

Welcome to Mexico!

By Victoria Schmidt

Things that crawl



While contemplating our move to Mexico, there was one thing that gave both my husband and I pause. It wasn't the "violence," or learning the language... it was things that crawl.

OK, grin if you will, but we're from Minnesota. Land of 10,000 Lakes, and maybe two "dangerous" bugs; mosquitos that may carry diseases, and ticks. And while there are salamanders, they are harmless, and poisonous snakes are rare. And Minnesota has four seasons. Nothing grows very large because of winter kill, so even cockroaches are downright tiny.

Mexico has bugs! Big bugs! Dangerous bugs. How were we going to handle living with black widows, scorpions and brown recluse spiders? We pictured them everywhere.

Two weeks after moving to Mexico we had our first encounter. It was not pretty. The house we were renting required us to access our bathroom by exiting the house, and entering the bathroom from the patio. (Mexican architecture is an entirely different column.) One night after a hard rain, I decided to take a hot shower to relax and allow myself some sleep. Prepared, I removed my glasses as I opened the sliding shower door. I was about to step inside when I thought I saw something moving. I stopped with my foot in the air, slowly stepped backward and shut the door. With my glasses on, I cautiously re-opened the door and saw that the entire shower stall floor was a moving mass of bugs...cockroaches, crickets, scorpions and more.

I closed the door. I did not scream. I did wake my husband telling him there was a bug problem in the bathroom. He went in, and I heard him yell "Holy S*&!" He eliminated the problem along with an entire can of Raid. Our maid had to clean out the dead carcasses. To this day, I always examine the shower floor before I remove my glasses!

That's when we learned about the essential weapon: drain covers. Other well-meaning ex-pats warned us not to go barefoot, not to leave our shoes on the floor, not to allow our bed sheets and blankets to touch the floor, names of fumigators, and household products for pest control, and, of course, the number for Cruz Roja.

We still fear the dreaded scorpion. Of course, we've since learned that people actually survive scorpion stings. We've learned where scorpions live; hide, and we learned to be cautious. But we have also learned that no matter how cautious we are, there may come a time when we may fall victim...but until then, we remain vigilant.

We recently moved to a new home, and while in the bathroom, again without my glasses, I saw something I couldn't quite identify. I asked my husband to take a look. He walked into our shower, and viciously stomped a scorpion to death. No drain cover. He went right out and bought covers for all our drains. My knight in shining armor hates these things as much as I do!