

Ecuador Monogatari, la quinta maleta

Baños de Agua Santa



Dear Danarel,
Children, relative and precious friends

Little by little I will start to curse the day I decided to keep a travelogue and especially to make it public. At the beginning I want to educate my children, to complete the education, to refine and enrich, relative and friends, later the mankind and finally myself. The last task was really insurmountable. So here I am stacked with my compulsive person trying and musing and thinking and reflecting how to transformer this cumbersome chore into an amusing game. If somebody has a bright idea please step forward, you included my beloved and venerated archangel.* So the dish of the day is Baños de Aqua Santa. Here is a place where everything is cool, the location in the lap of the mountains, (the CUENCA that the locals like so much), the friendly people, the holy waters from the peaks above, the food, the hot springs baths which are curing everything, only please be sick, the tourists young, active sportive, even the old gents who are gently herded by the tour operators look *mensch*, the gardens, the 280 hotels, the fruits, the *artesanias*, the public wall paintings, the *melcocha* (a sort of tropical nougat) the palm trees, the rivers, the deep canyons, the wild orchids, the 200 cascades, the climate, the church, the polychrome fancy houses, no style, so what? the green fields perched on the mountain stiff slopes. the opulent natural vegetation (did I forgot something?), everything bathes in bliss...



Even the ferocious Tungurahua, active volcano which from time to time spits lava, gazes and stones on that bands of locals and migrants sybarites does at the very end emphasizes by its laziness and reluctance to get amok what kind of paradise is Baños !

Take me for example I arrived there tormented by existential doubts upon what the hell I came to Ecuador. What can be more painful than to see this world aging so badly while one is being forced to survive among bloodthirsty activist believers, politically correct limited blokes and just plain criminals. I was impressed by the church of La Compania, the museum Casa del Alabado and the Monument of the Center of the Earth, but was that enough? At Baños, when a feeling of happiness overcame me at once I got the answer. To be there was the reason that I made the trip.

So here I am at the very end of the town, in a pretty hostel with a pretty garden, within a pretty room, and a magnificent view of a ecological sharp cliff of healthy green hues, and a superb generous water shot, La Cascada del Virgen coming down with poise and power. The host lady Janet, surge straight from a play of Lope de Vega or Tierso de Molina, a dynamo of good vibrations, with a magnificent chest façade and a master of rich breakfasts. She likes me and I like her, it was pastoral.

Transfixed by peace and beauty I decided to rest and enjoy and reflect, shortly to play it cool; attitude that I followed strictly all through the stay with the exception of short moments. I can remember that I took a guided tour to other famous cascades of the region, made a tough bike ride to the top of the mighty canyon carved by the Postaza river, visited an amazingly rich private zoo that had a superb collection of my dear macaws, participated to a religious ceremony where a mighty priest, areal prince of the church,



blessed cars, eventually owners, got shocked to see poor and skinned, delicious guinea pigs sold in the market, without any United Nation intervention, (cannot eat them in spite being a delicatessen, they are

too cute) fell in raptures with an enthralling sequence of huge graffiti decorating the street walls and especially did some basic immersions in hot basins of radioactive water coming straight from the volcano bowels. Now these immersions were alternated with short but intense exposure to chilling and violent shots of water coming directly from the Virgin Cascade. Imaginative people were able to discern between the jolts a kind of divine caress, of wet ectasia which only the holy water (Aqua Santa) can deliver.

This exaggerate splashing within the Sacred Water compound (Agua Santa) had an unpleasant outcome. At return to Quito and after an expensive visit at the hospital (the ultra-modern Hospital



Hospital with smashing hostesses, muscular slim guards and doors blocked immediately until you cash your due boy!) it came out that as holy as they were the basins waters were not particularly clean and that the tender surface of the my seating area, the so called bottom, got contaminated by local or international bugs, who cares, for which reason I had to submit my person to an antibiotic treatment. Of course, my atheistic inclination took a dramatic rise, but the general belief of having had at Baños a particular blissful moment justifying my arrival in this remote country, with a not particularly good national dish (*fritada*) remained firm and unquestionable. Don't look



for any logic here venerable patron Danerel, people are just like this. They are fans. A sharp drop of the IQ index while the area of involvement became the only matter that matters, accompanied by a total lack of intellectual honesty are the defining characteristics of the fan. He dislikes and conspues the competitor even if it does much better than his beloved team or performer. Distinguished academicians and thinkers get into this moron state like everybody else as was the case with Jean Paul Tartre (see here

his tabloid) supporting one of the most brutal and stupid endeavours of the XX century, the Cultural Revolution! 2.000.000 died in pain! Chinese magnates who are today sending, by thousands, their children to study in American Universities, such as the one where my daughter is teaching, thinking of this recurrent western confusion display a very thin despising smile! Me too.....

The Wanderer

*Off the records: It is not exactly his title but a little bit of flattering is welcomed in any relationship.