

ST.SOMETIMES

ST. SOMETIMES March 2012 V126



Look at the size of those strawberries! These were at a small market about two hours outside of Quito, Ecuador.

Quito, Ecuador The [AASSA](#) Teacher's Convention

By Greg Lemoine

My school is a member of the Association of American Schools in South America, which services schools all over the continent. They hold an annual hiring fair in Orlando, Florida and a Teacher's Convention at a different school in a different country. This year was in Quito, Ecuador for an entire week. My school picked up the bill as part of my contract for Professional

Development, but I brought the price down by being a presenter.

Seven of my colleagues and I went to Quito together, which says a lot for our school. That is a lot of planned substitutes for a week. It's just one more aspect of CIPLC that proves it is one of the best schools to work at on this continent.

We left Puerto la Cruz on Friday a bit early. I only missed teaching one class.

We made it to Caracas on time and left for our direct flight to Quito on time. This was a first for flying out of this silly country we live in. It was a little over three hours of a smooth flight. Someone pinch me. Was this for real? Who ever heard of a trip out of VZ and within South America that didn't have delays, hiccups, and chaos? We were picked up in Quito on time too.

Another Country, Another Market

Even Alpaca Products are Imported

Brad, Hannah, Emily, Sarah, and I decided to take a mini-bus to a neighboring city to check out an Ecuadorian market place and find gifts.

While the ladies were shopping, Brad and I meandered over to a small restaurant to get Brad some soup. He was suffering from a bad case of “I ate something-oops!” After a little soup and bread, Brad just wanted to sleep in the van and wait for the ladies. It was time for me to go on the hunt for alpaca products.

How exciting it was to be in a country, [that I thought] was alpaca country. Every little market stall was selling woven products with alpacas on them! Yes. This was my chance to get some examples for Erin and Jason’s family. They have an alpaca farm up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, so I had a chance to get some great ideas for alpaca products they might produce and sell in Green Bay.

Instead of the little stalls, I walked into a larger main street store that had hundreds of shirts, blankets, hoodies, and you name it made from alpaca wool. I started with a few cotton shirts - Ecuadorian style - that I had bought a few summers ago. They make great gifts at 15

“I was here for five years with the peace corps. I re-upped and sort of got stuck here. Live here now. No, none of the products that you see in our stores or markets are really alpaca. The highest percentage you will find is 30%. Most are made mainly of imported cotton.”

Gringa in a Market Store outside of Quito

dollars. As I was taking a pile up to the register, I needed a little help with translation. There was a North American “gringa” sitting there. I had her help with the explanation that I wanted a high percentage alpaca sweater for Erin.

The woman went into a diatribe about the products all being imported from the States or Bolivia or Peru. The raw materials at least. All of them are low percentage Alpaca.

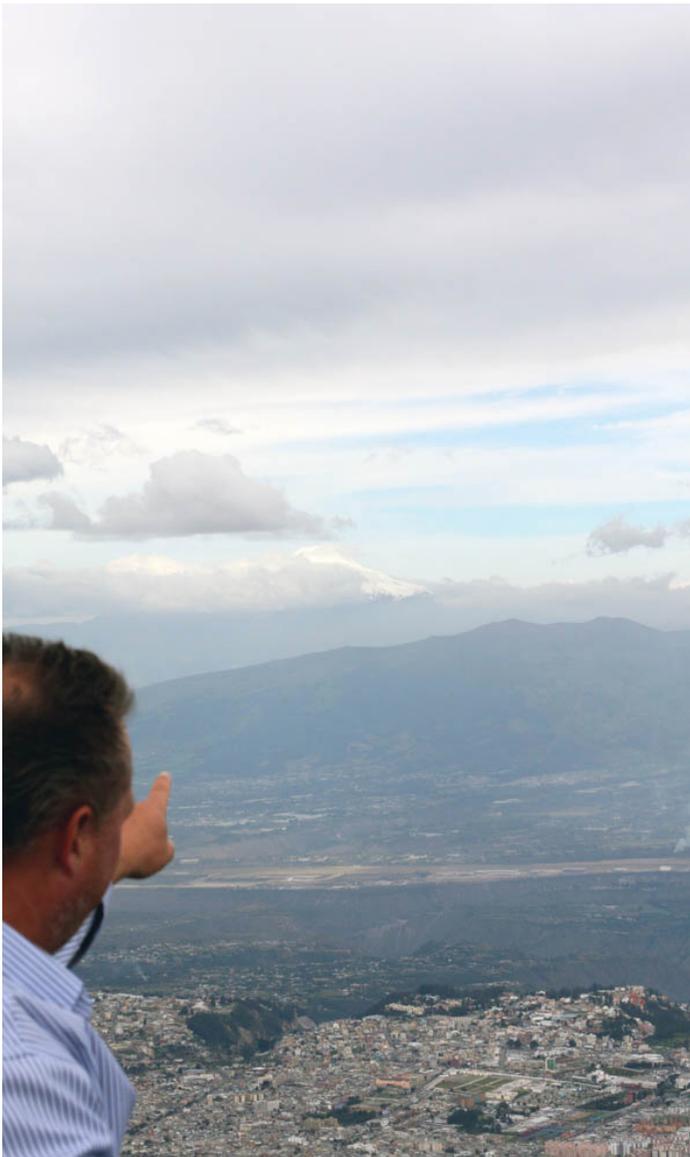
I found a nice sweater for Erin. I hope it fits. So much for my alpaca excitement. The sweater is beautiful, and woven in Ecuador, but it is probably only 20 percent alpaca! I stopped shopping and waited in the van with sicko Brad. About a half hour later, the ladies came back laden with plastic bags filled with market goodies. They found some great gifts.

Super Shoppers

Hannah (left), Sarah (middle) and Emily (right) all loved the market shopping. I was more interested in having lunch because the market was so much like other markets around the world.

Brad was really feeling sick so he joined me at a little restaurant for some soup. We left the ladies to their shopping. Hannah was busy finding wedding gifts because she and Brad are finally getting married this summer in June! Congratulations to them by the way!!





(Left) That's me, pointing at the distant peak of Cotopaxi. Quito is surrounded by volcanoes, but Cotopaxi at 19,347 foot (5,897 m) is the most famous.

(Below) Chantal and Andy took me to an Arab restaurant for Chwarma. Chantal and I caught up on the last nine years of our lives since we had taught fifth grade together in Honduras. She and Andy are recently married and both teach at the International School Cotopaxi, where the conference was being held.



“Of All the Gin Joints...” Running into Chantal again after 9 years

I live in a *very* small world. It doesn't surprise me when I run into former colleagues. On the contrary, I expect it. Nonetheless, oh what fun it is!

Chantal is a teacher that taught fifth grade with me back in 2002 at my first overseas school. A lot has happened since Honduras and I keep in touch with quite a few friends from those times. Chantal is not one of those, or as of now, wasn't. She is alive and well teaching at [Academia Cotopaxi](#) in Quito.

Planning my personal life is never a forté for me, but this was a business trip. Chantal's email popped up during one of my emails to plan my visit on campus with the Cotopaxi Director of Technology. There she was. A

name from the past, listed as one of the fifth grade teachers. One email to Chantal and I already had lunch plans for Sunday after my arrival.

She is happy and married to Andy, a chemistry teacher and techie - a windows version. Andy and I got along awesome. The two of them took me to an Arab restaurant where we spent a few hours catching up on life. They make an obviously happy couple. Cotopaxi is treating them well enough that they should be staying for a while longer. I was surprised at the “reality” stories they shared with me about Quito. There were some real eye openers. Coming from Chantal, who lived in Honduras like I did, the stories are believable and scary!

Difficult Breathing 12,000 ft in Quito

By Guess Who?

Matt and Stacy are two of my most favorite travel buddies. Stacy is pregnant with her baby. The little Judd is due on June 15, which Matt, Tara (see V106) and I all share a birthday. Matt and I ventured off without Stacy, because we were heading high up above Quito for a grand lookout.

There is a cable car ride here similar to Caracas and other big cities around the world. This trip starts at a little less than 10,000ft up in Quito, the second highest city in the world after LaPaz, Bolivia. From there, Matt and I went up to 13,500 feet above sea level. Imagine, I went skydiving with Scott in Higuarote (V105) and jumped out of a plane at 14,000ft. Matt and I were on a mountain at half of the 30,000ft that most planes fly at commercially!

Did I mention that Matt is phobic of heights? He has medication for flying. And here he was, going up in a gondola with me up a mountain side. “This guy can do anything” was my continual thought as the cable car went up into the clouds. We watched below us as the city got smaller and smaller. The



“How is it that Quito, a city in South America, can do so many things right and have so many things that we don’t have in Venezuela? Why can’t Venezuela get their S*#@ together if Ecuador can?”

Matt Judd



cable car kept climbing and climbing. We watched as an airplane took off from the Quito airport and flew lower than the cable car all the way across the length of the city!

We got out, had a celebration beer in the little gift shop, and took a silly Tourist picture of us falling out of the cable car. And what did we do next? Breathing heavily, we walked up the paths to even higher altitudes! The views were breath-taking. Hah. Get it? Now I know where that term

has the most meaning: when you see a shark or when you are 14,000ft up a mountain!

The best discussion Matt and I had was about bringing “little man” back up here at some point. Matt was on a mountain side thinking about being a daddy. How strong is that?

The next day, I stayed in the hotel to work on school stuff and a presentation I was scheduled for at the conference. I missed out on the equator fun. Ask me some other time.



“I’m not a Lesbian, but my girlfriend is”

The translated graffiti behind Matt

Safer and Cleaner A few Words on Quito

All eight of us from our school in Venezuela (if I may speak for us) felt the same way. “this place is so clean” and “they have everything” were two popular phrases that came up while comparing Quito to our little city.

There is a lot of crime. Chantal and Andy told me some stories about theft and crime in Quito that you certainly wouldn’t share with tourists. If I did share, you would never consider going to Ecuador. And you need to go see Ecuador! Just keep your head on a swivel

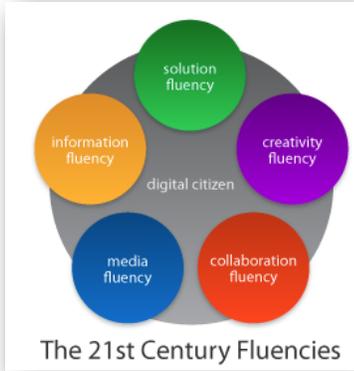
and consult some more experienced South American travelers before you go. I am certainly going back. No doubt about it. I still haven’t dove in the Galapagos Islands!

It is amazing how a place very similar to Venezuela can do things so much better. Just remember, I live in the far Eastern part of Venezuela. There are a lot of excellent parts of VZ, but those of us that have lived there can’t help but make comparisons while in Quito.

Overall, it was a fantastic trip. We worked hard, saw new things, and met some great people. But, wow, did we bring back a lot of stuff from the Quito grocery stores!

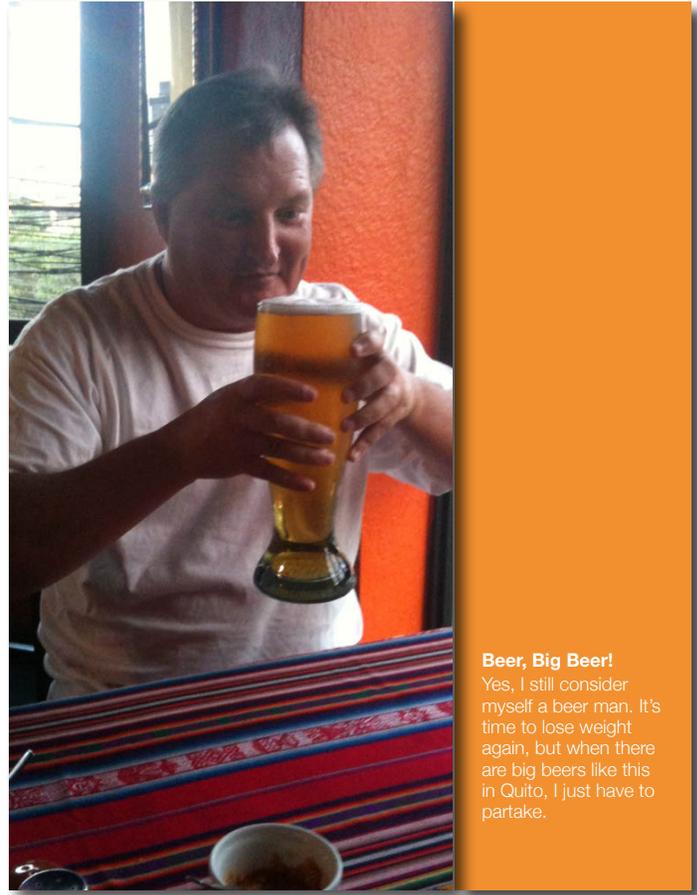
Ian Jukes - 21st Century 21st Century Fluency Project

I had the pleasure to sit in on a presentation given by Ian Jukes. He was powerful, persuasive, and full of energy for a cranky old presenter. His website is the blue link above. I visit his site about once a week because I believe in the same topics he



focuses on. The only problem I have with the new catchphrase “21st century learners” is we are already in the 21st century. How can we be more focused on the future if we are stuck in the “now”? When I write my doctoral dissertation, I will focus on “future learners” instead of this 21st century stuff.

Anyway, it was a pleasure to be a part of this conference. I also got to know a great educator and presenter named Mike Johnston. What an inspirational speaker! His focus is on Global Issues like “Greening your School” and “Earth Sustainability”. He and his family live and teach in Singapore. Mike is one character I plan to keep in touch with and hopefully present alongside of some day. Kudos to you, Mike!



Beer, Big Beer!
Yes, I still consider myself a beer man. It's time to lose weight again, but when there are big beers like this in Quito, I just have to partake.



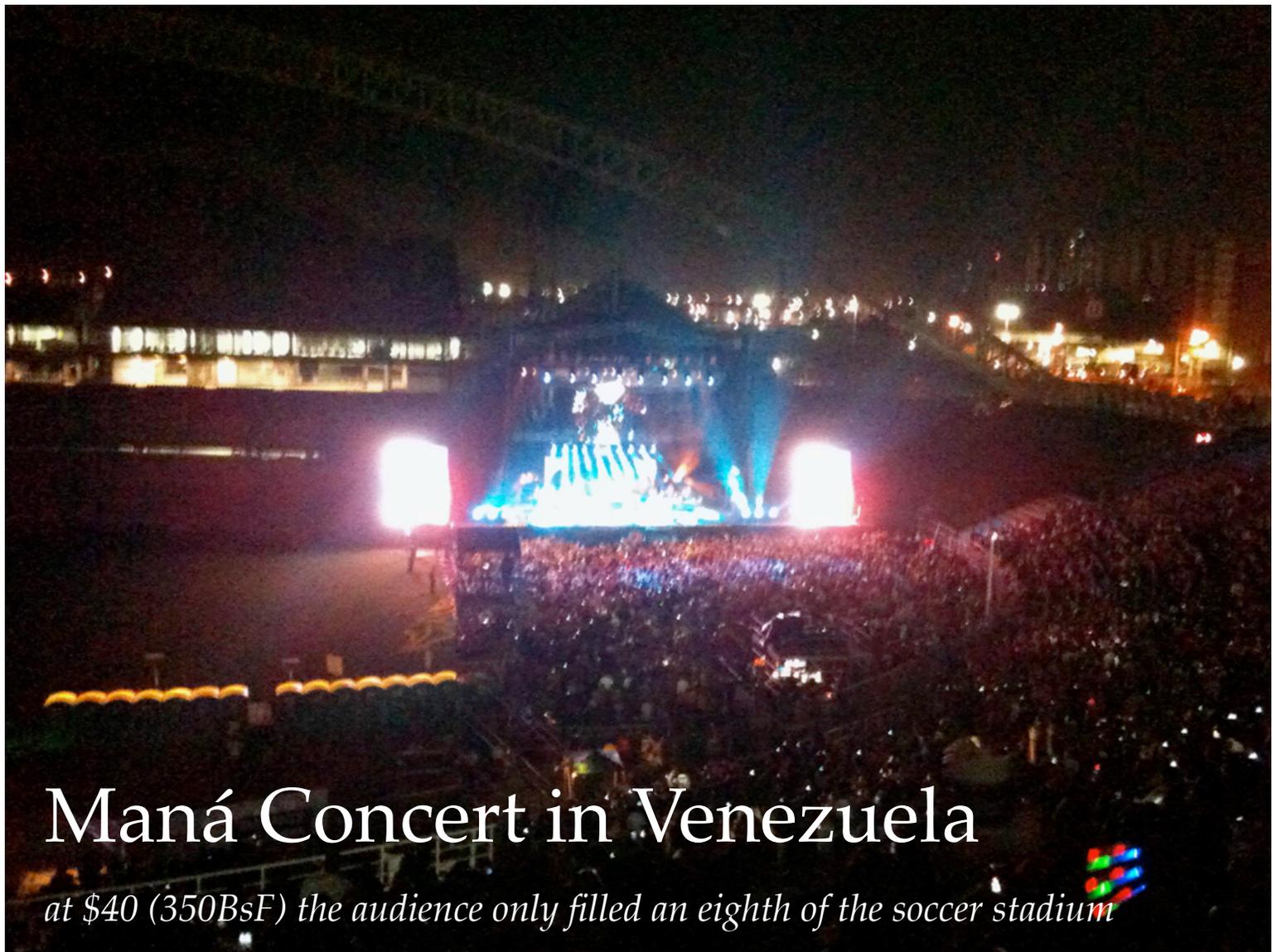
(above) Academia Cotopaxi Campus

This school is about twice the size of CIPLC. The campus was originally built for a small university before Cotopaxi bought it. I had a difficult time breathing during my Presentation, but I pulled it off. People seemed genuinely interested and happy with my presentation titled “Website Creation for Busy Teachers”.

(below) Chantal's Grade 5 Classroom.

Brad and I were welcomed into Chantal's classroom. We talked with the kids, observed Chantal's teaching methods, and just enjoyed ourselves. Brad stuck with the class while I ventured off to meet with the technology staff. Their tech director is heading to AAM in Russia next year to teach along side Paul Mooney. “ It's a small world after all.”





Maná Concert in Venezuela

at \$40 (350BsF) the audience only filled an eighth of the soccer stadium

Maná! World Famous. Have you ever listened to them? Maybe you heard *Mariposa* a few years ago on a Latino station or in the Miami airport. I don't know. Maybe some of you out there listen to Spanish language groups. Maná is a Mexican group that has hit the top Latin charts for decades.

Buying tickets is a story in itself. Suffice it to say, it wasn't easy. There were about 10 of us from school that bought tickets for the March 7th concert. The concert was held at the Soccer Stadium, so it was me in charge of getting us parked and getting us there on time. (I regularly go to the stadium for soccer games, so I know these things). I was expecting the stadium to be filled like a soccer match, so we parked a long way away and walked. I took them

to Paisanos (countrymen) bar, consisting of a few plastic tables and chairs in an alley close to the stadium. This was the meeting point for our other small groups heading to the concert.

I couldn't believe it when we arrived. The stage was set up on Southern eighth of the stadium. Basically, off of the soccer pitch, right on along what is a running track for most stadiums. There couldn't have been more than 1500 people in the audience. We were in the back, but still pretty close.

Everyone around us knew every song. And I mean everyone. I am not a concert critic or reporter, but they impressed me by starting on time. And...Maná played old and new songs for three hours! YES!



Payback!

Scott let students cut his hair as a fundraiser. I had to include this picture in St. Sometimes because I taught Scott how to make a website. He included a horrible picture of me on his Classroom Website. This is merely payback! Nice Hair!