

PANAMA CANAL CRUISE, RAINFORESTS & BEACHES OF PANAMA

February 15-February 23 with Caravan Tours

On our own Feb. 15, 24-26

Mike found a tour of the Panama Canal and stops at other areas of interest. We had a wonderful guide Oniel Valdes and a great driver Rey in a modern comfortable coach. With a group of 28 people it was a nice trip. Mike and I left home a day early to settle in at the Regency Hotel Miami for the night instead of a full day of travel and ending up in Panama very late at night. We had dinner at a seafood restaurant near the hotel called 'Catch of the Day'.

Somehow Mike and I had business class seats on American Airlines the next day and it was quite pleasant. When we departed the jet way and entered the airport in Panama everyone was welcomed by four people in white hazmat suits checking passengers for the Coronavirus. They pointed a device toward our head to get our temperature. We arrived safely in Panama City and settled into our room till the Caravan group met for orientation and the welcome dinner. BLD were included every day except day 1 and the last day of the tour. Mike and I usually skip breakfast but did go for breakfast a few days of the trip. The dinners were always buffet style. Our room at the Marriott Courtyard faced the city and the city was lit up at night. We met the group and our guide Oniel Vales who filled us in on how the tour will be arranged for us. The hotel was comfortable and the food was adequate. Many framed photos were distributed throughout the hotel of ships passing through the Panama Canal. The hotel was right next to the Multiplaza Panama Shopping Mall, a very large modern mall with lots of restaurants and designer shops.

Day 2: Panama City, the capital of Panama, is a modern city framed by the Pacific Ocean and man-made Panama Canal. It was interesting to view the ultramodern skyscrapers from the air and now from the seat of the coach as we traveled to visit the ruins of Panama Viego (Old Panama), founded by the Spanish in 1519. Panamá la Viejo, is the remaining part of the original Panama City, the former capital of the country. It is located in the suburbs of the current capital. Together with the historical district of Panamá, it has been a World Heritage Site since 1997. Shortly after its creation the city became a starting point for various expeditions in Peru and an important base where gold and silver were sent to Spain. At the beginning of the 17th century, the city was attacked several times by pirates and indigenous people from Darién. On 2 May 1620, an earthquake damaged many buildings in the city. On 21 February 1644, the Great Fire destroyed 83 religious buildings, including the cathedral. On 28 January 1671, the Welsh pirate Henry Morgan attacked the city with 1,400 men marching from the Caribbean coast across the jungle. Morgan's force defeated the city's militia then proceeded to sack Panamá. Either Morgan and his army started a fire that burned the city or the Captain General Don Juan Pérez de Guzmán ordered the gunpowder magazines exploded. Either way, the resulting fire destroyed the city. Morgan's attack caused the loss of thousands of lives and Panamá had to be rebuilt a few kilometres to the west on a new site (the current one). Henry Morgan was arrested but after proving he knew not of the recent treaty he was freed and later rewarded.

It would have been more of a moving experience to be able to walk around the ruins but instead our group rode down the street passing the ruins in a tram. The tram stopped in front of the remains of the old Panama Cathedral de Nuestra Senora de la Asuncion, built between 1619 and 1626, the best preserved buildings of the ruins. In traditional fashion, it was designed so that its two side chapels gave the cathedral a cross-like shape as viewed from the heavens. The bell tower was at the back of the church and may have served double duty as a watchtower for the Casas Reales. As the group exited the tram we were immediately taken inside the visitor center and museum. The museum traces the history from pre-colonial times to colonial life. The museum contained many displays, including a scale model of Panama Viego prior to 1671 as well as religious art, and exhibits on old maps and on pirate history.

We left and traveled to visit the Miraflores Visitors Center with exhibits, food and observation decks for watching ships pass through the locks. Located on the east side of the Miraflores Locks, the CVM allows the visitor to observe transiting vessels from a distance of only a few meters and learn first hand about the various operations of the Panama Canal, the history of its construction, its participation in the world markets, and the importance of its watershed. Miraflores is the name of two of the three locks that form the Pacific part of the Panama Canal, and the name of the small lake that separates these locks from the Pedro Miguel Locks upstream. In the Miraflores locks, vessels are lifted (or lowered) 54 feet (16.5 m) in two stages, allowing them to transit to or from the Pacific Ocean port of Balboa in Panama City. Ships cross below the Bridge of the Americas, which connects North and South America.

The visitor's center allows tourists to have a full view of the Miraflores locks operation. Binoculars are recommended to view the Pedro Miguel locks in the distance. Our group had a reserved viewing area on the 2nd floor overlooking the Miraflores locks. We watched as a small catamaran and a large transatlantic ship made its way into the locks. The canal has a water lock system that acts like a massive elevator. When ships enter the locks, they're raised by water from the lake. Each lock raises the ships until they're 85 feet above sea level.

In order to let the vessels pass the lock, each chamber needs to be filled with 26,700,000 US gallons of water. The locks are operated using the gravity flow of water from lakes such as Gatún, Alajuela, and Miraflores. The lock system includes 18 feet wide water culverts attached to it, performing the duty of carrying water from these lakes to the chambers to raise the vessels and from chambers to next lock or the sea to lower the vessels.

Operated electrically, the entire process of the lock system is controlled from a control room located on the centre wall of the upper flight of locks. The control rooms guide the vessels through the lock chambers using electric towing locomotives. Ships are pulled with the help of these machines, called "mules", using a cable through the locks. On an average, ships require six of such mules, three on each side, when using the locks to enter or exit the canal.

Operation of the Panama Canal Locks

The whole operation of the Panama Water Lock System works can be described in few steps:

1. The vessel approaches towards the lower chamber of the canal locks;
2. The valve of the first chamber opens and water flows by force of gravity from the higher chamber to the lowest one, bringing the water level to the sea level;
3. The locked gate opens to allow the ship into the chamber, and the gate closes behind it;
4. The valve of the next chamber is opened to increase the water level to that of the first chamber;
5. The gate of the lock is opened and the ship enters next chamber;
6. The water level is equalized again and the ship finally exits the lock and enters the 77 km long canal.

At the other end of the canal, the similar process will be performed in order to lower the vessel to the sea level.

After viewing the operation of the canal locks we were taken back to the hotel to relax and get together later for a show and dinner. Mike and I decided to skip the show and dinner at the hotel and instead walk around at the Multiplaza Panama Shopping Mall located next to our hotel. There were several restaurants to choose from. We picked a French restaurant and bakery called 'Paul Patisserie Viennoiserie'. With good reviews and a fantastic looking bakery we sat down for a seafood dinner. After ordering some pretty good gin & tonics (it took some time to get the waiter to understand us, but gin was the magic word) we looked over the menu. Mike ordered a nice dish or assorted seafood and fish on a bed of linguine and I had some grilled fish with roasted vegetable with a side of a green sauce that was good. Loved the hot fresh rolls and for dessert a box of assorted macarons to take back to my room.

Day 3: This morning we crossed the Isthmus to Colon, the Caribbean port at the north end of the Panama Canal. Got to see some of the country side and hear about the people and places in Panama by our guide Oniel Valdes. Our driver took us for a ride over the Atlantic Bridge. The third bridge over the Panama Canal, known as the Atlantic Bridge, is a road bridge in Colón, Panama, which spans the Atlantic entrance to the Canal. It is the third bridge over the Panama Canal after the Bridge of the Americas and the Centennial Bridge, both on the Pacific side of the canal.

We went to visit the Aguas Clara Locks Observation Center (2016) to see the newly constructed locks at the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal. It is designed with terraces and open, partial and covered platforms that allow visitors unobstructed views of

the locks. Located on the Atlantic side, near Colon City, the Agua Clara Visitor Center is a place where the Panama Canal has made it clear that both its legacy and its grandeur will continue to bear fruit for the world. On one side you will find the famous Gatun Lake, where cargo ships or other vessels transit every day, while on the other side, but from a different perspective, you will be amazed by the view of the expansion works. We watched the cruise ship 'Carnival Glory' with the capacity of 2,980 passengers with 13 decks make its way inside the locks. People were outside on the decks watching the ship make its way through the locks as we watched from the observation area on land. It was fun to look at the large screen on the top of the cruise ship that showed the view that the people on the cruise ship saw as they approached the lock gates. In front of the massive cruise ship was a Canal De Panama tugboat. The tugboat fleet plays an essential role on the canal, positioning vessels so they enter the locks correctly and then staying close in case they lose power or steering and become runaways. The new locks use tugboats to position the vessels instead of electric locomotives. We watched as the lock gates opened. They use rolling gates instead of miter gates, which are used by the original locks. Rolling gates are used in almost all existing locks with dimensions similar to the new ones, and are a proven technology. Our group was to meet for lunch at the covered café. As we had lunch we watched as the 'Carnival Glory' make its way through the locks.

After lunch our group was taken for a boat ride on Gatun Lake, the artificial lake which forms part of the Panama Canal. After Lake Mead, this is the world's largest man-made lake that forms the central part of the Panama Canal. It was a fast pace ride with stops at areas where we could spot different wildlife surrounding the lake, such as monkeys, iguanas, crocodiles, birds and more. Large vessels were moving in the lake along with us. We motored off towards a dense vegetation area where we saw some crocodiles and iguanas. At one point our boat slowly floated by the shore where we saw some monkeys waiting for us. The boat driver threw out a banana to the front deck of the boat and a Panamanian white-faced capuchin jumped from the bushes onto the boat to get that banana. It was so funny to see the looks on some of the passengers as the capuchin walked the whole edge of the boat looking for goodies. We were told ahead of time not to feed the wildlife but I guess that didn't apply to the boat driver. The best part for me was to see two small monkeys appear on the scene....the Geoffroy's Tamarin, also known as the Panamanian, red-crested or Rufous-Naped Tamarin, a type of small monkey, found in Panama and Colombia. It is predominantly black and white, with a reddish nape. They came and left quickly after a few bites of banana. The capuchin came back and sat by the boat driver to get a handout of a few grapes and then ran back into the jungle. I would have liked to get a better look and photos of the tamarins here but found out later I would have that opportunity later in the trip.

Off we went after the boat ride to Gamboa Rainforest Resort with time on our own to use the pool and watch for colorful birds and butterflies. Mike and I spent some time at the pool and enjoyed spotting some birds such as a Spotted Blue-Crested Hummingbird some Euphonia birds and several other birds. The pool was a peaceful place with nice views of the gardens.

Day 4: Today we cruise another portion of the Panama Canal. A cruise under the Bridge of the Americas, pass through Miraflores and Pedro Miguel Locks, and cross the Continental Divide. Then wind through the Gaillard Cut to the town of Gamboa. Our small passenger vessel allowed for close-up views of the opening and closing of the huge six foot thick steel gates of both the Miraflores and Pedro Miguel Locks. We were at eye-level, watching transiting vessels guided by tugboats and pulled by small trains. While Gatun Locks are a three-step system, the single-step Pedro Miguel and two-step Miraflores Locks are separated by the 1.5 kilometre long Lake Miraflores. The reason that the three chambers aren't located in the same place, as they are in Gatun, is that an active Tectonic fault lies beneath the lake.

On our route we passed two lighthouses the Original Balboa Southbound Read Light and the Balboa Northbound Front Light, Miraflores. The Balboa Northbound Front Light was unusual as it was painted all white on side and all black on the other side in order to be visible from only one direction. The white side of this tower is visible to ships entering from the Pacific. We passed many large cargo ships, tugboats, barges and pleasure crafts. Our boat cruised into the locks and waited our turn along with a ship called the Oleaje Burela that was next to us. A catamaran and a very large freighter, The Federal Sable was behind us. The Federal Sable had four locomotives known as mules as a safety feature to guide the ship through the lock chambers. Mules are used for side-to-side and braking control in the locks. We waited for the process to be completed and then first the catamaran left the lock, then our boat, then the Oleaje Burela, last the Federal Sable. We could get a great eye level view from the front of the boat and watch as the gates opened for all to pass. It got a bit exciting when the Oleaje Burela hit the side of the canal and started swaying side to side. Our boat also hit the side of the canal earlier and caused a bit of concern for some. As with every vessel that transits the Panama Canal the regulations are clear. The Panama Canal Pilot shall have navigational control of said vessel. This includes cruise ships.

Our group had a nice cruise with the help of a vender on the boat that yelled “Beer, Beer, Beer” through the full cruise. He even got a bit friendly with me when I wanted to take his photo with a Balboa beer in his hand. He had other ideas as he pulled me near him put his arm around me and smiled as his friend used my camera to take a photo of us. If that wasn't good enough he then took my hand and placed it on his cheek as he hugged me with his other hand for another photo. Well if he was going to embrace me I felt I should use my other hand to rub his head as everyone around found the scene to be quite funny. It was all in good fun!

As we continued to go through the Miraflores locks it was interesting as now we were the people traveling through the locks instead of being observers at Miraflores Visitors Center. Back to Gamboa Rainforest Resort for dinner. Mike went on the night tour with others in an open truck to see some of the wildlife on the resort grounds. We told me he saw a Sloth a Capybara and some Coiban Agoutis.

Day 5: This morning, cruise on the Chagres River to visit an Embera tribal village. The Emberá tribe originates from the Darien region in Panamá and the Choco region of

Colombia. They have lived in this area for centuries, long before there were countries called Panamá and Colombia and before the first Spanish explorer set foot in the new world. The government of Panamá recognizes the 7 unique Indigenous tribes who live here and they each have been given what is called a Comarca. A Comarca is roughly equivalent to a reservation in North America with several notable differences. The tribes in Panamá were never forced off of their home territories, the comarca borders are drawn around their original homelands. The other big difference is that in Panamá the indigenous people were never forced into boarding schools nor punished for speaking their language or practicing their cultural traditions. In fact, the tribes were ignored and not even counted in the census of Panama and not recognized as citizens nor given the right and access to education until 1975! There is one benefit that resulted from the Emberá being ignored for so long, and that is that their language, culture, traditions, villages and lifestyle are still intact.

The people of the village of Emberá Purú migrated from the Darien about 50 years ago, seeking a better quality of life for themselves and their children. They settled in what is now the Chagres National Park and are within 1-2 hours from a city with modern medicine, supplies and secondary education for the children. They survive by the income generated through tourism to their village. Tourism is a fun way for them to earn an income to purchase basic staple food items, medicine, school supplies, gas and outboard motors. Tourism also encourages the Emberá people to maintain their traditions, culture and language and allows them to live as they prefer to live and to share it all with visitors from around the world. Tourism also instills a sense of pride among the Emberá people because instead of being ignored, they feel proud that people come to meet and learn about them and their culture.

Fish (*bedá*) are an important staple of the Emberá diet along with plantains (*patá*), and rivers play a central role in daily life for fishing, bathing, transport, and many domestic chores. Boats have also played important roles in Emberá tradition and cosmology. The craft of constructing dugout canoes (*hampá*) was historically a very significant skill for Emberá men, at times serving as a rite of passage or prerequisite for marriage according to oral history. Ethnographic records detail the ways in which boats take on an anthropomorphic character in the Emberá language and philosophy, and traditionally people were even buried in canoes. A traditional Emberá house can be described as an open-air dwelling raised 6–12 feet off the ground on stilts with thatched roofing made from palm leaves and flooring made from the bark of the *jira* palm (*épa*). These houses were typically round in shape and large enough to hold members of an extended family group.

The visit to the Embera tribal village was a favorite of mine during this trip. I searched at home to find gifts to give to the children in the village and a few gifts for adults. I packed up lots of mini beanie baby animals, a few light scarves, three button bracelets (I had hand made) and little packages of sweetheart candies. I was happy that I had brought enough of the beanie animals and candies as all of the children that were at the village got one of each. I gave one button bracelet to a young lady and one to a mature lady and the last one to a very young girl (as that was one of my smaller button bracelets). The lady

that I purchased a basket from I gave a nice scarf in a handmade fiber purse that I got somewhere in Thailand. I took a photo of an older couple that were sitting on a large boulder and afterwards gave the aged lady my last scarf that I had in my gift bag. I was told by people in my group and our guide that the children just loved the gifts and were having a happy time. When our group arrived at the village we were told to enter a large hut. Once inside we sat down on benches a representative of the village told us about his people, their customs and crafts. Afterwards music was played by flute, drum and rattles as the people gathered to dance in a circle in the hut. They went around and offered people in our group to join them in dance. Afterwards we were told that all the crafts on the tables were for sale. On the tables were animals, birds, flowers and other shapes from nature carved from the tagua nut also known as "vegetable ivory" because of its rich ivory color and shiny texture. Their baskets are made from the fibers of the nahuala plant and chungá palm which grow the Darién Rainforest of Panamá. The exquisite wood carvings are made of cocobolo (rosewood).

We stopped for a quick visit to the Gamboa Rainforest sanctuary rescue center to go into a few exhibits, an orchid tent, a butterfly tent, a small structure with poison dart frogs and a live jungle sloth exhibition. On to our hotel The Westin Playa Bonita for the next two nights.

Day 6: Entire day at leisure to enjoy the beach resort of Playa Bonita. The Westin Playa Bonita Panama offers guests an idyllic retreat on the golden sands of Playa Bonita Beach. The Pacific Ocean and lush, tropical rainforests are only steps away from our doors. Vacationers will delight in our three infinity-edge pools, six restaurants and Sensory Spa.

Mike and I put on our swimsuits and gathered up our stuff to have a day at the pool. We picked a pool (there were many pools) that was far away from the blasting music that some hotels love to play at the pools. Each person in our group had a purple plastic band attached to their wrist to show that we had full reign of the hotel. This meant that we could have our choice of alcoholic or non alcoholic drinks the whole time we were at this hotel. There was a pool side bar in every part of the outside complex. We had breakfast in the morning before heading off to the pool. During the afternoon you could help yourself to the snack bars that were set up near the hotel dining areas. After we found our comfort spot Mike and I went to explore the beach at low tide. One area had trees and covered areas where lizards, birds and little tidal pools were there to explore. We saw many wading birds, a large heron in a tree and good sized lizard that ran away with his tail up and feet running till he found a tree and scrambled up it. We went back to our spot by the pool and stayed a while and had some chicken strip snacks and drinks. Good thing we didn't stay any longer than we did as Mike and I did get a bit of too much sun that led to a light sunburn. Doesn't take much even in the cover we found under some palm trees the sun still filtered through. Every night at the hotel was a themed dinner. Tonight was Asian night and the food was all very good.

Day 7: Morning return to Panama City via the Bridge of the Americas. Enjoy spectacular views from Amador Causeway connecting Perico, Naos, Culebra and Flamenco Islands. Visit a Kuna tribal marketplace. Shop for colorful Kuna mola

embroidery depicting rainforest animals and marine life, and exotic wood handicrafts. Visit the world-renowned Museum of Biodiversity, designed by architect Frank Gehry.

Our first stop was at the Kuna tribal marketplace. It was an area where many shops were under one roof with individual stalls. I am such a sucker for these places as I want to buy something from all of the vendors but must try and only buy a few items. When Mike and I were in Costa Rica I fell in love with molas made in the San Blas Islands where Kuna people live and purchased two that I had framed. I wanted to show the ladies in the stalls the mola that I had made and sewed onto a vest that I was wearing to this marketplace. It is a mola depicting a buffalo. The ladies loved it as I could hear them (in their language) talking about it as my back was to them as they touched the buffalo mola. I heard one say "buffalo". I continued to scan the stalls for the molas of my choice. I ended up buying four molas from different ladies. One depicted a moon and stars, one was the design of leaves, one was a geometric design and the last one was of several colorful birds surrounded by flowers.

The Kuna people (Cuna) are an indigenous people of Panama and Colombia. The Cuna are famous for their bright *molás*, a colorful textile art form made with the techniques of appliqué and reverse appliqué. Mola panels are used to make the blouses of the Kuna women's national dress, which is worn daily by many Cuna women. *Mola* means "clothing" in the Kuna language. The Cuna word for a *mola* blouse is *Tulemola*, (or "dulemola") "Kuna people's clothing." The Cuna have a high incidence rate of albinism, which led to their nickname of "White Indians" in the early 1900s. In Cuna mythology, albinos (or "sipu") were given a special place and are considered a special race of people. They have the specific duty of defending the Moon against a dragon which tries to eat it on occasion during a Lunar eclipse, and only they are allowed to go outside on the night of a Lunar eclipse and to use specially made bows and arrows to shoot down the dragon. The Cuna have been shown to have a low average blood pressure (B.P., 110/70 mm Hg), and, do not experience the age-related increase in blood pressure that is common in Western society.

Molas are hand-made using a reverse appliqué technique. Several layers (usually two to seven) of different-colored cloth (usually cotton) are sewn together; the design is then formed by cutting away parts of each layer. The edges of the layers are then turned under and sewn down. Often, the stitches are nearly invisible. This is achieved by using a thread the same color as the layer being sewn, sewing blind stitches, and sewing tiny stitches. The finest molas have extremely fine stitching, made using tiny needles. Molás vary greatly in quality, and the pricing to buyers varies accordingly. A greater number of layers is generally a sign of higher quality; two-layer molas are common, but examples with four or more layers will demand a better price. A mola can take from two weeks to six months to make, depending on the complexity of the design. It was nice to ask the Kuna people in the market to take their photos. Surrounded by their molas it was a perfect opportunity to take their photo. Mike was exploring outside the stalls and saw a few agoutis and came across a little boy cooling off in a cement basin behind the market.

Our second stop was to visit the Museum of Biodiversity. The museum is located at the end of the Amador Causeway in Panama City, facing the Pacific Ocean at the entrance of the Panama Canal. We saw the museum from the boat we were on earlier. Biomuseo is a museum focused on the natural history of Panama, whose isthmus was formed very recently in geologic time, with major impact on the ecology of the Western Hemisphere. Located on the Amador Causeway in Panama City, Panama, it was designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry. This is Gehry's first design for Latin America. The design was conceived in 1999 and the museum opened in October 2014. The Biomuseo highlights Panama's natural and cultural history, emphasizing the role of humans in the XXI century. Its galleries tell the story of how the rise of the isthmus of Panama changed the world.

Behind the museum I saw a walkway with trees and a garden. Mike and I went out the back exit to find a circular walkway and trees with lots of colorful birds. We saw a Squirrel Cuckoo a large and extremely long-tailed cuckoo, some hummingbirds, a Blue-gray Tanager, Euphonia and a large parrot with bright yellow breast, green and red wings. As we were leaving I saw a small group of people with binoculars and a scope. They were looking for birds. I told them that the yellow parrot was in a tree just close to them. They went immediately to the tree and one person said "The parrot was an escapee bird and not native to Panama." He said it looked like a parrot from Australia.

Tonight was the farewell dinner with the group. We were treated to a private dance show performed by a local dance group and band. The band consisted of five men, three with drums, one guitar and one accordion. Panamanians like Latin dances such as salsa, merengue or bachata but they also love their folklore. Three couples came out and danced different folkloric dances. The dancers performed in formal and local costumes. "Pollera" is a traditional costume of Panama worn by women. It originally came from Spain during colonial times. It is basically a blouse and long skirt, which in Panama acquired its own characteristics, differentiating itself from Spanish dress and other Latin American dresses of Spanish origin. Simple white polleras without much lace or embroidery can cost as little as \$600, but a proper "gala" pollera will take up to nine months to make and cost \$1,200 to \$3,000. The ladies had elaborate crowns with 'temblques' attached on their heads. Temblques are hand-beaded and individually pinned in their hair, these are unique to Panama. The men wear much simpler attire, white long sleeved cotton shirts, knee length white cotton pants and a 'montuno', or straw hat for the folk dances and dress long sleeved shirts and black pants for the formal dances. They were two-toned shoes because the men wish to bring attention to their fast footwork while dancing. Three ladies came out after some of the couple dancing and explained to our group about their proper 'gala' pollera de temblques crowns.

We were surprised when two dancers came out to perform 'The Dance of the Devils'. The devil dances have their origin in European masques. Especially after the plague, the macabre and the devil were themes for many celebrations. In the case of the devil dances in Panama, they all serve a religious purpose: the evangelization of the other. So they came to be a vivid image of the battle between good and evil that promoted conversion. Most of the devil dances are usually practiced for the religious feast of Corpus Christi,

that celebrates the presence of Jesus in the host and also in Carnival. Although not the highlight of Carnival, these diablos are thought to ward off evil spirits during this time. These practices are colonial, but there are no dates that we can specify as to when or where they started. Most probably very early in the 16th century. The costume of the devil was a one piece jumpsuit of red and black stripes with a robe of different designs wrapped on the shoulders. The masks were quite impressive. It depicted a devil with horns and large teeth and fangs. The process for making the masks have been passed down from generation to generation. Clay molds are covered in either petroleum jelly or pork fat. This barrier prevents the actual mask from sticking onto the mold. Layers consisting of paper and glue made with water and flour are used. Most masks have 3-6 layers. The dried mask is then taken off the mold. Teeth, antennas, and horns are added. The final step is to paint the mask. Colors vary depending on the owner's request, the type of devil, and/or the crafter. These masks can cost up to \$600, depending on the intricacy. Devils may be the most common mask seen in the celebrations, but they are not the only ones. Animals are also popular. The process to make these masks is the same as crafters who make the masks for devils. Today there are several different dances representing this genre, such as: the Dirty Little Devil, the Clean Little Devil, the Great Devil, the Little Bull, Spanish and Big Headed Montezuma, the Buzzard, the Midget Women, the Pure Black, the Pretentious Ones and the Mojigangas.

Day 8: Our tour with Caravan Tours is over and Mike and I are staying in Panama City at the Intercontinental Miramar. Today we went to visit Casco Viejo, Panama city, smallest neighborhood. Just four avenues wide, Casco Viejo (literally meaning 'old quarter') is an Unesco-protected district and a barrio on the up. Panama City was founded on August 15, 1519 and it lasted one hundred and fifty-two years. In January 1671, the Governor Juan Perez de Guzman had it set on fire, before the attack and looting by the pirate Henry Morgan. In 1672, Antonio Fernández de Córdoba initiated the construction of a new city, which was then founded on January 21, 1673. This city was built on a peninsula completely isolated by the sea and a defensive system of walls. Today this place preserves the first institutions and buildings of the modern city of Panama. It is known as *Casco Viejo* (Spanish for Old Town).

We started our tour of old town at Iglesia de San Jose church (Saint Joseph Church) located right on Avenida A and famous for the distinctive baroque Altar de Ora (The Golden Altar), which was saved from Panama Viejo and transported into the "new" city. Legend has it that the altar was about the only thing of value salvaged after Henry Morgan sacked Panama Viejo in 1671. A priest painted the altar black to disguise its value and convince the insurgents to leave it behind. The Golden Altar is actually made of carved wood that was overlaid with gold flake. However, as quaint as the story is, it is no more than a legend: the altarpiece's style corresponds to a later period in the 18th century. Historical records show that the altar was covered with gold leaf in 1915. Saint Joseph Church was an Augustinian temple with a rectangular shape one of the first to be built in Panama's Old Quarter. It was left in ruins after a major fire in 1737 and later rebuilt. When an 1832 law abolished all convents, the Augustinians left Panama. Their church was used as a school chapel until the religious order returned in the late 19th century. The temple's interior was renovated in the early 20th century.

Side altars, also made of hand carved wood and covered with gold flake, are located all about in the church. A nice font of a marble base and brass top with the figure of St. Joseph with one arm raised is located by the altar of 'Our Lady of Grace'. In a side room was a very large scale model of the life and death of Jesus. It had all the stages of Jesus life in miniature size towns that Jesus visited and lived in. The model was made in detail from the sky with the Star of Bethlehem to the villages with people, animals, trees and plants everything in miniature.

One of the oldest altars of this church, (Jesus of Nazareth) incorporates symbols of Christ's Passion, located at the entrance: symbols of a staircase, a tunic, a bag with 30 coins, dice, pincers, a sponge, a hammer and nails, a shroud, Malco's ear, a powerful hand and a sword. Jesus is at the center of the altar, Jesus is carrying the cross on his way to Calvary. Accompanied by Saint Hedwig with the houses that the faithful offer her in the hope of obtaining a home of their own; and Saint Martin of Porres, whose mother was Panamanian.

We passed the first dedicated rum bar to open in Casco Viejo the 'Pedra Mandinga'. People say nothing beats the Mandinga mojitos. We were looking for a coffee shop instead of morning mojitos. We walked to a square that had an equestrian statue of General Tomas Herrera (1804-1854). In November of 1840, present day Panama declared its independence from Columbia. General Tomás de Herrera, who is portrayed in this equestrian monument, was elected as the first president of the Free State of the Isthmus. Near the square was the coffee shop we had been looking for called Café Unido, Panama coffee roasters, located at the ground floor of the American Trade Hotel at Plaza Herrera. We wanted to try the champagne of coffees 'Geisha coffee' Panama's prized brew that they say is one of the world's best and most expensive cups of joe. Originally brought over from Ethiopia, local growers found that Geisha coffee beans thrived in Panama's climate. We ordered two Geisha coffees and a Cuban sandwich. We found a nice place to sit upstairs in the café overlooking the coffee bar where the coffee is made. Customers came upstairs with their dogs and enjoyed their morning coffee. I thought the coffee was good but just as good as other coffees I have had. Mike drinks a lot of coffee and he said it was good but nothing special for the price that can sell for up to \$170 a pound. The coffee came with some dried salted plantain chips that I thought were pretty tasty with the coffee. The Cuban sandwich was enough for Mike and me to share.

The buildings, restaurants and colonial homes on the narrow brick streets were a pleasant day to spend away from the towering skyscrapers of bustling Panama City. We could hear and watch the church bells ringing at the Iglesia Nuestra Senora de La Merced (Our Lady of Mercy Church). Dating back to 1680, La Iglesia de la Merced sits in the heart of Casco Viejo, just a couple of blocks from Independence Square. Its weathered stone facade is made of stones recovered from the abandoned original old city of Panama, Panama Viejo, and is flanked by two gleaming white stucco bell towers, with bells chiming every 15 minutes. Particularly striking is a statue of María de Cervelló (also known as María del Socorro or Mary of Cervellione) holding a ship in her hand. She was a 12th-century saint who was said, after she had died, sail on the wings of the wind to

rescue ships who were at risk of shipwreck. It was Sunday and service was being observed by locals. The service was over in a few minutes and we took a look around the main worship area. The church had columns holding up the roof. A sign in the courtyard explained the columns. The columns are made of a single tree trunk of “nispero” (manikara bidentata). Each column is about 13 meters tall and is more than 300 years old. Each column was one of ten that held the roof of the Mercedarian temple since its construction in the 18th century. The original columns were made of uncovered wood. The church was “modernized” around 1890 and its columns were covered with decorative metal plates. Later thick circular brick shells covered the columns. In 2015 all the coverings were removed and the columns can still hold the roof of the temple up.

Inside this church were many interesting religious statues. The statue that I previously talked about was the statue of Maria de Cervello. Another statue of interest was that of virgin Mary dressed in a gold gown with a gold crown on her head. She is holding a young Jesus in her one arm and Jesus is holding a pair of handcuffs. Not sure what this statue’s story is all about. I saw a pair of handcuffs in a glass case in the church’s museum also amid other religious items. Another statue was of Saint Hedwig surrounding by small hand made houses. St. Hedwig founded monasteries along with her husband. After the death of her husband, Hedwig became a nun and continued to serve the poor and sick. Panamanian devotees come to her to request the grace of a home; for this, they offer miniature houses at her feet. The statue of Saint Serapion hanging from a blade-shaped cross dressed in a white robe had a disturbing story about him. Saint Serapion became a Mercedarian in 1222, and participated in several redemptions to free captives. He was martyred by the Saracens, who bound him to a blade-shaped cross, plucked his intestines out and cut off his limbs. St Serapion is invoked on behalf of the sick, and his blessed oil is used to relieve pain. On his altar there are two amphorae where this sacred oil is stored. The last interesting statue was called ‘Poor Christ’. The Poor Christ is an articulated image from the 18th century, the second oldest in this temple. It is a dress-up statue, as his devotees periodically provide Him with a new tunic, cane, wig and shoes. The image is also popularly known as ‘Jesus of the Little Sandal’. Today Jesus was dress in a bright purple gown with white lace on the hem. Sitting on his throne with a gold crown deep in thought.

This church housed the Museum of Religious Art with glass cases of the religious nature. One interesting object was a prayer desk. The prio-dieu belonged to Manuel Antonio Noriega (1934-2017). As commander-in-chief of Panama’s Defense Forces, Noriega de facto controlled Panama’s government from 1983. He was removed from power by the United States during a military invasion in 1989. A man named Fray Francisco Javier Arteta saved this prie-dieu, a tabernacle and other objects from the chapel of the Panamanian military command to protect them from the massive looting that took place after the invasion. Outside in the courtyard were three mercedarian bells displayed that used to be in the clock tower. They were replaced in 2013 because they could not be used without endangering their preservation. All were static and worked by manually striking their clappers. Also in the courtyard was a big stone and brick well with a iron grid across the opening. The sign said it was called El Pozo De La Merced ‘Our Mercy’s Well’. In Spanish, pozo, from the Latin puteus, is a deep hole in the ground that usually

has a cylindrical shape. Those used to search and store water are characterized by having a curb or wall to prevent both landslides and having people fall inside; a pulley on top to raise a container with water, and a lid or cover. It was customary in the past to throw stones in wells to make wishes, later replaced by coins as a symbol of the future. For Catholics, the well is also a symbol of salvations. Panama City did not have streams at convenient distances, so it was common for towns people to build wells; La Merced had two.

Our next stop was to visit the Cathedral Basilica of St. Mary. The Sacred Heart Cathedral (Spanish: Catedral Basílica Santa María la Antigua de Panamá) It is a Catholic church located in the old town of Panama City in Panama. It was consecrated in 1796, although construction work began in 1688, 108 years earlier. The cathedral is the Episcopal see of the Archdiocese of Panama. The exterior of the Basilica is made of stone and brick and features two towers. Each of the towers holds a bell. The main entry was carved in the Jesuit (or Renaissance) style and has three entry doors. The layout of the church is a typical cruciform style (shape of the cross). The interior wooden ceiling is supported by 67 columns. The majority of the walls are painted white save for the altar which is a lovely blue to represent the Virgin Mary. Beautiful stain glass panels, glow with rainbow-colors.

Inside a glass case was a model of a boy dressed in a white shirt, blue jeans and no shoes. A sign stated that his name was Jose Sanchez del Rio, born in Sahuayo de Morelos, Mexico in 1913. During the 1924-1928 religious persecution by Mexican President Plutarco Elías Calles, St. Jose became a Mexican Cristero, fighting against the anti-Catholic legislation. Cardinal Suarez reflected on the life of Jose Sanchez del Rio, who was canonized by Pope Francis on October 16, alongside 6 other blessed. At age 14, St. Jose was martyred by the Federal Army on Feb. 10, 1928. According to witness accounts, soldiers cut off the soles of his feet and forced him to walk barefoot to his grave. Although he was tortured, he refused to renounce his Catholic faith. Moments before he was killed, the teen shouted, “Viva Cristo Rey!” which means “Long live Christ the King!”

It got pretty hot. We passed a family sitting outside on their plastic chairs with a BBQ nearby. A man was blowing up a couple of kiddie pools for the children. Four children couldn't wait for water to be put in the pool and were jumping in it and pretending to swim and play in fake water...it was cute. It was time for a break, we walked to Town Square, (Plaza de la Independencia). This beautiful square is where Panama declared its independence from Colombia on 3 November 1903. People had booths set up in the square and were selling their wares and molas. We went inside Central Hotel Panama facing the square and had some relieve from the heat. Mike got a Xa'madre India pale ale and I ordered an Aperol Spritz that was pretty big with raspberries fizzing in the drink...it was great! With a beautiful cool lobby and a bathroom inside, you couldn't ask for more!

We went to find a shop called Reprosa. A high-end workshop and store whose mission is to preserved and promote the historic and cultural traditions of Panama. Reposa

collaborates with indigenous tribes from Panama and with artisans from rural areas to produce objects such as baskets, wood engravings, masks woven in Darien, the famous fabrics from Guna Yala, pottery and more. I purchased a geometric designed basket called “cultura” in this shop made using fibers of the Chunga palm which have been spilt, bleached in the sun, and dyed by hand with natural plant extracts. Leaving the shop we stopped at Granclement the oldest ice cream shop in Casco Viejo.

We left the ice cream shop and continued exploring, walking past renovated buildings and crumbling facades. Ended walking at Paseo de las Bovedas, a trellised promenade at the outermost tip of Casco Viejo. A memorial marker was here on the sea wall for Captain Raul Chevalier which read: From this site on November 3, 1903 Captain Raul Chevalier fired the cannon shots that forced the Colombian gunner *Bogotá* to abandon our waters, thus consolidating our independence. From this marker you could view the modern skyline of Panama City to the north. Many booths were set up with people selling molasses, souvenirs and other items. Paseo de Las Bovedas is part of the history of Panama when the French were attempting to build the Panama Canal. Paseo de las Bóvedas earned its name from the infamous Las Bóvedas (“The Vaults”) that lies beneath. Las Bóvedas was the dreaded and well used dungeon of colonial Panama.

At the end of the Paseo you will find a wide white staircase that leads down to Plaza Francia. Once the original main square of the walled city, Plaza Francia is dedicated to the thousands of people from around the world who died during French attempt to build the Panama Canal. A dozen or so marble plaques detail the event, while an obelisk stands in the center with a rooster atop. Flanking the Plaza are the French Embassy, the Instituto Nacional de Cultura (National Culture Institute), and the dungeon. These days the dungeon is home to a restaurant, appropriately named Las Bóvedas. One side of a building had many murals that told a local story we did not know. Mike looked up a restaurant on his cell for us to have lunch. It was called Finca del Mar. Had some good fish dishes.

We went back to our hotel and got ready to go out and attend ‘Carnival’ in town. Carnival in Panama City is celebrated with merriment and wild abandon in the days preceding Ash Wednesday, between February and March. From Saturday until the following Tuesday, work is put away and masks, costumes and confetti come out, and for 96 hours almost anything goes. Dance, party and get wet.

One of Panama’s carnival traditions is the ‘mojaderas’, literally meaning instances where people ‘get drenched’ in water. Whether that be with water balloons, buckets or water hoses, people gather and get sprayed with water until they’re soaking wet. In the early morning cistern trucks arrived in the city street to douse crowds with large fire hoses. (We skipped this event!)

We left our hotel room about 6:00 p.m. and walked down a pedestrian walkway along the waterfront the runs along the entire bay to where the mass party was already under way. Many streets were blocked off by barricades with lots of police guarding them. You had to show picture ID and get patted down to past the check point. Once inside masses of

people were gathered around the food and beer tents. Lots of grills were loaded with food, smoke rising to the skies. The loudest music you could humanly tolerate was blasting everywhere. We finally found the parade route and ran to get a spot to see the floats and the main stage with yet another band playing music. After seeing some floats it was time to evacuate.

Day 9: Today we had reservations to have a lunch and birding tour at Canopy Tower. The Canopy Tower is a prime location from which to observe the birds and other wildlife of the forest canopy. Because the birds and mammals are at eye level, it is common to get fantastic views otherwise nearly impossible from the ground, making this one of the best places for birding, as well as Mantled Howlers, Geoffroy's Tamarins and other mammals. The Canopy Tower is located in impressive rainforest atop Semaphore Hill within Soberanía National Park, 35 miles north of Panamá City.

The Canopy Tower was originally constructed in 1965 by the US Military, a radar station, set in the middle of the vast lowland rainforest. It was used in the protection of the Panama Canal from 1965 to the early 1990s. Left abandoned by the mid-1990s, local Panamanian and nature lover Raul Arias de Para came across the metal structure and immediately saw its potential as a premier birding lodge. Surrounded by the lowland rainforest of Soberania National Park, the Canopy Tower sits on the highest hill in the region. An observation deck circles around the giant geodesic ball that still sits on top of the Tower. At dawn on the observation deck, dozens of species can be seen at eye level as they forage in the canopy.

Our driver picked us up at the hotel and we got to the Canopy Tower around 11:30 a.m. We walked around on the top of the tower, not much happening, saw some Black Vultures. It was nice to hear the Mantled Howlers calling in the wild. Lunch was at 12:00. We had some soup and bread. While at lunch two Rufous-naped Tamarins came into view in a tree near the widow. A lady that worked at Canopy Tower arranged a full banana on a wire and when it got close to the tamarins one of them finished pulling the wire till it got the banana. The birding trip started at 3:00. Our guide was Fidelino "Igua" Jimenez a local man who was born in the indigenous territory of Madugandi. He is a skilled naturalist guide and really good at locating birds and animals. A total of eight people were on this birding trip. His favorite bird is the King Vulture, because, in his culture, it is related to intelligence, as they are the first ones to eat. Our guide took us to Summit Ponds and Old Gamboa Road South. Igua was looking for the Spectacled Owl but didn't find one. We did see a Boat-billed Heron, Rufous Tiger Heron, Anhinga and large turtles at Summit Ponds. We saw several Mantled Howlers, Keel-billed Toucans, Crimson-backed Tanager, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Squirrel Cuckoo, Trogon and many other birds.

Day 9: Early pick up at our hotel to go back to Canopy Tower for the early morning birding trip with Fidelino "Igua" Jimenez as the guide for this guided walk. We met everyone on the top of the tower where a table was set with coffee and hot water for tea. We experienced the sunrise over the Pacific and heard the thundering bellows of the Mantled Howler proclaiming their territory. First to show up was the Variegated Squirrel

to steal a banana. This squirrel is well named, and comes in many color forms throughout its range. Birding scopes were set up and hummingbirds, Toucans and other colorful birds were spotted. After breakfast our group went downstairs and outside to watch the many hummingbird feeders. My favorite was the White-necked Jacobin, a uniquely-patterned, medium-sized hummingbird. The adult has a blue head and chest, a sharply contrasting white nape, a green back and blackish wings. Fidelino "Igua" Jimenez told us that this morning we were going to walk along Semaphore Hill Road inside Parque Nacional Soberania. This is the hilly, winding road that we took this morning to get to Canopy Tower.

The first thing we saw of interest besides birds was small pit shaped areas at a sandy area. Igua told us that these were the pits of antlions, a group of insects in the family Myrmeleontidae, known for the fiercely predatory habits of their larvae, which in many species dig pits to trap passing ants or other prey. The adult insects are less well known, due to their relatively short lifespans compared to the larvae and mostly fly at dusk or after dark, and may be mistakenly identified as dragonflies or damselflies; they are sometimes known as antlion lacewings, and in North America. He directed an ant heading towards one of the pits and the ant went inside and as you know he disappeared as breakfast for the antlion. Some of the birds I remember seeing but we did not get many photos of them because it can be difficult to photo birds. I remember seeing Euphonias, Keel-billed Toucan, Honeycreepers, Barred Antshrike, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Red-lored Amazon Parrot, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, Hummingbirds, Blue-gray Tanager, Ten-making Bats, Electron Montmot, Woodpeckers and other beautiful birds. When we got to the bottom Semaphore Hill Road we got to ride back on Canopy Towers open top truck with benches.

When the tour was over an employee of Canopy Towers was going to drive us back to our hotel. We asked him if he could drop us off at Albrook Mall a large shopping mall complex locate in Panama City. The mall was opened in 2002 on the site of Albrook Air Force Base, which had been a United States Air Force base in the former Panama Canal Zone. It is located beside the city's main bus station and the Marcos A. Gelabert domestic airport. We thought we could have lunch there and shop a bit. Our driver dropped us off and when we tried to enter the mall it was closed. Many other people were trying to enter the mall also but we found out that because it was 'Carnival' (which lasts 4 days) the mall was closed. As we were looking at our cell phones trying to figure about a new plan a young woman asked us if we needed help. We told her because the mall was closed we were looking for a seafood place for lunch. She suggested that we try Praia a restaurant on the beach that she was going for lunch today with her family. We realized while we were riding in the uber that we picked up at the bus station that Praia was not far from the Westin Playa Bonita that we had stayed earlier in the trip. There was a large covered outdoor seating patio that we could of dined at but choose to relax in the air conditioned room at the restaurant. The patio overlooked the Pacific Ocean. It was low-tide and people were walking the beach and kids having fun in the water. There were other restaurants in this strip and lots of outdoor sitting areas. This place was more for the locals that tourist like it was just a day at the beach for them having fun with their friends and family. Finally got back to our hotel and packed up to go home the next day.

We hitched a ride with the coach taking a different group of Caravan tourist to the airport. Up Up and Away we had our flights back home to find our car encased in snow and ice.

It was a nice get-a-way trip and we found it to be interesting and pleasant.

Might go back to Panama sometime in the future to see more of the country.

Mike & Audrey – Panama 2020

PANAMA CANAL CRUISE, RAINFORESTS & BEACHES OF PANAMA

February 15-February 26 with Caravan Tours

Day 1 – Panama City, Panama

Welcome to fun, vibrant Panama, home to the Panama Canal, the most important waterway in the world. The Isthmus of Panama divides the North and South America continents. During your tour you'll take two daytime cruises on the Panama Canal, one through the canal locks and another on Gatun Lake. In Panama you'll see the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, stroll sandy beaches, explore rainforests, and meet the native Embera tribe. Hotel: Marriott Courtyard, Panama City.

Day 2 – Old Panama, Miraflores Locks

This morning, visit the ruins of Panama Viejo (Old Panama), the city founded by the Spanish in 1519, as a gateway for gold from the Inca Empire. Next, on your scenic drive of Panama City's bayfront, enjoy views of Casco Antiquo (The Old French Quarter) and today's modern skyline. Panama City is a blend of Manhattan, Miami, and Las Vegas seasoned with Latin American flavor and style. Visit the Canal Museum at Miraflores, overlooking the Panama Canal locks. Learn about the Canal construction and operation. From Pre-Columbian times to the present day, Panama had a prominent role as the major transit route between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Hotel: Marriott Courtyard, Panama City.

Day 3 – Panama Canal Cruise - Gatun Lake

This morning cross the Isthmus to Colon, the Caribbean port at the north end of the Panama Canal. Your short drive through Colon passes by the Free Trade Zone, the largest in the Americas and the Panama Canal Railway Station. Visit the Panama Canal Expansion Observation Center. See the newly constructed locks at the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal. Learn how the locks raise ships 87 feet above the Caribbean Sea on to the Panama Canal. Lunch. Afternoon boat ride on Gatun Lake, the artificial lake which forms part of the Panama Canal. See the lush jungle watershed region of the Panama Canal. Cruise by hilltop islands, home to a variety of wildlife. Look for monkeys. Enjoy a relaxing two night stay at your resort located in the rainforest. Hotel: Gamboa Rainforest Resort, Gamboa, Panama.

Day 4 – Panama Canal Cruise - Locks Transit

Today cruise another portion of the Panama Canal. Cruise by the Bridge of the Americas, pass through Miraflores and Pedro Miguel Locks, and cross the Continental Divide. Then wind through the Gaillard Cut to the town of Gamboa. Your small passenger vessel allows for close-up views of the opening and closing of the huge six foot thick steel gates of both the Miraflores and Pedro Miguel Locks. See, at eye-level, how transiting vessels are guided by tugboats and pulled by small trains. (Please note, route may be reversed.) Return to your jungle resort. Stroll the gardens, swim in the pool, or enjoy the scenic views from your private balcony. Hotel: Gamboa Rainforest Resort, Gamboa, Panama.

Day 5 – Embera Tribe, Playa Bonita

This morning, cruise on the Chagres River to visit an Embera tribal village. The Embera inhabit the rainforests of Panama. See exotic Embera handicrafts, such as tightly woven palm fiber baskets and carvings made from tagua nuts and the cocobolo tree. Look for colorful butterflies on your visit to a butterfly garden. See rare tropical orchids at an orchid nursery. Visit a live jungle sloth exhibition. Next, cross over the Panama Canal on the Centenario Bridge. Continue to your beach hotel for a relaxing two night stay on the Pacific. Hotel: Westin Playa Bonita, Playa Bonita, Panama.

Day 6 – Playa Bonita

Entire day at leisure to enjoy your beach resort. Swim in your hotel's infinity pool. Enjoy a carefree afternoon. Time to beachcomb and enjoy your resort's amenities. Hotel: Westin Playa Bonita, Playa Bonita, Panama.

Day 7 – Handicrafts, Biodiversity Museum

Morning return to Panama City via the Bridge of the Americas. Enjoy spectacular views from Amador Causeway connecting Perico, Naos, Culebra and Flamenco Islands. Visit a Kuna tribal marketplace. Shop for colorful Kuna mola embroidery depicting rainforest animals and marine life, and exotic wood handicrafts. Visit the world-renowned Museum of Biodiversity, designed by architect Frank Gehry. Enjoy a farewell dinner. Hotel: Intercontinental Miramar, Panama City, Panama.

Day 8 – Panama City

Your tour ends after breakfast this morning at your hotel. Breakfast begins at 6:00 a.m. Caravan provides transfers to Panama's Tocumen Airport. We stayed three more days in Panama.

Two Daytime Cruises on the Panama Canal

With Caravan, you enjoy two daytime cruises on the Panama Canal. Your Panama Canal Gatun Lake Cruise is one hour by small watercraft. Your Panama Canal Locks Transit

Cruise is usually three hours, depending on canal schedules. This is a public vessel so you may be joined by other tourists. The smaller size of the ship allows for unique close-up views of the opening and closing of the six foot thick steel gates of both the Miraflores and Pedro Miguel Locks.