatulco Hotel Association, together with hospitality partners in Tangolunda, La Crucecita and Santa Cruz, is organizing the second edition of the Xandú Festival.

The festival takes place on October 30, 2026, at Plaza de la Guelaguetza, also known as Plaza Benito Juárez, across from Marina Chahué.

Last year's inaugural celebration began with a parade of illuminated floats winding through the streets before arriving at the plaza. There, residents and visitors gathered for food, drinks, live music and dancing. The festival brought together local businesses and the wider community in a celebration of Huatulco's cultural traditions.

Art and Tradition in the 2026 Edition

This year, visual art will play a larger role in the festivities. Art Gallery Copalli and the women's collective La Magia del Color have issued an open call inviting artists from across the Oaxacan coast to submit work by October 10.

Artists are encouraged to explore Mexico's spiritual heritage, cultural roots, traditions and collective memory.

A selection committee will choose 24 works for exhibition during the festival. RE/MAX is sponsoring the art competition and will purchase the winning painting.

Beginning November 2, the selected works will be exhibited at Art Gallery Copalli in Tangolunda, where they will also be available for purchase.

The Xandú Festival offers residents and visitors an opportunity to experience Día de Muertos traditions while discovering the work of artists from the Oaxacan coast.

Festival: October 30, Plaza de la Guelaguetza, across from Marina Chahué.

Art exhibition: Beginning November 2, Art Gallery Copalli, Tangolunda.

Admission is open to everyone.





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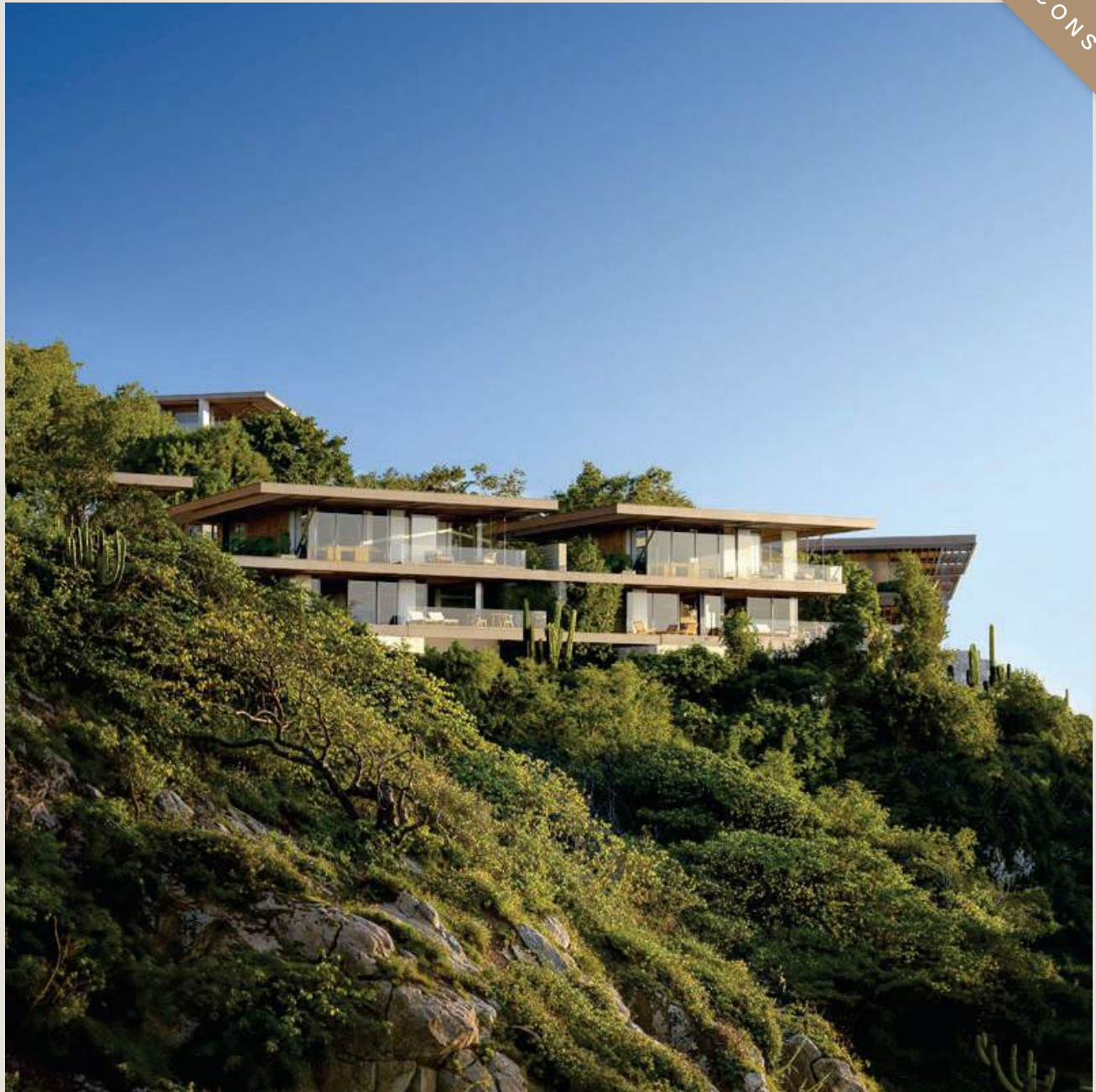
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End-of-Year New Books

By Carole Reedy

Readers have had a banner year of new books from some of our favorite writers, and it's not over yet. Here are six titles arriving before the end of 2026 to add to your holiday list—either to give or, even better, to receive.

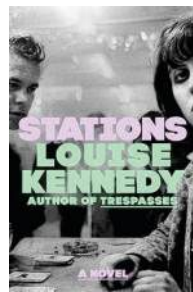
***Partita* by Barbara Kingsolver, October 6**

Without a doubt one of the most anticipated reads of the season, Kingsolver's latest will appear in bookstores, libraries, and on your Kindle this fall. We mentioned this book, about music, memory, and a life-altering love affair, in our July 2026 column and include it here again as a reminder.



***Stations* by Louise Kennedy, November 3**

Kennedy's much-lauded 2022 debut novel, *Trespasses*, put her on the radar of book lovers everywhere. The book was also adapted into a British TV series. Irish author Anne Enright poignantly said of the novel: "I loved it for the way it holds a national sorrow."

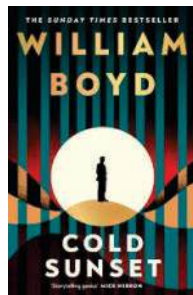


Kennedy's latest returns to the world of 1980s Ireland and Northern Ireland. It's the story of two teenagers, Red and Róisín. Red, often on the wrong side of the law, escapes to England, but they remain connected. In search of freedom, Róisín eventually travels to England but doesn't find what she anticipated.

***Cold Sunset* by William Boyd, November 3 in the US, September 3 in Britain**

Even if you're not a lover of the spy genre, a William Boyd novel is guaranteed to entertain in a deeply intelligent way. Boyd's unusual talent for engaging readers, regardless of the subject matter, is evident in the 16 novels he's published to date.

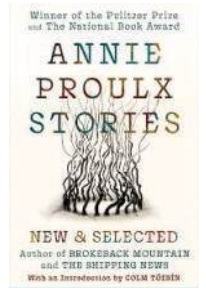
Cold Sunset is number three in his Gabriel Dax spy series, preceded by *Gabriel's Moon* and *The Predicament*, both compelling, delightfully fresh, entertaining reads.



Cold Sunset takes the reluctant spy and travel writer Gabriel Dax to Russia in 1964 with the task of delivering a drawing to a triple agent, who then wants Dax to sneak him over the Russian border to Finland.

***Annie Proulx Stories: New and Selected*, November 10**

Annie Proulx is 91 years old. Her newest publication brings together celebrated stories from across her career, along with three new works. The collection spans decades of her writing about the American West, New England, and rural life.

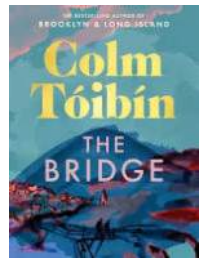


The book's introduction is written by Colm Tóibín (see his new book below), who has observed that some of the most powerful depictions of intimacy between men can be found in Proulx's work.

Proulx has had a distinguished career. Her 1993 novel *The Shipping News* won both the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award. Her short story *Brokeback Mountain* won an O. Henry Award in 1998 and was later adapted into an opera, with a libretto written by Proulx herself. The opera premiered at Madrid's Teatro Real in 2014.

***The Bridge* by Colm Tóibín, December 1**

Tóibín has the remarkable talent, found in so many Irish writers, of weaving a simple story into a beautifully rendered tale. Each of his books is unique in subject, place, and style. *The Bridge* is a novella and a follow-up to *A Long Winter*. The setting is the Catalan Pyrenees, where a new bridge opens up a formerly isolated area. And so the story of Miquel and his father continues.



Tóibín has written 11 novels, including *Brooklyn*, *The Blackwater Lightship*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and *The Master*.

***Primeval and Other Times* by Olga Tokarczuk, December 1**

Originally published in Poland in the 1990s, *Primeval and Other Times* arrives this December in a new US edition translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones.



Tokarczuk was awarded the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature for what the Nobel committee described as "a narrative imagination that with encyclopedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life."

One of Tokarczuk's most notable creations, *Flights*, was awarded the Man Booker International Prize in 2018 and is a reader favorite. The unusually titled *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* is another of her popular works, while the 900-page epic *The Books of Jacob* is considered by many to be her magnum opus.

Tokarczuk's background in clinical psychology is evident in her writing. Primeval is a mythical Polish village through which Tokarczuk takes us across three generations of life. Reading their stories may cause you to reflect on your own history and life. The tales are not only about the changes and hardships experienced by the people, but also about the natural world surrounding them.

We're already looking forward to another year of innovative storytelling in 2027.

Carole Reedy has been writing for The Eye since 2011. She is an avid reader who has made Mexico her home for many years.

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Alebrije

By Julie Etra

This whimsical and intricately painted form of wood sculpture is unique to the state of Oaxaca, and more precisely to the Valley of Oaxaca, where it originated. Primarily animals, the fantastical objects can include hummingbirds, coyotes, jaguars, unicorns, rabbits, raccoons, dinosaurs—well, you name it.

Origins

Last winter, while in Oaxaca City, I had the dumb luck to stumble upon a special, temporary exhibit of alebrijes at the museum in the Church of Santo Domingo.

The art form's origin is relatively recent. In Mexico City in 1936, artisan Pedro Linares developed a high fever and accompanying nightmares that included imaginary animal-like monsters shouting the word “alebrijes.” Upon awakening and recovering, he recalled the creatures from his dreams and began creating them using cardboard and paper (aka papier-mâché, or a version thereof).

Manuel Jiménez Ramírez took the original concept of the cardboard figures created by Linares and transformed it using wood from copal trees native to the region. Jiménez Ramírez, an Oaxaqueño, was from San Antonio Arrazola, a community on the outskirts of Oaxaca City.

The original location of Jiménez Ramírez's workshop is still active and run by his family successors, with the men primarily preparing the wood and doing the heavier work of sculpting, and the women pursuing the painstaking, patient and detailed work of painting the figures.

Lucky me, I was the only visitor on a sunny Saturday in February 2026 and received a very personal tour of the family facility, complete with a pictorial history, workshop, gallery, cats and dogs, various family members, and a garden where I had a chance to ask one of Jiménez Ramírez's sons a few questions.

The Wood

The wood is soft and malleable and comes from trees in the genus *Bursera* (commonly known as copal). This group of trees is common in the tropical dry forests of coastal Oaxaca and produces fruit on which a variety of birds and mammals feed.

There are more than 100 species distributed throughout the Americas, with many found in Mexico, particularly in the states of Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca. I have identified five species in our area, but the botanical inventory Flora de la Costa de Oaxaca, México: Lista Florística de la Región de Zimatán lists 11.



These trees are common in our forests, with one recognizable species being *Bursera fagaroides*, known locally by various common names and recognizable by its peeling bark.

The Jiménez Ramírez family explained that not all species of *Bursera* are suitable for carving and that *Bursera tecomaca* is one they prefer. After a little research, I found that copal resin, rather than the wood itself, also has uses as a preservative and is commonly burned as incense.

Other species of *Bursera* used for sculpting include:

Bursera glabrifolia: Commonly called copalillo, this is a preferred wood due to its softness and lightness.

Bursera bipinnata: This species is known as copal santo or copal blanco.

Bursera copallifera: This species is commonly known as copal ancho.

Jiménez Ramírez also worked with other woods, including zompantle (aka colorin, *Erythrina coralloides*), palo de águila and cedar. The first two were collected locally, while he purchased the latter from vendors in Valle Nacional and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Regulation

As one of Jiménez Ramírez's sons explained to me, artisans and communities play a role in managing the supply of wood to avoid overexploiting the resource. Wood may be sourced from local forests, communal lands or private initiatives.

There are also independent reforestation projects. Faced with the risk of overharvesting and shortages due to high demand, communities such as San Martín Tilcajete have launched conservation projects, including Palo que Habla (Sticks That Talk), to cultivate copal trees, primarily copalillo.

There have also been efforts to protect the identity and origin of Oaxacan alebrije handicrafts. Such protections, however, are distinct from the rules governing the harvesting and sale of wood.

Given the variation in figures available at tourist destinations, I don't know how consistently these protections are enforced.

Jiménez Ramírez obtained his wood from vendors in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and Valle Nacional, as well as locally.

Creating the Figures

Tools used for carving the green wood are typically quite basic, consisting of knives and machetes. Wood is selected for its shape and its correspondence to the animal or figure being created, which often includes delicate appendages such as ears, spines and tails. These are inserted or pegged into the main body of the sculpture and can be conveniently removed for transport.

Commercial enamel paints were initially used, but these days, once the piece has dried and hardened, a coat of white base paint is often applied to enhance the brilliance of acrylic or vinyl paints. Tiny dots, lines, symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns, and even fibers sometimes adorn the sculptures.

Where to Shop

Since the early days, dozens of sculptors have continued developing the art form, with varying degrees of complexity.

I am told that very elaborate (and expensive) pieces can be found in San Martín Tilcajete, south of Oaxaca City, where there are workshops and galleries. Street vendors generally offer simpler carvings and a seemingly endless supply of hummingbirds.

Several stores in Huatulco offer high-quality pieces if you want to shop locally, as do shops in Oaxaca City.

The small but lovely Museo Estatal de Arte Popular de Oaxaca in Santa María Coyotepec, south of Oaxaca City, also had some excellent pieces in its museum store. It is worth a visit.

Since I have not been to San Martín Tilcajete, I can't compare it with San Antonio Arrazola, which I thoroughly enjoyed and where I purchased an outstanding sitting coyote.

Julie Etra is a vegetation restoration specialist and botanist.



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First Morning in Huatulco: The Map, The Mirror and The Mind

By Randy Jackson

Beyond a certain age, it becomes strikingly clear how much our memories define who we are, or who we think we are. What we remember, whether true or false, ends up defining us. Memory is a complex and fascinating faculty, and understanding even a few of its features helps us better understand how we make sense of the world.

If you can imagine awakening from a deep blackout sleep, one in which your brain needs to reboot, you would have three profound questions: Where am I? Who am I? And who (the hell) are you? At that moment, you really need your memory to perform three different functions. These three functions are handled differently with varying degrees of accuracy and reliability within your cranial complex. These are: Geographical Memory to know where you are. Autobiographical Memory to recall who you are. And Facial Memory to recognize others.

Geographical Memory

As a seasonal resident, sometimes waking on the first morning in Huatulco results in a brief but sudden shift in orientation. That felt shift seems to be the result of my brain recognizing the familiar bedroom surroundings of our place in Huatulco, while realizing I'm not in Calgary anymore. And although I'm sure no neurologist would ever describe it this way, it seems like the geographical memory snapped into place.

In fact, our geographical memory function is one of the oldest and most developed in evolutionary terms. Well before we had language ability and could formulate abstract thought, we could remember where we were. John O'Keefe, a brain researcher, discovered, in the 1970s, what he called "place cells": brain cells that fired only when an animal stood in one particular place, and nowhere else. In 2014, this work won the Nobel Prize after further discoveries showed that brain cells formed a hexagonal map of any space we move through. So who knew, that first-morning surprise awakening in Huatulco is backed by solid brain science.



The capacity of our geographical memory is perhaps best demonstrated by research on London cab drivers. What cabbies call 'The Knowledge' requires them to memorize an extraordinary amount about London's notoriously complex network of roads, place names and landmarks. I can vouch for this ability. Once (before Google Maps), after getting off at the wrong

underground stop and being hopelessly lost, we took a bus to who-knows-where, hoping to find a place to catch a cab. Then, getting off at a random bus stop, we found a London cab that recognized the street name our hotel was on. Saved by the enlarged hippocampus of a taxi driver. Brain scans have shown that London cabbies have a larger-than-normal area of the brain most tied to spatial memory.

Autobiographical Memory

That impressive ability of humans, and no doubt other animals, to know where we are does not translate so well to remembering who we are. Autobiographical memory is notoriously poor, or perhaps better said: "flexible". But "flexible" enough to clearly remember things that never happened.

Often cited as an important "where were you when" example is the account of people remembering where they were when they first heard that John F Kennedy was assassinated. It's a term psychologists call Flashbulb Memory. The idea is that the emotional impact of hearing of a tragic event cements the details of where they were when they heard the news. But when psychologists have actually tested such memories, they've found otherwise.

The day after the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster, in January 1986, researchers asked a group of students to write down where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news. Three years later, they asked the same students again. The students were confident in their memories, but often those later memories were wrong. Even when shown their own handwritten account from the day after, some refused to believe it, trusting their most vivid current memory over the document in their own hands.

Getting some details wrong about a past event is one thing. Remembering a whole event that never happened is something else. This may be best demonstrated by a 1995 study titled "Lost in the Mall." Researchers first interviewed each subject's family members to gather three real events from that person's childhood. Then they presented those three, along with a fourth, a made-up story about being lost in a mall as a child but rescued unharmed by a kind stranger.

Over two interviews, they asked what the subjects remembered about each event. By the second interview, about a quarter of them not only "recalled" the mall incident that never happened but had begun to furnish it with details of their own, such as what the kind rescuer was wearing.

And if getting details wrong over time and remembering things that never happened aren't bad enough, another fly in the ointment of autobiographical memory is how our brains reconstruct our memories. It is a misconception to think our brains are like computer memory, where the data stored is the same data recalled. Rather, each time we recall an event, we rebuild it, filling gaps from previous versions and coloring the result with the mood and circumstances of the moment. Then this revised version of the memory is stored until the next recall, creating a slow drift over time.

Facial Memory

As unreliable as our autobiographical memory can be, we are very good at remembering other people — not their names, of course, or even where we might have seen them before, but in recognizing the face itself. In fact, some people show exceptional skill in this ability.

At the time of the London riots in 2011, Constable Gary Collins of the London Metropolitan Police was on vacation. Recognizing some of the faces in the television news coverage, he returned to work to help identify rioters in the grainy CCTV footage. Collins identified around 180 suspects from riot imagery. The Met's facial-recognition software of the time identified just one. His unusual ability helped prompt the Met to establish a dedicated super-recognizer unit, built on the small number of people who possess a supersized portion of our ability to recognize faces.

The three questions I opened with: Where am I? Who am I? Who are you? are each answered by a different memory faculty. Our sense of identity leans on all their answers. To demonstrate the importance of these memory functions, we might look to an example of someone who can no longer answer any of the three correctly.

In the essay 'A Matter of Identity', neurologist Oliver Sacks describes a patient of his, William Thompson, who has Korsakoff's syndrome (the alcohol-related memory collapse). When Thompson was alone, out in the home's garden, he sat quietly. But the moment another person appeared, a face he could not place, the confabulation ignited. He would take the stranger for someone he knew, then improvise a time and place to fit, often articulate, often interesting, a whole new identity assembled on the spot.

Thankfully, unlike Thompson, we do not invent a new self for every stranger we meet. Perhaps the brief disorientation we sometimes feel on waking is a reminder that our sense of self depends not on memory being perfectly accurate, but on it being flexible enough to bend without breaking—and still carry one continuous self from one day into the next.

Randy Jackson blends local reporting from the perspective of a seasonal Huatulco resident with explorations of life and change in Huatulco, Oaxaca, and Mexico. Email: box95jackson@gmail.com

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Un Nuevo Amanecer

It takes a village to raise a child

by Anita McDermott and Alyson Vinish

Thirty years ago, a small group of determined people climbed into a VW Beetle and began traveling from village to village around Santa María Huatulco. They were looking for families whose children had physical or developmental disabilities — children who, at the time, had few local resources available to them.



Flor Angélica Castillo de la Cruz, María Estela Venegas Aguirre, Dominga Sánchez Aguirre, Luz María Blanquet and Leonardo Alcántara García recognized the need and decided to do something about it. Their work would eventually become **Un Nuevo Amanecer en Pro del Discapacitado (UNA)**, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2025.

In those early days, the group conducted needs assessments throughout the municipality of Santa María Huatulco. Traveling to remote communities, they met with families to better understand their circumstances and to talk about the importance of care and support for children with physical and developmental disabilities.

UNA's initial funding came from the Ba'asolay Foundation. Piña Palmera, another organization working with people with disabilities on the Oaxacan coast, provided medical assistance, wheelchairs and hearing aids in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Huatulco.

Over the years, UNA developed partnerships with government institutions, international organizations and local supporters. Volunteers also became an important part of the organization's growth.

For 27 years, UNA operated from space generously provided inside Ferrealianza Hardware store. Then, in 2023, it moved into its new Child Care Centre in Huatulco — a considerable change from those early journeys in a VW Beetle.

Today, UNA serves approximately 180 children each year from 28 communities. Families come not only from Huatulco, but also from neighboring municipalities and communities including San Miguel del Puerto, Pochutla, Río Grande and San Pedro Huamelula.

The children range in age from infants to teenagers and receive services according to their individual needs. These include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, sign-language instruction and educational support, provided by qualified full-time therapists.

But the work is also about what comes next.

UNA's goal is to help children participate as fully as possible in their families, schools and communities and, as they grow older, in the workplace. For young people who may not continue with formal education, workshops teach practical skills such as cooking and independent living, helping prepare them for adulthood.

Thirty years after a handful of people began traveling through the villages surrounding Huatulco, the need for that work remains. According to UNA, approximately 70 percent of the families it serves live in poverty. The organization relies heavily on donors, volunteers and community support to cover the cost of therapies, programs and staff.

What has changed is the scale of what those first volunteers began. The VW Beetle has given way to a dedicated center, and a small group trying to identify children who needed help has become an organization serving families across the region.

But the idea at its heart remains much the same: caring for a child is rarely the work of one person alone.

How You Can Help

Through UNA's Sponsor a Child (Apadrina a un Niño) program, donors can help cover a child's therapeutic treatment. A donation of \$15,000 pesos provides therapeutic support for one year, with the program focusing particularly on children who require multiple therapies and whose families need financial assistance.

Canadian donors can make tax-deductible contributions through Amistad Canada. When donating, select the Un Nuevo Amanecer project and indicate whether your contribution is to sponsor a child or support UNA's general operating costs.

www.amistadcanada.org

UNA also raises funds through annual community events, including Blues at Bocana, with food, drinks and live entertainment, and Vamos Huatulco, a 3 km walk and 5 km run.

For more information about UNA, including stories from some of the families it has supported, visit:

www.unnuevoamanecerhux.com

Alyson Vinish and Anita McDermott serve as project liaisons between UNA and Amistad Canada.



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1968: The Massacre Mexico Was Supposed to Forget

By Estefanía Camacho Jiménez

When you visit the Plaza of the Three Cultures in Tlatelolco, Mexico City, on a quiet afternoon, when the old trees are almost the only sound amplified by the plaza's peculiar acoustics, you can feel something like a stifled scream. It has always astonished me that so many tragedies could have taken place there.



The plaza contains traces of three major tragedies. In 1521, a massacre followed Cuauhtémoc's defense of Tlatelolco against Hernán Cortés. "It was neither a triumph nor a defeat; it was the painful birth of the mestizo people that is Mexico today," reads a monumental plaque. In 1968, students were massacred only four years after the inauguration of Mario Pani's modernist housing complex.

Then, during the magnitude 8.1 earthquake of September 19, 1985, the Nuevo León building collapsed, killing many of its residents. Each tragedy has its own memorial in a plaza where beautiful apartments still stand, some seemingly frozen in the 1960s.

That Afternoon

That afternoon was confusing. According to the immediate accounts of journalists, residents and survivors, there was no way to determine how many people had been killed on October 2.

Tensions had been building throughout the summer of 1968. Mexico's authoritarian government, controlled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, used a clash between students from schools affiliated with UNAM and the National Polytechnic Institute as justification for intervening in educational institutions across the capital. The riot police known as the *granaderos* beat, tortured and detained students and, at times, teachers. As the students organized against the repression and demanded the release of political prisoners, every new protest brought further arrests. The government accused them of trying to sabotage the Olympic Games, and the conflict escalated when the Army entered UNAM preparatory schools with tanks, military trucks, artillery and a bazooka.

In the United States, some press coverage repeated unsubstantiated allegations that Fidel Castro and communist agents had infiltrated the protests. These claims reflected the Cold War obsession with preventing the alleged spread of Cuban communism throughout the continent.

What the public did not know in 1968 was that President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was one of the CIA's

highest-level contacts in Mexico and had been assigned the cryptonym LITEMPO-2. His government shared information about the protests, student leaders and political opponents, while the agency closely monitored the movement. Documents declassified decades later also showed that Mexican officials misled the CIA about the origins of the violence and the government's responsibility for it.

By mid-September, approximately 10,000 soldiers had occupied University City, UNAM's main campus, while the arrests of high school and university students continued. UNAM Rector Javier Barros Sierra publicly sided with the students, infuriating Díaz Ordaz. Under intense government pressure, he submitted his resignation in late September, although the university's Governing Board refused to accept it.

Much of the mass media had been co-opted by those in power. Newspapers, television programs and magazines were expected to follow the government's version of events. Only a handful of journalists dared to criticize its actions, particularly after October 2, knowing that doing so could lead to censorship, persecution or even death.

International progressive movements, feminism, the counterculture, foreign music, the Cuban Revolution and protests against the Vietnam War were also influencing young Mexicans. This was a generation awakening to its dissatisfaction with an established order controlled by a repressive party that elected and reelected itself through processes bearing little resemblance to democracy. Those who questioned the system were branded as enemies and persecuted.

On September 30, the Army withdrew from UNAM's main campus, leaving destruction behind. Students then prepared for an October 2 rally at the Plaza of the Three Cultures, followed by a march toward the Polytechnic's Casco de Santo Tomás campus.

The Day

Despite the peaceful nature of the gathering, the Plaza of the Three Cultures had become a trap. The esplanade was enclosed by the Church of Santiago and the tall buildings of the housing complex. Government agents had infiltrated the crowd in civilian clothes, while troops, tanks and armored vehicles surrounded the area. The gathering included not only students but also families, children, teachers, workers and Mexican and international journalists. Estimates place the crowd at as many as 10,000 people.

Two movement leaders spoke briefly, but tense and cautious. The second announced that organizers feared a provocation and had therefore decided to cancel the march. The gathering would disperse as soon as the speakers had finished.

Above them, two menacing helicopters circled the plaza. Flares were fired into the sky.

The Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, who was present that day, later recalled that her experience covering the war in Vietnam taught her to recognize the flares as an unmistakable signal that an attack was about to begin. She was alarmed, but it was already too late.

Troops moved into the plaza carrying machine guns and high-caliber weapons. Gunfire erupted from the surrounding buildings, and the soldiers opened fire. Armed men in civilian clothes, identified by a white glove or handkerchief, moved through the crowd and entered the Chihuahua building. Some belonged to the Batallón Olimpia, which had been assigned to capture the student leaders; later evidence indicated that a separate group of snipers linked to the Presidential General Staff fired on both the crowd and the Army. Amid the confusion, plainclothes agents shouted, "Batallón Olimpia! Don't shoot!" to keep soldiers from killing members of their own side.

People ran into the surrounding buildings and pounded desperately on apartment doors, begging residents to hide them. Some did. But hiding proved futile. Security forces forced their way into the apartments, violating the homes of residents and killing or detaining people who had simply been going about their daily lives. Photographs documenting some of these acts would not become widely known until decades later.



Decades Later

It was not until 2000, when the PRI lost the presidency after more than seven decades in power, that Vicente Fox came to office promising to clarify what had happened. By then, writers, journalists, intellectuals and filmmakers had spent decades pursuing the same questions: How many people were killed? Where and under what circumstances did they die? How many disappeared? Was it possible to remove the bodies in a single night and then claim that only 20 or 30 people had died?

The Díaz Ordaz government never officially acknowledged the *Batallón Olimpia's* role. For years, the evidence consisted mainly of survivor testimony and fragmentary footage, as government agents had confiscated film from some journalists. In 2002, journalist Sanjuana Martínez anonymously received an archive containing 35 previously unpublished photographs taken by Manuel Gutiérrez Paredes, who had worked for the government. The images showed detainees, torture, bodies, weapons and men wearing white gloves, further undermining the official account and its implausibly low death toll.



Puestos de periódicos tirados por los estudiantes.
Agosto de 1968. Archivo Fotográfico de El Nacional,
Fondo Temático, Sobre 337 - G. INEHRM. NT-337-G-053.

Fox knew the wound Mexico was carrying. By then, the slogan "October 2 will not be forgotten!" had echoed across the country for decades, particularly during the annual march commemorating the massacre. The demonstration traditionally begins in Tlatelolco and proceeds to Mexico City's Zócalo. High school students, university students, young people and workers gather every year, with some traveling from other states to participate.

A presidential decree issued in 2001 ordered federal agencies to transfer records concerning past political repression to the General Archive of the Nation. The following year, Mexico's intelligence service delivered more than 4,000 boxes containing approximately 58,000 files produced by the former Federal Security Directorate and the General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations. The Defense Ministry transferred a separate military collection.

International correspondents who had arrived to cover the Olympic Games inevitably noticed what was happening to students, teachers and workers. Despite government censorship, the information crossed Mexico's borders. Díaz Ordaz may have feared that the country would be portrayed as sliding toward communism; instead, he became internationally associated with authoritarianism and grave human rights violations.

We remember the date because public protest is a right.



Desfile Deportivo de la Revolución Mexicana, 20 de noviembre de 1968,
Archivo Gráfico de El Nacional, Fondo Deportes, sobre Juegos Olímpicos, México, Inauguración P. INEHRM.



Archivo Fotográfico de El Nacional, Fondo Temático, Sobre 337 - G. INEHRM



Because the declassification and opening of government archives happened only recently.

Because photographic and documentary evidence can expose lies repeated for decades.

Because alarms go off whenever military convoys, soldiers or armed deployments appear on streets where they do not belong.

Because police forces are not supposed to enter university campuses, and when they do—as they still have—it must be regarded as reprehensible and unacceptable.

Because, in theory, no event as grand as the Olympic Games should ever be considered more important than human rights.

And because when students from other states organize and travel to the annual October 2 commemoration, their lives should not be placed in danger—as happened to the 43 students from Ayotzinapa who were forcibly disappeared on September 26, 2014. Mexico, you could say, has an extraordinary capacity to remember.

Estefanía Camacho Jiménez is a freelance Mexican journalist working across media and digital magazines. She is a specialist in gender, SMEs, economics, and business.

When Did Huatulco Stop Being Cheap?

By Randy Redmon and Jesse Kirkham

There was a time when one of the great pleasures of living in or visiting Huatulco was sitting down at a nice restaurant, ordering a good meal, having a couple of drinks and walking away from the table thinking, “Wow, that was a lot of food for very little money.”



Visitors adjust accordingly. A family staying in an Airbnb may make breakfast and lunch themselves and eat out less often, while a couple might buy a bottle of wine at the supermarket rather than order several glasses at dinner. Someone heading to the beach may fill a cooler rather than buying drinks and snacks throughout the day. Those choices make perfect financial sense, but collectively they can also affect the local businesses that depend on visitor spending.

Huatulco was never completely free of expensive restaurants, of course, but for many Canadians and Americans, the appeal was that even a good restaurant meal generally felt like a bargain compared with what they were accustomed to paying at home.

Lately, however, we've found ourselves looking at restaurant bills a little differently, not necessarily because the prices are outrageous, but because the gap between what we used to think of as “cheap” and what we are paying today seems to be getting smaller. Perhaps the easiest way to see that change is with a glass of wine.

Consider a restaurant selling a house wine for 150 pesos a glass. Depending on the exchange rate, that works out to roughly C\$12 or US\$9. Neither figure is particularly shocking when compared with a mid-range restaurant in Canada or the United States, especially when you remember that Canadian restaurant prices often have sales tax added after the menu price.

The question, then, isn't really whether 150 pesos is expensive, but whether it still feels like the kind of value people have traditionally associated with Huatulco.

For many years, the favourable exchange rate helped make Huatulco feel exceptionally inexpensive to Canadians and Americans. A 300-peso dinner seemed like a bargain when your dollar bought a significant number of pesos. With the peso stronger against both the Canadian and U.S. dollars, those same peso prices translate into noticeably more money from a foreign visitor's perspective.

A 1,000-peso restaurant bill is still 1,000 pesos, but it is also roughly C\$81 or US\$59 at today's exchange rates. Add a bottle of wine, a couple of cocktails, dessert and a tip, and a dinner for two can reach 1,500 pesos or more without anyone feeling as though they went overboard.

That doesn't necessarily make Huatulco expensive, particularly when a comparable dinner in Canada, the United States or Europe can easily cost more. It does, however, mean that Huatulco may not feel as incredibly cheap to a Canadian or American visitor as it once did.

This is where the conversation becomes more interesting than simply asking whether Huatulco restaurants are too expensive. The real question may be what value means to us now.

Huatulco has changed considerably over the years, and the restaurant scene is better and more diverse than it was when many of us first arrived. There are talented chefs, excellent seafood, international cuisine, interesting wine lists and restaurants offering experiences that simply weren't available here years ago. That improvement comes with a price, and most of us understand that, but customers are also doing their own calculations.

If I spend 1,200 or 1,500 pesos on dinner, I don't necessarily need it to be cheap; I need it to feel worthwhile. I want good food, good service, a pleasant atmosphere and, yes, a glass of wine that makes me glad I ordered it. That is really the difference between cheap and value: cheap is about price, while value is about what you get for the price.

Perhaps Huatulco is slowly making that transition. For years, one of the easiest ways to market a Mexican vacation was to say, “It's beautiful, the weather is fantastic, and everything is cheap,” but perhaps that isn't the best way to describe Huatulco anymore.

Huatulco may be becoming a value destination rather than a cheap destination, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. People will pay for quality, a memorable meal, good service and a beautiful setting when they feel that what they received was worth what they paid.

Huatulco's appeal has never really been that everything is cheap. It has always been the combination of natural beauty, climate, culture, food, hospitality and a quality of life that offered exceptional value. Perhaps that's what we should be protecting.

So the next time you sit down at a Huatulco restaurant and look at a 150-peso glass of wine, maybe the question isn't whether it's expensive, but something much simpler: **Is it worth it?**

Do You Remember Huatulco When...?

Dime cuánto tiempo llevas en Huatulco sin decirme cuánto tiempo llevas en Huatulco.

That was the question we put to readers on Facebook. We asked them to name something they remembered that no longer exists, and more than 400 comments followed. Together, they recalled an earlier map of Huatulco: bus stops beneath trees, dances where markets now stand, favorite places to eat, and the little train that circled the park.

“La Crucecita didn’t exist yet. The Adolfo López Mateos primary school stood where the Santa Cruz dock is now. There was only one taxi, and people traveled in passenger trucks.”—Fabiola

“Where Plaza Madero stands, the micros used to stop beneath a huge tree. U2 was mostly dirt, with just a few improvised houses.”—Alika

“I remember the guanacaste tree where Plaza Madero is now.”—Carolina

“The boulevard to Santa Cruz ended at the far end of Sector F.”—Harriet

“There was no parking or bathroom at Playa El Arrocito. You reached the beach by a steep path.”—Pedro

“Before Magic Circus, we went dancing at a place across from the park that everyone called La Nacoteca. Workers from the hotels and the construction sites met there. It was beautiful, and we had such a good time.”—Sharin

“The fairs were set up in La Crucecita’s park, and the Independence Day celebrations took place at the sports court. The dancing and festivities happened right in the center.”—Lety

“La Tropicana was open around the clock. Upstairs was El Telefonito, where Doña Naty made the best chocolate milkshake.”—Calacas

“I remember sitting on those lovely benches with backs, eating a paleta from La Zamora after dinner at Pollo Chava or Don Arnoldo’s Fogón. Paradise.”—Socorro

“The little train—and the Barbie motorcycles and Jeeps you could rent in the park. I remember them from as far back as I can remember.”—Kyara



“Música por la Tierra!” —Estefanía

“There was a place where you could rent a movie and watch it in a little wooden room.”—Miguel

“I used Mare’s dial-up internet and went to its cybercafé above the shops behind Súper Santa Cruz.”—Raúl

“The first cinema was where the Megacable offices are now.”—Jesús

“There were no traffic lights, and there was just one policeman.”—Ritu

“La Fuente, Café Dublín, the internet cafés—and the iguana at the bar in Los Portales.”—Karen

“Santa Cruz had only Ve el Mar and Doña Celia. The church was just a palapa.”—Julie

“Doña Celia’s first palapa; her son Migue with the first Jet Ski in Huatulco; and Don Wilo’s pizzas on Cocotillo.”—Rubén

“The pizzas sold from a tricycle at the entrance to Residencial Chahué were delicious.”—Bernardo

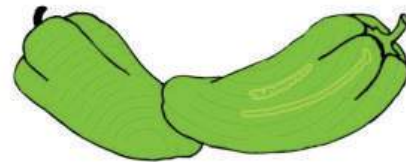
Some places have changed names. Others have disappeared so completely that a comment was enough to make someone else say, I remember that too.

What do you remember?

Write to us at TheEyeMexico@gmail.com

Reader comments translated and lightly edited for length.

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- Recipe Manual
- Free Gift Bag
- Food and Drinks Included
- Transportation Included

Cost:

USD \$115 per adult

USD \$75 for children under 12

Pick-up 9am

Return 1pm

"We had amazing food, learned a lot about the region ... HIGHLY RECOMMEND!"

— Lisa R., UK

"Street Food class is a gem! ... we experienced an anthropological cooking class with Jane ... in a small town."

— Tom D., Canada

"Hands down the best cooking class I've ever taken — everything was delicious!"

— John M., USA

WEDNESDAYS

Mama's Kitchen

- Black Mole and Yellow Mole served with Rice and Chicken
- Handmade Tortillas
- Mezcal Margarita

THURSDAYS

Fiesta

- Beef Picadillo Tamales
- Poblano & Nopal Empanadas
- Guacamole
- Jicama, Cucumber, and Orange Salad
- Ancho Reyes Margarita

FRIDAYS

Street Food

- Red and Green Salsas
- Pico de Gallo
- Handmade Tortillas and Sopes
- Two types of Taco Fillings
- Tlayudas
- Jamaica Margaritas

SATURDAYS

Seafood

- Fish Ceviche with Totopos
- Rosemary Shrimp
- Shrimp Mousse
- Baja-style Fish Tacos
- Beer Micheladas

Reserve your spot in the kitchen:

www.HuatulcoFoodTours.com

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