

Tales from Joy, #5, 2022

Hello again, dear readers.

Having shared the beauty of my landlord Clemente in the last Tale, I thought it would be fair to also feature Carmen and her family. The mom (Rosa, in pink) teaches ancient history at the university here. Dad tinkers with his enormous collection of antique clocks and watches. Yesterday, we all sat in the patio and I shared pranayama and yoga for a couple hours, while they took turns entertaining the indefatigable Alba Maria.



I am writing this from Puerto Adolfo Lopez de Mateo, a town to the north of La Paz near Magdalena Bay on the Pacific side. I drove up here in about four hours this morning, in a rented car.

As I texted my “twins” (Stephen and Tuesday) earlier, before departure:

*I'm feeling like a grown-up
WOMAN this year, instead of the
terrified child who took this trip a year ago.*



Whales Tale Inn

It's hard to acknowledge the anxious “moi” who agonized about so many aspects of this same outing last year:

***Will it be safe, pandemic-wise?*

***Will it be outlandishly expensive to rent a lancha all alone?*

***Will I even see a whale?*

***Will I get sea-sick? (I am a famously crappy sailor)*

***Will it be too cold in the early morning?*

***Will I be able to drive in Mexico safely?*

BLEAH BLEAH BLEAH... around and around ad nauseum

I didn't sleep for two nights prior to departure last year.... though I did practice very deep sweeping both nights to counteract the terror. That's the best I can do sometimes.

The bulk of my *shpetauchle* (Yiddish for neurosis) was rooted in my half-century old determination to be a NOT-Tourist. Tourists go on outings. Tourists rent cars and boats.. Tourists spend lots of money and don't actually "see" anything.

This premise, like a shaky ice floe, was thin to begin with and is now melting altogether.

To span the "NOT-tourist" shpetuachle gap last year, I rented my friend's old car that she inherited from her father....an adorable five-speed manual clunker and very un-touristic (555). Hard to believe, but I had never driven in the Third World, in my fifty years of hitchhiking and public transport, so intense was my fear ofsome kind of phantom.

So I was indeed a terrified child as I pulled out of La Paz last year, sleepless, in a spluttering car, and forgetting to slow down for the massive road bumps ...BAM!



And of my whale-watching experience last year?

If there is a pass/fail grade for Whale Watching, I have to say:

I failed.

Whereas the whale passed with flying colors.

I had contacted Jorge Botello, who has known Carmen and her family for years. Jorge and I crept out of the harbor in his lancha, long before anyone else stirred, and the day not yet awakened.

We waited in Magdalena Bay, about thirty minutes out from the dock, when an exquisite enormous Blue whale raised her head out of the water, and gazed at me with her calm huge eye, right next to the boat. It was sublime.

Next (sigh), I completely lost my mind... I HAD to get a picture of this whale! And the magic was assassinated. In retrospect, it was like trying to get a selfie during an intimate sexual encounter. The result was dismal on all fronts. I was absolutely not present, failed to get a good photo and did not SEE my beautiful friend again, though she circled around for another forty minutes. She grew more and more distant, as I fumbled incessantly and frantically with my damn cellphone.



A few days later, Coyote Trickster had to add the “cherry” to my Silly Sundae:

I was in a magnificent hot springs, still trying to get away from “Tourists”, and to find my OWN special spot. I had fled from a couple of bourgeois-looking American girls...but within an hour they had plopped down right next to me in my lovely, remote sulphur pool.

They were staying in a little village, with a woman who sheltered stray and abused animals. These girls, in fact, were always on the look-out for strays and even bought abused dogs from the owners, bringing them to the sanctuary. Hmmmm... pretty interesting. My heart/mind opened.

The topic of whales arose...and they mentioned that the mother whale had brought her baby over to their boat for them to bless. I had to ask:

Uuum, did you get any photos of the experience?

They appeared perplexed by my question, and gravely shook their heads, no. That would be so out of the question.

Thank you, Spirit.
Thank you, Coyote Trickster.

This year, I prayed for another chance to return to the Church of the Blue Whales, and to be given another opportunity. Of course, I left my cellphone in the room at the Inn. And again, I met Jorge before dawn.

It seemed that we traveled further out this year. And the waters were quite rough. Then we saw LOTS of whales circling all around us, spouting and rolling and diving, tails straight up!

Two in particular came right over to the boat, several times, and clearly wanted me to scratch their gorgeous calcetaceous heads. Jorge turned off the engine, and we stayed there for an hour, bouncing and suspended in the glory of whale-love! I was quite nauseous, which concerned Jorge, but nothing could touch my elation during that ecstatic hour, as I reassured him.

I, of course, didn't think about taking a photo. But Jorge took this one short clip:



We returned to the port just as a few other boats were heading out. I was pretty nauseous for many more hours, but it didn't touch my deep and timeless experience. We had clearly blessed each other, these whales and I.



When I could stand, a few hours later, I packed up and drove to the charming town of Loreto, through the incredible Baja mountain range to the gulf side. Nauseous and grinning.

I apparently didn't have enough braincells to find my airbnb lodging... but a policewoman finally walked me to the dwelling and helped me unravel the mysteries of the lockbox. As the sun was setting in downtown Loreto, another beautiful young man (or angel?) ran a stick along the iron grating of my lodging until I came to see what the fuss was? I had left my car door open and he didn't want the battery to drain.

That evening in Loreto I sent a copy of the video to my dear friend Bas in Holland. Bas has spent decades distributing sunscreen to people of albinism in East Africa, so they don't get skin cancer. I met him through my work there in Tanzania. He has visited me at Wattle Hollow.

Bas responded immediately:

A child and mother whale, saying 'hi' - trusting you 🥰 Those big eyes just under water looking in your eyes, making real contact. we are definately not the only special creatures.