

## **International Friendship Club Aces Home & Villa Tours**

**By**

**Peggy A. Nelson, IFC Vice President**

It gives me joy to have friends and family visit me in Vallarta. I am proud to show off my city. Visitors are blown away by the mountains and the sea, the friendliness of people, the 1000+ restaurants, every kind of music and theatre, and the great variety of organizations dedicated to improving the lives of those who live in and around Vallarta.

Thus, it was so much fun this year to entertain my significant other (“SO”) who visited for 3 weeks, and my sister, Rosie, who later visited for 9 days. My SO is not especially interested in home design or architecture, but he is an intelligent person with a general interest in everything. Rosie, on the other hand, is intensely and constantly interested in design. Rosie, who lived many years in Chicago, travels to antiques and home shows in Texas, Chicago and New York. Her own home was once featured in a gardening show on Chicago television.

What to do with visitors like these? It was obvious to me that they would love the Home Tours offered by Vallarta’s International Friendship Club (IFC).

IFC is so grateful to the owners who make their spectacular homes and villas available, knowing that the proceeds from these tours go to various charities around Vallarta. The homeowners are rightly proud of their homes. Many of them are present during the tour to answer questions about art or architecture. Most of these homes are one-of-a-kind, and bursting with ideas for anyone, whether one lives in Vallarta or is visiting.

The guides, the management of the tours, all of it is done by volunteers who love what they do. One can feel their enjoyment and that makes the tours more fun. This is not just a job for them. Steve, who led my bus during both tours, is full of interesting figures and facts about Vallarta. It is no surprise that these tours are rated in Trip Advisor in the top 10 tours out of 410 tours in Vallarta.

On both tours we saw 4 very different homes in 4 different locations. We each had our favorites. On the home tour with my SO, my favorite was a home in Upper Conchas Chinas that was loaded colorful Mexican artwork collected by the couple over 20+ years. The husband and wife were both home to share their stories of art collecting in Mexico. They have travelled around Mexico to meet the artists in person. I would love to do the same. The home is on the hillside, with spectacular views of Banderas Bay, and an infinity pool. My SO’s favorite was a more modest (yet spectacular) home on Rio Cuale in Gringo Gulch. This home used lots of native wood. It was cooled by surrounding trees and by the river. So close to town!

We also went to see the building that is now the Arte Museo Vallarta in the Remance neighborhood. This, originally, was an hacienda, meaning a place where one both lives and works. The 2 story brick building, with high walls surrounding a huge open courtyard. It wasn’t

hard to imagine living there, and turning it into a home, surrounded by bourganvilla, parota trees, and primavera.

On the second tour, with my sister, my favorite home was a first level condo in Molina de Agua, in the Romantic Zone beside the Rio Cuale facing the Bay. Because the apartment was on the first level, one could see and hear the waves crashing on the shore. It was quite dramatic. One also feels encased by the surrounding green landscaping and gardens. This homeowner eagerly shared many fascinating stories about her art collection. She had several pieces by artists whose sculptures are featured on the Malecon. My sister's favorite was a 9000 square foot home in Upper Conchas Chinas. It was a modern home, with accents of the traditional. A huge atrium featured a chandelier hanging from the second floor where we had grand views of Los Arcos.

The IFC home tours run each Tuesday and Wednesday, from 10:15 AM to 1:00 PM, leaving from Sea Monkey Restaurant on the Malecon and Calle Aquiles Serden. Discounted breakfast is available at the Sea Monkey to those going on the tour. One must have good agility, as many of the homes involve hikes on steep slopes or difficult cobblestone. For more information, see the IFC website at [ifcvallarta.org](http://ifcvallarta.org).

*There are only 3 weeks left of tours with the final one being on Wednesday, April 5, 2023.*