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# A Bar, A Community, A Calling: How San Pancho Became Home

Kirsten Raccuia

**T**he first rule of **San Pancho** is not to talk about San Pancho. Everyone keeps the secret to themselves.

Everyone but Dan Camacho and Talula Casillas.

The town is too good, they say, not to share.

“There’s something magical in San Pancho. It has a rare energy. I just feel it. We finally found the community we’ve been searching for,” explains Dan.

In 2008, Dan left New York City to spend a month at a friend’s condo in Puerto Vallarta. Back then, Vallarta was a small, charming fishing village that captivated his heart.

Dan lived in various neighborhoods, or *colonias*, in Vallarta for the better part of nine years, and became a permanent resident of Mexico. But over time, PV transformed from a village to a bustling, cosmopolitan town, so Dan began looking for a new home with the quaint, quiet environment he preferred. “I decided to slowly move north. First, I moved to Bucerías, then settled in La Cruz de Huacacastle. And finally, two months ago, my partner Talula and I moved to San Pancho, about an hour north of Puerto Vallarta.

The star of San Pancho is the expansive golden-sand beach punctuated with restaurants and beach clubs.

“You can throw your chair in the sand



Dan and Talula love the quiet authenticity of a town the locals would prefer to keep a secret...

and grab a drink from one of the bar shacks... along with oysters pulled fresh from the sea,” Dan says.

There are no big grocery stores, but there are markets and delivery trucks for your daily needs, like pasta, meat, fish, and fruit.

“San Pancho is a one-horse town in the very best way. It’s small but not sleepy. And it’s full of soul...

“I wanted to recreate the vibrant feeling of community I had when I first moved to Puerto Vallarta,” Dan says. “And San Pancho is filling that void. Plus, everyone seems to be doing something spiritual. There’s healing energy here.”

It’s that energy that made Talula feel a profound bond with San Pancho right from the start. Born in Tepic, Mexico, about two hours inland, she’s always been in tune with the land, the people, and the spiritual world. “She’s a natural-born healer... the real deal,” says Dan.

## Sharing the Spirits

Dan and Talula didn’t just move to San Pancho on a whim. They first went for business.

There was a small corner spot in the middle of town, perfect for their passion project: **Picabu**, a mezcal bar and tasting spot, named after the kind of childlike wonder the couple has for life.

They fell in love with the space and the landlords, who come from one of the original San Pancho families. “We felt the energy of the space. We connected with the abuela (grandma) who lives in the back, and her grandson, a famous chef in the area. They’ve thanked us for turning the space into something special.”

It’s those little things that made Dan and Talula feel like they were finally becoming part of a harmonious community.

When they first found the location for the bar, they weren’t planning on living in San Pancho. They lived 25 minutes away in La Cruz, and were planning to make the commute.

As they started building the bar and spending time there, neighbors kept popping over to ask what they planned for the space. “We loved explaining the concept and slogan, ‘Sharing the Spirits.’ It embodies both the joy of sharing agave spirits and the transformative effects of the agave plant.”

## Our Yellow Submarine

One day on their drive into Picabu to work on the bar, it hit them. “Why are we doing this drive every day? We love San Pancho. Why are we not living there?”

That very same day, as they left the bar, they saw a serendipitous “For Rent” sign and stopped to investigate. “It’s a beautiful little yellow house we call the Yellow Submarine for \$1,240 a month. We closed the deal the next day.

“It really was fate because it’s not easy to find rentals in this town. We saw a sign. Literally and spiritually. We knew it was meant for us,” says Dan.

## It’s Where We Belong

Now, Dan’s routine has a rhythm that feels right.

“I feel like a shopkeeper in 19th-century Europe. In many ways, I’m living a simpler existence.”

In San Pancho, Talula has found a place where she can embrace her gifts.

“There’s a crazy energy here that makes you want to be better. It’s a special place. It’s where we belong, and we’re more connected with our community than ever.” ■

**Editor’s Note:** For a detailed look at the town of San Pancho, including shopping, dining, real estate, and other local tips, go [here](#).

## THE HEALING PROPERTIES OF MEZCAL

Mezcal is any agave-based spirit. The agave plant (*pulque* in its fermented form) has long been sacred to the indigenous Mexican peoples, and was used in Aztec religious rites.

For centuries, *Curanderos* (native healers and shamans) have used agave for its cleansing and healing properties.

In her work, Talula uses mezcal to “unite people with deeper aspects of themselves.”