

New York, N.Y.

*I wanna go back to the pyramids
On the road to Palanque
Pick the magic mushrooms on the way
Come along with me, baby
We will be so happy just you and me,*

Baby, Let's Go to Mexico

By Joe "King" Carrasco
as told to Joe Nick Patoski & David Herndon

There is perhaps no greater authority on kicking around Mexico than Joe "King" Carrasco, the author of "Baby Let's Go to Mexico" and hundreds of other tunes that recall the Tex-Mex trash rock of "Wooly Bully" and "96 Tears" and cut it with Mexicali Carrasco' Hot Saruce. "I make my music for people traveling in Mexico." If we could, we would've included a flexi-disc full of tune like "Manana," "Escondido," "Dinero and "Vamos a Bailar," from his latest album Bordertown (New Rose and Big Beat imports) so you could dance to this article, but the best we could do is consult with the "King" for its lowdown and pass it along with this neat map.

Carrasco hails from Austin, "but I basically live in Mexico when I'm not on the road. When I was 17 I found paradise in Puerto Escondido, and I made a pact with myself never to give it up." So he changed his name from Teutsch and started living out his royal fantasy to become a rockin' ambassador for all things Mexican. This is the man who wrote "Caca de Vaca".

*Groovin' out on the mysteries,
On the psicodelicos every day
Vamonos, are you ready?*

*Caca de Vaca, Baby where are you?
Caca de Vaca, if I only knew*

*I'm gonna get down when the sun goes down
Hang out on the Plaza,
Listen to the music blast in the streets,
Drinkin' cold cervesas
While the world spins around,
Goin' topsy-turvy,
It's hasta la vista,
Catch me manana*

Ladies and Gentlemen, THE JOE "KING" CARRASCO GUIDE TO MEXICO!!!

The Carrasco Trails

If someone's flying in from New York, look for specials on Aeromexico. Once you're inside Mexico, airlines are really cheap. You can fly anyplace for a dollar extra each flight on Aeromexico after you've bought a roundtrip ticket (\$355, weekdays) from New York!

If you got lots of time, go by bus or train. Mexican train are from the '40s and slow, so it can be tough, and they go through scenic areas at night. But there are cool train rides from Palanque to Merida and from Oaxaca to Mexico City. The best train ride is from Chihuahua to

Los Mochis through Copper Canyon.

To me, the best way to go is by car, so you can stop off at all the bars.

East Side - West Side, Where You Gonna Go?

One of my biggest diemmas in life is deciding whether to go to the Yucatan or the west coast. I do both. The west coast has more music on the radio, and funky little conjunto bands playing little dances.

The Cribbean is flat, except for pyramids. The water's clear blue, so the snorkeling's a plus, but the only place to bodysurf is between the two pyramids at Tulum in the Yucatan.

The Yucatan's real mystical - you can feel the presence of the ancient Mayan civilization. I was layin' in myt hotel room once and saw a flame shoot four feet in the air. *There's spirits walkin' around!* But the Yucatan's becoming real commercialized, so you gotta get up early to beat the tourists to the ruins. Take a mosquito net too.

Trail Numero Uno: On the Road to Palanque

On my last two trips I headed for Oaxaco (the capital city of the state with the same name), because it has the most colorful market in Mexico; each village in the region makes something different - serapes, blankets, pottery. But it's getting touristed out, and San Crist'obal de las Casas (in the state of Chiapas) is turning out the plac to be.

From Oaxaca, you catch alittle bitty plane to Puerto Escondido (approximately 150 miles, about \$20 each way on local airlines). Fonatur (Mex tourist council) is about to expand and



develop the whole southern coast, so people should get here real fast. I like to stay at the Baungalows Marinero. It's fun to get your own house or cabin as near to the water as you can. There's a lot of hotels along the beach' it just depends if a person wants to rough it. You can find anything from \$1 a day to \$50 a doay. One dollar gets you a Palspa (thatched hut, usually open air) and a hammock. For \$22 you get a room on the beach at the Hotel Santa Fe.

The beach on the bay has the best bodysurfing waves in all of Mexico. You've got to be careful, though. It's dangerous. Then you can go snorkeling at Puerto Angelito, a little by inlet just west of town, about a mile away. And the fish down there, huachinango (red snapper), is great.

The only problem with Escondido is they have a lot of surfers from California who only know two words - cambio (change) and cerveza (beer). That's not what I'm about. Be polite as you can and be patient.

Up in the mountains between Escondido and Oaxaca are a lot of neat areas. All the mushrooms are in San Jose de Pacifica, but if you're gonna get high in Escondido, don't do it on the beach. It's not Central Park. If the Federales catch you, you gotta be ready with la mordita (bribe). I got busted once for running a red light, so I gave the guy \$15.

Next I go through Tehuantepec, down on the Isthmus - at the prison there they've got the best hammocks for sale. The women in Tehuantepec are in control of society, the men are secondary. They have parades fo the women. Plaus they have good sinsemilla.

After Tehuantepec, I head to San Cristobal, near the Guatemalan border. It's the best state in Mexico for Indian cultures - each village has its own style of dress. The Lacandon Indians are descended from Mayan high priests; they wear white robes and have real long hair and carry bows and arrows. The most beartiful drive in Mexico is from San Cristobal to Palenque (the ruins of a Mayan ceremonial center) 'cause it's 200 miles through the highlands and jungles. Takes all day. Stop at Agua Azul, seven miles of blue waterfalls. It's like being in the Caribbean. There's lots of mushrooms around there. If you wanna go down and get real primitive, that's the place. Atourist might represent a spirit to them.

Palenque has the best pyramids in all of Mexico, and surrounding theruins are all these mushroom fields. When I'm around pyramids I find I get a lot of energy to writh songs. They say Palenque was started by a flying saucer and that's what the song "Yabba Ding Ding" is all about. That's the name we gave this astronaut statue down there. The Indians hear weird things at night and out in the lake ther's a pyramid on an island that moves when the wind blows. There's a story of a man who had a jade statue and when he tried to sell it, it came to life. They've got all this mythology and when you get down there and hear it, you believe it.

From Palenque, you can hitchhike across the Yucatan peninsula straight over to Tulum, which has ruins, beaches, and cenotes (deep water holes) to swim in after you've been at the beach all day.

About 30 miles from Tulum are the ruins of Coba, which are mostly uncovered. It's like out of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. It'd be a great place to make a video 'cause there's no heat. From there a lot of people like to go to Isla Mujeres (the Isle of Women) 'cause it's a party scene. It's okay, but I like to hang around the ruins more. I guess I go to Mexico to get away from the Anglo way of life, to sit in the Zocalo (town square) and watch everybody, go to markets, and hang around. Relax. You can do this trip in 17 days if you hustle.

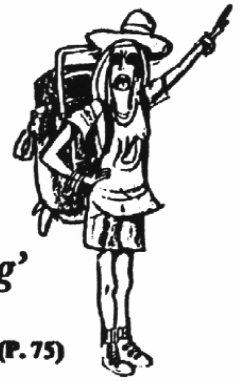
Trail Numero Dos: The Perfect Spot

Another trip starts at the border in Laredo. You drive from Laredo through Saltillo through Zacatecas; this is don't-break-down country, serious desert. Get a car that's in good shape, and bring extra fan belts, hoses, and spares. I was in a village once where the only tools were a screwdriver and a pair of pliers. Zacatecas is right out of *The Wild Bunch*. It was a real big town in the Mexican Revolution. Peo;le don't realize this, but within a day's drive of Nuevo Laredo you can be around qyramids, right outside Zacatecas on the way to Guadalajara. Guadalajara has good markets, but there's too many gringos there, so I head for the Pacific beaches. Tenacatita is the best beach in Mexico, 20 miles north of Bahia de Navidad. The waves are so clear you can see through them, and you just camp out there. It's undiscovered, but it's gonna be a big place someday.

After I get burned at the beaches, I head for the mountains in Michoacan (state). It has a lot in common with Oaxaca - heavy emphasis on culture - and this one town, Paracho, is like 48th Street - about two miles long and 200 guitar shops. All the quitar makers drink tequila in the afternoon.

Baby, Let's Go to Mexico with Joe 'King' Carrasco

TRAVEL SUPPLEMENT (P. 75)



From Paracho we go to Huichapan, a Swiss village in the Alps, pine trees and everything. For \$4 a day you get a nice room with breakfast in the only hotel in town.

In the center of Michoacan is Lake Patxcuaro. On an island in the lake they have the best Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration. Everybody dresses up in skeleton suits and goes to the cemetary and puts skulls on the graves.

Uruapan has the nicest park in all of Mexico, all tropical with waterfalls, and nearby is San Miguelde Allende. Mexican movie stars live there, and there are art galleries - pretty touristy but both towns are nice to visit.

Trail Numero Tres: El East Coast

Another one of my trips starts on the border in Matamoros and goes down the east coast to Veracruz and Jalapa - They're great cities - and this cool place between Tampico and Veracruz called Papantla where all the vanilla in Mexico comes from. There's a hotel in a beach town near there called Tecolutla that's built like a giant ship with portholes for windows and everything. It's famous because Brigitte Bardot make a movie there. Anyway, that's what they say.

Below Veracruz is another cool town called Catemaco that I wrote "Monkey Got My Frisbee" about, 'cause ther's a lake with islands that have pyramids and lots of monkeys.

Manana

Mexico is third world right across the border, a whole 'nother culture. You can't be in a hurry in Mexico. There's no exacts there. It's a real mysterious place, and people move at heir own pace. If you try to fight that, if you car breaks dawn, you can't be in a hurry to git it fixed. Siestas stop things in the afternoon and time stands still.

Mexico has shortages sometimes: one week they won't have toothpaste, the next week they won't have aspirin, but usually you can get everything you want. And the products you find there are fun to try out. There are some thinga you oughta bring, though, like a flashlight's real important. And Band - Aids. Good mosquito repellent's sometimes hard to find. If you don't like mosquitos it can be tough. Go down to the Army - Navy store and get that real chemical stuff.

To me, the life in Mexico is conducive to music - real happy, real mysterious. The climate's perfect all year around. You see a lot of bands playing in the Zocalos. The don't make much money but they do it because they love the music.

