

### Namaste!

Welcome to the October 2004 edition of Namaste News!

The Expedition travelled south through Central America from Guatemala to Costa Rica, through El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, exploring both inland and along both coasts. From the ancient Mayan city of Copan to the crystal Caribbean waters of the Bay Islands; from delightful colonial towns to amazing active volcanoes, this

whole region is home to dramatic scenery, abundant wildlife, incredibly friendly people and a history peppered with relatively recent turbulence and conflicts...

Packed full of features this month as well as the regular updates, feel free to send me an email with your suggestions and ideas for future issues.

*Cheers, Chris*

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## Global Expedition Highlights

1/10/04 Day 180  
Antigua Mile 20629



3/10/04 Day 182  
Montericco Mile 20702



5/10/04 Day 184  
Volcan Zalco Mile 20862



6/10/04 Day 185  
Suchitoto Mile 20942



8/10/04 Day 187  
Marcala Mile 21134



30/10/04 Day 209  
San Jose Mile 22500



10/10/04 Day 189  
Copan Mile 21305



26/10/04 Day 205  
Volcan Arenal Mile 22425



11/10/04 Day 190  
El Porvenir Mile 21531



23/10/04 Day 205  
Isla de Ometepe Mile 22265



22/10/04 Day 201  
Granada Mile 22075



20/10/04 Day 199  
La Tigra N.P. Mile 21879



19/10/04 Day 198  
La Murella N.P. Mile 21760



14/10/04 Day 193  
Roatan Island Mile 21570



### Expedition Trivia...

- # of Days (overall): 31 (210)
- Miles in month (overall): 2038 (22575)
- Avg miles/day (overall): 66 (108)
- Longest day (overall): 226 (527)
- # countries (overall): 5 (9)
- # of police stops (overall): 12 (33)

### Top Tips this month...

- Top Tip: Volcan Arenal, Costa Rica
- Favourite City: Granada, Nicaragua
- Adventure Spot: El Salvador
- Place to Stay: Beach House, Roatan
- Night Spot: Antigua, Honduras
- Wilderness: P.N. La Murella, Honduras

### Features on Page 4...

Find out what its like to explore the ocean depths as far as 1,000 feet in a home-made submarine; learn about the burgeoning arts scene in El Salvador; and support the great work of those whose work is improving the lot of the children of the dump in Mexico...

### Global Expedition Update

The month began at one of the most spectacular places in Central America, Lago Atitlan. The lake is a caldera (collapsed volcanic cone) filled with shimmering waters to a depth of more than 320m. Set amid towering volcanoes, it was a perfect setting for a great hike, to the summit of Santa Clara Peak.

*"We were up at 3:45am, and ready to go by 5:30am. With such an early start, we got to experience San Pedro streets all to ourselves before beginning our hike: deserted and eerie, with the moon still hanging about and the sun slowly making its way over the mountains. Quite a contrast to the evening street scene, with singing & preaching ringing out from the abundant churches."*



The same afternoon, we headed to Antigua, the road to which takes a dramatic, winding route up to an awesome height of 8600ft, providing a final incredible view of the lake and its volcanoes.

Once upon a time the capital of Guatemala, Antigua is nestled between 3 volcanoes and is a cool town. Relaxed, yet lively, it is a hotch-potch of local life and traveller vibe, set amongst delightful colonial architecture.

*"Amidst the chaotic traffic including vehicles, pedestrians & gringos, I enjoyed seeing the work of the Guatemalan artist, Gustavo Mendez: his colorful, energetic and detailed watercolours, in particular of the Livingston area were so beautiful. Octoberfest, at the Jardin Bavaria, filled our bellies with roast pig and giant steins of mixta cervesas - we were quite sloshed by the time we got out of there! Then we thought it smart to hit La Casbah, the local disco. Needless to say we stumbled home rapping to our own beat: funky drunks!"*

Heading southwest to the Pacific Coast, the final section of the road required a short ferry-ride across the laguna. Slightly nervous, as the ferry was only just big enough to hold the Land Rover, and only that, we ferried across with nothing but a small outboard.



Reaching the coast, we were witness to a deluge of a rain in a fantastic tropical storm.

*"We set up the awning and its side walls just in time, but not without failing to drench ourselves entirely! The next*

*three or so hours were dedicated to draining the awning and figuring out the simplest way to spend a semi-damp evening. We even cut a bamboo pole to prop up the awning and allow rain to run-off, an addition that kept us dry in subsequent rainstorms."*

Heading into Montericco on a thankfully dry and sunny morning, we drove past interesting homes made of wooden slat walls and thatched roofs on our way to the Tortuga Reserve. Set on the edge of the Biotopo Montericco-Hawaii, a 20km-long nature reserve of coastal mangrove swamps filled with bird and aquatic life, the Reserve is home to many turtles, iguanas, caimans and other endangered species.



After a soothing 30-minute ride on another one-car ferry, we made our way towards the El Salvador border. Given failing light, we decided to camp before the border. Looking for a place to stop we thankfully

met Christina, who offered us a spot to camp outside the house of her father, the local padre.

*"The padre joined us for dinner and we had the most wonderful time chatting with him, due to his patience with our obvious lack of the Castellana language, but we still managed to get by!"*

On 5th October, we crossed smoothly into El Salvador, with the 'aid' of some border 'helpers', who make a living jostling to offer assistance to travellers crossing all Central American borders. Interestingly, El Salvador receives the least foreign travellers, partly because of (unnecessary) worries about safety, but this is part of its charm. It is a beautiful country, full of friendly and interesting people, and I would recommend it to anyone visiting the region.

Whilst driving along the 36km Ruta de Las Flores, so named for the abundant wildflowers that decorate the region, we stopped in at one of the lovely gardens and met Micha, a great character who filled us with amazing stories of drug-induced experiences back in the early '70's. Apparently, "all good & evil would soon find their proper destinies..."

We continued east to Cerro Verde National Park for a little off-road adventure, winding our way up the side of a volcano on some pretty exciting inclines, the final part being completed in the dark.

*"We found a perfect flat spot on the slopes of Volcan Izalco, overlooking the Lago de Coatepeque, with a million light shows of distant thunderstorms."*



Further east, we stopped overnight in a lovely little hotel in Suchitoto. 47km north of San Salvador, it was the cultural capital during the heyday of the indigo trade,

Suchitoto is now experiencing something of an arts revival [see more in Minako's article on page 4].

*"Suchitoto is such a peaceful little town that seems unspoiled by tourists. Laid-back, historic buildings, colourful doorways, tiled rooftops and narrow cobblestone streets bearing a green carpet*

*from the tiny weeds growing between each stone..."*

The following day, I caught up on some work before we headed north and east, destination Perquin. Not quite reaching our goal, we found ourselves a camp spot in the dark, nestled in the middle of a small quarry!

*"That night, we listened to a fanfare of insect noises, including storm-trooper bugs that made us feel like we were on some kind of Star Wars set. It wasn't the most picturesque spot to pitch the tent, but certainly unusual! And we were also witness to a grand thunder and lightning show, raising the*



*hairs on the back of my neck! In the morning, we met a local fellow and talked politics, about the civil unrest of the 80's, and the new quality of life in El Salvador."*

We arrived in Perquin, once the guerilla base, and now home to a fascinating museum that provides an interesting perspective on the relatively recent war from the guerilla point of view. Whilst the ceasefire was only negotiated in January 1992, the FMLN, or Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, the political party born of the guerilla organisation, won the largest share of the legislative assembly in March 2000. During the course of the 12-year war, an estimated 75,000 people were killed, and the US government gave a staggering US\$6 billion to the Salvadoran government's war effort.

*"I was surprised to learn of the number of women soldiers in the guerilla forces, as well as the number of women honoured on the walls of the museum."*

That afternoon, we crossed into Honduras at possibly the friendliest, and remote, border I have ever crossed. And this is right in the middle of disputed territory between El Salvador and Honduras. The dirt road, though, is not for the faint-hearted, as it winds its bumpy way through the mountains. And it took its toll on the vehicle, the constant heavy vibrations finally severing the restraining arms of the spare wheel carriers.

Stopping to get these re-welded at a local fridge-repair outfit, we headed northwest through Marcala and La Esperanza, with Heidi taking the wheel as co-pilot for a while.



*"Chris lent the young boy his goggle sunglasses to protect his eyes from flying*

*sparks as he welded, under the watchful eye of his father (and Chris)..."*

We finally pulled into Copan Ruinas on 10th October after a long and tiring drive, much of which was off-road. Whilst Copan has recently become a major tourist destination, this hasn't disrupted the peace and tranquility of the town and the ruins. Designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site, the ruins are still being explored by archaeologists, unveiling five separate phases of development on the site.

*"The tunnels were hot and the air very still, and the parrots reminded me of the Yukon ravens the way they rambled on at you. And I had to stop to pick some sweet smelling lemonrinas."*

Then northeast to La Ceiba and the Caribbean  
*continued on page 3...*

**Coming Up...to find out how to join, click below**

**November 2004**

Through Panama, including amazing diving in the Bocas del Toro, then by boat to Ecuador to explore inland volcanoes, the Amazon jungle and hot springs of Banos before heading out to the wonderful volcanic Galapagos Islands, a natural wildlife haven and scuba-diving paradise...

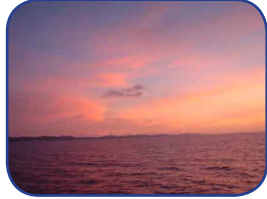
**December 2004**

Returning from the Galapagos, travelling broadly south through Peru, horse-riding in the Cordillera Blanca and rainforest of Parque Nacional Manu; and trekking to Macchu Picchu before crossing into Bolivia for Christmas and New Year on the shores of Lake Titicaca, then onto La Paz...

### Global Expedition Update cont...

Coast. It is in this northern region that Honduras is known to many as the 'Banana Republic' as banana exports have historically made up a huge proportion of the country's exports. The USA has had tremendous influence, as in much of modern day Central America, but mostly here to protect US economic banana interests!

We were also treated to the delights of Honduran bureaucracy, as we discovered thanks to a friendly policeman that we needed the correct paperwork for the vehicle. Having been advised that this wasn't necessary back at the border crossing north of Perquin, we spent the



next 6(!) hours obtaining a single piece of paper. Backwards and forwards between official offices, we ferried local officials attempting to help us obtain the requisite permit. At the final hurdle, I had to laugh, as the officials argued over which stamp to use in my passport, for over 1/2 hour; and at the fact they were unaware of the border crossing we had used. And not to mention the US\$90 cost, over 10 times the amount in any other Central American country - daylight robbery!

But with the vehicle permit finally in hand and passport duly stamped (three times!), we organised our nighttime boat crossing by the cargo ship, 'La Costa', to Roatan, the largest of the incredible Bay Islands.

"As we approached Roatan, the air was warm, the sea quite calm. I watched the sky turn from dark to pink to orange. There were big puffy clouds on the horizon that reflected and cushioned the colors and blanketed the destined island ahead."

Whereas the Spanish focused their settlement in the interior of Honduras, the British settled the Bay Islands and the coast. In 1797, following an uprising on the island of St Vincent, the British removed a large group of West Indians and abandoned them at Port Royal on Roatan. The group survived, prospered and multiplied, crossed to the mainland and gave rise to the Garifuna communities found today throughout northern Honduras.



We chose to stay for 5 great days on the west end of Roatan Island at beautiful Half Moon Bay. Enjoying our fabulous apartment overlooking the bay, Heidi completed her PADI Open Water certificate while I managed to get quite some writing done, though it was somewhat frustrating as I managed to get a stinky cold from the air-conditioning!

"The fabulous Argentinian cuisine at Arco Iris' restaurant was mouthwatering; the diving was incredible, hovering over the reef walls, admiring the schools of fish and abundant corals; and the sub ride was quiet and smooth, looking through the bubble window, things that seemed at arms length were actually 40-50 feet away."

Crossing back to the mainland, we headed south. This route to La Union was possibly the most scenic drive of the whole month. With barely a cloud in the sky, we followed an amazing dirt road with gorgeous landscapes and glorious sunshine. A perfect setting for a spot of 'roof-surfing', where we took it in turns to sit on the roof of the Land Rover and take in the great views (well, I had designed a seat for this

purpose, so it would have been rude not to!)

From La Union, we took a steep track deep into the heart of the Parque Nacional La Murella to find a perfect campsite amidst the dense vegetation.

"With an incredible sunset over the thick virgin cloud forest, I thought about riding the roof of the Landie - it was so much fun!"



Continuing south on another glorious day, we reached Parque Nacional La Tigra. One of the most beautiful spots in Honduras, the reserve was the country's first national park. There we met Carlos, who grew up there, and Katie (from Canada) and Audhild (from Norway), both volunteers working with the park team and the local communities on a number of development and conservation projects.

The next morning, we stopped in at Rudy and Karen's in Valle de Angeles, a lovely town which has largely been restored to its original 16th-century appearance. Full of helpful advice and ideas, we were treated to a fantastic breakfast, and we also managed to get the Landie washed - it needed it!

Following Rudy's advice, we headed south and east to the Nicaraguan border, which was a breeze. Finding a suitable place to camp away from the main road, we showered and settled down for some dinner, consisting of what we thought was fish...

"Cooking tip: do not cook conch without cutting it into tiny pieces first..."

Nicaragua has often been the subject of political controversy, most notably during the 1980s Contra War. When the US Congress rejected new military aid for the Contras in 1985, the Reagan administration secretly continued the funding, through a scheme in which the CIA illegally sold weapons to Iran at inflated prices and used the money to fund the Contras. When the details leaked out, the infamous 'Iran-Contra Affair' blew up.

Now though, Nicaragua's days of armed conflict are long over. This, the largest of the Central American countries, is also one of the safest, and provides the traveller with the opportunity to experience delightful colonial cities, mountain villages, pristine islands and jungle hamlets.



After a leisurely start, we headed southwest to Leon, finally reaching the centre of town during a major downpour. Set amongst the Cordillera de los Maribios, a chain of 10 volcanoes, Leon is the country's second-largest city and former capital.

Leon was also home to the famous Poet, Ruben Dario (1884-1954), otherwise known as the 'Prince of Spanish-American literature', whose writings have inspired poetry movements and literary currents throughout the Latin world.

"During a major downpour, we found the central square of Leon, despite my terrible navigational skills; then continued on through the chaotic capital of Managua, and onto Granada. It was a stressful drive in, as night had fallen, the road was under construction, and many vehicles had suspect lights."

We were relieved to reach Granada, Nicaragua's finest colonial town and my October favourite city.

We found a plush, yet inexpensive hotel right on the edge of the palm-covered central plaza. And what a treat we found that evening...

"After a short walk, we found Dona Conchi's restaurant - through a beaded entrance, the inside was lit up by small candles strung throughout the lush garden and on the walls; the food was excellent and the sangria packed quite the punch."



It was also quite amusing later that evening when we were hauled out of a bar, even before we had managed to start our beers, by two armed policemen demanding to see our passports. Clearly bored with little else to do, I was a bit disappointed that they felt the need to interrupt our evening in this way. But it was friendly and harmless, so no worries.

On 23rd October, we reached Isla de Ometepe (meaning 'between two hills' in Nahuatl), which is formed by 2 large volcanoes. Lava flowing from them created an isthmus between them and united both in a single island. Situated on the western side of Lago de Nicaragua, Central America's largest lake, covering 8624 sq km, the island is known as an ecological jewel. However, we unfortunately could not get on the ferry to the island (reservations are required), so we opted to find a camp spot on the shores of the lake overlooking the island.

And what a place we stumbled upon, right on the edge of the lake with a dreamy view of the island. We also enjoyed the company of the three kids living in the house next to our campsite, who we chatted to and danced with late into the evening.

After a morning swim in the lake, we continued south into Costa Rica, but not before a laborious effort to complete the requisite paperwork at the border. I think this was a good reason to spend two nights at a peaceful spot outside of Canas, with a very pleasant swimming pool and garden.

Set on the edge of Lago Arenal, Volcan Arenal, Costa Rica's most active volcano, was an amazing sight. Not having seen an active volcano before, we were both in awe, particularly at night, when the streams of red-hot lava, and tumbling, glowing rocks created an awesome natural firework display.



On 27th October, we arrived San Jose, perhaps not the most beautiful of cities, but a true centre of cosmopolitan activity, with vibrant nightlife and hectic streets. If you ever drive here, don't expect to get anywhere fast, and watch out for streets that become one-way at certain times of the day, as we found out on one occasion. Luckily, we managed to turn off before we were confronted by six lanes of oncoming traffic!

After a fond farewell to Heidi at the airport on the 28th, I headed back to the hotel and settled in for a couple of days of writing before the arrival of my good Dutch friend, Maud, who was flying out from London for a couple of weeks.

I look forward to exploring Costa Rica's national parks and protected areas, which cover more than 27% of the country; the Caribbean coast of both Costa Rica and Panama, and an exploration of the amazing country that is Panama...

by Chris Charlton and Heidi Bliedung

### Submarines...

Ever thought of what it's like to explore the depths of the oceans? Not just scuba-diving to 100 feet, but getting really, really deep...in a submarine!

Well, now is your chance...

Built and operated by Karl Stanley, a young American based in Roatan Island, Honduras, Idabel is one of only two subs available for tourist rides to the ocean's depths in the world. Karl's choice of location is perfect, as a short ride from the beautiful Caribbean beach takes you to the edge of the Cayman Trench, which reaches a maximum depth of more than 20,000 feet. After all, Columbus did name Honduras for this reason - it means "deep waters".

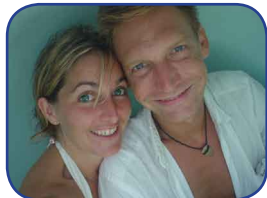


Many ride options are offered for those seeking journeys to "inner space". There is a shipwreck at 2,600 feet to explore, a seamount rising over 2,000 feet like a castle spire, a night

dive option, and even an option where a couple can join the "half mile deep club"! The most common option, though, is a 1,200 foot deep dive that lasts for an hour and 15 minutes. Once the sub has passed through the first thermo-cline, the visibility averages 300 feet and can exceed 500 feet, due to the lack of mixing with the sediment rich waters above.

Aside from the surreal and fascinating experience of diving to this depth in a small sub, big enough for Karl and 2 passengers, there is an array of flora and fauna to observe. Leatherback sea turtles, hammerhead and bull sharks, schools of 1000's of tuna, a variety of other schooling fish, pelagic tunicates, squid, foot-long corkscrew worms, and a multiplicity of other deep-water species have all been observed from the sub.

As you descend (and ascend) next to the wall of the trench, there are many canyons, cracks, caves and other interesting features to explore. On top, you get the most amazing views amid varying shades of ocean iridescent blue as you look up towards the light at the surface. Surprisingly calm and quiet, you are barely aware that you are sinking or rising, as you gaze out of the large bubble window that Karl designed for passengers. Kept cool near the surface by fans, the temperature drops as you descend but never to the point



of any discomfort,

Idabel is Karl's second sub, which he designed specifically for Roatan. His first sub, C-BUG, was the end-result of a childhood dream project. He finished this project after 8 years at the age of 23, when he made his first dive. It just goes to prove that anything is possible if you have the dream and the determination to succeed. Well done Karl.

This sub-dive is a fabulous experience for anyone, and one that I would definitely recommend... For more info, check out

[www.stanleysubmarines.com](http://www.stanleysubmarines.com)

by Chris Charlton

### Arts in El Salvador...

#### Textiles of San Sebastian...

The 'tack, tack' sound of the looms in motion still can be heard in the small town of San Sebastian in the north-eastern region of El Salvador. Beautiful textiles are hand woven in the back rooms of houses and weaving workshops. San Sebastian is known as the textile town of El Salvador. Generations of loom weavers produce and sell hammocks, tablecloths, bedspreads, mantels of all types, although today, the number of weavers is dwindling.

Alvaro Rodriguez, President of Textiles Bataneca Cooperative, proudly explains some history and the process of weaving. He says that the weavers used to be able to purchase the thread locally. Today, they buy the threads in San Salvador, but they are spun onto spools of bamboo in preparation for use at the cooperative. Next, the looms are strung by specialists, under instruction of the weaver, according to his choice of thread, colors, and type of fabric. Afterwards, the weaver goes to work, manually operating the machine, using both feet and both hands. In the Bataneca workshop, there are 6 looms and 9 weavers. Here, colorful fabrics, sometimes using thread dyed with Añil (indigo, a once thriving industry of El Salvador) are produced and then sewn into hammocks, shawls, or various linens.



As many artisan projects in El Salvador falter, there is little support for the marketing of artisan

products locally, nor is there protection or a plan for the fostering of cultural traditions provided by the national government to sustain such artistry. Modernization has sadly replaced efforts of hand-loomed weaving, and has left the artisans stranded, searching for ways to keep their traditions alive.

Since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992, the arts in El Salvador have slowly been resuscitated through project plans such as Fair Trade and through the support of various non-profit organizations, such as Arts and Technology Exchange (Centro Artex). Centro Artex is a U.S. based non-profit organization whose mission is to establish arts and technology education centers in developing countries such as El Salvador. Artex believes not only in the need for establishing arts and creativity education resources, but also in educating and assisting artisans with a marketing plan to help them earn a living - without emigrating to other countries.

Artex currently has designed labels for the textiles and is selling Textiles Bataneca's hammocks, shawls and table linens in Artex Café, their Internet café/coffee bar/info. center, located in the near-by tourist town of Suchitoto. Artex continues to look for new ways to assist in reviving the arts of El Salvador, and is currently seeking building space to establish its first creative Arts Center in Suchitoto.

For more info e-mail: [contacto@centroartex.org](mailto:contacto@centroartex.org)

by Minako Close, Suchitoto, El Salvador



### Children of the dump...

I went to Puerto Vallarta in search of hope, following the loss of so many lives, including many of our colleagues, after Alaska Airlines Flight 261 crashed on its way home to Seattle from this beautiful resort destination in January 2000. As we poured over the news articles and stories of each of the passengers, we found one striking article about Linda Knight. Her story began on a previous visit to Puerto Vallarta when she asked a friend to take her "where no tourist had ever gone". He took her to see the children of the dump. She found them with open sores, with very little food, and with no running or clean water. These families literally survived on the remnants of the tourists' garbage. The dozens of little ones scavenged alongside the adults, the gulls and vultures. They ate, played and even slept among the filth.



Linda responded and went to work. Friends began to give. She envisioned the children having access to showers and fresh water. She believed that "no child should have to eat out of a dump."

Unfortunately, when we visited, the shower she had built was now enclosed inside the new walls surrounding the dump, seemingly closing these families off forever from the outside world. Her dream could not go down with Flight 261. Linda's family, churches, the boating community, local hotels, and others all began to get involved. We did too!

That year we used an idea for a fund-raising project in memory of Flight 261. Mexico's Sam's Club had specially packaged staple boxes that would feed a family of four for up to one week for only six dollars. We took one home and set it up in the break room. Everyone

wanted to buy a box of food for the kids! Permid de Amistad, and Pastor Saul Gonzales (from the church now heading up the project) distributed the boxes to children if they attended school for the week instead of working alongside their parents in the dump.

That year we raised \$1800 from our Seattle station. Now, each year every one of our stations gets involved, and over \$28,000 was raised last year! [Photo: Presenting the 2004 Gift of Love from Alaska Airlines to Pastor Saul Gonzales]

With all the local and national publicity, the government donated land adjacent to the dump and "The School of Champions" was born. They also provide safe drinking water. Showers and laundry facilities were built with two classrooms for English and Computer Studies. The school's objective is to teach impoverished children basic communication and computer skills so they can get good jobs in the local economy and break the cycle of poverty in their families. Children are also given a nutritious meal every Tuesday and Thursday after classes, thanks to donations and food from local hotels.

That is the good news! But the need continues to be great as Permid de Amistad has started other such schools - three in Mexico! Constantly, new families arrive at the dump, in search of hope.

What is often missing, though, is the will to make a difference. If you would like more information, or you would like to contribute, you may visit the website at: [www.childrenofthedump.org](http://www.childrenofthedump.org)



by Debbie Gordon, Alaska Airlines, Seattle

## People

### Fellow Adventurers...



Heidi Bleidung, 32 from Dawson City, the Yukon, Canada completed her month long trip with the expedition from Guatemala City to San Jose, Costa Rica on 28 Oct.



Maud Gerritsen, 32, from London, began her journey from San Jose, Costa Rica to Panama City on 30 Oct.

"This expedition is the way to go...", Heidi, Costa Rica, 26/10/2004

### Along the way...



A big thank you to all those people who we've met along the way in October, including:

Andrea & friends (Cerro de Oro), our hired guns (Volcan san Pedro), Julio & his Dad (San Pedro), our guide (Monterrico Reserve), Christina, Padre and family (Punte de Oro), Misha & Rodrigues (Apaneca), Luis & Minako (Suchitoto), Lionel (Santa Rosa), Roger (El Porvenir), Carlos from



customs, Andy & boat crew, Sonia & Byron (La Ceiba), Dawna - Beach House Babe & her sister, Rudy, Diana, Gregor, Karl, Mike, Tree, Chris, Mik, Gay (Roatan), Rudy and Karen (Valle de Angeles), Carlos, Katie, Audhild (P.N La Tigra), Dona Conchi, Maurice (Granada), Donald, Luce Marina, Williann (San Jorge), ...

## In the News

### In the News

The Expedition to appear in the Oaxaca Times in November. A feature on the Expedition Vehicle will appear in Land Rover Owner International magazine in December... see [www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news)

### In-Country News

With a failing grade of 3.6 out of 10, Latin America ranked second to last behind Africa (3.0) in this year's Corruption Perception Index prepared by Transparency International, released in October. In Central America, Costa Rica won with a score of 4.6, but this did not account for the recent scandals. Former President Calderon (1990-94) is in prison, President Rodriguez (1998-2002) is in house arrest, and President Figueres (1994-98) is now under the watchful eye of the Prosecutor's Office.

### Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at [www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news) or click the links below if online:

April 2004  
June 2004  
Aug 2004

May 2004  
July 2004  
Sep 2004

## Letters & Emails

Thank you for all your letters, emails and faxes. Each month, a few excerpts will be printed here...

"Hi Chris, Great to hear from you! How is Guatemala? I've heard it's one of the most beautiful countries on the continent - lakes inside of mountains and lush green valleys. I'm sure you're getting some great footage! Things in Guadalajara are going well. Recently I've visited an amazing herb market, used my press pass to get front-and-center at Nascar Mexico, seen two amazing photography shows, and gone camping - this time we lost the dog and he got hit by a car, but other than that it was a nice weekend with lots of guitar music and tequila, and my landlord's little nieces and nephews running everywhere, which is always a nice addition. Looking forward to seeing you (and Panama & Ecuador).", Tarah, Guadalajara, Mexico

"Hi Chris, Looks like all is still going well for you. Best of luck in Central America. Just returned from Cho Oyu. Our whole group summited on Sept 26...Quality footage to the summit and back! I'm heading to Chile/Argentina shortly, and will be there until end of February. Drop me a line if you think our paths might cross. OK, talk again soon.", Tom, Jackson Hole, USA

"Hello you! Hope things are going well - your last newsletter really made me want to pack my bags and come out to join you! Sounds like you have loads of people booking in to travel with you - good on you - will stop you getting introverted!! (as if!) Things here are going well, loads and loads of travelling which thank god I am still enjoying...". Bee, Frankfurt, Germany

"Hi Chris...Your September Newsletter was an interesting read. I was fascinated and enjoyed your account of some of the places you have visited. I guess that a knowledge of local Spanish language would be helpful to pronounce some of the names. And, expanding your pics to screen size filled me with envy at the beautiful scenes that you have seen. You were about 2/3 hours out of Acapulco when we spoke on your birthday. No doubt you reached it in good time and hopefully you were able to celebrate in an appropriate style! I was left in some doubt as to whether that style may have included joining in with the clavdistas!? Certainly, you arrived at the right time to join in their celebrations..." Dad & Chrissie, Penne D'Agenais, France

"Chris, I hope the expedition is going well... Please set us up with the news letter so that we can stay up to date on your trip. Cheers", Frank, USA

## Website Update

### Stage 2 Development

The first Namaste Management Guides (Project Management Series; Leadership & Management Series) and Namaste Fun Films (Climbing Denali; A Taste of North America) are now in production; and should become available from December 2004.

### Statistics

#### October 2004

Hits: 29,844  
Countries: 32  
Downloads: 1,903 Mb

#### September 2004

Hits: 33,377  
Countries: 30  
Downloads: 2,252Mb

## So, what's it like?

### Adventures in Central America...

Upon meeting Mr Charlton back in June during his descent through the Yukon, never in a million moons would I have guessed I would be joining him on his grand expedition. Perhaps it was his boyish charms or the tantalising emails that set me over the top, but by mid-August I had booked my flight and was scheduled to embark on a trip I would not soon forget...

Arriving in early morning of Sep 28th into Guatemala City, I was pleased to find Chris waiting for me at the airport. You always carry a sliver of doubt in the back of your mind when you set off to meet up with someone you've only met once before in the middle of Central America. But yes, he was there, which reaffirmed my gut instinct, that this WAS indeed going to be a beautiful month. Not having had much sleep, our primary goal was to exit the city and head for Lago Atitlan.



Having just left Dawson City, Yukon, three days earlier where snow and frigid temperatures had already begun to rear their ugly face, driving through the Guatemalan Highlands, through breathtaking altitudes, along winding roads with gorgeous sunny skies was way more than this little northern girl could have asked for! ...And then we reached Lago Atitlan!!!! It was soooo pretty with the towering volcanoes, the majestic lake, hot sun and soothing breeze... I was in heaven... The adventure was truly beginning.

Constantly travelling through new places and being able to witness the everyday lives of others first hand, even invited into their hearts and homes, may not be your average Joe's idea of what a vacation to Central America should be or is even looking for. We set up campsites in spots some could only see in the movies! Every new day was a new paradise, every new place as special as the next.

Half-way through my month long adventure, we decided on combining a little quality time and quantity time on the magnificent, dreamy island of Roatan, and rented a top notch apartment for 5 lovely days. I got my PADI Open Water scuba-diving certification, journeyed a 1/2 mile deep in a mini submarine and found myself doing things I never thought I had in me!

Saddened by our farewell to memorable Roatan, we found our way back through the middle of Honduras on a road considered to be well off the beaten track, even by Honduran standards. We visited old ruins, beautifully secluded cloud forests and national park reserves. We drifted through lush mangroves and sailed the Caribbean on a cargo ship. We climbed dormant volcanoes and took in sights I will cherish forever...

For those of you seeking to see the world in all its glory, experience its people AND have the most incredible time doing so, this expedition is the way to go. For those of you who scratch your heads and wonder why Chris Charlton has embarked on such an adventure, you simply need to join to find out!...and then you'll understand...

Chris had originally asked me to pick 5 words to describe the expedition. These are the ones I came up with: educational, engaging, exhilarating, stimulating and serene.

Thank you Chris, for giving me the opportunity to meet all the wonderfully inspiring people along the way, the chance to see places I had so far only dreamt of, and the experience I've so longed for. NAMASTE... P.S. See you in Africa....



by Heidi Bleidung