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Chill out, in warm waters, deep in the heart of central Mexico.

De-Stress for Less at La Gruta Spa

The perfect antidote for feet made weary from hours of wandering the cobblestoned streets of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico is La Gruta Spa. Relax any sore muscles in a series of hot, spring-fed pools.

A series of pools is surrounded by an appealing canopy of trees and landscape. The grounds are lush and inviting, with plenty of strategically placed chairs and tables.

The hottest, deepest pool is the most spectacular, given its surrounding sheer rock walls. Palm and banana trees tower above, and at the end of the pool, a mysterious tunnel beckons.

Wade through the passage, with its incandescent walls, to be well rewarded. At the tunnel's end there is a step down into a steamy pool, covered by a magical domed rock roof. A few rays of light

stream through breaks in the dome, creating an enchanting aura.

Waiters wander the grounds, taking drink and food orders poolside. Visitors can scan the waterproof menu while soaking. It lists breakfast and lunch options, and liquid refreshments. Why not sip on a cool Bloody Mary while lounging in a hot pool?

It's a 15-minute drive to La

Gruta—at Km. 10 on the road north to Dolores-Hidalgo from San Miguel. You can get there by bus, taxi, or car. For details, see: Spalagruta.com.

It all costs 200 pesos per person, about \$10. The spa is open

Wednesday through Sunday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.. To nab a comfy lounger, arrive early. For a 50-peso, returnable deposit, rent one of the lockers. Sundays are family oriented. Weekdays are less crowded.—*Ann Kuffner*.

“Visitors can scan the waterproof menu while soaking in the pools.”

Panama City Metro Line 2 Opens

Thousands of city residents and visitors already use the metro every day. Before the advent of the service, rush hour drives could take me up to an hour. Now I can zip downtown in about 10 minutes.

The new metro line has a green feature that saves energy generated by the trains' brakes (it

can then be used to power things like escalators, lighting, and ventilation); and before too long, we'll be able to take the metro all the way to the international airport. The metro administration recently announced that it would take about 28 months to complete the new link.—*IL Panama Editor Jessica Ramesch*.

Duck Parades in South Africa

For 35 years, winemakers at the Vergenoegd Löw Wine Estate near Cape Town, South Africa have enlisted the help of an unusual partner—more than 1,200 Indian runner ducks. The flock forages for pests in the vineyards, helping Vergenoegd minimize its use of chemicals.

The estate also hosts popular duck parades. Here, visitors can watch a sea of feathered workers waddle by. This fun spectacle attracts visitors of all ages, and takes place several times a day. The winery's grounds, which include

an elegant 18th-century manor house, offer splendid vineyard and mountain views. A tasting of five wines costs \$6 per person. The winery's on-site kitchen offers everything from sandwiches and burgers to baked goods and artisanal picnics. The cuisine incorporates local ingredients as well as produce grown in Vergenoegd's garden.

Vergenoegd is located along the Stellenbosch Wine Route, renowned for its Cape Dutch architecture and rugged mountain ranges.—*Tricia A. Mitchell*.

A Floral Wonderland in Penang

Just over the bridge to mainland Penang, Malaysia, in an area called Batu Kawan, is the new Central Island Park. This 25-acre plot of land is designed as a green lung for a massive mixed development project in the area.

The park is still in phase one, but the expertly manicured gardens and floral sculptures are already open to the public for viewing. The gorgeous green sanctuary is a respite from the industrial area surrounding it. The highlight of the garden is the Four Seasons Floral scul-

ture. A 328-foot-long tunnel bathed in glorious flowers, each section representing one season with sunflowers, tulips, hydrangea, and dripping white flower vines.

More than 30 species of plants and flowers adorn the garden. Various pathways split the landscaped gardens and lead to a lake with a 164-foot water jet display.

Try to go just before sunset so you can see the archway during the day, and then lit up as night falls.—*Kirsten Raccuia*.

DID YOU KNOW? In La Paz, Bolivia, volunteer traffic police help keep the city moving safely. What's odd is that they do so dressed as zebras. Road accidents have plummeted since the movement began.