

Mexico City, seen through the lens of 'Roma'

By Necee Regis

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

"Roma," Alfonso Cuarón's memoir of childhood in Mexico City, received 10 Academy Award nominations this year, and won in three big categories: best foreign language film, best cinematography, and best director.

Set in 1970, the movie is an intimate portrait of Cuarón's neighborhood, Colonia Roma, and the people who populated it, especially his nanny, an indigenous Mixtec woman played by Oscar-nominated Yalitza Aparico. Filmed in black and white, the movie captures the spirit of the past, aided in part by a devastating earthquake in 1985 that slowed the district's gentrification. On a recent visit, I was curious to see this other part of Mexico City, outside of its impressive tourist destinations. Visiting places where the movie was filmed, it was easy to imagine the area as it looked half a century ago.

The sprawling metropolis of Mexico City can be overwhelming for a newcomer, so I connected with Catalina Beraducci, a young actress and writer familiar with the filming locations of "Roma." Divided into Norte and Sur (north and south), Colonia Roma today is an artsy bohemian enclave known for its lively chef-owned restaurants and bars, art galleries, lovely parks, and Neo-colonial and Art Deco architecture.

We began our pilgrimage in Roma Sur, meandering along tree-shaded residential streets, passing colorful two and three story buildings with shops, cafes, and a small independent cinema displaying an enormous Roma film poster.

Our first destination, the family house (Tepeji 22, Roma Sur) is identified by a discrete plaque that reads, "Aqui Se Filmo ROMA." It was here I realized I was not the only person on this quest. A couple were taking selfies in front of the garage door, and a man arrived alone to snap some shots as I was leaving. Movie geek alert: Cuarón's actual childhood home (Tepeji 21) is opposite the house in the film. When comparing my photos with film stills, I noticed the filmmaker switched the house number and changed the shape of the window to mirror his actual family home. (And then, obviously, changed it back.) The giveaway — other than the sign — is the tree in front with branching trunks.

From there we walked to Kinder Condesa (Tlaxcala 105, Roma Sur), the kindergarten where Aparico's character, Cleo, escorts one of the family's children. A sign with a Roma film image announces the school is "very proud for the success of its former student, Alfonso Cuarón." As I photographed the building, the door opened twice to let students in and out, and I stepped back so as not to intrude. The third time, a smiling woman emerged to offer me a map of the city, saying it was un regalo, a gift.

The more we strolled the more the movie came to life. Mexico City is alive with sounds that played a role in the film, and they were present on our journey: barking dogs, children's voices, streetside knife sharpeners, gas vendors, junk salesmen, organ grinders (sans monkeys) and military bands. Add to that the smells of food vendors selling everything from tacos carnitas to grilled sweet potatoes and corn, and roasted coffee wafting from open cafes.

There are numerous places to stop for a meal or coffee break in Roma. For aromatic organic coffee and baked goods, nothing beats Borola Café Roma (Jalapa 181, borola.mx); for a full on breakfast try the colorful and playful Lalo (Zacatecas 173, eat-lalo.com); a tasty lunch of typical food from the Yucatan peninsula can be had at Cantina Riviera del Sur (Chiapas 174, www.facebook.com/cantinariviera).

An Uber whisked us to Hospital Siglo XXI (Av. Cuauhtémoc 330, Doc-



PHOTOS BY NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



tores), an area of hospitals and health care centers where some of the movie's pivotal scenes were filmed. The cutting-edge medical facility is heroic in scale, as are stunning murals along the vast entryway and the subsequent

courtyard. Turning to leave, we spied life-size letters of the movie title, ROMA. They seem to be ready for cinephile tourism.

Opened in 1943, the massive former movie house Teatro Metropolitan

(Av. Independencia 90, Colonia Centro) — where maids Cleo and Adela go to meet their dates — sports an Art Deco façade inspired by Rockefeller Center and Radio City Music Hall in New York. The theater today is used for con-

"Roma" fans can visit Mexico City and tour the places where Alfonso Cuarón filmed his Academy Award winning picture, including (clockwise, from top) the family house at Tepeji 22, Roma Sur; La Casa del Pavo; Hospital Siglo XXI; and Kinder Condesa.

certs and live dance and other performances. As I snapped a photo, a late-1960s Plymouth Fury III convertible cruised down the street, a serendipitous bonus to my Roma-inspired day.

Our final destination was La Casa del Pavo (Motolinía 40, Centro Histórico) — literally, "the house of turkey" — the modest eatery where Cleo is introduced to her boyfriend, Fermin. Founded in 1901, the restaurant is known for its turkey sandwiches, and also serves meals such as chicken with mole poblano and grilled steak.

En route to the restaurant, an easy 10-minute hike from the theater, we detoured along Alameda Central, the city's oldest public park. Turning the corner, as if on cue, we met hundreds of protesters marching in the wide Avenida Juárez, waving flags and chanting. Beraducci translated their familiar-sounding slogan — "The workers, united, will not be divided!" — and I recalled the movie's scene with mobs of student protesters. Luckily, no shots were fired. The march that day was peaceful.

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TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER | CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Where's compensation from Iberia for delayed luggage?

Q. Last summer, my wife and I flew from Madrid to Munich on Iberia Airlines. The airline lost two of our bags.

We filed a lost luggage claim, and after many, many calls from Germany to Iberia's customer service office in London, the airline delivered one of our small checked bags five days later. It found my wife's larger bag and delivered it eight days after we arrived.

We sent receipts for items purchased by my wife since she had no toiletries and only the clothes she was wearing when she arrived in Munich. We also sent a registered letter to Iberia's customer experience manager in Madrid, Spain, requesting \$495 in compensation for the items she had to purchase.

To this date, the manager we contacted has not responded, but Iberia's London office has denied the claim, saying there is "missing information" on the sheet. Instead of covering our costs and paying us \$495, Iberia is sending us \$162. It's their final offer.

I would like you to get someone to resolve this claim, if possible. We have double-checked all our receipts, and they are all clear and legible. My wife even made a separate list with each item purchased and the cost.

BENEDICT VALENTI, *Boynton Beach, Fla.*

A. I'm sorry about your delayed luggage. Iberia should have delivered your wife's bags to her in Munich when she arrived. Not five days later and not

eight days later. (But it could be worse — remember last week's case, where the airline lost a reader's bag permanently?)

No one disputes the loss, the delay nor the fact that your wife had expenses for clothing and toiletries. But according to the documentation you provided, Iberia thinks your wife only ran up a tab of \$162.

Hmm, \$162 for a week's worth of clothing and toiletries? (Have they ever been to Germany?)

A look at the receipts you sent to Iberia suggests that everything was correctly documented. If I didn't know any better, I'd say someone in the main office is just denying your wife's refund requests on a line-by-line basis, and on a whim.

The fix? Send a brief, polite e-mail to one of

Iberia's executives. I also list the managers at International Airlines Group, Iberia's parent company.

When an airline loses your luggage but eventually recovers it, the airline has a lot more flexibility on compensation. So Iberia could have told you to take it or leave it. A closer look at your claim suggested that while you presented the receipts, you also could have included an itemized list that clearly explained what your wife had purchased.

You did, and I shared that new list with Iberia. It cut you a check for the full amount of your claim.

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