The Lake Atitlán Reference Guide
ISBN 0-9648706-1-4
by Richard J. Morgan Szybist
Adventures in Education, Inc.
Retail Price: $US 11.00

The Lake Atitlán Reference Guide the first eco-cultural Guidebook on Lake Atitlán, an enchanted place judged by such notables as Aldous Huxley (Brave New World) as the most beautiful lake in the world. Lake Atitlán is in the Highlands of Guatemala. It was born violently, long ago, probably before the emergence of man here. Scientists still debate the exact nature of its birth, an event which created a nearly circular depression of 11 miles in diameter, 95 square miles of area, and over 1,000 feet deep. The cause of this huge cavity, a chain of events which began with an immense eruption, produced a unique microenvironment that has been drawing wanderers to the Lake's shores for at least thousands of years. Aside from Atitlán's natural beauty and immensity, it boasts a population that is 90% Mayan. The Atitlán Mayans are a friendly people who have maintained their traditional dress and customs and are accomplished weavers, painters, carvers, and jewelry makers.

Atitlán's exposure to world attention and mass culture has been significantly limited by its relative remoteness as well as its location in a country that has only recently emerged from 36 years of violent civil war. Having said this, Atitlán has become a popular regional vacation destination and has been "discovered" by adventurous travelers from around the world. Its largest town, Panajachel, has a full range of services to include hotels, restaurants, banks, ATM machines, and internet cafes.

The Lake Atitlán Reference Guide is an eclectic work designed to present the full character of the Lake in an accurate but non-academic style. It addresses the Lake's natural and cultural history, as well as its contemporary cultural, socioeconomic and recreational character. This book contains more than 100 contemporary color photos, rare old photographs, and an assortment of other illustrations.

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Natural Healing: A Journey to the Mayan World of Atitlán
ISBN 978-9-9294004-7-4
by Richard J. Morgan Szybist
Retail Price: $US 10.00

In this work, the author provides personal background as context for this account of experiences in healing he has witnessed at Atitlán, and connects these experiences to a range of writings in the subject areas of Mayan culture, shamanism, the human mind-body-spirit, and natural healing. He provides practical information on the use of medicinal plants. Within his presentation of the pre-Columbian Mayan belief system, he includes a summary explanation of the Mayan calendars, to include the long-count calendar which ends in December 2012.

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or order the Kindle version from Amazon.com.

Fables & Other Mayan Tales of Atitlán
by Richard Morgan Szybist
Retail Price: $US 8.00
"Fables & Other Mayan Tales of Atitlan (English edition) lent itself well as a tool to teach English...at the University of Valle in Solola, Guatemala...the text is simple and straightforward, making it very comprehensible for learners at the low intermediate level."
- Dr. Jillian S. Haeseler, Associate Professor of English, 2009 Fulbright Scholar, Greensboro College, North Carolina, USA

"...an excellent teaching tool...provides succinct insights into Mayan cultural values, traditions, thought processes, and lifestyles...a tremendous instructional resource for thematic Social Studies units about the Mayans...being published in a bilingual version. It also serves as a valuable literature component for intermediate to advanced Spanish classes."
- Franziska Zenhäusern, Principal, Robert Muller LIFE School, Panajachel, Guatemala, C.A.

"...succinct collection of tales makes for a great companion reader to anyone who is interested in Atitlan...a delightful read sure to please and educate..."
- Anthony Gatti, Tour Coordinator, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands

"Author Richard Morgan preserves the essence of Mayan culture with Fables, an entertaining, informative and thought provoking anthology...a useful tool for students learning Spanish or English."
- Ann Comtois, Atitlan Sol Magazine, April 2009

Fables & Other Mayan Tales is a collection of short stories, one from each of most of the towns around the Atitlan lakeshore, as they were told by Lake natives to a young European wanderer (an alter ego) as he traveled from town to town at Atitlan. The book is bilingual, English-Spanish, in the same volume. Fables & Other Mayan Tales is the "magical realism" companion piece to The Lake Atitlan Reference Guide. All of the stories are rooted in Mayan mythology. Some date back hundreds of years, while others are contemporary hybrids of mythology and imagination.

Fables & Other Mayan Tales is being successfully used in a pilot program in Guatemala to teach in various subject areas at grades K-12. Its use is also being explored in US schools at various levels. As a bilingual book of imaginative short stories it has proved valuable as a supplemental text in teaching Spanish to children. In that it documents the values, beliefs, and simple lifestyles of Latin American folk culture, it also provides a ready tool for serving articulated core curriculum Language Arts Literacy standards. The importance of incorporating multicultural literature into mainstream teaching is given emphasis in evolving national core curriculum guidance for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies as well.

The Lake Atitlan Reference Guide serves as a valuable supporting resource for teaching with Fables. A Teacher's Guide, for a price of $2.00, has also been published to help in adapting its use to various classroom settings.

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or order the Kindle version from Amazon.com.
This work is a comprehensive treatment of the missions constructed by the Jesuits and Franciscans in a region colonized by Spain and since divided between the United States and Mexico. It provides the historical context for the development of the mission system, describes the physical and cultural characters of the regions at the time of the missionaries’ arrival, and explains the architectural features incorporated into the construction of their temples -- all in layman terms.

The book includes more than 90 full-color photographs that portray 26 historic churches as they look today. Maps illustrate historic and modern-day routes to the mission sites. Travel tips are included for touring in Mexican Sonora. Printed in a convenient 6x8 format, the book serves as the perfect travel companion for those interested in understanding the deeper history of the missions and churches scattered through the Arizona-Sonora borderlands.

Click here for more on A Guide to Historic Missions and Churches of the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands.

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Hitchhiking on America’s War Machine; 1964-88
ISBN Available soon

by Richard J. Morgan, Jr.
Adventures in Education, Inc.
Retail Price: Available soon
This is the story of Ron Baran, a guy I met a few years back in a bar in Central America. I don’t generally write stories about people I meet in bars, but I found Ron’s life journey extraordinary. He had made a career of what he off-handedly called “hitchhiking on America’s war machine.” A combat veteran of the infantry, he had served 24 years in the U.S. Army, seen the world, and risen to the rank of colonel before retiring at the age of 45. It had been a cheap way to travel and a productive one from the standpoint of material advancement - but the cost had been high to both his physical being and psyche. His life since retirement had become a restless quest to rejuvenate his body and spirit.

His story is both an “eye opener” for anyone who hasn’t lived in the military sub-culture of American society and a caveat emptor for any young person considering a military career. As a view from the “grass roots” level of implementation of U.S. foreign policy, it is also a valuable “think piece” for any American concerned with the appropriate role of the U.S. in world affairs.

The timeframe and setting of his adventure includes both the Cold War of U.S. – Russian confrontation in Europe and U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Baran served at the “line of contact” of both of these conflictive chapters of U.S. history. Initially an idealist, his sense of patriotic fervor dissipated in the face of his experience as a self-described “tool of institutionally-sanctioned violence.” His transparency in sharing personal details of his life and his feelings drew me into his story.

Click here for more on Hitchhiking on America’s War Machine: 1964-88 (links to amazon Kindle, select expanded view for more).

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