

## TRENDS AND OBSERVATIONS

## An Applegater in La Paz

BY RAUNO PERTTU

I have spent the majority of this winter as a non-Spanish speaking snowbird in La Paz, Mexico, with periodic trips back to the Applegate to take care of necessary tasks. For those thinking about seasonally moving to warmer climates like La Paz, I can give a big thumbs-up. La Paz is a great location, with a warm, calm ocean, good food, new friends, and fun activities.

My fiancée Ana and I drove the length of the Baja, which is gorgeous, and many of the cliché worries about Mexico and Mexicans have been put to rest. I have found both the expats and local Mexicans to be friendly and interesting—and the warm, sunny winter has been delightful.

I thought, for other Applegaters considering a Mexican winter escape, I would share a few personal observations.

Violent crime in La Paz is little different from that in American cities, possibly less than in many of our cities. Nonviolent crime, however, is more common.

Part of the expat regimen is trying out new restaurants, and reviews are freely shared. Many restaurants (and there are many) are good to very good and inexpensive. Worries about food poisoning are exaggerated. I have had no problems, just delights.

I've found that festive get-togethers are a way of life for La Pazians. You probably can get yourself invited every

night if you try.

Shopping can be more challenging. Some goods are harder to find and more expensive, especially if you want American rather than local goods. Some everyday Applegate grocery items become luxury items in La Paz. Finding a specific item sometimes becomes a snipe hunt. However, local supermarkets and the La Paz Walmart are on a par with those in the States.

**Mexican cities are just plain noisy.** My first nights back in the Applegate were eerily quiet.

La Paz and the Baja are much cleaner than in years past.

The highways are good; the city streets are not as good. On some, you become expert at dodging potholes.

Driving in Mexico is initially a bit scary, but when you adjust to local driving habits, driving is safe and relatively easy.

I love the malecón, the pretty and active walkway that stretches for several kilometers along the shore of the city. I got into the habit of taking long walks every day.

La Paz is a sailboat city. Friends with sailboats have taken Ana and me cruising



The malecón, an active walkway in La Paz, stretches for several kilometers along the shore.

to look for whales and whale sharks in the beautiful bay on which La Paz is located. We have also had invitations to cruise to the gulf islands.

Perhaps one of the most surprising things I've noticed is the incredible musical talent in La Paz. We've gone to several musical events (they are common), and two things have impressed me. These are very inexpensive and the local talent is impressive.

For example, we went to a roofless stage (informal shorts weather, as almost always) to hear a tribute to John Lennon. The band was very good, but too loud. Even J.D. Rogers would have wanted earplugs. We solved that problem by stuffing pieces of Kleenex in our ears. After that, we could enjoy the performers.

A trio of local girl singers stunned me. As a group, they sounded exceptional. A short time later, one of the girls sang solo. She was beyond good, so we assumed she had carried the trio. A little later, the second

sister sang a solo, which may have exceeded that of the first sister. We naturally thought "Wow, two good singers."

The third sister wore a plain dress, wasn't quite as attractive as the first two, and seemed a bit shy. We were surprised when she came out to sing a solo. She proceeded to let down her hair and to knock our socks off with a Lennon tune that she turned into an incredible blues song. She may have been the best of the three. From my perspective, any one of the sisters would have won one of the television talent competitions here in the States.

**Spending winters in La Paz** for the next round of my life has started out wonderfully. Now, I hope and need to learn Spanish, which I've been very delinquent in doing. I've had both an advantage and disadvantage with Ana. She is fluent in Spanish, so all I have to do is use her as my personal interpreter, but the downside is that I have been lazy in learning Spanish myself. When we go to a Mexican party, I'm mostly lost, although many Mexicans understand English. I have to learn Spanish. It can be discomforting when you hear your name mentioned, followed by laughter, and you don't have a clue.

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## An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

BY BARBARA MUMBLO

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is an idiom often used in reference to human health. It also works with ecosystem health. Of course, if you know me, I'm using this expression in reference to preventing invasive species (noxious weeds) from impacting the health of our ecosystem in the Applegate Valley.

The terms *invasive species* and *noxious weeds* generally refer to non-native species that are aggressive and out-compete our natives. Noxious weeds are designated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and usually have economic impacts, often on the health of domestic animals. Invasive species can be plants or animals that reproduce and spread too much and impact species we want to preserve. These species have come from other parts of the world (often the Mediterranean area), usually arriving accidentally mixed in with other material (hay/soil), but some were brought on purpose (horticulture or herbal uses). Upon arrival, the species didn't have the natural controls (insects/other plants) that would normally keep them in check in their native land, allowing them to out-compete with our native species.

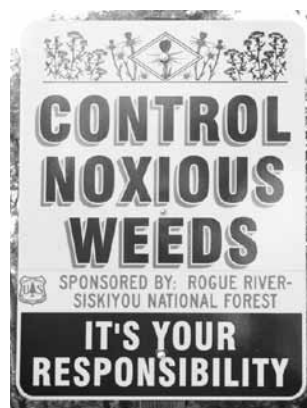
One of the most obvious examples of a noxious/invasive weed in the Applegate Valley is yellow star thistle. There wasn't

much in the late 1970s, but over the years it's moved along the roads and into the dry fields and hillsides.

Invasive species can be introduced or existing infestations can spread by moving seed or plant parts (often in materials such as soil, hay, or mulch). Existing infestations can be spread by equipment like bulldozers, mowers, or road graders. I've watched star thistle come in with topsoil for septic work, rock for log landings, seed mixes and hay for restoration, and birdseed (thanks, Kay). Infestations often pop up after new driveway/house site construction.

Federal agencies in our area spend much time and money controlling these weeds and working to prevent more sites from occurring. It's getting to be common practice to ask for clean material and equipment when working on Bureau of Land Management and national forest lands. Many private landowners in the Applegate are controlling weeds on their land (thanks!). It can take a lot of time and money and one year of treatment isn't adequate to do the job—it takes several years of persistence, but it can be done.

**It makes sense to prevent** the introduction/spread of invasive species and not have to pay to treat an infestation. One way to prevent introduction is to avoid



bringing infested material to your land. Ask for noxious-weed-free material if you are bringing soil, rock, hay, mulch, etc., to your property. If you have equipment coming to your property from elsewhere, ask that it first be cleaned of soil and vegetation. Be careful driving over infested areas so you don't transport plants/seed to an uninfested area. I've done it myself—parked in an area of star thistle and when I got home and opened the door, it fell out. Be aware of what you are doing!

Some quarry owners are starting to understand the need for noxious-weed-free rock and are working to prevent it from spreading. A quarry accreditation process is in the early stages of development by the Jackson, Josephine, and Douglas County CWMA's (Cooperative Weed Management Areas) and will be coordinated by the Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District. This process will include inspections and a rating system, and will inform landowners of where they can purchase noxious-weed-free rock. I've been working with personnel from Knife River and Blue Mountain Rock to reduce

the noxious weeds around their pits. They understand that weed-free material will be more valuable to their customers.

We have more wineries and organic crops in the valley all the time. To reduce the potential need for herbicide use on noxious weeds, we can prevent infestations or get rid of the weeds before they become too large.

I've noticed signs along the road that say "owner maintained." Some of you are doing a great job of that (thanks, Beau), but others have the signs up and aren't really doing the maintenance. It's important to eradicate any invasive species along the road (especially between fence lines and the road). Ditch cleaning easily moves seeds down the road. If we can eradicate invasive species from the roadside, we'll have less potential for infestations to move down the road and onto your neighbor's (or possibly your) property.

**Weeds know no boundaries;** they move wherever they are able. We need to work together with our neighbors to eliminate these species and prevent further infestations from occurring. Help us maintain a healthy ecosystem in the Applegate Valley. Please, do your part to prevent noxious/invasive species spread!

For more information about noxious weeds, see the Oregon Department of Agriculture website at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/WEEDS> or call me.

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