



Welcome to Casa del Sol Connections!!

We know how daunting travel can sometimes be. After a harrowing journey through airports or down busy highways, you find yourself in a different culture needing to take care of the basics like locating an ATM or finding a good spot for lunch or deciding what to do in the evenings. This issue is devoted to helping you find what you need to make your stay as enjoyable and care free as possible.

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Enjoy -- Read On!!

Cathy Roberts
Owner/Innkeeper
Casa del Sol Bed & Breakfast Inn
Ajiic, Mexico

January, 2010

[Click here for Casa del Sol's Website](#)



Two Agaves, No Tequila!!

If you're in the Lake Chapala area, we invite you to join us for a special event at Casa del Sol Inn on Thursday, January 28 from 11 am - 1 pm. We will be hosting a reading and book signing event for two books by local authors.

"Two Agaves, No Tequila", will feature Bill Frayer reading from his newly published poetry collection, **Agave Blood**, and then the Lake Chapala Women Writers will read excerpts from their classic anthology, **Maria Agaves**.

The books will be available for sale and will be signed by the authors. The readings will begin at 11AM, and will be hosted by Alejandro Grattan, Editor-In-Chief of El Ojo del Lago.

Join us for coffee, refreshments, conversation and some literary entertainment.



Casa del Sol Website Additions

We are excited to introduce our two new web pages. We are always working hard to bring you more information to make your vacation experience at Casa del Sol the best ever!!

1. Check out our new webpage at [Lake Chapala Area Events](#) -- we want to make it easy for you to plan your visit around the many things there are to do in our area.

[Click here to see the new Events page](#)

2. I have also added a new web page with my favorite [Mexico On-line Resources](#). Some are on-line magazines, others blogs by people who have moved to Mexico and share delightful experiences with us, and still others contain helpful information about living in or retiring to the area.

[Click here to see the new Mexico Resources page](#)

Have Your Next Event at Casa del Sol

As if running a B&B isn't challenging enough, I also keep busy with event planning. I think the large Hacienda Room at Casa del Sol makes an ideal venue for special events: birthday parties, weddings, anniversaries, family reunions and fundraisers, and I have lots of prior experience organizing events: As a human resources executive, under "other duties as assigned" I oversaw the planning for employee picnics, award banquets and other events -- often the guest list topped 1,000.

At Casa del Sol I've hosted cocktail parties with up to 150 guests for holidays like Cinco de Mayo and for benefit fundraisers (a very fun chocolate, cheese and wine tasting event comes to mind), plus sit down dinners for 50 and family reunions of varied size.

I'm currently planning a May wedding which includes the welcome night Taquiza, the reception and all sourcing for catering, flowers, cake, photographer, music and even a horse & carriage to transport the lovely bride and groom.



Michelle, the bride, says: *"I can't tell you what a delight it was when Cathy said she would take on the role of wedding coordinator for my honey and I. It had become quite a challenge sourcing vendors long-distance when so many simply don't have an online presence. Enter Cathy, the most connected and über-organized diva you could ever hope to have on your side! She listened and immediately got the vision that Chris and I had for our wedding weekend, incorporating two cultures, two languages and to make it as eco-friendly as possible. She's a great soundboard and a calming voice who is generous with her time and has excellent attention to detail. If I didn't have Cathy holding down the fort in Ajijic, I'd be a jittery mess over here in Toronto!"*

I encourage you to consider Casa del Sol for your next special event. It's ideal for family reunions, special birthdays and any reason you have to gather family and friends together in a beautiful setting. I'm happy to handle all the headaches for you. Contact me to discuss your needs by email at info@casadelsolinn.com or by telephone: Toll free from the US & Canada: 1-866-403-9275 or within Mexico: 376-766-0050

Mexico 2010



From Beach Reads, Alma Libre Book Store Newsletter, December 2009

Mexico has a lot to celebrate (no, not Lou Dobbs leaving CNN...that's just a bonus). 2010 will mark a double anniversary for Mexico. It is the bicentennial of its independence and the centennial of its revolution. The entire year has been proclaimed by President Felipe Calderón as "Año de la Patria," or "Year of the Nation."

September 15th, 1810 is the day of the "Grito de Dolores" or Miguel Hidalgo's call to take up arms against the Spanish colonial government. The start of the Mexican Revolution is celebrated November 20th, 1910, when Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Pascual Orozco led the first insurrectionist attack.

In the Zocalo (main square) in Mexico City a large digital clock is counting down to the 15 September 2010 and 20 November 2010 dates. Similar countdown clocks are located in all the capital cities of the 31 states.

Many celebrations are planned and some important buildings are being restored for the celebrations. You will see signs along the road marking "Ruta 2010", roads linking important historical sites and recreating routes used during the battles for independence and the revolution.

[More info can be found on this Wikipedia website. Mexico has a fascinating history, get to know it in 2010.](#)

Exploring the Neighborhood -- Services near Casa del Sol

Written by Harriet Hart

Tony Cohan, author of *On Mexican Time* and *Mexican Days*, (highly recommended reading if you enjoy reading



about life in Mexico) says he exchanged a life of California driving for "a life on foot, open to the mysteries hidden in slowness." When you arrive at Casa del Sol, you will have the opportunity to follow Cohan's example and explore Ajijic as a pedestrian. The B&B is so well located everything you need is within a few blocks – and it is easy, level walking too!! One sunny morning in December, I went strolling in the neighborhood. My discoveries will give you a good idea of what you will find nearby.

Medical

If you develop an upset tummy or worse...up Javier Mina and right across the carretera (highway) sits Hospital Clinica Ajijic at 33A. Once my son and his wife came for a visit and disembarked from the plane feeling nauseas; when they got really ill, I took them straight to the Clinica which is staffed 24 hours a day. An English speaking doctor treated them immediately and effectively. If you need medications, the Farmacia Guadalajara is also open 24 hours/day and is conveniently located on the lakeside of the highway just 1 block east at the corner of Calle Encarcion Rosas.

If you develop a toothache Dental del Lago at 27A Constitucion can help you out at a very reasonable rate. I know visitors to lakeside who schedule dental cleanings (and also major work like implants and bridges) while they're here because the dentists are excellent and the rates are very reasonable.

Money

I always tell my friends not to bother bringing traveller's checks when they come to Mexico – there are plenty of ATMs which give you a good conversion rate. There is an ATM in the Farmacia Guadalajara on the carretera, one in Bugambilas Plaza and another on the town plaza at the Bancomer Bank – all available 24 hours/day.

Dining

Many of Ajijic's top restaurants are very close to the Casa del Sol. El Jardin de Ninette at Constitucion #57 is just around the corner and is my favorite for special occasions with it's intimate garden setting and delicious international cuisine. Other top notch restaurants nearby include Number Four at Donato Guerra #4 with its classy décor and beautifully presented food and Ajijic Tango on Morelos #5 which is Ajijic's most popular restaurant serving reliable, high quality food and specializing in steak. All are bargains compared to what you're used to paying anywhere north of the border!

For comfort food you have plenty of choices. Up at the corner of Javier Mina is the Deli Corner at #36 Carretera serving sandwiches and salads; down Javier Mina toward the lake is Cocina San Andres with a daily lunch special and freshly baked empañadas and cookies. If you walk to the town plaza be sure and try Restaurant Jardin Plaza where the burgers and enchiladas are inexpensive and the people watching worth the trip. And La Trattoria di Axixic is on the lakeside of the Carretera at the corner of Galeana, and has great pastas and really delicious pizza cooked in a wood-burning open oven.

Watering Holes

If thirst is your problem, there are up scale bars at Number Four and at the tapas wine bar Ole Ola around the corner from Casa del Sol; and within a few blocks you can find the new late night hotspots Go! and the Chili Bang Bar (watch for more about these new night spots in our next issue); if you feel like getting a little down and dirty, try Tom's Bar or the Chameleon Bar, both on Constitucion, or The Music Box on the plaza.

If you're on the wagon there are excellent spots for coffee including Café Grano Café across from the main church (on Marcos Castellanos) specializing in freshly roasted Mexican grown coffee including espressos, cappuccinos and lattes. Right around the corner is The Coffee Hour which also serves an excellent cup of java (and terrific icy Frappuccinos and refreshing fruit smoothies in many flavors).

Services We can't forget the necessities– like washing that pile of dirty laundry that's growing daily in the back of your closet. There's a Laundry service just 4 doors up from Casa del Sol where they will wash, dry and fold your laundry for a nominal fee (ironing is available too) while you sightsee.

You can get a haircut, manicure, pedicure, facial or massage at a number of establishments including Joly's in Bugambilia Plaza or the Mayan Spa and Salon up on the carretera (on the lakeside of the highway across from the Pemex gas station). Even closer is Susana's Salon on Guadalupe Victoria, just 1 1/2 blocks from Casa del Sol. And we can arrange for an excellent masseuse to come right to Casa del Sol to give you a relaxing and renewing massage. Remember, part of being on vacation is pampering yourself.

If you need to copy or fax a document, go to the Alps Internet Cafe just ½ block up Javier Mina right on the corner at the first cross street, Guadalupe Victoria – you can also check your emails by buying Internet minutes.

Want a taxi – they'll be lined up on the west side of the town plaza (or you can call one from the B&B and they are here in less than 5 minutes).

And if you need groceries of any kind, walk to El Torito in Bugambilia Plaza. It's stocked with supplies: fresh fruit, snacks, soft drinks, postcards and includes a full liquor store. The Farmacia Guadalajara also has a good selection of cookies, chips, soft drinks and even beer, and there are also corner "Aborrates" (mini convenience stores) located on several nearby corners.

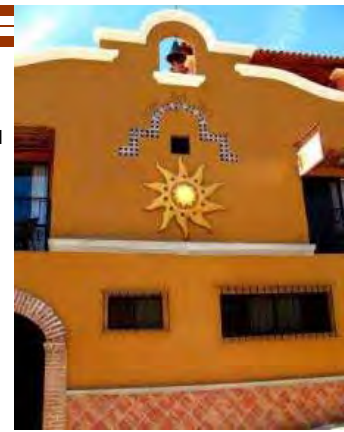
Shopping

We all forget important items when we travel – like an umbrella or a flashlight to guide us home at night. There's a little store on the main plaza which sells everything from reading glasses to scissors, gift bags, flip flops, cleaning supplies and even a gadget that looks like a calculator but in reality is a translator so you can communicate in Spanish with relative ease. Right next door to it is a shop selling shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, insect repellent and lotion for those who stay out in the sun too long.

If you need something, it's available within easy walking distance of Casa del Sol. I haven't even mentioned the movie theatre, the new gambling casino or the multitude of speciality shops selling jewelry, folk art and souvenirs of all kinds.

Tony Cohan is right – Mexico encourages us to slow down and become pedestrians again and when we do, we discover a richness of life we thought had disappeared forever.

[Click here for a map of central Ajijic so you can see where the streets above are located – all in the neighborhood surrounding Casa del Sol:](#)



Dancing the Night Away



Written by Harriet Hart

Up north you probably avoid noisy bars with live bands playing that old time rock and roll, but here in Ajijic dancing is a legitimate activity for the "the young at heart at any age"-- so dust off those dancing shoes and follow me. I've been writing a music column for the Lake Chapala Review for over a year now so I've come to know the music scene.



slow dancing | Photo: Kenneth

Noe Raygoza and the Classics formed in 2002 and are rock and rollers in the "classic" sense. They begin their sets with tunes from the 1950s; Noe does a great Elvis impersonation and can sing Roy Orbison better than anyone in town. As the evening progresses, the group picks up steam and rocks their way through numbers like Jerry Lee Lewis' Great Ball of Fire and Whole Lotta Shaking Goin On. By closing time they're back to their roots with Carlos Santana' Black Magic Woman. You can catch Noe Fridays at 9 p.m. at the Old Posada (766 0744) or Saturdays at La Bodega (766-1002).

Ricardo Razo is another of Lakeside's most durable and popular artists. He's been entertaining audiences here for 15 years and fronts a band called Mirage. Ricardo says his goal is to get folks up on the dance floor: "Dancing is good for the heart, the body and the spirit...good for just about

anything that ails you." His favourite American entertainer is Elvis but he can do Mexico's Marco Antonio Solis too; his sets include a blend of old and new, American and Spanish. You can catch Ricardo on his own Wednesday nights at Manix or Saturdays at the Old Posada.

If you are an aficionado of Chicago Blues - Buddy, Guy, BB King or Muddy Waters, you're in luck. **The Bryan James Band** formed in 2008 and are accomplished musicians dedicated to creating their own sound which Bryan James calls Chicago blues with rock and funk thrown in. Their sets are a nice combination of fast and slow with numbers like Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone and My Girl for slow dancing and Mustang Sally and Hey Bartender for the rowdies in the crowd. They often perform on Sunday nights at Vicki's Hideaway west of town. It's a taxi trip but this is a good spot to eat dinner (try the best filet mignon and baked potato in town or the ribs) and stay for the music.

The Tall Boys consist of David Truly, Flip Nicholson and Joel Barker, three Americans who found their way to lakeside and I'm very glad they did. Their love of music is reflected in their exuberant performances. Much of the music they play is from the 1970s when music was difficult to classify. In a recent gig their sets included Dylan's It Ain't Me Babe, Brewer and Shipley's One Toke over the Line and Van Morrison's Tupelo Honey plus tunes from the Eagles and the Grateful Dead. This is toe tapping, foot stomping, just can't sit still kind of music. The Tall Boys perform regularly at La Tasca on Friday nights. If you love the 70s music scene, this group's for you.

Of course there are many more night spots offering different musical experiences in Ajijic and you owe it to your inner twenty-year-old to check out at least one of the four groups just described; toss away your inhibitions and lose yourself in the 50s, 60s or 70s.

[Click here to enjoy a video of the Tall Boys performing their original song "Somewhere in Mexico" recorded and filmed at local sites around Lake Chapala](#)

New Lake Chapala Society Board Elected

Excerpted from the Guadalajara Reporter/December 11, 2009 by Jeanne Chaussee

After a keenly contested campaign for control of the Lake Chapala Society (LCS), the "Yes Team" headed by Howard Feldstein beat off the challenge by Charlie Smith at the December 11 election. Feldstein became the new president of the primarily expatriate organization on January 1. He received 632 votes against Smith's 385. About one-third of LCS' membership turned out to vote in the new board of directors for the next two years. The vote split right down slate lines, with Feldstein's team winning all the posts.



When asked what his first priority would be when he assumed the presidential position, he said, "We want to get the friendly atmosphere back that so many people have claimed has been missing. We also want to put LCS in a position wherein the management of day-to-day operations is assured. We are going to put in place a professional executive director (that may not end up being the official term for the position), who will have full responsibility for that management, supported by a staff of volunteer managers. That way, the board of directors will oversee the operations and focus on a year, five years or more in the future, which hasn't been possible because the board has had to focus on the day-to-day management of the Society."

Congratulations to Howard and his team!

[Click here to see more about what's happening at The Lake Chapala Society.](#)

Medical Care in Mexico



I recently stumbled on the link to a recent (December 28, 2009) news video about Americans coming to Mexico specifically for their health care needs, a very good report by PBS. While it focuses on health care in the Puerto Vallarta area, the medical care in Guadalajara (just an hour north of Lake Chapala) is some of the best in the world.

[Click here for the link to this short video](#)

Upcoming Events

January 28 Two Agaves, No Tequila: a book launch for Bill Frayer's **Agave Blood** and an authors' re-union and reading from the classic anthology **Agave Marias** at 11:00 a.m. at Casa del Sol Inn. Refreshments served.

February 2010

12-16 Carnaval, Chapala (Mardi Gras): Music, dancing and fun culminating with very fun parades not be missed, in both Ajijic and Chapala on the 16th, Fat Tuesday.

14 Valentine's Day Concert: Songs of love sung by Patteye Simpson, accompanied by Tim Welch and others.

25 Spring Home Tour #2: Fun tour of area homes and gardens.

26 - 28 32nd Annual Mexican Chili Cook-off: Three days of music, food, margaritas, charros, lots of great vendor booths and fun, and several charities benefit from the event proceeds.

27 - Mar 9 Lakeside Little Theatre presents "The Boy Friend", a musical written by Sandy Wilson.

March 2010

5 - 15 Northern Lights Music Festival: 10 day music festival with some of Canada's finest talents.





20 – 21 Los Cantantes del Lago: Spring concert, opera choruses and movie themes by community choir of 65-70 singers.

25 Spring Home Tour #3: Fun tour of area homes and gardens.

26 Virgen de Dolores altar displays, Chapala, San Antonio, Ajijic

28 Palm Sunday: Beginning of week-long Passion Play, Ajijic. A very special event you may want to play your trip around. [See more information at Passion Play](#)

April 2010

3 – 11 Lakeside Little Theatre presents "Cash on Delivery", a comedy written by Michael Cooney

4 Dia de Pascua: Easter Sunday

22 Spring Home Tour #4: Fun tour of area homes and gardens.

[Click here for more Lake Chapala Events](#)



Thanks!!

I received so many nice emails from you after the publication of our first newsletter at the end of November. I'm glad to hear you are enjoying our updates and information on the Lake Chapala area. If you have suggestions or ideas for future topics, just drop me a line!

We are fully into high season in Ajijic -- restaurants are busy, there's lots of traffic, and there's some great people watching while relaxing on the plaza. Plan now to get away to beautiful Ajijic. While we are pretty booked for February, there is still "room at the Inn" during March and beyond.

I hope to see you soon!!

Cathy Roberts
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