

Your Passport Please, Two Magical Places.

Posted on 01-24-2004 11:41

Summary:



Jack Kohane, The National Post, Toronto - January 25th, 2004
Saturday, January 24, 2004

Liona Boyd, the First Lady of the Guitar and five-time Juno Award winner for Instrumental Artist of the Year, has released a new recording, Camino Latino/ Latin Journey. From her home in Beverly Hills, Calif., she talks about her travels.

Full Story:



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SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, MEXICO I've been coming to this town, located about four hours north of Mexico City, since the 1960s, when my parents came here to live for a time. It's still where we hold our family reunions. This marvellous colonial town is filled with restaurants, wonderful shops with local art and handicrafts and unique cooking -- try appetizers like corn cakes topped with black beans and sour cream or mini corn tortillas with shredded chicken and green tomatillo sauce or fried cactus -- it's divine! San Miguel is always humming with activity, due in large part to the community's 10,000 artists and wealthy Mexican and American retirees who have settled here. There's quite a contingent of Canadians living and wintering here, too, including skater Toller Cranston, who owns a house in the town. Colonial Mexico thrives here, much as it has for the past 300 years. The steep cobbled streets are lined with brightly

coloured cantinas and grand villas decked with intricate stonework, wrought-iron balconies, hanging lanterns and elaborate door knockers. The town is perfectly preserved because it's been a designated historical landmark since 1930. As such, there's a ban on new-style construction, neon signs and other symbols of "modernization." It's easy to get lost in the winding lanes of San Miguel. Luckily, most lead to the Jardin, the town's main square, where on most evenings locals and tourists gather to spontaneously break into salsa or merengue. Dominating the garden plaza is the Parroquia, a pink Gothic church, San Miguel's most famous landmark. Built in 1683, its intricate carvings are a wonder to behold and its soaring spires are visible from almost anywhere in the city. Every year, on Nov. 1 (All Saints Day) and 2 (All Souls Day), something special takes place in San Miguel and many other areas of Mexico -- the Day of the Dead. This is one of the country's most popular cultural festivals, celebrated with the elaborately decorated pan de muerto (a rich coffee cake decorated with meringues made to look like bones), skull-shaped candies and sweets, marzipan death figures and papier mache skeletons and skulls.

VENICE, ITALY This is my all-time favourite place, one I visit at every possible opportunity. It's such an artistically inspiring city that I've filmed some of my best music videos here. It's hauntingly beautiful, just like something out of a Canaletto painting, with historic canals, bridges, houses and museums that have attracted world travellers -- and artists -- for centuries. The whole city is an extraordinary architectural masterpiece in which even the smallest buildings contain works by some of the world's greatest masters, such as Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese. The only way to get around in Venice is to walk or take a boat. I especially adore the boat taxis to access all the main parts of the city, the main islands of the lagoon and the mainland. On sultry evenings at outdoor cafes, one is serenaded by mandolins and the rich musical repertoire of the gondoliers. I recommend the Hotel Danieli, a masterfully restored palace with great views of the Grand Canal, located steps away from the Piazza San Marco and its Basilica as well as the original 14th-century palace of Doge Dandolo's family, a Venetian Gothic landmark lavishly appointed with pink marble, stained glass, gold ceilings, Murano glass chandeliers and antiques.

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