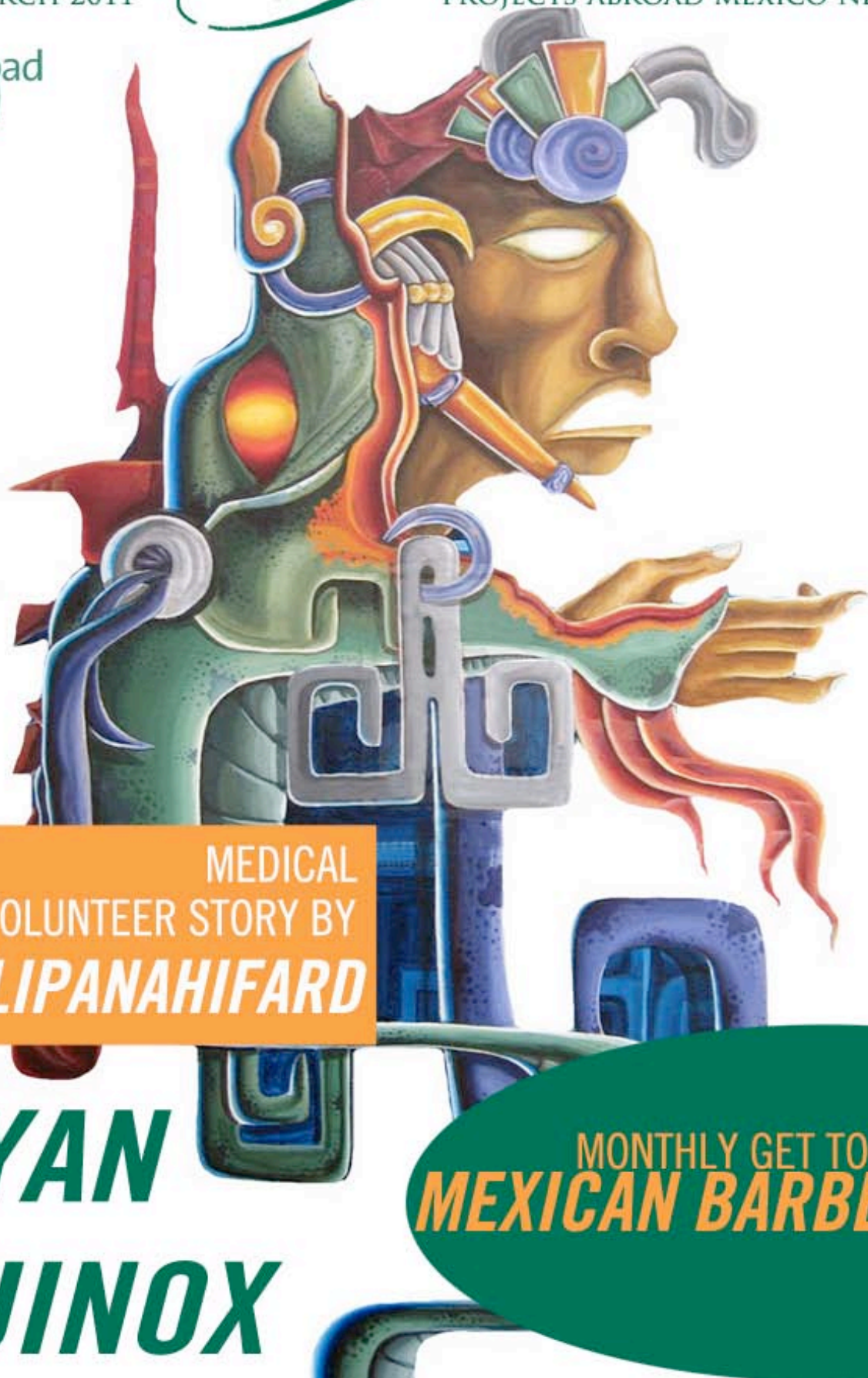


SOL AZTECA

ISSUE 45 MARCH 2011

PROJECTS ABROAD MEXICO NEWSLETTER

ProjectsAbroad



MEDICAL
VOLUNTEER STORY BY

SOMA ALIPANAHI FARD

**MAYAN
EQUINOX**

MONTHLY GET TOGETHER
MEXICAN BARBECUE

Editor's Notes

Hello!

Third month and counting! Mexico is getting hotter and hotter. March marks the beginning of the hot season in the country; A hot season that will last until July. Last month we were pretty active out here with new placements and gatherings with all the volunteers. Salsa classes are still taking place so we hope we all improve our dancing skills.

March is the perfect time to visit Mexico due to its perfect climate and festivals around the country; Especially the Spring Equinox in Chichen Itza in the state Yucatan. This ceremonial centre was one of the most important ones from the Maya Culture.

I hope you enjoy of our March edition!

Special thanks for this newsletter goes to:

- Soma Alipanahifard for the story about her experience on the medical project.
 - Oliver Garcia for his update on the turtle conservation program.
- I hope you enjoy the March edition of the Mexican newsletter!

I also want to invite you to join our Facebook community where we share our pictures, happenings and news. The name of our network is:

Projects Abroad Mexico-The Official Group

We also encourage everyone to write their stories for us to publish in our newsletters. If you want to write something about your current, past or future experience with us, please do not hesitate to send it to me along with your pictures to jonatanarriaga@projects-abroad.org

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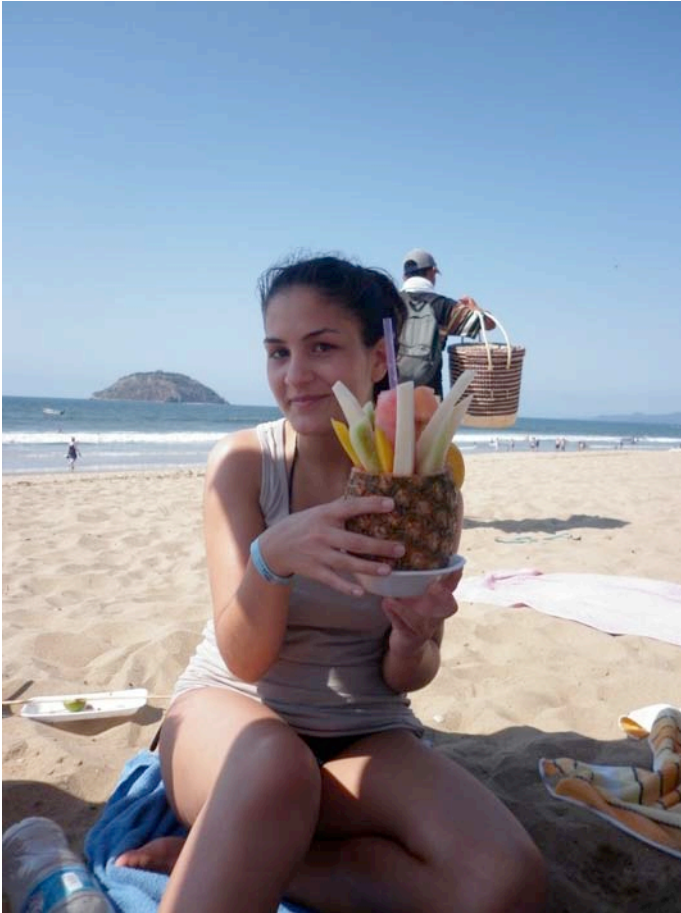
Adios!!! Me voy a México! – die perfekte Entscheidung für alle, die auf der Suche nach einer Auszeit vom Alltag daheim, Abenteuer, neuen Freunden und einmaligen Erfahrungen sind.



Guadalajara, Mexiko zählt von nun an zu meinem zu Hause. Vom ersten Moment an, als ich den Flughafen in Guadalajara verlassen habe, habe ich mich in diesen Ort verliebt. Trotz der langen anstrengenden Reise von insgesamt 24 Stunden, wusste ich sofort, dass es die richtige Entscheidung gewesen ist. Alle Ängste, alle Sorgen waren mit einem Mal wie vom Erdboden verschluckt.

Ich bin jetzt seit einem Monat hier und um einige Erfahrungen, Erlebnisse und Freunde reicher und immer noch ueberglucklich. Die Atmosphäre ist super entspannt, die Menschen sind sehr freundlich und zuvorkommend und vom Wetter und Essen muss ich wohl gar nicht erst anfangen zu erzählen. Kulturell und industriell ist es eine komplett andere Welt, verglichen mit Europa und vor allem Deutschland, jedoch eine Welt, die ich jetzt schon zu schätzen und lieben gelernt habe und die ich nicht mehr missen will.





Spaß sind garantiert.

Die Gastfamilien werden von den Betreuern vor Ort ausgesucht und es wird regelmäßig gecheckt, ob alles in bester Ordnung ist. Meine Gastfamilie besteht nur aus einer Gastmutter, sie war von Beginn an sehr nett und kommunikativ, obwohl ich anfangs kaum ein Wort Spanisch sprechen konnte.

Sie interessiert sich für einen und fragt, was man zum Beispiel gerne isst oder was man gar nicht leiden kann und gibt ihr Bestes, mich zufrieden zu stellen.

Mein Praktikum im Krankenhaus ist genauso toll wie alles andere hier. Ich wurde herzlich aufgenommen und trotz des Sprachdefizits konnten wir uns verständigen.

Und jetzt zum wesentlichen, dem Projekt und der Organisation: Ich bereue es absolut nicht, ich bin sogar der festen Überzeugung, dass es keine bessere Organisation für Auslandsaufenthalte gibt als "projectsabroad". Jeder einzelne wird unglaublich gut betreut. In Deutschland hat es angefangen mit Informationstagen und Vorbereitungsseminaren, die sehr hilfreich waren und einem sehr engen Kontakt zu den Betreuern.

Einen noch engeren Kontakt hat man mit den Betreuern hier vor Ort, sie tun alles dafür, dass man sich von Anfang an wohlfühlt, sind immer bereit, Fragen zu beantworten oder bei Problemen zu helfen. 24 Stunden, 7 Tage die Woche erreichbar und nebdran noch warmherzige, sehr offene und lustige Leute – Lachkrämpfe und



Ich wurde von meinem ersten Tag an super in das Geschehen im Krankenhaus eingebunden.

Natürlich habe ich die ersten Tage erstmal zugeschaut, auch wegen der fehlenden Sprache, von Woche zu Woche habe ich jedoch mehr Verantwortung zugeteilt bekommen, was schön ist, weil man sich wie ein Teil des Ganzen fühlt. Schon in meiner zweiten Woche durfte ich bei kleinen Operationen als

„Instrumentenreicher“ helfen und hatte schon gelernt, wie man eine Wunde zunäht. Die Eindrücke, die ich bis jetzt im Krankenhaus sammeln durfte und die Verantwortung, die ich jetzt schon trage, hätte ich niemals in einem deutschen Krankenhaus bekommen. Es herrschen andere Verhältnisse, deshalb auch andere Krankheitsfälle und Patienten und ich bin jeden Tag dankbar, dass ich ein Teil davon sein darf und die Möglichkeit habe, diese einmaligen Erfahrungen zu sammeln.

Also lasst eure Ängste und Sorgen zu Hause und packt eure Koffer. Wenn ihr die Möglichkeit habt, ergreift sie und zögert nicht zu lange. Es wird mit die beste Zeit eures Lebens und es warten so viele wundervolle Dinge hier in Mexiko auf euch.

Espero que nos vemos pronto.

Saludos - Soma

By Soma Alipanahifard
Germany- Medicine in Mexico

Mayan Equinox

SPRING EQUINOX



An **equinox** is either of the two moments in the year when the sun is exactly over the Equator and the day and night are exactly the same length. Both solstices and equinoxes are simply stages of the Earth's orbit around the sun.

On December 21 we entered the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere, the shortest day of the year, and we are now moving towards the spring **equinox**, around March 21, followed by the summer solstice on June 21, and finally the autumnal equinox, around September 23.

Chichén Itzá is amongst the greatest surviving monuments of the Mayan civilisation. During the spring equinox, thousands gather to witness a phenomenon of light and shadow: the 'plumed serpent' of light descending across the steps of El Castillo pyramid.

The snake-like light phenomenon is created by an undulating pattern of sunlight on the edge of the pyramid's steps. According to Mayan legend, the 34m-long ancient 'serpent', Kukulkan, is making his way to the well of sacrifice nearby.



For many, watching the Spring Equinox is a spiritual experience - and here in Chichén Itzá, among locals, happy-snappy tourists and the media, you can't fail to notice the white-clothed religious groups who pray and sing to their gods, believing in the holistic healing and energising effect of the Equinox.

As the sun breaks through the clouds to reveal the eagerly awaited 'serpent', most of the crowd fervently clap and cheer, but others stand in awed silence.

The idea that a civilisation which evolved as early as 1500BC managed to concentrate its energies in building a monument of incomprehensible scale to highlight the time of year when the hours of daylight and darkness are equal is extraordinary. Get there early to avoid the midday heat and ensuing crowds.

Benito Juarez



Benito Juárez was a Mexican statesman and four-time president of Mexico. After resisting takeover by European powers, Juárez installed numerous social changes that would improve the lives of the Mexican people.

Benito Juárez was born in the small Zapotec Indian village of San Pablo Guelatao, Oaxaca, Mexico, on March 21, 1806. His parents, who were poor peasants, died when he was three years old. Juárez then lived with his grandparents and later with an uncle. He worked with his uncle until he was thirteen. Then he walked forty miles to the city of Oaxaca, Mexico, to move in with his sister. At the time he could not yet speak Spanish (he spoke the language used in the Oaxaca tribe).

In Oaxaca, Juárez worked with Don Antonio Salanueva, a bookbinder, who basically adopted him. Helped by Salanueva and a local teacher, Juárez eventually learned to read and write. In 1827 he graduated from the Seminary of Santa Cruz, but later changed career paths and decided to study law. In 1831 he qualified to enter a local law office, but as the legal profession was already overcrowded, he began a second career as an antiestablishment Liberal politician with goals to change the Mexican government.

In 1831 Juárez entered politics as an official on the Oaxacan town council. In 1835 the city elected him as a Liberal deputy to the federal legislature. He carried forward his legal career, often serving as a representative of the severely poor Indian communities in their struggles to protect their landholdings. Honest and intelligent, he became one of Oaxaca's leading lawyers.



The government began to build railroads and schools, the military budget was cut, and the Church was stripped of its large landholdings. Most important, Mexico had its first effective government; based upon the Constitution of 1857, which guaranteed free speech, free press, right of assembly (right to organise), and the abolishment of special legal privileges.

On July 18, 1872, the president suffered from a stroke and died at his desk.

Guadalajara Film Festival



The Guadalajara International Film festival (FICG) is the most important cinematographic event in Latin America. The quality and relevance of screened films, the celebrities that gather, the professionals of the industry that pin down projects and make business, and the people that attend the festival and enjoy a myriad of cultural, formation and entertainment activities, are the main performers that make the FICG a preeminent event.

Key sponsors like the University of Guadalajara, the Mexican Cinematographic Institute (Imcine), the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Conaculta), the State

Government of Jalisco and the cities of Guadalajara and Zapopan have helped to achieve international recognition for the festival.

This festival also holds the best of the best in the art film industry! It is a must for everyone who is a movie lover! Catch quality Mexican and Latin American feature films in the official competitive section of Guadalajara International Film Festival every year in cinemas, auditoriums, cultural centers and other venues across the city. There are also international non-competitive features, documentaries and shorts.

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Happy Birthday Carlos!



Everybody in the office is happy due to the celebration of the birthday of a member of the staff! Carlos Ochoa has been working for Projects Abroad for more than 6 years! He has been working in different destinations such as Argentina and South Africa!

His birthday...March 15th! We want to wish him a great day! We are really happy to have him as a member of the staff and as a great friend.

Cheers!

Donation Update



This is the fourth visit already to Brayan! The fourth delivery of part of the money Projects Abroad is donating for his transport expenses to receive his weekly treatment.

Brayan was so asleep this time that I did not want to wake him up but his mother told me he is doing well so far but with a few ear problems caused by the illness he is suffering from. Hopefully these issues disappear soon!

All the best wishes for Brayan!

Get together-Mexican Barbecue.



The climate is getting hotter and hotter in Guadalajara. Spring brings a great desire to be outside enjoying the breeze and cool air that is in the city during that time. That is why we decided to arrange a traditional barbecue for all the volunteers in the Projects Abroad office. We have a great terrace in which we can enjoy of a private open space!

So we set up the barbecue and started cooking! Quesadillas, sausage, chillis, tortillas, meat and guacamole! Spicy sauce, nachos and loads of refreshing beverages were part of this food parade. Salsa music on in the background at first and then some classic rock to finish the day!

Thanks to everyone who joined us for our monthly social event at Projects Abroad Mexico!!!!



Destination- San Miguel de Allende



San Miguel de Allende is a small colonial town in the Bajío Mountains of central Mexico, about 170 miles northwest of Mexico City. Founded as "San Miguel" in 1542 by a San Franciscan Monk named San Miguel El Grande, it became a centerpiece in the war for Mexican independence from Spain; it was renamed San Miguel de Allende after Ignacio Allende, a hero of the independence movement. In danger of becoming a ghost town in the early 20th century, the town was declared a national monument in 1926 and building became heavily restricted in the town's historic *centro* district, allowing the city to keep the colourful native facades that have become the backdrop of many famous works of art and even modern motion pictures.

San Miguel is, first and foremost, a city built for relaxing. It is a Spanish colonial town of perhaps 140,000 people; a heritage site protected by the Mexican government in order to maintain its character. In July of 2008 it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's a tourist destination, an art colony, and a retirement community for a few thousand foreigners, mostly Americans, Canadians, and Europeans. In spite of the increased number of foreigners over the past perhaps 20 years, it is still charming enough that many Mexicans visit for special holidays, and there are more than a few visitors who buy a house within a few days of their first arrival.



itself.

Ultimately, the climate has the lazy, quiet air and temperance of Palm Springs, encouraging long hours of swimming and pool-side tanning, reading or napping, or just lying in a hammock and forgetting the world exists.

You can also explore inside some of these historic buildings, including the **Angela Peralta Theatre** and the **home of Ignacio Allende**, now museums of art and culture dedicated to the town

- San Miguel's many **art institutes** are always open to travellers looking to discover (or become the next) Frida Kahlo. Painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, you name it and it's probably there.
- Take in one of the numerous **festivals**. The place celebrates Semana Santa (Easter holy week) with impressive and touching parades, and Dia de las Locos in mid-June is also worthwhile. The days leading up to Independence Day (September 16) and New Year's in San Miguel are favourite times for Mexicans.
- There are also **music festivals** covering classical and jazz music at different times of the year, and endless art galleries with works that range from wonderful to "whats that?".
- The once famous **Sanmiguelada**, San Miguel's version of the "running of the bulls" is no more. After the crowds grew to an unmanageable size and violence broke out in 2007, the event was cancelled. There has been some talk of reinstating it in a somewhat different form, but no decisions have yet been made.



Mexican Kitchen-Tacos Dorados



Tacos dorados is one of the most traditional meals in Mexico. You can find them really easily in the streets of Guadalajara! These tacos are deeply fried and typically served with an explosive spicy sauce! Enjoy!

Ingredients:

- 1 large tomato, roasted, peeled and chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped fine
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 lbs cooked chicken breasts or 1

1/2 lbs cooked beef or 1 1/2 lbs cooked pork, shredded

- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 12 corn tortillas, slightly warmed for easy rolling
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons milk
- 1/2 cup sour cream, thinned with the milk
- 1 1/2 cups guacamole
- shredded queso fresco or shredded farmer cheese
- 1/2-1 cup salsa
- cilantro

**Directions:**

1. Puree the tomato, onion and garlic in a food processor.
2. Heat the oil in a medium skillet over medium high heat.
3. Cook tomato filling until thick and reduced-around 5 minutes.
4. Add the meat of choice and mix well.
5. Remove from heat and season with salt.
6. Heat the tortillas and place an equal amount of filling on each.
7. Roll and secure with toothpicks OR assemble all and chill seam side down.
8. Heat the oil over medium high heat and when hot begin frying tacos 4 at a time until golden on all sides.
9. If you are not using the toothpicks-I don't-place seam side down in the hot oil first.
10. Remove and drain-repeat and keep warm in the oven until done.
11. When done place 3 on each plate and top with Guacamole, cream and salsa.
12. Garnish with Cilantro and cheese.
13. Serve with refried beans and Cactus Salad!

Conservation Update

Conservation in Mexico – Monthly Update February – March 2011

Turtle Conservation Program.

Once again we are coming to that point in the year when we have to start to get all our equipment ready in order to maximize the results we obtain from the nest collection in the high season. The equipment must be ready to meet the adverse conditions and in order to do this a total check up is in order.



The amount of turtles laying their eggs at the moment is low compared to the high season (98 nests were collected in total during February), but we are still conducting the morning patrols in order to work out the number of specimens that come out to nest during the low season months. We are also still releasing numerous hatchlings daily from the 119 nests collected during January this year.

As there are still cold fronts coming from the north, there is still a good chance of spotting a Leatherback, the largest and one of the rarest of the sea turtle species.

We are also working on the maintenance of all our structures at the camp, to make sure everything is ready for the busy summer period. We are constantly trying to improve the comfort and facilities at the camp, but living on a beach, will always be basic, but we hope the beautiful environment more than makes up for cool sea showers!

Crocodile Farm.

In the past couple of months we have had the opportunity to collect the corpse of an adult crocodile which will be kept and preserved in the museum area of the crocodile farm. The crocodile was killed by another over a territory dispute. These creatures are extremely territorial and when a new male enters an already occupied area, there exists a huge chance that a fight takes place.

Unfortunately the outcome of this particular fight was a dead crocodile that we believe was over 5 years old, and over 5 meters in length. In the last week we have been able to start to collect the bones of the reptile in order to reassemble it in the museum area, it has been a very interesting job, and to establish the cause of death from the teeth marks left in the bones, we had to go all C.S.I. Tecoman!



Biodiversity Project.

As the Easter holiday season is at hand, the local cooperative society of the El Chupadero Lagoon, is starting to develop several activities focused on the development of environmentally friendly activities in the lagoon for tourists. Their programs vary from guided boat trips to far areas of the lagoon to renting small recreational boats. This is aimed at creating an income to the local community.

Oliver Garcia
Conservation Director
March 2011
Projects Abroad