

Why choose the city of Chitré to build Cubitá?

I would have to mention the time when I served in the position of Chief Financial Officer for Verdeazul Group, a development company in charge of projects such as the Bristol Hotels, Buenaventura and among others. From the group, I learned how to uphold the quality of a luxury project, through hard work and attention to detail. Through this learning we advanced with the planning for the project Cubitá. At that time my wife and I made the decision to conceive a project of our own somewhere in the country outside of Panama City, to live a different experience, leaving the capital, and to have a more relaxed lifestyle. For the 1st time in 2008, we took a trip to the region of Azuero. We conducted an extensive tour of the peninsula and Chitré, in the province of Herrera definitely impacted us in a profound way. Subsequently, we further investigated Chitré and realized it was a city that was experiencing a commercial expansion. From then on we traveled often to Chitré as we immediately fell in love with the warmth of the people, the rich traditions and above all the "country living" atmosphere that the area has to offer. Every morning we woke up to the sounds of nature, something very difficult to achieve in the capital city.

What led to the conception of Cubitá?

Cubitá today is the result of a team effort with the contribution of several diverse ideas. However, all was born with that first trip my wife and I made to Azuero. Gradually, in subsequent visits, we realized that, despite this cultural richness offered by the region (an unparalleled cultural wealth), there were no educational facilities or any options for those who would seek to understand the culture of the peninsula. At first we wanted to build a tourism project, a structure that includes a hotel of a higher standard than existed at that time.

So we can say that Cubitá was born first as a Hotel?

That's right. The first thing was to find a good concept, a word that sums up everything that the region represents for us. Through various readings, facilitated by Professor Milciades Pinzón, we found the word "Cubitá". Professor Pinzón argues, in his book "Con los Cutarras Puestas", as on his blog and other websites that the region should not be called Azuero, because that was the name of a Colombian who never knew the region; instead, the region should be known as Cubitá, which was the name of a group of pre-Columbian people who inhabited the area close to the La Villa river. So we decided to christen the project with the name, Cubitá, as a way of paying tribute to the deepest roots of the peninsula, and recognition of the rich tradition and history.

Once the name Cubitá was found, what was the next step?

Our priority was to find a suitable location for the project. We soon found a spot which although exceeded the dimensions required for the construction of the Cubitá Hotel, was the catalyst to provide complimentary residential and commercial components. Our next step was to ascertain the feasibility of such an ambitious project, so commenced with the appropriate inquiries and Government bodies. We realized then that Herrera and Los Santos, in the past had a large population which had migrated to the capital city and that at any given time would intend to return to their home soil, either for retirement or vacation and would require to purchase homes with a quality in which they would now be accustomed to from the city. We were also aware that a lot of people, lovers of the Azuero region, whether or not natives, may want to have a home in the region to spend a few months of the year which gaining the income generation from the rental program for the remainder of the year. So our hotel, we knew immediately, would offer a property management service to owners, providing security, maintenance and peace of mind that their property is in good hands.

Does the project Cubitá also have a shopping plaza?

It does indeed; The Plaza complements the hotel and residences. We thought it would be very comfortable and convenient for guests to have a shopping mall within the project area itself.

The Cubitá project, located in such a rich region such as Azuero, is inherently different, but what more can you tell us about the hotel? For example, what other features make it unique?

The hotel's design is inspired on pre-Columbian elements and the colonial architecture of Azuero. We take into account all materials that relate to such periods, such as: tile, brick, stone, clay, and how these elements were used in the construction of structures of the time. We wanted to make a replica of a "Interiorano village" (a local village). That is how the idea was born for a central courtyard inside the hotel, with a chapel and a gazebo in the center, emulating the way that many of the Azuero villages were designed by the Spanish, with its central park and the church in the forefront. To complement this idea we included a small traditional mud hut and a sugar cane mill, through which guests can live the experience of how the houses were built of mud and had fresh cane juice on tap. Finally, we came up with the construction of a museum where there will be displayed, replicas of handicrafts, clothing and other objects alluding to the region. Our ultimate goal is that guests are immersed in a truly "interiorano" atmosphere and live an authentic azuereño experience.

What about the international market? What feedback have you received from foreigners on the Cubitá project?

Last year, we participated at the International Home Show in Toronto, Canada, and Canadians strongly agreed that Cubitá had a very authentic personality and identity. The attendees viewed the project's unique features and expressed that it has not been cut from the same cloth as all the others. With all the included benefits of the hotel facilities Cubitá has to offer, there is no other product on the market for the price. This is a fantastic project for the international market, something with an original heart and soul.

Azuero, we know, is the region that is home to all this cultural richness, but on the other hand, from the perspective of human development and trade, where do you see Chitré in 5 years?

Chitré is changing and growing rapidly but, more importantly, it is doing so with order and without losing the warmth and atmosphere of a small town. Here just across the street from our office, there has recently opened a Do it Center store. A little further down the road, is the hardware store Cochez; just 150 meters further to the other side, a new Novey hardware store is planned; at the entrance of Chitré is the new shopping mall Paseo Central, including the supermarket Rey, Madison Store (with 10,000 m² of shopping areas), a Lumicentro lighting store, an Farmacias Arrocha and a food court that is comparable to the capital city. We are experiencing a time of economic growth that is definitely tracing a direction that will give Chitré another face in the future and that despite this commercial boom, the town of Chitré retains the essence of the people we highlight and love. It is for these reasons that Chitré was chosen by the Gorgas Memorial Institute as the best city to live in the Republic of Panama: the city has good hospitals, clinics, banks, bilingual private schools and other amenities. Rest assured, whoever invests in Chitré will take advantage of a fantastic opportunity.