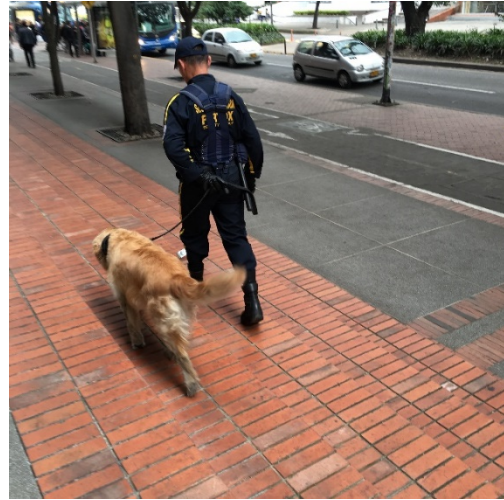


GREETINGS FROM BOGOTA!

Over the Thanksgiving holidays, Tom and I took a trip to Bogota Columbia. I have been wanting to go there for some time and much to my Mother's relief, I wasn't kidnapped. Bogota is a vibrant city with an altitude of 8700 feet. The weather was perfect. I brought an umbrella because the weather app on my phone kept reporting rain every day. However, even though the weather app said it was raining, it didn't rain once except for a tiny sprinkle for one hour but that was it. The weather ranges from 60 degrees as a high to 40 degrees as a low. In Houston this sounds cold but it wasn't. I didn't even wear the coat I brought.



View of Bogota



Dogs have police duty too

If you love plants and gardening, you will be in heaven. Plants love Bogota!! Bottle brush plants are shrubs in Houston but they are trees in Bogota. Succulents were especially abundant. Bogota is very green.



Examples of plants in Bogota

We stayed in the Zona Rosa district at a very nice hotel called the Hotel Porton. Hotel Porton is a small hotel, somewhat like staying in a small mansion. The front desk always had someone there that spoke English and they were very helpful. They recommended that we not use cabs but rather a personal driver. Our driver, Luis, was the best. Luis charged \$6 an hour but we gladly paid him more in tips.

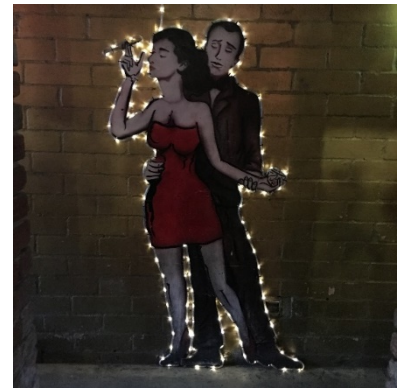


Luis and Tom

What did we do? Well, we enjoyed some great meals at restaurants La Luna, Casa, and Brutos. We also enjoyed the crazy décor, and the margaritas at Qudres D.C. Bogota is very sophisticated.



The Bar at Casa



Scenes from the restaurant Qudres D.C.

The hotel provided a big spread for breakfast. I couldn't help taking pictures. Bogota has some very interesting fruit that we never see in the states. This odd ball fruit is called pitahaya or dragon fruit. It tastes somewhat like a sweeter kiwi fruit. Nice.



Breakfast at Hotel Porton



Breakfast with a Pitahaya



The Pitahaya opened

Bogota has an excellent contemporary art scene. We especially enjoyed Galeria La Cometa. Here are pictures from Galeria La Cometa, the art of Regina Silveira and Santa made out of coke cans.



Bogota was a shopper's paradise for me. Yes, they have malls with all the name brands and designers. What I was intrigued with and what I couldn't stop buying were the handicrafts. At last, something not made in China. We went to a craft market and I started to hyperventilate before we found an ATM. Nothing was expensive but I just had to buy everything. Macramé necklaces, jewelry with semi-precious stones, leather handmade purses, woven bags and on and on. I even had to buy an extra suitcase. So shopping is definitely a Bogota activity.



The craft market



This vendor sells everything made with Coca Leaves

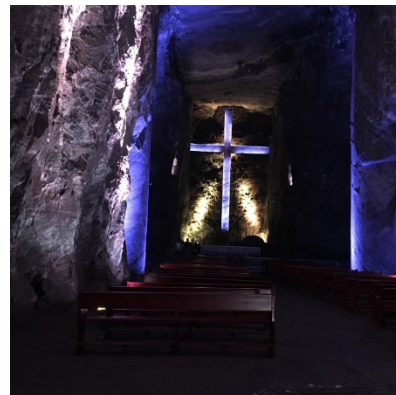
Another thing that intrigued me were the mobile stands at almost every corner. I called them chip stands because they carried all types of chips, not to mention nuts, avocados and other exotic goodies.



The Botero museum was worth a visit and the Salt Cathedral located in the town of Zipaquirá. Luis drove us there and it was worth the short one hour ride. The Cathedral is actually below ground in a working salt mine. It was beautiful.



Botero Art



Scene from the salt Cathedral

The dollar to peso ratio was good when we were there and I thought all the prices were very reasonable. It is a direct flight from Houston and takes approximately five hours. Bogota is on Eastern Standard Time, so no jet lag. The only thing you may experience is the altitude the first day. Going from sea level in Houston to 8700 feet can cause you to move a little slow the first day.

The people were friendly, always quick to say Buenos Dias. I don't speak Spanish, but amazingly after a couple of margaritas I get pretty fluent. It was great. Hope you get to go.