



Travel Dispatches

from

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&
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Summer of 2025 began with a flight to Tijuana, then the Cross Border Express (CBX) for an easy entry into San Diego, and a bit of family time at an exceptional wedding in the scenic hills of nearby Poway. After the festivities, and a day of recovery, we recrossed the border at CBX for a flight to the easterly side of Mexico.

Our plane threaded the high peaks and knife-edged desert mountains around Monterrey, the capital of Mexico's northeastern state of Nuevo León. We'd spend about a week in this dynamo of the north and then hop a bus heading south to other interesting places along the edge of the Sierra Madre Oriental, the eastern



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backbone of Mexico. It joins up with the Sierra Madre Occidental south of Mexico City, and then extends down the spine of the Americas all the way to Antarctica. We're only going to Mexico City (CDMX), but it will take us about a month and a half to get there, so we hope you'll enjoy the ride!



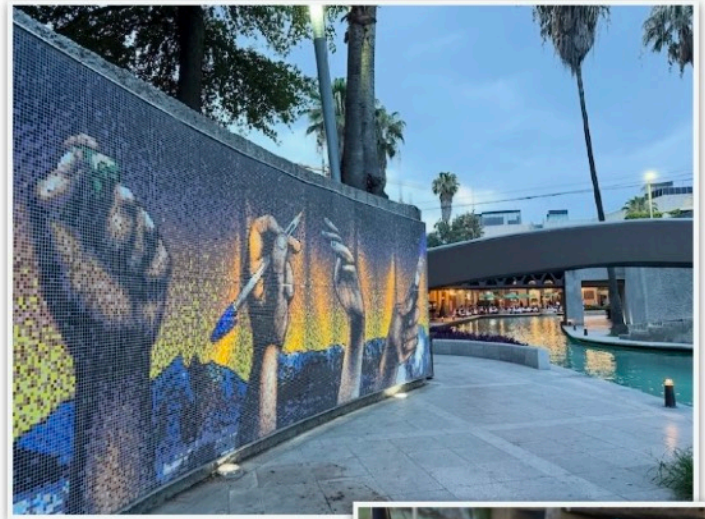
As a side note: The nearby port of Tampico, on the Gulf of Mexico, is where that classic movie "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (1948) begins. Bogie is a drunk who falls in with adventurers who find the gold, and then they lose it all. And it was the bandit called 'Gold Hat' (Played by Alfonso Bedoya of Vicam, Sonora; much of the movie was filmed in Sonora) who said, "Badges? We don't need no steekeen badges!" Or words to that effect.

Monterrey has come a long way since I changed buses here about 50 years ago on my way back to the US border after a long trip. I was perilously low on pesos, with no extra time or money to look around this grimy industrial giant of the north. And I left in the middle of the night, so I really have no past impressions of this important big city.

At the Taxi Seguro stand at the airport we got a chit for the next driver, and soon we arrived at a sweet little place that Carolyn had located in the newly developing central Barrio Viejo district, where we flopped onto the bed for a short nap. It was a good central location for an intro to Monterrey.



There were plenty of sweet little restaurants, museums, and coffee houses within easy walking distance, and we were only a block from the city's attractive new riverwalk. A fine summer's evening crept across the sky, and we took a stroll to see what the Barrio Viejo had to offer. A stairway led down to the new river walk, the *Paseo Santa Lucia*, with a huge tile mural along one wall. And a well-lighted riverside restaurant, named Tenérías, caught our attention. We settled in with a round of



fine drinks followed by a delicious dinner, as riverboats cruised quietly past. It's hard to imagine a nicer welcome to the city.

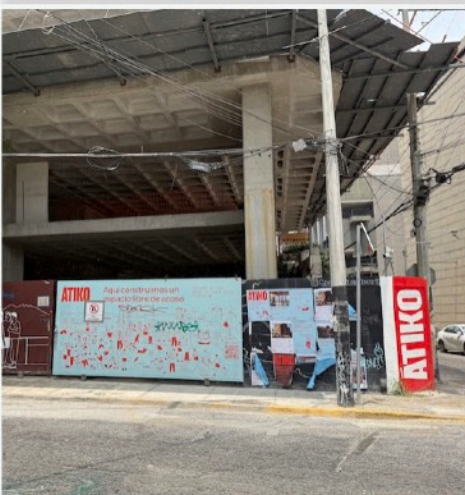
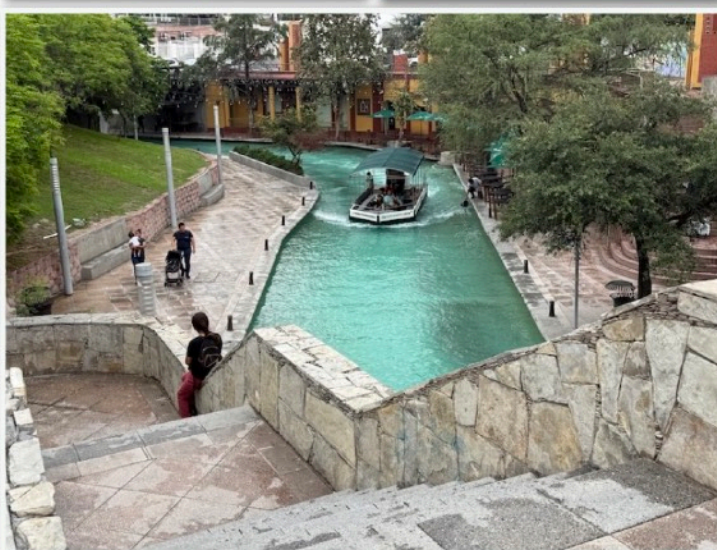


We began the following morning in search of coffee and found 'Liminal,' a little books and coffee spot, with a ghost motif, just around the corner from our apartment. It was a place we'd return to for more good coffee and a quick breakfast.

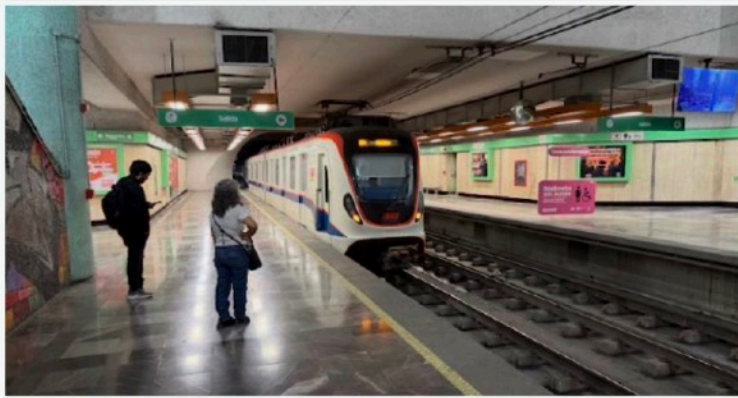
(Liminal was a new word for me, so I asked the guy at the counter. He shrugged and said, "Fantasma (ghost)." I looked it up later in my thick Spanish-English dictionary and found no mention of the word. But a copy of the Oxford English lists it as coming from Latin and meaning, "occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold." And that could be a good description of a ghost. Or those quantum quarkish particles that neither exist nor don't. Or maybe just an indecisive person.)



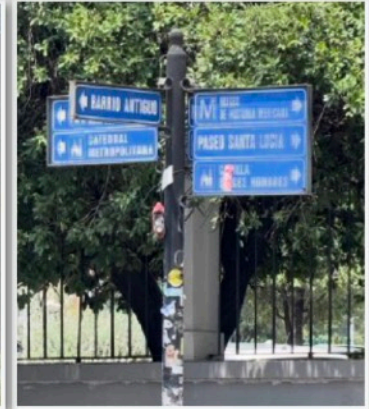
After a mug of hot coffee and a snack we explored the colorful streets of the Barrio Viejo. We were right near the sharp-edged, modernist Museo de Historia Mexicana, an area of artistic murals that's quickly filling with tall housing developments. The city of Monterrey is clearly making a big commitment to repopulate the inner city, and is likely to become an even more interesting place to visit in years to come.



But we had to find a Metro station and get to the city's Central de Autobuses. We always make plans early for our eventual departure, so we can relax and better enjoy our time on-site. We also need to see how difficult the route is for rolling our bags. It appears that the Metro is not yet ready for bag-rollers like us, so we'll need to hail a cab to the station when we leave. Plus it's important to get good front seats with a view to the countryside. Many Mexicanos travel by bus to save on hotel rooms, and they often pull the shades so they can sleep – and so there goes much of your view.



The city's efficient Metro helps us gain some insider knowledge about the city, as it gets us quickly back to the center of things. We emerge at the MacroPlaza, which is said to be the 5th largest public square in the world. It's a long grid that's built above several major streets with room for a grand opera house that's now featuring a



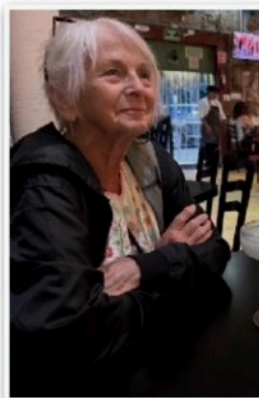
performance of Rossini's "Italian Girl in Algiers." The tall, slender, and brilliantly red, Faro del Comercio, designed by Luis Baragán, one of Mexico's most famous Architects, stands at the southern end with its green laser light sweeping the night sky. And there's a gigantic Neptune fountain, with gamboling figures frolicking in the spray that made me want to join in the fun!



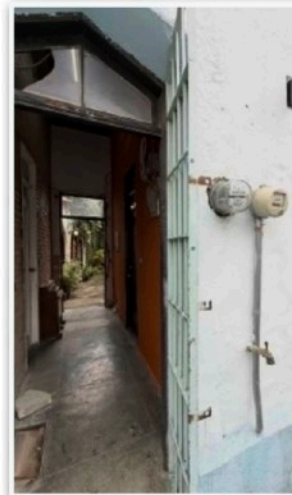
And yet there's a sad reminder nearby of the city's years of drug-fueled violence that consumed the futures of so many bright young people. We've encountered this sort of memorial before in other cities and it's still difficult, but necessary, to take a long hard look into the many faces found here in this shrine to their memory. And to hope we can do better, somehow, in the future.

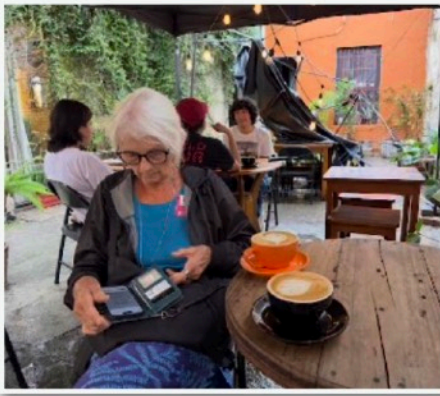


Night is descending by the time we return to the Barrio, and a brightly-lit Cubano bar beckons us inside. A slogan by the door reads, "This is not your home, but it feels like it is." The place is filled with Caribbean color, there's a video of sexy street dancers on constant loop, and photos of cigar-smoking mamas (and papas) adorn the walls. There's no band playing tonight, but tasty platters of black beans and rice with fried platanos remind us of Habana, and it's a good way to end the day.

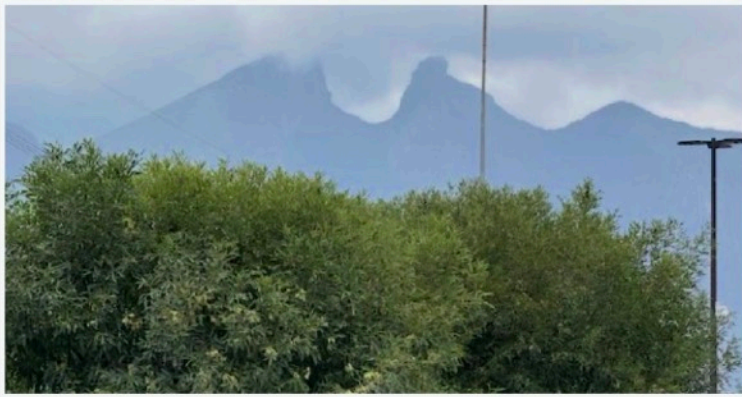


Another day, and we find another sweet little coffee shop. This one is called the Seabird, and it's hidden down a shabby alleyway to a small courtyard and evening venue, shared with a barber shop. It's the right blend of hidden-funky that we try to find on our travels, as we enjoy a good wake-up brew.

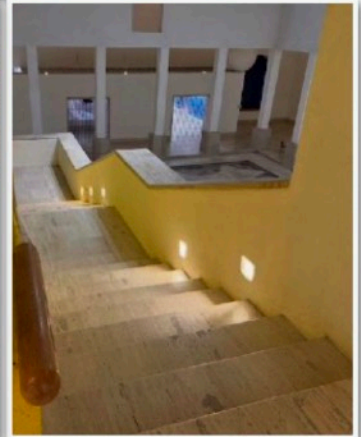
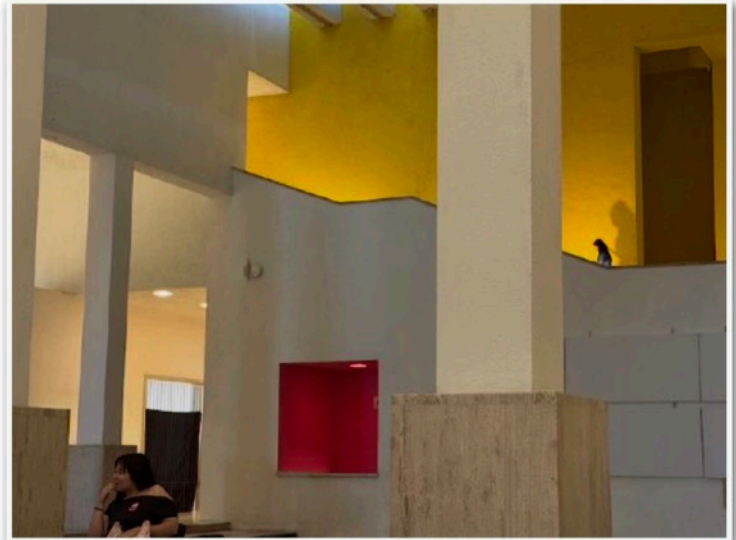




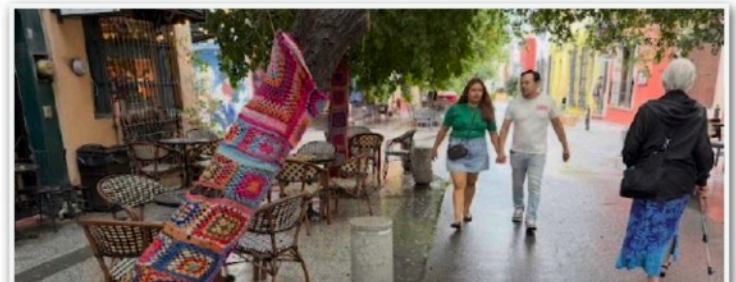
But this will be a rainy day, as clouds are enshrouding the towering mountains at the edge of town. We've seen signs reading "Cuidado con los Osos," and there really could be a few bears living around here in those nearby mountains that are part of the Sierra Madre Oriental.

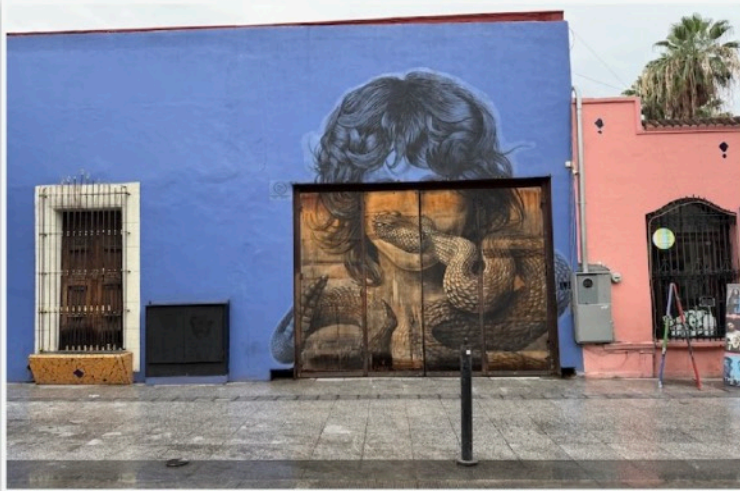
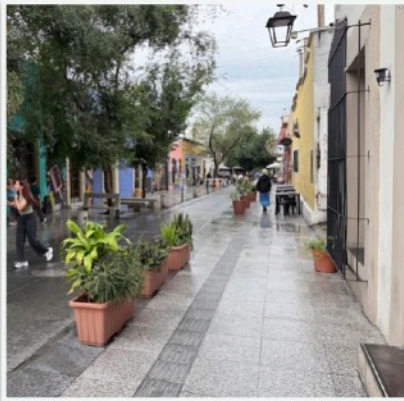


And so it will be a good rainy day to spend inside the nearby Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, designed by Ricardo Legorreta, another famous Mexican Architect, in his distinctive colors. Large interior walls of yellow make a statement that becomes part of the art within. And the artistic experiments on exhibit do not fail to challenge our tastes and sensibilities.



After the rainfall ends we find our way along narrow, colorful, and newly-restored pedestrian ways with many other venues to explore, as we head back toward the apartment. It will be a good rainy afternoon for a nap before dinner.





As evening falls we find a surprisingly romantic spot nearby that's called La Divina. One of the reviews said, "The outside of La Divina does not look too promising, but once through the door it changes." Yes, it looked like a grubby little neighbor bar on the outside, but the inside embraces us with rough-hewn walls, and the warm lighting makes it feel like a tastefully curated art piece. And the finest of well-presented food and drink carries us nicely into the evening.



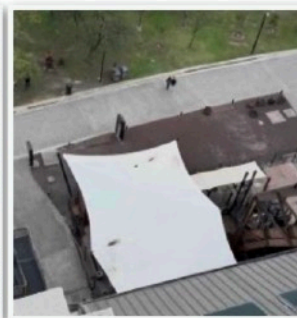
Monterrey is the kind of town that quickly grows on us – and we hadn't even gotten to the grand Parque Fundidora and the huge blast furnaces of past decades that powered much of the wealth of Northern Mexico. But the old furnaces are silent now and most are gone. Only 'Horno Numero Tres' (Furnace Number Three) remains, and it's now the focus of an artistic piece of urban redesign that has given this rough and rusty old town a new life.



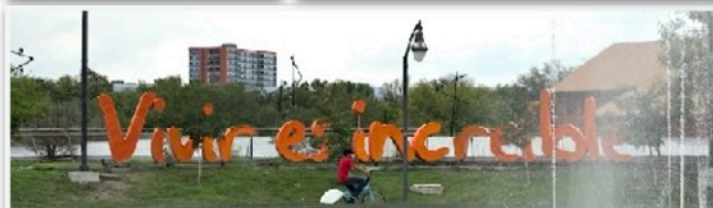
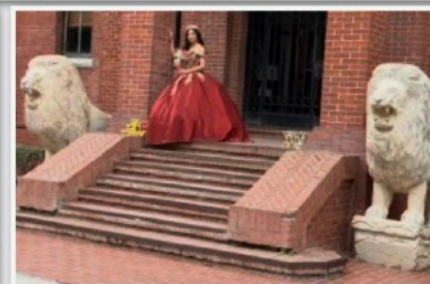
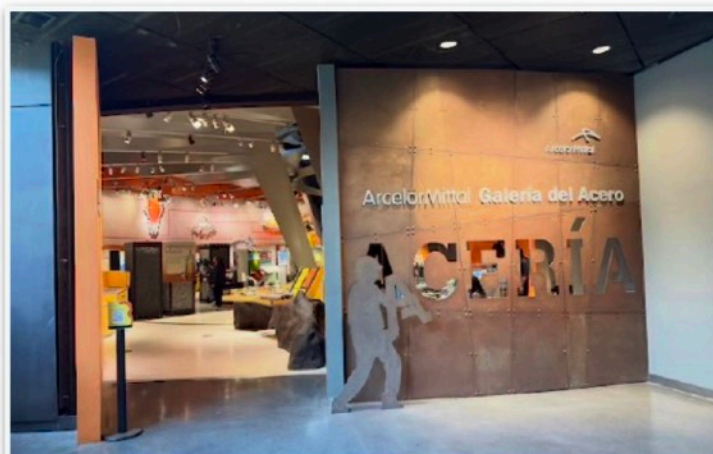
The vast Parque Fundidora (Foundry Park), once the site of the first steel and iron foundry in Latin America, is now a special place to enjoy a quiet day in the greenery, and appreciate the craftsmanship that was required to build those gigantic smokestacks. And maybe to find a bit of the beauty of our industrial past. A quick ride up the rickety old funicular gets you a clear view over the entire city, or a look at the ridiculously complex pipework it took to run this huge old furnace. And a peek at the ant-like humans walking far below.



The fact that this Parque even exists at all is a testament to a visionary 1988 partnership between Federal and State governments after the foundry went bankrupt. People of smaller minds and lesser ability might have cleared away this dirty part of the city's troubled history. And maybe build a Walmart, or something equally horrible, in its place.



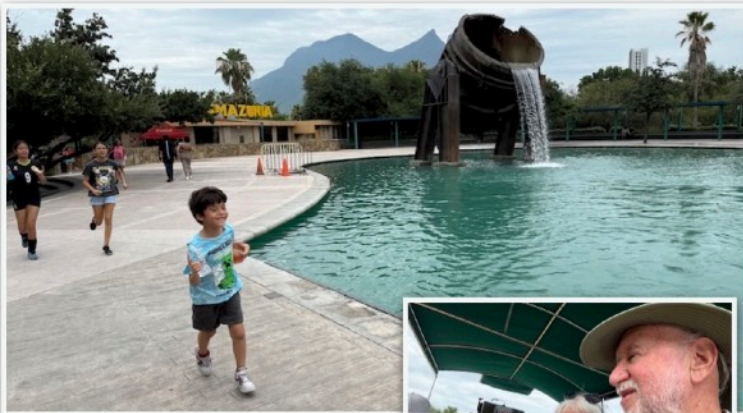
Back down at ground level there's an impressive museum, and broad parklands are filled with colorful artworks of all kinds, with some suggesting, "Hey, check out this photo-op!" Ducks are loving the water features. And a gorgeous young lady gets her 'quince' pictures taken on the brick steps between two old and weathered lion statues.



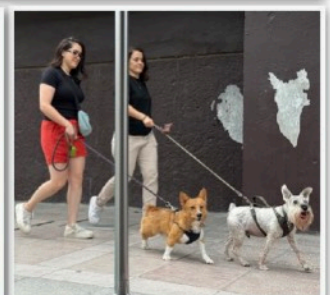
Carolyn and I head for the boat launch, beside a huge old repurposed iron bucket that's now become a water feature, and a pair of giggling older sisters are chasing their mischievous little brother along the waterway. We watched these boats cruise by our dinner table at beautiful Tenérias, and now it's time to board one of them.

There's a good long line waiting for the next boat, so we wait under a pretty mesquite tree.

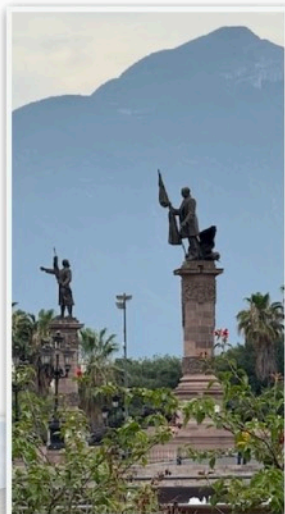
Here is where the Santa Lucía Riverwalk begins, and it's become a newly viable economic connection that ends right at the MegaPlaza in Downtown Monterrey. While Monterrey still produces more than 60% of the nation's steel and about half of the beer, this part of the city has transformed over the past few decades into an attractive destination with much to offer the traveler. And the city the home of Tech de Monterrey, the top engineering school in the country.



A quiet cruise down the Paseo Santa Lucia is one of the best ways to get a pretty view of the inner city, and to witness the developing potential along its banks. People are outside to enjoy the clean air, walking their dogs by the waterside, or stopping for lunch in the many new river-view eateries that have opened in recent years. It's a well-used facility in a re-born city.



Our cruise ends just after we pass under the artistic brick bridge, and we dock near the tall statues of the Esplanada de los Heroes at the base of the Museo de la Historia Mexicana. And now we're only a block or two from our apartment.



On our last night in town we enjoy a long evening stroll by the riverwalk, to see how the average citizen might enjoy this experience. And we stop for a pizza and cerveza at a popular spot overlooking the riverwalk below. This trip has been good, to see how Monterrey has developed after the drug-related problems of recent years.



There's so much more to experience here, but in the morning our travels continue as we head further south. We grab a cab to the bus station to get a quick coffee at Tim Hortons (Yes, even here in MX!) before boarding a bus for Saltillo, with a change for the charming colonial village of Parras.



Please join us for the next leg of our trip. I think you'll enjoy it.— *PRW*