

A Beach Vacation Unlike Any Other

Contributed by Steve Gillman
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{bot_wrgoogle}When my wife Ana and I were visiting her family in Ecuador, her father took us to the coast for a beach vacation. First we toured several coastal cities, then we ended up in Salinas, where the five of us stayed for a couple days. Our first night we went downtown, which was busy and alive and full of good restaurants. The next day was to a day at the beach - a boring one, I assumed. I was pleasantly surprised.

The beaches in Ecuador are different. The first thing you notice that is that there are people trying to sell you things everywhere. Now, you might think this is annoying, and in fact, the vendors would be removed from most beaches in the world. However, once you get used to it, this part of the local culture is what makes the beaches here so special.

Would you like a chair? A man will rent you one for fifty cents. In our case, we chose to sit on our towels. I quickly learned to chase off the jewelry vendors with a glance. They did have some necklaces that Ana would love, and I suppose it could be fun to shop while laying on the beach, but we had been shopping enough already.

Then along came a lady with cold beer in an old cooler. At less than a dollar per bottle, I couldn't help but buy a couple for me and Ana's father. The woman said she would check back again later, and continued down the beach. I was beginning to like this idea of sitting here and being waited on.

Ana and her step-mother had some ice-cream when a vendor went by. I bought some peanuts covered in lime juice from another vendor. Ana's father said these were considered Ecuadorian Viagra, so I handed them to him and flagged down the beer lady again.

Ana's brother wanted to try a jet-ski. I told him I would try it too. Since I'm not a beach person, and thought it was expensive, I had never been on one, but this was a vacation. Ana's step-mother negotiated for us, and got us two jet skis for thirty minutes for ten dollars each. We had a blast, much more fun than when we were towed around the harbor earlier on the inflatable banana for two dollars.

Later, I relaxed again and let the deliveries of food and drink continue. For five dollars, two very talented musicians stopped by and put on our own personal concert for almost thirty minutes. I was starting to think that a beach vacation isn't such a bad idea. We returned to the beach the next morning.

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