



Welcome to Casa del Sol Connections!!

Welcome to the first issue of Casa del Sol Connections. As owner and operator of the B&B, I am eager to stay in touch with all my former and potential guests and encourage you to return for another visit or come for the first time! Of course, there are many of you who now live in the Lake Chapala area after visiting and falling in love with the area, and I hope you will also be interested in our newsletter -- and please pass it on to a friend who may want to visit Ajiijc!!

The idea for the newsletter has been brewing for some time, but I confess I was reluctant to take on the job of roving reporter. I asked Harriet Hart, a friend and local writer, to help me out. We met for lunch, put our heads together, and came up with this, the premiere edition of Casa del Sol Connections.

In this first issue of the newsletter you will find the following articles:

- **Updates from Casa del Sol**
- **Dining in Ajiijc**
- **Essences of Ajiijc**
- **Is Mexico Safe for Tourists?**
- **The Magic of Lake Chapala**
- **Upcoming Events**
- **Special Offer--See Below for Exclusive Discount!!**

I sincerely hope you will enjoy Casa del Sol Connections, which we will publish every few months. Please send us any comments or suggestions for future editions!

Saludos,

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

November, 2009

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



Updates from Casa del Sol

We have expanded!! Many of you may not be aware that we now have 10 suites and 2 casitas -- the perfect options for your next visit to Ajiijc!!

I've been busy over the past couple of years. I purchased the home directly across the street and renovated it so that I would have more room for myself and for my guests.

My former living quarters on the main floor of the B&B have been transformed into a spacious casita with its own kitchen, living room, bedroom, bathroom and screened-in terrace by the swimming pool. Right next door to this are two large guest suites that are totally wheelchair accessible. Now my guests who have difficulty with stairs can stay on the main level and not have to use the elevator (unless, of course, they prefer to do so).

My new home right across the street from the front door of the B&B also has a casita for rent with its own separate entrance. It is just like having your own one bedroom apartment. There is a large living room, open concept kitchen, large master bedroom, bathroom and a covered terrace. My new living space is underneath the casita on the main floor but you'd hardly know I was there!

In short, I have added two casitas to the Casa del Sol as well as two totally wheelchair accessible main floor suites.

[Click here to see our Suites & Casitas](#)

Next I decided to turn my talent for shopping to good use and expanded the gift shop just off the breakfast area. Now you don't even have to leave the B&B to purchase gifts to take home. You'll find delightful, reasonably priced, made in Mexico jewelry, gifts and souvenirs for people of all ages.

We have also created a Spanish language version of our beautiful website and will now have this periodic newsletter to connect with all our former and potential guests.

Some things that have not changed are the comfort and luxury you love at Casa del Sol, the gourmet breakfasts, the incredibly comfortable beds, the warm atmosphere and the wonderful staff that takes care of your every desire!

Casa del Sol in the News: I am proud to report that there have been two recent feature articles about Casa del Sol on two different websites about Mexico. Enjoy the articles here:

[Click here to read the MexConnect Article](#)

[Click here to read the Mexico Vacation Travels Article](#)

We'd love to have you as guests of Casa del Sol any time!!

Dining in Ajijic

Written by Harriet Hart

One of the great joys of traveling is trying out restaurants. There are so many here we warrant our own restaurant guide. John Keeling's 2010 Restaurant Guide will be out in time for Christmas. For the past five years, Keeling has been interviewing local residents to get their opinions on where and what to eat.

I'll recommend a few spots within easy walking distance of the Casa del Sol. My first choice is **Don Vito's Pizzeria** at 21B Marcos Castellanos just up from the church. Owner Pepe Villa Lobo, a local musician, recently turned his family home into a pizza joint. The pizzas are all made from fresh ingredients; Pepe even picks fresh basil from his back garden to sprinkle on top. His wife and children all help out. Dining there is a family affair – it's open evenings from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Pepe also delivers but I suggest going there in person – you will meet one of the most handsome men in Ajijic as well as his charming family.

If you are in the mood for a little fine dining, there are several choices close to Casa del Sol. **El Jardin de Ninette** at Constitucion #57 has "a classy intimate atmosphere" and "impressive cuisine with enchanting flavors." John Keeling suggests you try the filet steak, the shrimp in green curry or the chicken Riesling. Cathy recommends the sea scallops. Ninette is moderately priced for the quality and my personal choice for wedding anniversaries and other special occasions. There is an extensive wine list and for the non drinkers, a delightful complimentary fresh mint-flavored agua fresca.

La Nueva Posada Restaurant **La Rusa** on Donato Guerra #9 is a "long-time fixture in Ajijic". The restaurant guide recommends it for its ambiance: there is elegant interior seating and a charming terrace with daytime views of the lake. For dinner Keeling suggests you try the Caesar salad with chicken strips or the fajitas or lemon chicken. Save room for Chef Lorraine's mango pie.

Number Four at Donato Guerra #4 is an international restaurant with "great décor and ambiance." Keeling suggests the nightly specials, the pear gorgonzola salad and the salmon. He says the espresso coffee is particularly good. This is another special occasion spot for locals. It's the most expensive restaurant in Ajijic but still a bargain for visitors accustomed to paying at least twice the price up north for this type of cuisine. Number Four also has a piano bar which is the perfect place to stop for a drink and a little music.

You can buy Keeling's restaurant guide at Diane Pearl's Gallery on the corner of Colon and Constitucion for \$95 pesos. The B&B has its own copy for your convenience plus Cathy provides her own Casa Del Sol Information Guide in every room which contains her personal restaurant recommendations. There are so many wonderful eateries that it can be overwhelming unless you seek advice.

Essences of Ajijic

Excerpted from the Guadalajara Reporter, November 13, 2009, Jeanne Chaussee

The sculpture "Essences of Ajijic" by Estela Hidalgo was dedicated on November 9. After just over three years, sculptor Estela Hidalgo has finished her beautiful sculpture carved from the stump of an Indian laurel tree that had stood on the Ajijic plaza for decades.

Dedicated at a special ceremony November 9, the sculpture took 340 working days to complete and sports glass, bronze and brass additions to the woodcarvings.

It's a spectacular work of art to be enjoyed and treasured by everyone.

Congratulations Estela!



Is Mexico Safe for Tourists?

Written by Harriet Hart

Mexico gets a lot of bad press regarding violent crime. A tourist couple is murdered at a resort and it makes the national news in Canada and the USA. The facts tell a more reassuring tale. The US State Department did a study of non-natural deaths of US citizens in Mexico over a three year period, from 2005 to 2007, and found that of a whopping 18 million Americans who visited Mexico in those three years only 668 died. The causes were: accidents 389, homicides 128, drowning 85, suicides 61 and drug overdoses 5. Clearly violent death at the hands of drug lords or other unsavoury characters is uncommon in Mexico and even rarer here on the shores of Lake Chapala.

Are you reassured yet? If not, here's some personal testimony. I have lived here for eight years. I feel physically safe walking the streets of Ajijic and Chapala; indeed, I don't drive and walk the 30 minutes into town along the carretera (main highway) daily.

You do have to be careful. It's easy to become distracted gazing at the beautiful Sierra Nevada Mountains, or looking heavenward at the blossoming trees, or spotting a white egret on the lake. It's important to watch where you are going. An unfortunate pair of tourists was struck by a vehicle crossing the carretera last winter and killed. Pedestrians do not have the right of way.

How about petty crimes? Our community does have its share of pick pockets and thieves. I personally witnessed a distraught grocery shopper discover that while she was reading labels in Spanish on a marmalade jar, someone lifted her wallet from her open straw handbag. Keep your money secured. I use a fanny pack or specially designed travel wallet (with a strap that fits under my jacket) when I'm going to be in a crowded public place like the weekly open air market.

Casa del Sol is completely secure. In addition to the high exterior walls, there is a combination lock on the main door and all guest rooms have secure lock systems. We've never been robbed. Our staff is loyal and trustworthy, so you can sleep in safety and comfort, worry free.

Are the taxis safe? Yes. I've been told that you don't call a cab on the street in Mexico City and I heed that advice but lakeside is different. When you arrive at the Guadalajara airport, the taxis will be lined up and waiting. You can climb into one with confidence; you don't even haggle over the rate; you pay established fees at the kiosk inside the airport. Casa del Sol will be happy to arrange for a private driver to pick you up at the airport if you prefer. While in Ajijic, the staff at the B&B will call you a taxi or you can grab one at the main plaza.

I feel safe here as do my friends. I walk the village streets basking in the sunshine and warm greetings of my Mexican neighbors. I ride the local buses where sometimes a chivalrous man offers me his seat or a kindly fellow passenger shares her bag of peanuts! I practice common sense – I don't wander the streets at night alone, I keep my money secured and my eyes and ears open. Ajijic is easily as safe as my former home town in Canada.



The Magic of Lake Chapala



I thought you would enjoy seeing this video, produced by my friend Kristina Morgan, who works for Focus on Mexico, an organization in Lake Chapala that presents a comprehensive 8-day educational program on living at Lake Chapala. Their program is offered many times during the year with wonderful reviews from their participants.

Just click on the link below to read her heartfelt story and see her video on what she loves about living in the Lake Chapala area:

[Click here to see The Magic of Lake Chapala Video](#)

Upcoming Events

Written by Harriet Hart

Those of you planning a trip to Ajijic this January might want to take in the **Sixth Annual Lake Chapala Writers' Conference** from January 20 - 22, 2010. Every year the conference planning committee lures a couple of gifted northerners down to teach the writing craft. This year the speakers are both from the Willamette Writers' Group based in Portland, Oregon. Marc Acito is a humorist and syndicated columnist often billed as the gay world's answer to Dave Barry; and Cai Emmons is a well known novelist, playwright and teacher. Their topics include: Creativity, Finding the Form for Essays and Articles, Self Editing and Turning Rejection into Success. At \$1,150 pesos this is good value for the money. To register, or for more information, contact kdavis987@gmail.com

Classical music lovers will be pleased to know that this winter Viva la Musica is sponsoring bus trips into Guadalajara to take in **"Live at the Met"**, a live broadcast of opera from the New York Metropolitan Theatre; viewers say it's almost the same as being there. The following trips are scheduled: January 9th Der Rosenkavalier, January 16th Carmen, and February 6th Simon Boccanegra with Placido Domingo. This is a new initiative for this organization. For tickets or more information contact Rosemary Keeling in Ajijic at (376) 766 1801 or at rosemarykeeling@hotmail.com.

Sunset Tours is currently offering a unique opportunity to visit Colola on the Michoacan coast. Here you can stay in a cabana on the beach in a nature preserve and watch giant, endangered sea turtles coming ashore to lay their eggs. This ecological tour allows you to hold the new hatchlings and help volunteers release them into the ocean. For details contact Sunset Tours at (376) 766 2001, or at sunset_rentacar@hotmail.com

February 8 – 16 is Carnival in Chapala. This is nine days of music, dancing, food and fun with a fantastic parade culminating with Mardi Gras on February 16th.



The 32nd Annual Chili Cookoff takes place February 26, 27 and 28th in Ajijic. This event is three action-packed days of music, food, shopping, margaritas and charros (Mexico's famous horseback riders) -- and let's not forget the delicious chili tasting contest!! This outdoor event has a country fair atmosphere and is always lots of fun.

March 5 – 15 is the Northern Lights Music Festival, an opportunity to listen to high quality classical music and jazz performed by Canadian professional musicians. The festival began in 2003 and gets better with each passing year. The 2010 line-up includes chamber music, a jazz quintet, a guitar recital and more.

March 28 – April 4 is Semana Santa (Easter week) with special events including an elaborate and moving passion play depicting the trial and resurrection of Jesus performed in front of the church in Ajijic on Palm Sunday, March 28th.

In addition to the great weather, the lovely scenery and the relaxing atmosphere here in Ajijic, there are plenty of excellent dining establishments and some special events to keep you amused. Hope to see you soon!

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



SPECIAL OFFER!!!

Start making your plans now for a winter break in sunny Ajijic. We have a special offer exclusively for recipients of this newsletter:

A 10% discount off our regular nightly rates with your stay of 7 nights or more -- only during the month of January, 2010!!

And the Dollar to Pesos Exchange Rate is still very good -- almost \$13 Pesos for every \$1 US (and about \$12.20 Pesos for every \$1 CAD), so your money goes further in Mexico!!

Please mention this newsletter offer when making reservations for January.

I wish you all a very happy holiday season, and I hope to see you soon!

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

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

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