



Alma Libre Books
Puerto Morelos, Mexico



Beach Reads

News from Alma Libre Bookstore - Puerto Morelos, Mexico

Year #02 - Issue #1 - November 2003

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News From Puerto Morelos

We're Back!

How was your summer? We spent our summer closing up the store, driving 8000 kilometres through Mexico, the US and Canada. We bought some books up there and then did the whole drive again, south to Puerto Morelos.



We saw a lot more of this beautiful country and as usual we have lots of stories of the kindness of the people of Mexico we met on the way. This is an incredibly diverse country, and we love to try to visit every corner of it.

Calgary enjoyed a spectacular summer and we spent most of it doing a little work at our old jobs and visiting family and friends. We never realized though just how much stress there is living in a big city. Traffic snarls and "the job" are just the beginning. If you live in a big city, or anywhere north of here, you are going to need a vacation this year and we suggest a winter one in Puerto Morelos!

More details about our route north and south later in this newsletter.

There have been a lot of little changes in your town, see the details in the following section. Some things remain the same though. The healthy reef, the miles of white sand beach, the quiet streets, the friendly people, the great food...and that big bookstore!

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News Briefs

Changes!

We were only gone four months but there have been many changes in your town!

Here's a round-up of new things you can expect to see:



Palapa Pizza, a perennial Puerto Morelos favourite, will close to make way for a new restaurant concept. The final plans are top secret, so I can't reveal them here, but I can tell you that pizza will still be part of the menu, but there will be much, much more. All will be revealed on November 15th, which is the grand opening.

A new restaurant has opened next door to Alma Libre Bookstore, "El Picudo Azul" They specialize in seafood tacos and they also offer crepes.

Eduardo and Cece of Cafe del Puerto have a new menu and their dinner specials revolve around their new outdoor grill. Superb!

Chip's Bistro in the Hacienda has closed, but Chip & Valeria's new pub called "Locos" is already a favourite with locals. Look for something new in the Hacienda coming soon.

Dianne of Mama's Bakery will be re-opening very soon, and something new, will be doing dinner on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. She will have nightly "comfort food" specials like meatloaf and chicken pot pie.

Cafe de Amancia now has high-speed, satellite internet service in addition to their coffee, sandwiches and desserts.

Marand Travel has new high-speed internet service too.

A new Mexican food restaurant has moved into the space where "Seafari" restaurant used to be.

A pizza restaurant has moved in to the old Chip's Bar space across from Don Pepe's.

Hola Asia's new rooftop bar will open in December. A good place to get a drink with an ocean view.

Neptune's Divers have a new name (divepuertomorelos.com) a new boat (Cisne Negro or Black Swan) and a new website (built by Alma Libre) They offer diving, snorkelling, fishing and tours.

Jeanine Kitchel, the owner of "Casa Maya" and the former owner and founder of Alma Libre, has published her book. "Where the Sky is Born: Living in the Land of the Maya" will be available at our shop in late November. The book chronicles her and partner Paul Zappella's adventures building Casa Maya and opening a bookstore in Puerto Morelos.

The news we are happiest about, the town of Puerto Morelos is cleaning the beach every morning! Looks great.

The Yucatan Express has decided to suspend service to Mexico this year. This cruise ship / car ferry was making runs in Puerto Morelos last year from Tampa, but the channel into our port was just not deep enough for them. They continued to make a Tampa to Progreso run once a week, but the company decided it was not viable as a once-a-week venture. We hope to see the Yucatan Express sail into Puerto Morelos again next year.

We bought a house in Puerto Morelos! We are currently renovating it so that it will be a duplex. We will live in half and rent the other half. Renovations in Mexico, as anywhere on the planet, tend to be long and messy ordeals. We may be spending a lot more time at the shop this year!

Current Exchange Rates (In Puerto Morelos) USA Dollar 10.85 CDN Dollar 7.75 (Canadians! The Loonie has never looked better, as if you need another reason to visit!)

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This Just In! *New Books & Products at Alma Libre*

We bought so many books this year, we can't even start to show them here. You will have to come and see for yourself. We can't cover everything, so we'll look at some of the guidebooks we have for you.

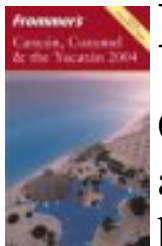
Books!

Having a good guidebook with you is like having a good friend along who knows the best places to go and the ones to avoid. They save you money and time and let you get more out of your vacation. Here's a round up of our favourites:



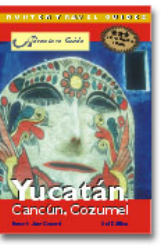
Lonely Planet Yucatan by Ben Greensfelder

This bestseller has been completely updated for 2004. They have also added the one thing that was missing in the last edition: Alma Libre Bookstore! This is the guidebook for the adventurer on a budget. We have a good supply of these books in the shop. We also have Lonely Planet Mexico and the Lonely Planet Spanish Phrasebook.



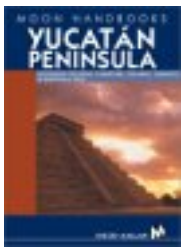
Frommer's Yucatan 2004 by David Baird & Lynne Bairstow

One of the few guidebooks that is updated every year, Frommer's is always on top of the rapidly changing Yucatan. Frommer's gives you the best of the area whether you are on a budget or you want to do it up in style.



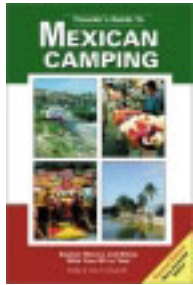
Adventure Guide to the Yucatan by Bruce & June Conord

This one is so new it hasn't come out yet! We are anxiously awaiting the new edition of this guidebook which, if it is anything like the last edition, will cover every last thing on the Peninsula. More pages, more places.



Moon Handbooks: Yucatan by Chicki Mallan

Our bestselling guidebook last year, this is the seventh edition of the guide to the Yucatan Peninsula. Moon Handbooks give plenty of background information and history of our area.



Traveler's Guide to Mexican Camping by Mike & Terri Church

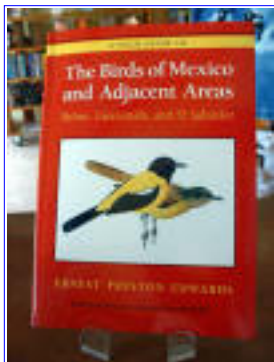
The mere fact that I am writing this from Puerto Morelos is testimony as to the usefulness of this book. Worth the price just for the border crossing information. The all new second edition includes GPS co-ordinates. As a rookie RV'er, this book told me everything I needed to know to navigate my rig through Mexico, except how to back up...which I have yet to learn.

We have brought in new copies of these Alma Libre favourites too:



Maya Nature: An Introduction to the Ecosystems, Plants and Animals of the Mayan World

At last we have found a book that covers the unique life that you will find only in the Maya world. Featuring 196 color photographs of the flowers, birds, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians, and mammals found in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Many are on the endangered species list. The photographer & author, Thor Janson, has taken almost impossible shots of various animals. An absolutely beautiful book we are proud to have in the shop. Excellent souvenir & keepsake of your trip.



The Birds of Mexico and Adjacent Areas by Ernest Preston Edwards

Okay, we admit it is not a very catchy title for a book, but it is the best book to identify all the birds in the Yucatan.

Features more than 850 species in a convenient, easy to carry guide. We now have new hardcover edition too!



Snorkeling Guide to Marine Life by Paul Humann & Ned DeLoach

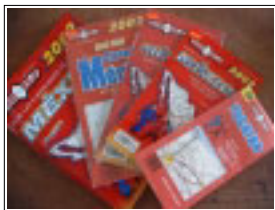
The best guide to identify what lives in the Caribbean Sea. Features 280 colour photographs of everything you might see on your next snorkeling trip including fish, coral and plants. Also includes valuable tips about which plants and animals should be approached with caution, how to treat stings, and other interesting facts. *We also now have a mini version that is waterproof, so you can take it with you underwater! How cool is that!*



Secrets of the Talking Jaguar by Martin Prechtel

This is the story of the author's physical and spiritual journey from the southwestern US to the highlands of Central America. There he becomes apprenticed to a local shaman who teaches Prechtel much about indigenous Mayan life, and about life in general.

Maps!



Guia Roji if you have spent any time in Mexico, you know how difficult it is to get a good map. We had been coming down here for four years before we found the Gui Roji Road Atlas. This 144 page atlas features detailed maps, city maps & detailed breakdowns of major routes. It's now available in a smaller form. We are also carrying their new map of the Maya world of Mexico that includes information on the archeological sites.

We also have the detailed ITMB maps of the Yucatan, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Central America.

Postcards! A new selection awaits you to send to your envious friends back home.

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Our Trip North...and South!

Part of our plan when we quit our jobs in Calgary and ventured south was that we would close the shop for a few months each year and spend some time touring through Mexico and the US on our way back to Canada. This June we left Puerto Morelos and instead of heading north, we drove further south.



Palenque was our first highlight, an incredible ancient city in the jungle. We felt like explorers, seeing the site for the first time, shining brightly in a sea of green with monkeys swinging in the trees above us.

San Cristobal de las Casas was our next stop. A beautiful city in the state of Chiapis. We took a tour to the nearby town of Chamula. This is a closed society that has created their own culture and religion. They are wary of strangers, so it is best to take a tour. We happened to be there on their busy market day, with stalls teeming with things we had never seen before, in Mexico or anywhere else. Our visit to Chamula was something we will never forget and I can't recommend it enough. San Cristobal de las Casas also had the best shopping of the trip.

From there we ended up in Oaxaca, since the road we were going to take north existed only on our map and in some map maker's imagination. The locals explained to us that while it looked like a nice road and a nice idea...there was no such thing. It was a happy detour though as Oaxaca was a place we wanted to see anyway and we loaded up on cheese, coffee and brightly painted carved animals. The city is vibrant, with a long pedestrian mall down the centre where tourists and students from the local schools linger.



From there we went to Puebla, then taking a nice bypass around Mexico City (I will NOT drive there) ended up in one of our favourite cities, Queretaro. A quick drive to San Miguel de Allende (where they had just filmed "Once Upon a Time in Mexico") and Guanajuato. We have been to these beautiful colonial cities before with their stunning architecture, giant markets and fabulous food.



Our last stop on our way north was a jewel overlooked by most tourists, Zacatecas. This is an old silver mining town that hollowed out its mountains for Spain. You can still tour one of the old mines and ride a cable car between the mountains for a breathtaking view. It's a town not used to tourists, so they treat them very well. One night, in one of those "only in Mexico" moments we were watching a band playing in the square.

Suddenly the band started marching and urged all of us watching to follow. Fuelled by free tequila being given out by the Zacatecas tourism board, the ever growing crowd followed the band through the narrow streets and alleys of the Centro for about an hour, waking up the neighbours and stopping traffic. Finally they led us to a residential square where everyone danced well into the night. They may still be there!

From here the drive north is very dull, but level on good roads. Cactus & scrub are the only scenery. After getting through the border towns as quickly as possible we drove for Albuquerque and Santa Fe. After that we sped home through Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and into Alberta.

We drove about 8000 kilometres and had very few problems. We overheated our brakes on the tope-laden hills around San Cristobal de las Casas and blew a radiator connector near San Miguel de Allende.

On our way back south we come through our "usual" route through Montana, Wyoming, Fort Collins & Denver in Colorado, then Texas for days on end. This year we spent a little extra time in Austin and San Antonio before crossing the border at Los Indios. In Mexico we follow the 180 through Tampico, Monte Gordo on the Emerald Coast, Veracruz, Villahermosa, and Chetumal. It's a good drive in Mexico on mostly two lane roads. The roads south of Tampico are terrible, but otherwise it's pretty clear sailing.

It should be noted too that we drove all these kilometres **WITHOUT** being pulled over by the police or waylaid by banditos. The scary stories you hear about driving in Mexico are mostly overblown or a thing of the past. We drive carefully and (mostly) follow the speed limit. We never drive too many hours in a day and never at night. We take the toll roads where we can, they are expensive but usually well worth the price.

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Mexico Facts

Mexico in the Movies:

Frida: Madonna, who is a fan of Frida Kahlo and owns some of her work, was keen to play Frida in the movie and Jennifer Lopez was also considered for the role. Luckily Salma Hayek won the job. Salma is from the state of Veracruz and she did some of the paintings used in the film. The film was shot in Puebla and Mexico City.

Once Upon at Time in Mexico: In addition to San Miguel, this movie was also shot in Queretaro and Guanajuato. Johnny Depp shot all of his scenes in nine

days, but didn't want to leave so he convinced the director to allow him to play another small part. He plays the priest that Antonio Banderas talks to in the church using his Marlon Brando impression.

Source: Internet Movie Database www.imdb.com

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Just a reminder that we are in our high season hours now. That is Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 am until 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Sunday we are open 4:00 to 9:00. We are closed Monday.

Our hours are always posted on the front page of our website at www.almalibrebooks.com.



We take trades every day, so our selection is constantly changing. If you are planning a trip down, why not bring some recent bestsellers to trade and check out our store.

We look forward to seeing you in Puerto Morelos!

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Beach Reads is the official newsletter of Alma Libre Bookstore in Puerto Morelos Mexico.

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