



The Rio Chico Family that Ruben and I hung out with for a few days of Easter on the way to and from Choroni.

Spending the 2012 Easter Week as a Local Venezuelan!

I spent Easter Week traveling to Rio Chico, Caracas, and Mariconi

What a great week! I have Ruben to thank. It was his idea to gather up the Caracas friends for Choroni and stop in Rio Chico to see his dad's place.

The week before break was not so much fun. I had to pay a lot of money just to get my car running for such a long trip. Ruben and I went all over Barcelona finding new headlights.

But the most expensive was the new head gasket on my motor! (5,000 BsF, \$600) The car was ready. I was ready. Ruben was ready.

We took off for the 2^{1/2} hour trip to Rio Chico right after school on that Friday. A few minutes into the trip, we saw a fatality accident as a compact car passed us on the right going about 150 kmph (75mph) and swerved to avoid a huge pothole. He over compensated, flipped twice, and hit a light post in the grass median. Dead! Ruben told me not to stop. A

truck had stopped to help the man. With that, we started a very safe and traffic conscious trip.

Ruben and I lucked out for the most part on traffic throughout the trip. We were always headed in the opposite direction of the masses. Most Venezuelans come FROM Caracas TOWARDS Lecheria/ Barcelona. Since we live in a tourist area, we leave it to the tourists on main holidays and benefit by going in the opposite directions.

What does Greg Love to eat in Venezuela?

Empanadas

I don't always talk about local foods but I love empanadas. Log onto St.Somewhere and see the video that I posted in the Video tab. Empanadas are basically soft tacos closed up and deep fried. People say the empanadas are better elsewhere, but I love them here. Venezuelans love seafood. I'd rather have queso empanadas.



Mani Japanese: the dropping game. Put a mani in someone's drink if they aren't looking.

El Padrino: Meet the Godfather

This is the father of the sister-in-law of Ruben's half brother. If you can understand that, good for you. I had so much fun with this old guy! Every time he came near me, he would drop a Japanese Peanut into my beer. Why? Because I did that to him while we were playing bocci ball at his house the night before. I don't think he's ever hung out with a gringo before, much less a gringo that can beat him at bocci and plays jokes on him. There wasn't a minute that he wasn't laughing.



Another Day, Another Beach

Ruben has a split family. Some of them choose to live in the states, but Ruben chooses to live here. His biological father is Venezuelan and lives in Rio Chico. What we didn't know was that his half brother, Ruben, had moved into his dad's Rio Chico house after the government let him go from his job. So Ruben and I arrived to find half brother Ruben and his family! This made the stay so much more fun.

Rio Chico is a sleepy little town North West of Puerto la Cruz that suffers from tourism mis-planning. There are a lot of beaches, condos, and hotels all around the little town. But the planners didn't know that other places like Puerto la Cruz would draw all of the tourism away.

It's like I adopted another family. They just didn't know what to expect. I come along on vacation and all I want to do is go to the beach with lots of beer, Japanese peanuts, and have fun. We played a lot of dominoes, spoke a lot of Spanish, and laughed a lot! Thanks for sharing your extended family Ruben.

Venezuelan Spanish

Coño, Verga, Marico

These are three words I don't need to translate. I'd get kicked out of church. Every Venezuelan says these words ALL THE TIME.

Pajudo (silent 'd')

This translates to Jackass! El padrino calls his son-in-law this.

Mapurite - skunk

ambiente - weather

besito de cocoa - these are little coconut baked goods sold on the beaches

ajonjolí - sesame seeds

papagayo - kite (Lots of kids fly kites on the VZ beaches)

está lloviendo como un palo de agua - "it's raining cats and dogs"

Maní Japones - japanese peanuts

I love these things. The peanuts have a peculiar shell around them. Some are even a bit spicy.



Choroni Turns “Mariconi”

Playa Grande (Big Beach)



I wrote about this beach in a past issue of *StSometimes*. Playa Grande is bookended by Mountains. This time there were about 2,000 Venezuelans, no Chinese, one Goyo, and about 10 other gringos. My friends say you can spot a Gringo by their sandals. I think their white skin gives them away. hah!

I went on this part of the trip with Jhon, Igles, Ruben, and William. We were all here two years ago. We started calling it “Marioconi” because there are so many gay men hanging out. (marico means gay) I don’t have anything against gays! Believe me. But I was here to meet some women. Venezuela isn’t friendly towards gays, so when so many get together on a remote beach, they become truly aggressive. While I enjoyed being with my friends, it was just a “wrong” beach to be at. Even Igles, William’s fiancé, didn’t want to be around all the hunting gay men! Probably the last time going here!

Pellentesque tincidunt



Ruben isn’t really passed out. This is staged in the main square of the little town. We went on the search for the local alcohol called Guarapita, which is rum mixed with fruit juices. We couldn’t find anyone selling it.

The town is a short walk away from all the tents on the beach. We spent about an hour walking around people watching. Ruben started talking to a hot little chica in the square, but as we spent more time with her, we figured out she was a prostitute (probably from Caracas for the weekend to benefit from the Choroni tourism).

We didn’t want anything to do with that so we returned to the beach. For the first time ever, Jhon was drinking. Drinking Jhon was trying to talk about string theory. Ruben and I wanted to talk about Bikini-string Theory. (so funny, so funny)

A Full Beach in Choroni



There are so many tents on the beach it is hard to walk. At night, every night, more people arrive. They put up their tents on the beach in the dark. In the morning, the cops come and make them move so the chairs and tables can be set up. This is usually around 4am. Not many people sleep.

One thing you have to watch out for is theft. With so many people, thieves are prevalent. Whenever our group goes into the water, or into town, one person stays behind to watch our tents. This year, we had an incident. William usually keeps his iPhone, camera, and wallet in a backpack or fanny pack. While he and Igles were sleeping, someone slit the side of their decrepit tent and stole his backpack. They were inside asleep. Luckily, the pack was empty! But we can never be too careful. Oh well. We just kept on having fun. We had brought limited valuables. Let the thief have it!



Death Road to Choroni

This is one of the most dangerous roads in the World. Two lanes turn to one lane on dangerous curves with nothing below but sheer cliffs and forest growing around skeletons of burned out buses of past trips.

Choroni is a small beach surrounded by mountains and forests. The only way in and out is the narrow mountain pass.

Imagine a drive that is 32 mi (50k) but takes 2 hours! The two lane road that turns into one lane around the curves, winds through the Henri Pitter national forest park up to a peak of 1,620 meters, and then goes down to the beach. The local buses go really fast and blare their horns before corners to warn oncoming traffic they are coming. They rarely stop. A bus will just slow down so one guy can get out and direct the traffic to the benefit of the bus. We honk our horn but busses cannot hear anything

because they are blaring reggaeton music for their passengers, packed like sardines.

This is no joke! You can look over the side of the cliff and see skeletons of past buses that didn't make the curves. How many people have died here? I don't know. My friends and I have survived two trips.

This time was especially dangerous. My windshield wiper motor died and it started raining. We had to keep going because rainfall brings landslides. (there was a landslide that stranded people in Choroni for a few days right after we passed through the mountain pass without wipers.

Soon I will go on a trip to Bolivia to bicycle down the "world's most dangerous road" with my friend Marcelo. It was planned for this summer, but the plan fell through.



Thank you for reading this issue!
Look for the next May issue!