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ARCR's English Language Magazine

January / February 2021

Published by ARCR Administración S.A. Apdo. 1191-1007 Centro Colón San José, Costa Rica (www.arcr.cr)

El Residente

Adventure by
Chicken Bus



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This magazine has been published every two months since 1995 as the official communications media of ARCR Administration. Our organization provides service to thousands of foreigners who have chosen Costa Rica to reside for short periods or for permanent residence.

Since 1984 we have been offering reliable **services, information** and **advocacy** to Costa Rica's foreign residents. We have the experience and ability to help you with your residency application, immigration, business and financial management, real estate purchases and rentals, property management, insurance, pet importation and much more.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Not much good can be said about 2020, except it is past and behind us. Fortunately, none of the El Residente staff has contracted COVID-19 and we soldier on, looking forward to 2021 with high hopes that all our readers will continue to stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Speaking of 2021, with this issue we begin a new series of articles. In the tradition of last year's travel theme, Destinos, this new series tells of one family's experiences moving around Central America with their children, utilizing local public transportation. Reading Adventure by Chicken Bus may help quell your desire to get out of the house, if only for a moment, but through it you can visit some of the places you can't go today. We hope you enjoy the tale.

The salutation, "Happy New Year" seems more than appropriate at this point! Everyone, please wear your masks and stay healthy; we need you! The first delivery of vaccine has arrived, and inoculations have begun. Maybe soon we can get out and experience our own adventures!



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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

TREE OF HOPE Each year ARCR engages in a charity effort to provide gifts to children in Costa Rica hospitals. Despite the impact of COVID-19, we are pleased to report that the 2020 effort was a resounding success! Through the generosity of our members we were able to purchase 347 toys for children of all ages. The toys were given to the Holy Spirit Charity Group (Obras del Espiritu Santo) for distribution.

In addition, ARCR was also able to obtain 2,652 diapers and 60 sets of clothing for newborns. Each set included: A T-shirt, underwear, stockings, onesie, and a blanket. The sets were donated to the Children's Hospital (Hospital de Niños).

Our deepest thanks to all, including the ARCR staff, who contributed to this effort.

SOCIAL SECURITY "PROOF OF LIFE" FORMS

Periodically United States citizens residing outside the US, and who receive payments from the Social Security Administration (SSA), receive letters instructing them to complete and return an included form which certifies they continue to be eligible to receive those payments. (These are commonly called "Proof of Life" forms.) The letters are mailed out in May, and a follow-up is sent in September. Failure to complete and return the form can result in a suspension of payments. HOWEVER, due to COVID-19 issues, the SSA has announced that the forms will not be sent this year. More information and the complete SSA notice can be found by reading the Ask ACS column in this issue.

The Board of Directors wishes everyone a safe, happy, and healthy New Year!



ARCR Board of Directors:
From the left, back row, Earl Tomlinson, Allen Dickinson, Bob Brashears, Terry Renfer, Terry Wise.
Front row, Mel Goldberg, Linda Leake, Martha Rollins.

2021 Official Holidays, Observances, and Days Off in Costa Rica

Date	Day	Name	Type
01 Jan	Friday	New Year's Day	National Holiday
19 March	Friday	Saint Joseph's Day	Observance
02 April	Friday	Good Friday	National Holiday
11 April*	Sunday	Juan Santamaría Day	National Holiday
01 May*	Saturday	Labor Day	National Holiday
20 June	Sunday	Father's Day	Observance
25 July*	Sunday	Guanacaste Day	National Holiday
2 Aug	Monday	Our Lady of Los Ángeles	Non-Compulsory Payment Holiday
15 Aug*	Sunday	Mother's Day	National Holiday
24 Aug	Tuesday	National Parks Day	Observance
09 Sep	Thursday	Children's Day	Observance
15 Sep [#]	Wednesday	Independence Day	National Holiday
02 Nov	Tuesday	All Souls' Day	Observance
22 Nov	Monday	Teacher's Day	Observance
01 Dec [#]	Wednesday	Abolition of the Army Day	Non-Compulsory Payment Holiday
08 Dec	Wednesday	Feast of the Immaculate Conception	Observance
25 Dec	Saturday	Christmas Day	National Holiday

Dates followed by * indicate that an official Day Off will be taken the following Monday.
 Dates followed by # indicate that an official Day Off will be taken the preceding Monday.

DEFINITIONS OF HOLIDAY TERMS

DAY OFF: Days designated as a "Day Off" are paid days for Costa Rican workers.

OBSERVANCES: If the date falls on a weekday, it is a paid day off for Costa Rican workers and will be celebrated on the actual date, not moved.

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS: Non-essential businesses will be closed. These are paid holidays for Costa Rican workers. A worker who is required to work on a national holiday must, by law, be paid double wages.

NON-COMPULSORY PAYMENT HOLIDAYS: These are official holidays, however the employer is not required to pay their employees double if they are required to work that day.

6 ADVENTURE BY CHICKEN BUS

by Janet LoSole



Part 1: Farewell

“Chicken Bus” – Public bus service in some regions of Central America most often utilizing refurbished school buses from North America that are beautifully decorated in pastel colors, religious imagery, and outfitted with overhead racks; frequently crowded with people and animals such that luggage, and sometimes travelers, must ride on the roof.

(The following is excerpted from the book, Adventure by Chicken Bus: An Unschooling Odyssey Through Central America)

On the eve of our trip I tossed and turned on my farting air mattress and worried. The empty house echoed around our sleeping bags laid out alongside small piles of clothes, and visions of attacking crocodiles and venomous snakes weaseled into my brain. Two years of planning had come down to this: every possession sold, jobs put on hold, long goodbyes over. I worried to myself, Are we ready for this?

At the farewell party I’d ushered friends over to the map of Costa Rica tacked to the wall and explained

our itinerary. “We’ll be arriving at the tail end of turtle nesting season, so we’ll head directly to this area here,” I said, pointing to the Caribbean coast, “to volunteer with a conservation project. After that, we’ll return to the Central Valley to find jobs.”

Some peered at the map, nodding, others pointed nervously to the region lying to the north. “Nicaragua? With the girls?”

“No. No way!” I said. I was thinking about keeping our two daughters, eight-year-old Jocelyn and five-

year-old Natalie, safe and healthy while we taught English as a Second Language in Costa Rica.

My husband, Lloyd, was a teacher like me, but I was a stay-at-home-mom tasked with homeschooling our daughters as we focused on exploring interests, rather than following a government-imposed curriculum. One night, we realized that the original blueprint was going off the rails. With only one of us working, homeschooling demanded frugality. In our present situation we could not survive without the credit card to get us out of financial jams, so with a steadily rising debt load, Lloyd and I had been forced to pick up night school contracts. This meant hiring a sitter. It also meant both of us were absent from putting the girls to bed at night. As a family, we were spending little time together, and that wasn't what we wanted life to be.

"This is not how I want to live," Lloyd admitted one night. It was then that the notion of taking a massive field trip somewhere exotic, germinated.

As a couple, we had established a practice of writing down our long-term goals and working toward them. We worked well as a team, egging each other on and reviewing the lists periodically. "Let's write down what means the most to us and go from there," I suggested.

We finished scribbling and then swapped papers. The lists were nearly identical and at the top of each was one word – Travel.

But where could we go with two small children? It mattered a great deal to have the girls exposed to a different way of life. I wanted the girls to understand how others lived and to respect the privilege into which they were born, and Lloyd felt we were only paying lip service to environmentalism while driving two cars around. Wherever we went, we intended to rely on public transit whenever we could. Nor would we be content just to sightsee; we expected to integrate, live as the locals did, have real-life experiences that would enhance our children's understanding of the culture.

Lloyd was barely in the door one night when I called out to him from the computer. "Hey, did you know that Costa Rica has no military?" I read aloud, "Costa Rica abolished its military forces in 1949 and since then has devoted substantial resources to investment in health and education."

He began reading along with me. "Its population of 4.4 million people enjoys a literacy rate of 96 percent and a life expectancy of 79.3 years." He stood up. "That's about the

same as Canada!" The decision was made; Costa Rica would be our destination.

Because we were deep in credit-card debt, we held a perpetual garage sale for months before we left to pay it off. Our plan was that we would travel on an extreme budget, getting around as the locals do, eating their food, shopping at their stores, relying on them for information and assistance. In return we would put currency directly into the hands of the villagers; introducing this form of travel, community-based-tourism, to provide education to the girls by example.

Goodbyes over, tears shed, beer guzzled, on a hot August morning in 2005, we handed over the keys to our tenants and left Canada behind.

We headed to the airport, each of us carrying our important possessions in a backpack. Each pack held the individual's clothes, books, toiletries, air mattresses and covers, sleep sacks, and shoes. Lloyd brought with him a four-man tent, some tools and an air pump, and I carted the travel guides, health books, medicines, vitamins, first aid kit, and a laptop. The girls traveled with a few toys, including a handful of Lego pieces, some Barbies, and Jocelyn's beloved Pepper, a stuffed St. Bernard. Thus equipped, and comprising the entirety of our possessions, we boarded our flight. In just a few hours we were disembarking at the Juan Santamaría airport, in the Central Valley just outside of San José, the capital of Costa Rica.

Our first stop was Alajuela, a quaint mid-sized city adjacent to the airport, where we bunked for the first few days. Jocelyn often went off in her mind to a fantasy world instead of looking where she was going, and her daydreaming, because of the lack of typical public safeguards, became a relatively big concern when we explored the city; "Please pay attention to where you are going," I said, dodging potholes in the sidewalks.

We must have looked like strutting chickens, heads bobbing back and forth as we lunged over gaps in the sidewalk or ducked to avoid low-hanging signs. Noise blared from every direction: car horns, engines, music, vendors shouting, and we clapped our hands to our ears and gave up any attempt to speak to each other.

For lunch, we gorged on gigantic portions of gallo pinto before waddling in the direction of the terminal to inquire about buses to San José. If the garage sale money was expected to last, we could not indulge in luxuries like taxis and rental cars. Public transportation

in Costa Rica is inexpensive, so we each endured the lugging and stowing of four backpacks in the heat. Even Natalie, who was solid and wiry, favoring vigorous activity and strenuous exercise, was expected to carry her own belongings.

From Alajuela, we ventured a pathetic twenty kilometers to San José, giving a whole new meaning to the term “baby steps.” There our room at a popular hostel was crammed with just a single set of bunk beds and a small wooden locker. We wedged the girls’ air mattresses under the bottom bunk and stowed packs at the foot of our beds.

The place was buzzing with travelers like us, spilling into town to begin their journey or resting up after completing one. San José is like that, a geographic jumping off point inside Central America. I was captivated by the stories from travelers who breezed in from Nicaragua or who had flown in from Colombia. The hint that the entire region was well-suited to backpacking was taking root. We’d thumbed through the guidebooks until they were dog-eared, never once contemplating the adjacent countries because, of course, they were “too dangerous.” Oh, we allowed for brief forays into border towns in Panama to renew our visas, but nothing more adventurous than that.

Young sojourners, curious at the sight of a backpacking family, assumed we were rich, and others scratched their heads at the notion of homeschooling. Anyone from Canada or the US reacted with a knowing, “Ah, you’re homeschooling.” Europeans, however, (where homeschooling is less common, and in some countries illegal) asked us to explain. Many were surprised to learn that homeschooling can be accomplished without the use of an official, text-based curriculum, and that in fact many families adopt a system called “un-schooling” where children learn through natural life experiences. That was the approach we intended to use on the road; the entire trip was designed as an opportunity to participate in hands-on learning. The girls’ first subject was to be science.

In San José we located the terminal for buses going to the Caribbean side of Costa Rica. At the Gran Terminal del Caribe we found a coach shuttling folks to the coast and, for a small fee, bought our tickets. The advent of the rainy season coincides with the end of turtle nesting season and the members of a turtle conservation project were waiting for us to help them in their efforts to rescue the endangered sea turtles of

Parismina, a Caribbean island village visited annually by nesting sea turtles. We planned to slip into the narrow slot between the two seasons for a few weeks before returning to the Central Valley, where Costa Rica is more densely populated, to look for teaching jobs.

For ninety minutes, while we journeyed to Limón, I fanned myself with a copy of *La Nación*, Costa Rica’s Spanish language daily newspaper. When we disembarked, I remarked to Lloyd that, “Sweat is dripping down the back of my legs.”

“Zip off the bottom of your cargo pants,” he suggested. “Oh...” was all I could think to say.

Our destination, the turtle rescue, is remote and cumbersome to find, so we planned to break up the journey by stopping at Limón, south of Parismina along the coast. At the bus terminal we formed a scrum and decided that Lloyd would stay with the girls while I tried to find the Hotel Rey, recommended in our guidebook. Bad idea. Street signs are rare in Costa Rica and directions center on the number of meters you are from a major landmark. Hotel Rey, I was told, was “fifty meters west of the southwest corner of the mercado.” Of course, these instructions assumed that I knew where the mercado was and that I understood that fifty meters represented a portion of a city block and not actual meters. After a few of these wild-goose-chase directions I gave up on finding the hotel and went back to the terminal where, Jocelyn, Natalie, and Lloyd drank from their bottles of water, enjoying the floor show; hawkers of a variety of edible goods who sang out “Pati! Pati! Pateeeeeeeeeeeee!”

Corporate marketers in developed nations spend millions on slick ad campaigns, but merchants in Limón’s market employed attention-getting gimmicks and annoyance to attract customers. This method almost worked; we seriously considered buying some of the pastries, hereafter known to us as “pateeeeeee.”

Later, we found Hotel Rey. We must have looked a sight because as we stood looking up at the reception on the second floor, a dusty, old shifter with a patchy gray beard and wiry hair offered to carry our bags up the two flights of stairs, for a small fee. We declined the offer. The owners of the hotel, a Chinese family consisting of many people who lived in the back, their apartment entirely exposed to the public by curtain-less glass walls, rented us a room.

"Ahhhhh, relaxing in Cell Block Four," Lloyd said, referring not so much to the four windowless walls as to the one bare light bulb that dangled above the bed. The walls in fact did not even make it all the way to the ceiling; the last two feet were enclosed by lattice that allowed in all the light from the street, and the noise along with it.

I gestured to the sleeping sacks I had sewn from light, cool fabric to use as sleeping bags and asked Lloyd, "Am I not smart?" But he was busy examining the doorknob and trying to enter the locked room from the outside to test its security. In the middle of the noisy night, the absurdity hit me, and I burst into a fit of giggles. Fleabag hotel.

In the morning, Lloyd complained. "Was someone chopping food all night?"

In the morning as the four of us sat groggily on the beds, we could hear all manner of sounds emanating from neighboring rooms. Jocelyn raised her head and announced, "Somebody farted!"

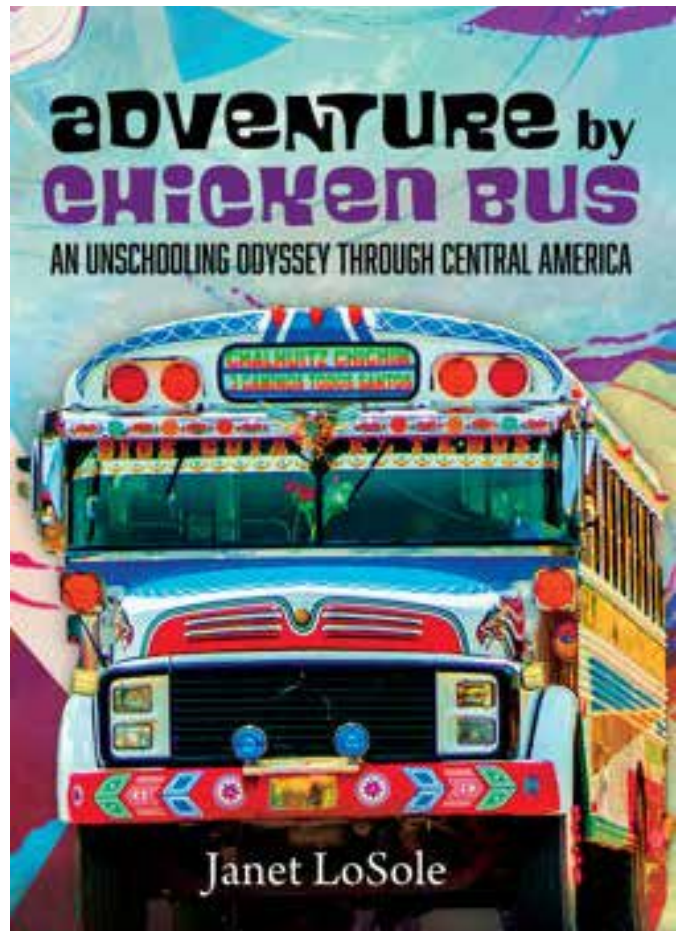
Thus ended our brief introduction to Limón, the Costa Rican transportation system, and the oppressive heat. We trudged down the street to the terminal and sat at a little table eating pastries that we bought after being attracted to a corner kiosk by a hawker yelling, "Pati! Pati! Pateeeeee!"

One may wonder about "Chicken Bus" in the title because our bus rides from Alajuela to San José to Limón were in semi-modern coaches in relative comfort, with seats for everyone. Our education about the true meaning of "chicken bus" was about to begin.

Janet LoSole is the author of Adventure by Chicken Bus: An Unschooling Odyssey Through Central America. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree (French) and is a certified TESOL instructor. You can learn more about the book or order the complete book about their travels at:

<https://www.adventurebychickenbus.com> or contact her at: <https://www.instagram.com/janetlosole/?hl=en>

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10 THE COFFEE STORY

by Bob Normand



The Perfect Cup

This is the third and last installment of the story of how coffee became the most popular beverage in the world, and the second most valuable traded commodity after oil. As we shall see, the story of coffee has become an integral part of the history of Costa Rica, particularly in the last fifty years.

In this part I'll address "The Perfect Cup" and how the search for special tastes progressed in the 20th century, in many ways similar to the global experience with wine. Also, how the periodic financial instability in the market led to great efforts to produce new and higher valued products, and created the specialty flavors segment.

The coffee industry prospered over the centuries as more people learned about it through the caravans and

trading ships which brought the beans, and then the plants, to northern countries. The Turks, in particular, invented coffee houses and, being the nomads that they were, spread the word about coffee across much of lower Europe.

It was only a matter of time before the word about coffee reached northern Europe. By the 1500s and 1600s all of Europe, by hook or crook, had experienced and fallen in love with the brew. In the 1700s the bean and plant spread to the Americas, particularly to the Caribbean and Latin America, where eventually Brazil would become the number-one producer in the world.

In the 1900s the industry had grown substantially but had, at times, suffered several financial collapses because of overproduction. Because of these difficulties some



The original Starbucks store was opened in Seattle, Washington March 31, 1971 on Western Avenue. A few years later it moved to 1912 Pike Place, where it still resides. As they say in the novels, the rest is history. They now have over 6,000 stores, employ some 350,000 people and have revenue of almost \$30 billion. (Man, that's a lot of Mocha Lattes!) Not bad for a specialty company, eh? Starbucks has its own farms in Costa Rica and annually produces/purchases an amount that registers over 15% of the entire Costa Rican crop. Some of the coffee producers refer to Starbucks as "the big bully of the specialty producers" but it's hard to argue with their success.

coffee producers looked for ways to make the business more stable and profitable. That search gave rise to product diversification in the 1960s, when the first attempts at creating more recession-proof, higher profit margin coffee products were made. Many thought that specialization via production of higher quality products with unique tastes was one answer, as did Costa Rica. And so did some American entrepreneurs.

It was during this period that three liberal arts students at the University of San Francisco met and came up with the idea of roasting and selling superior coffee. When it came time to name the operation and, after debating the issue, their consensus was that words beginning with "St" were strong (OK, why not?). So they decided to name their first store Starbucks, after the first mate in the novel *Moby-Dick* (that's what happens when you get English and History majors together as founders).



Starbucks had the right idea. I can remember the first time I returned to Florida from living in Costa Rica for a couple of years. I tried a cup of coffee at a restaurant and was shocked because it was thin, weak, and bitter. A little later I went to a Starbucks and ordered a large cup of one of their dark roast specials (something about "Volcan Poas" on their label description) – it helped reduce the mental derangement I had felt. I was back to normal – it tasted like Costa Rica!

It was in the late 1900s that Costa Rica coffee farmers realized that changes were needed if they were going to survive. In an attempt to rationalize a business that had gone through serious depressions around the world, the largest coffee producers, like Brazil or Vietnam, were resorting to mechanization to harvest the coffee cherries (ripe beans) rather than traditional hand picking. That meant they got some of the unripe and partially ripe beans in the mix, resulting in the coffee being of lower quality, even bitter tasting. The subsequent post-picking-bean treatment process they went through only added to the problem.

Costa Rica growers recognized that they, particularly the smaller farms, would never be able to economically compete with high volume sellers like Chase & Sanborn, Folgers, etc., which they somewhat derided by calling them "the cans." They decided that specialization was the key, and local producers elected to go with high quality specialty tastes to achieve higher prices, rather than using high volume mechanization.

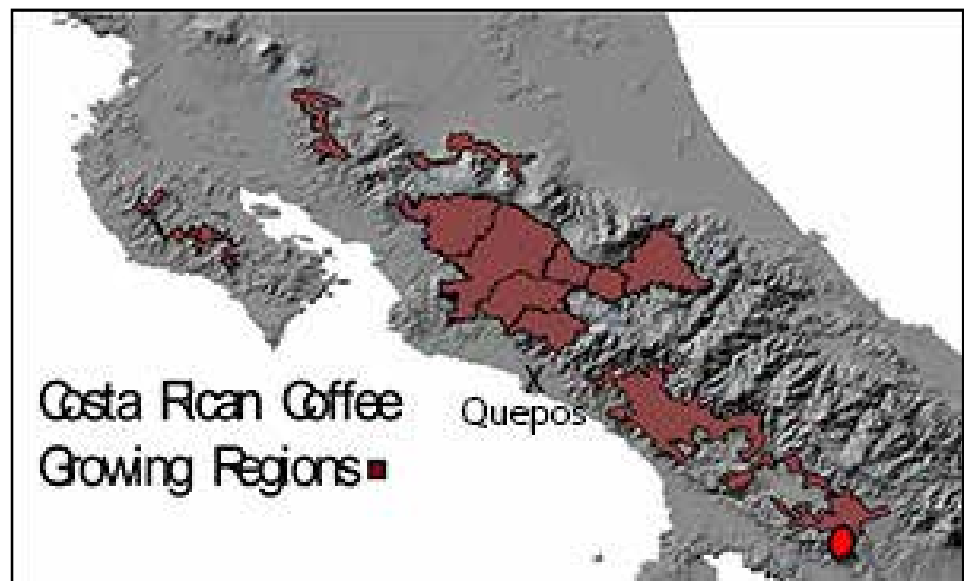
In 1989 Costa Rica passed a law that only Arabica coffee (the type of original plant from Ethiopia and which is

rated highest for its flavor) could be produced in Ticolandia. During this time the country also began the development of cooperatives that helped in the exchange of growing and marketing information based on higher priced specialty products. These products also provided a better wage for the staff and better return on investment for the growers, a movement which later became known as the “Fair Trade” movement.

The process of creating a great cup of coffee is more extensive than most people realize. The term “mountain-grown” is not a myth or marketing ploy; the best conditions exist where there are warm, tropical or near-tropical mountain climates, such as in Costa Rica.

Generally speaking, there are eight areas that are considered particularly good coffee producing regions in Costa Rica. They are mostly snuggled up to the sides of the Cordillera Central, the mountain range that bisects the country down its center, and are: West Central Valley (Naranjo), Los Santos (Terrazú), East Central Valley (Tres Rios), Orosi (Paraíso), Brunca (Coto Brus), Turrialba (Turrialba), North Central Valley (San Isidro), and Guanacaste (Tilarán). Each of these areas has striven to make their coffees a little different and professional taste testers can usually tell which one of these areas a brew comes from with one little sip.

It was originally thought that strong sun was necessary to achieve good production. This belief resulted in a great deal of deforestation in the higher production countries (Brazil, Vietnam). Experience has shown, however, that for higher quality specialty production, that shade-grown plants, particularly from certain trees (the Horku for example) can produce excellent beans and coffee flavors, and that they also provide their own fruit and leaves that naturally fertilize the



coffee plants. This is one way a farm can attain the rating of being “organic.”

Once the cherries are (hand) picked they are washed and the hull removed in an extractor, then the mucilage on the outside of the bean is removed in a tumbling process. Any natural materials left over from cleaning the beans is sent, along with the unripe beans and leaves that were earlier separated at picking time, to the composter and recycled as fertilizer.

Lastly, the washed beans are laid out to dry for up to ten days. The moisture level in the beans is monitored until it reaches a specific level, after which the unroasted beans are packaged in 60 kg (132 lb) bags, labeled, and held for commercial customers who do their own roasting. Roasting, in itself is an art form



that varies from producer to producer and coffee seller to coffee seller.

When you get the roasted, ground, Costa Rican coffee home, do you throw it in the percolator? Hell no! The once-through drip is still the way to extract the best flavor. If you're really an aficionado, try the Costa Rica bag method.

Go into almost any Costa Rican home and you'll see a contraption (called a chorreador) which is a simple wooden

stand that supports a cloth bag into which you place some of your best ground coffee. Then, into the bag, is poured hot water which passes through the grounds and drains into a cup below. Now that's "once-through" for real coffee! Try samples from all eight regions (you can buy them on the internet these days) and make your own vintage choice. (I say "vintage" because coffee has reached a sophistication of styles and choices much like the wine industry has realized over the centuries.)

Raise your cup and say, "Cheers amigos!"

Editor's Note: All three installments of this article were previously published in The Golden Gringo Chronicles. They have been reprinted here with permission.

Part 1 was printed in El Residente in the July/August, 2020 issue. The article reviewed the history of coffee, from its accidental finding as a medication in Ethiopia to the phenomenal blossoming of coffee houses throughout the Arab world.

Part 2 was included in El Residente in the November/December, 2020 issue. It described the business of coffee, how it grew in popularity through entrepreneurship, and the effects, both good and bad, that it had on countries and people's lives.

You can find these articles in the El Residente archives at the ARCR.CR website.

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by Mitzi Stark



Ropa Americanas

The Ropa Americanas, commonly thought of as used clothing stores that you see everywhere, have survived the COVID-19 plummet, and most are doing very well. The reason? Everybody shops at them!

One day I met my lawyer friend Adilia coming from the court house in San José in a smashing blue sheath dress. When I asked her where she bought it she replied, “In a Ropa Americana.” Denia came to a baby shower in a gorgeous pants suit; she got it in a Ropa Americana. Kay came from New York for her annual two-month stay in Costa Rica with only a carry-on bag. She bought all her vacation clothes at Ropa Americanas and saved having to pack and tote a lot of luggage. One close friend proudly wears a T-shirt that reads, “It’s hard to be humble when you’re perfect.” It came from a Ropa Americana.

Artists and gardeners pick out work clothes at the Ropa Americanas. Men looking for something to wear on a hike or fishing trip shop at the “Ropas.” Play clothes for fast growing kids? Try the Ropa Americanas. And

for a wedding, graduation, or special party, you may find the perfect outfit in a Ropa Americana for only a few dollars

But, where do these clothes come from? It’s kind of a mystery and I’ve heard several theories. One was that these were clothes donated to North American “charities” by wholesale distributors, manufactures, and top name stores needing to make room for new inventories, but end up in commercial hands. Then, I read an article in *El Financiero* which said yes, the clothes had originally been donated to charities like Goodwill and the Salvation Army in the USA, but that does not mean they were misappropriated. Those major charity organizations, which have high standards for donations, receive much more than they can use, so they sell the excess in big lots or *pacos*, which individual stores and chains buy through the internet. So, in actuality, buying from Ropa Americanas isn’t stealing from charitable causes, instead we are helping them. And, we can be assured that our “new” clothes have been checked and sanitized.



Some Ropa Americana stores are huge and, besides clothing, sell bedding, towels, curtains, and other cloth items for the home. Some stores are Selecto, meaning they only sell choice items in good condition. Others resemble a garage sale. But even there it's possible to find an occasional goodie. At one I saw an Armani jacket. It was a small size, but nevertheless, everybody had to try it on; not many of us get to wear an Armani! I have a favorite store in Alajuela, but that doesn't stop me from shopping around at others.

I was once reluctant to buy "used" clothes because I remember the hand-me-downs from my childhood years. My cousin Marge is a few years older, and I inherited her outgrown and outdated duds. While my mother was profusely thanking my aunt for her largess, my cousin was pointing out the moth holes and identifying the stains to me.

But I've since learned that the Ropa Americanas offer good buys of good quality items at low prices, and by picking your way through a display rack you can find top brand clothes in good condition, sometimes even brand-new never-worn clothes with the retail price tags still attached. At one Ropa Americana I had my pick of brand new Catalina jackets with the tags still in place, for ₡1,000!

Being a vanity snob I look at labels and I have a closet full of Talbots, Liz Claibournes, Gloria Vanderbilts, some Calvin Kleins, and an Abrecrombie and Fitch pants and top. I'm aware that nobody else but me reads the labels on my clothes, but I know when I am wearing them that I'm in posh style.



There are many Ropa Americana stores to choose from but I have a favorite, the Mt. Sion store in Alajuela. It is well organized, the young people who work there know the merchandise, and I always find something I really, really need (and more of what I don't need but can't resist). They also have sections for bedding, table cloths, pillow covers, blankets, and quilts. Clothes are sorted for men, women, kids, dress and casual.

On the lower level of Mt. Sion there are piscinas, which are big bins of mixed items that you can buy, 5 for ₡1,000, or ₡200 each, but it means scrambling through the lot. It was in one of those bins, where I was looking for something to make a bed for my dog, that I discovered a large piece of forest green velvet. I tugged it out and saw it was a full-length robe with enough material for a comfy dog bed. Naturally I tried it on when I got home – and it fit me perfectly – the dog can sleep on a rug!



Another time, as I dug through a bin of small stuffed toys (peluches) for \$500 each looking for dog toys, a store employee said he was looking for a stuffed cat that meowed for a customer. I told him that if he found any I'd like one too. As it turned out, there were no meowing cats but I found a bird that chirped. It was too cute to give to the dog, so, like the green velvet robe and the Ralph Lauren bed sheets, also from a bin, it is mine.

I once found a nickel in the pocket of a pair of shorts I bought in a "used" store. I've heard that now the clerks check all the pockets before putting out clothes, after somebody found a ten-dollar bill in one. For me shopping in the Ropa Americanas is like going on a treasure hunt. And I no longer feel embarrassed wearing used clothes. Certainly not when the label suggests I only buy the best!

Editor's note: Originally I was reluctant to shop at Ropa Americanas because of the stigma about used clothes. Then my wife clued me in. I now have many polo shirts from big name brands like American Eagle, Old Navy, Body Glove, Nike Golf, Outer Banks, and many more. Ropa Americanas are not just for women, but men too! Sadly though, I have never found any Wrangler or Levi jeans in my size.

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18 ADVENTURES "OFF" THE HIGH SEAS

by Christine Monteith

Boomerang

Because of some medical issues, the past few months I have been prohibited from my usual ocean activities. Because of that, I have developed my inner entomologist skills and become more aware of the wildlife living with me. Here's the story on some of those friendly creatures that have become an integral part of my life.

Let me introduce our new housemate, Boomerang, an intrepid tree frog. Not as splashy as those colorful tree frogs that you see in the Costa Rica tourism promotions, Boomerang is a muted relative, with a subtle grey/green mantle, huge eyes, and the iconic round suction pads at the end of its toes. I first discovered Boomerang when I emptied the water from the flower vase that sits on our kitchen island. I carefully scooped him into an empty yogurt container and walked down to the edge of our property that is rimmed by jungle forest, gently depositing him on a large leaf, I wished him luck and said goodbye. When, just a few days later, I discovered Boomerang had

returned to the vase, I repeated my amphibian relocation service hoping that I'd seen the last of him.

That was not to be the case. A few days later, when reaching over my head to the top shelf of a kitchen cabinet to grab some tea bags, I recoiled with a short squeal as my fingers grazed something soft and rubbery. Fetching the step stool, I elevated myself to eye level with the shelf and discovered Boomerang crouched next to the box of tea bags. After a subsequent trip to the forest's edge accomplished, I thought no further about it.

Sometime later, in the gray, early morning light, I was somewhat disconcerted to find Boomerang perched on top of the faucet in the kitchen. Generally, I don't turn on a light when I fetch a glass of water, but just as I was positioning the glass before turning the tap, in the half-light I noticed a strange humped shape. "Good morning, Boomers!" Since I didn't want to venture to the forest in the near dark, I left him on a broad leaf of a heliconia plant that grows at our entry stairs. Later in the day, I

discovered that he had migrated up the railing structure leading to the entrance of our second floor kitchen. That time, I marched him down to the forest and strongly urged him to stay put.

Here we are again; Boomer is ensconced on the stem of a hibiscus branch sitting in the vase on our kitchen island. “Welcome to the family, Boomerang. Your tenacity is greater than my will to keep a frog-free kitchen.” As long as he contributes to the overall effort of keeping the insect population at bay, like our house gecko, Sneaker, then he can stay.



Sneaker has been our “gecko-in-residence” for several years, scooting about in the dark recesses of our home. A Sneaker sighting is relatively rare; mostly he surprises me in the shower. I’ll look up at the bathroom wall and there he will be, placidly suctioned there looking like a piece of wall art. One time, he surprised me when I opened the cabinet door under the kitchen sink to see him clinging to the inner panel. After acknowledging my presence, he languorously side-winded away into the dark depths. I know that Sneaker is on the job when late in the quiet of the night, I hear his distinctive call; a high-pitched squeak like basketball shoes on a wooden court as the players pivot and stop short.

Shortly after moving here, I decided to embrace my inner entomologist. The presence of so many insects in and outside our new home was a little disconcerting, yet I became fascinated by the spectacular colors or “electric acid test” body structures. I learned of the very few dangerous ones, the mostly harmless ones, and some, like mosquitoes and cockroaches – the just annoying ones.

Our household (the humans) believes in “catch and release” as a strategy to reduce the intruders. The exception is cockroaches. After living for a short time in a Manhattan fifth floor walk-up that was crawling with them, I cannot abide them; the “catch and release” philosophy is suspended if I catch them in my kitchen. Our canine companions enjoy hunting and chewing on what they capture. Chicharra season being especially amusing when Soozie, our jet black cazadora “sings” with a chicharra in her closed mouth.

It was not even a month after moving into our home that I learned the valuable lesson about the need to shake out any footwear, clothing, or towel before using them. One

day, after washing my face in the bathroom, I reached out for my gold-colored towel. Remembering that it was drying outside on the balcony, I shambled out there with water dripping in my half-closed eyes. When I cradled the towel in my hands to bring it to my face, I felt a strange sensation of the towel moving on my palms. The next sensation was a sharp stab just below my collarbone. I lowered my hands and shook open my eyes to see a three-inch long, gold and black scorpion wriggling on my towel. Looking down to my chest, I saw an angry red dot where it had stung me. Our neighbors had warned us of scorpion stings and I raced about the house looking for a Benadryl. I found one lonely pill in the bottom of my travel bathroom bag. It was ancient, and as I peeled back the foil, the pill disintegrated to dust. I licked up as much of the dust as I could, and while I waited for any of the warning signs – tightening throat, tingling lips and/or mouth – I captured the scorpion and walked it down to the edge of the property. Upon returning from my mission my lips and mouth were tingling, but I couldn’t decide if it was a result of the scorpion sting or from eating Benadryl dust. Fortunately, I had no significant reaction and enjoyed a long, refreshing nap.

I try, as much as possible, to live in harmony with the natural surroundings. After all, I am invading their environment and they are just surviving, just as eons of evolution have programmed them. With caution and curiosity on my part, we will thrive together.

Christine has had the great fortune to live, work, and travel around the world, and now is happily ensconced in tropical tranquility near the Golfo Dulce with one husband, two dogs, and four hens.

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TRANSPORTATION **TOURS** **ACCOMMODATIONS** **ALL COSTA RICA**

by Linda Loverude

Moving Toward Carbon Neutral

In 2018, newly elected Costa Rica President Alvarado rode in the hydrogen-fueled bus, Nyuti, to his inauguration. Costa Rica was already known as a model of sustainability, and recognized by the United Nations as a “Champion of the Earth.” The 35-passenger bus rolling down the streets of San José was a symbol of the country’s continuing commitment to the task at hand; to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

Costa Rica has many things to be proud of. I remember 30-some years ago, while attending a United Nations Conference at the University of Peace here in Costa Rica, the director repeatedly stating that Costa Rica was a “living laboratory” for peace initiatives and sustainable development.

Costa Rica has continued to maintain that world view. Although a country small in land area, it has become a model for the world in how to recognize, research, and work to solve complex problems to improve the environment and peoples’ lives. A landmark accomplishment is the sourcing of electricity through hydroelectric, geothermal, and other sustainable methods. Today, the country is basically carbon neutral in its production of electricity.

The nation is the reigning example of how “green” can pay off in innovative ways to improve the quality of life. This ranges from the momentous “Debt for Nature” swap, which took place during the Arias administration, to a community project in Desamparados, a neighborhood in San José, which has declared itself to be an eco-friendly community. They have internalized global concepts to benefit their residents through water protection, no pesticide use, food forests, nature areas, and walks for its citizens.

The Debt for Nature Swap, funded by Sweden, Netherlands, and the USA, was an innovative way to help countries free themselves from binding debt without destroying natural resources to pay their obligations. Through it, farmers were compensated to keep the trees and protect watersheds. Further, previously the national parks had been unprotected, with reforestation projects blighted by planting of mono-culture trees. In 1981 only 21 percent of Costa Rica was rainforest. Now, 40 years later, 51 percent of the land is rainforest. This is a triumph in a world where rainforests are being obliterated daily.

These efforts have led to Costa Rica achieving world recognition for its expertise and leadership. Christiana Figueres, daughter of the renowned former president, is a leader at the United Nations in negotiating the Paris Agreement. In February of 2019 she introduced Costa Rica’s National Decarbonization Plan, stating Costa Rica is, “Thinking big and moving past its comfort zones to decarbonize its economy by 2050.”

Another leader is Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, the Minister of Environment and Energy, who put forth a ten point plan including the modernization of transportation, waste disposal, livestock and agriculture, and their businesses, as well as construction, cargo, and ocean resources.

A favorite son is Doctor Franklin Chang Diaz, a NASA astronaut and jet propulsion expert. His non-profit organization, Ad Astra, is the convener of other innovative businesses and organizations to advance hydrogen fueling of public transportation. Dr. Chang’s work in harvesting hydrogen and using it to fuel transportation in Costa Rica is a major project; he is the person responsible for the prototype bus, Nyuti, which, when not hauling the president-elect to his inauguration, runs on the Pacific coast.

Another plan underway is to build new, and revitalize old, train systems. An intermodal train will move 200,000 people daily and connect the entire central valley. A revitalization of the train to Puntarenas and a freight train system in Limón to haul produce, will also take the strain off the highway system.

Further, Costa Rica has implemented an “incentives law” to promote electric cars, including suspending import taxes for those vehicles. Currently there are over 120 recharging stations in operation for electric vehicles, and over two dozen scheduled for installation in 2021. Electric powered and hydrogen-fueled personal use and public vehicles are a viable combination to wean Costa Rica off fossil fuels. The number of electric vehicles is growing. Currently there are some 1,200 electric cars and almost 2,000 other vehicles, both commercial and private, operating in the country.

These significant projects forecast the futuristic world view of Costa Rica in achieving a clean and bountiful environment. Yet, it is important to note that, as usual, the devil is in

the details. Corrupt licenses are destroying fisheries in the Pacific, 50 percent of carbon emissions are from the area of transportation, and another 40 percent come from the agricultural sector.

Another area getting attention is the use of pesticides. Costa Rica has one of the highest uses of pesticides in the world, with industrial tropical agriculture conducting monoculture production while using agri-chemicals in abundance. Every morning as I sit on my veranda with my coffee and watch the crop dusters dump chemicals on the banana plantation below, I ponder whether its herbicide, pesticide, or fungicide for that day. Palm and pineapple plantations and storage of containers pollute neighborhood ground water as well.

Niamh Michail, the minister of Agriculture Sectoral Office of Climate Actions and Decarbonizations, and co-leader of the United Nation's One Planet Network states, "We are showing that a sustainable and resilient agriculture interface with climate change is possible."

Costa Rica is the home base of two renowned educational institutions constantly working on solutions and systems to address these issues. CATIE, in Turrialba, was founded in 1949 and EARTH University, in Limón, founded in 1990, educate young people on how to utilize sustainable methods and research to develop plants and protect biodiverse areas.

The work isn't done. Presently the two major watersheds, the Tarcoles and Reventazon Rivers, are very polluted with wastewater. And, as is evident, Costa Rica has a garbage problem. Solid waste is everywhere and there is no national recycling program. I have the sneaking suspicion when I put my recyclables into a bin they're going to where all the rest of it goes.

A pertinent question for all of us is, "What can I do about it?"

Catalina Mora from the Costa Rican Sustainable Agriculture Network states, "It will all come down to money." Costa Rica has monetary issues, super extenuated by the COVID

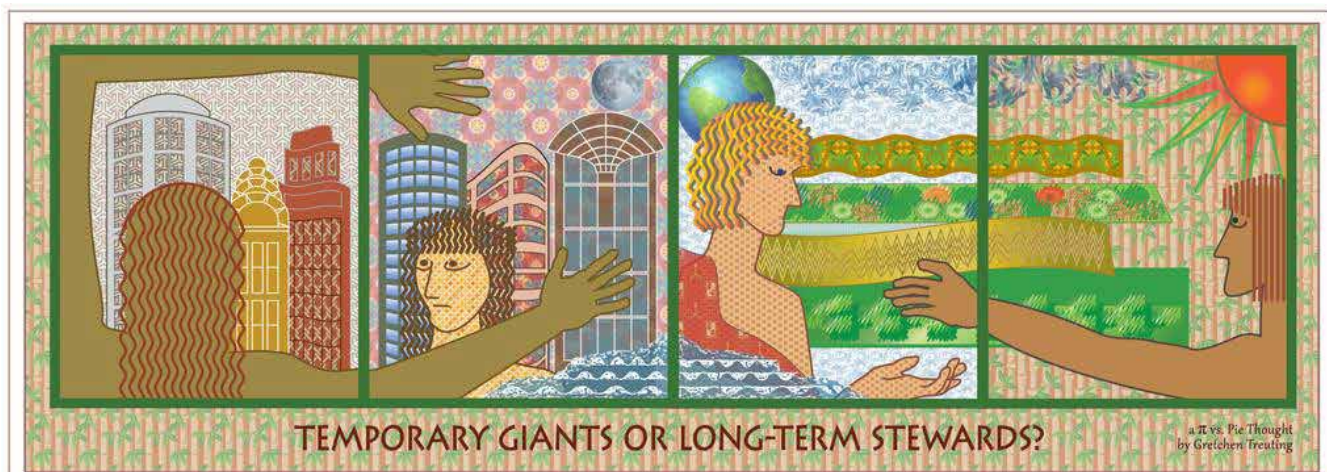
crisis, and unless you're Jeff Bezos you probably can't fund the country out of some of its worst problems. But, one thing we can do is ease up on the criticism. Costa Rica is the "little engine that could" and we need to be supportive of all its efforts; they are admirable and often world-leading.

Many years ago, a common expression for Estadounidenses living in Central America was "When the USA sneezes, Central America gets pneumonia." In other words, we are definitely all connected, and the USA and other power countries' policies hugely affect Costa Rica. Just because you now live here, don't abandon the power of your voice back in your home country; keep pressuring politicians to do the right thing, support funding for green projects. Don't support exploitation, and yes, give serious support to addressing the global climate crisis.

On a local level, there are tree planting projects, permaculture projects, save the baby sea turtle projects, animal rescues, and clean up the beach projects which, by the way, were initiated in Costa Rica 40 years ago and are now copied worldwide. Another important thing to do is look at your neighborhood – be like Desamparados. Green up! Talk to your neighbors, be inclusive, and help others. There is an expression in the indigenous Dakota language that is used a lot in Minnesota and the Dakotas: "Mitakuye Oyasin." (We are all related.)

Linda Loverude (her real name) currently spends half her year living on a cacao farm in the foothills of the Talamanca range south of Limón, with her husband of 40 years. The rest of the year she lives in Wisconsin and Minnesota. She is a teacher and a member of the Leadership Corps of The Climate Reality Project. She can be reached at: lloverud@yahoo.com

Editor's Note. After the above article was finalized, Costa Rica announced that 727 additional electric vehicles had been registered in 2020, for a total of 3,106 registered in the country. We apologize for any confusion.



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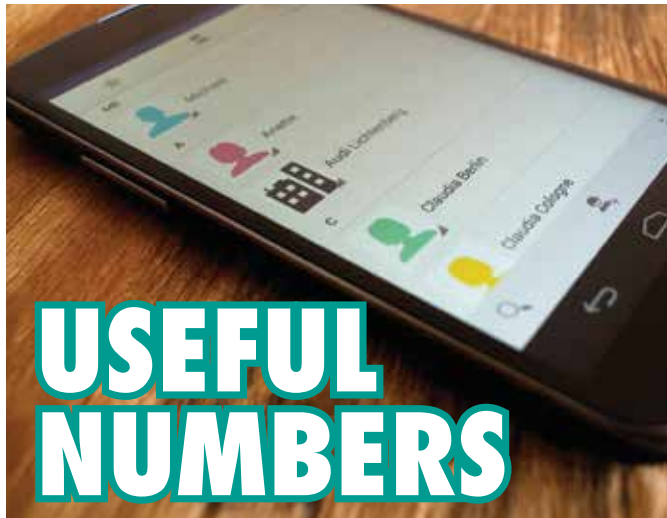
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Website: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica

Email: costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk

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Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet

Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares

Hectares × 2.47 = Acres

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26 FROM THE EMBASSIES



ASK ACS

Q: Will the US Embassy provide COVID-19 vaccination for US citizens living overseas?

A: The US Department of State has no greater responsibility than the safety and security of US citizens overseas. The Department continues to proactively communicate travel advice and warnings to US citizens amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As part of our efforts to give US citizens timely information so that they can make informed choices about travel abroad, the Department advises that the United States Government does not plan to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to private citizens overseas. US citizens traveling or residing overseas should follow host country developments and guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination.

US citizens abroad should also register for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program ([STEP.state.gov](https://step.state.gov)) so they can receive important messages from their nearest US Embassy or Consulate, including timely alerts and updates to Travel Advisories.

You can email any additional questions to: ACSSANJOSE@state.gov. We will respond to your inquiries as quickly as possible. Updated information regarding COVID-19 in Costa Rica can be found on the US Embassy San José COVID-19 information page at: <https://cr.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>

IMPORTANT SOCIAL SECURITY UPDATE

Periodically United States citizens residing outside the US, and who receive payments from the Social Security Administration (SSA), receive letters instructing them to complete and return an included form which certifies they are still eligible to receive those payments. (These are commonly called “Proof of Life” forms.) The letters are mailed out in May of the year and a follow-up is sent in September.

Failure to complete and return the form can result in a suspension of payments. With regard to these forms, the SSA has issued the following:

Notice Regarding Forms SSA-7161 and SSA-7162

Because of postal service interruptions around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Social Security Administration has suspended mailing these forms. SSA will not suspend your benefits if you have not completed and returned the forms in 2020. SSA will resume mailing the forms at a later date when conditions have changed.

More information can be found at: <https://www.ssa.gov/foreign/index.html> or by contacting the Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) that services your country of residence. Servicing FBUs can be found here: <https://www.ssa.gov/foreign/foreign.htm>



by Allen Dickinson

Deep Thoughts

With the COVID-19 pandemic and voluntary isolation, I have found I have more time for “Deep Thoughts.” After an extended time of contemplating my navel (about two minutes), I moved on to other things, like wondering what happened to some products or brands that used to be common in US stores but are no longer available there, and I now see in Costa Rica. Investigation ensued!

I have discovered that some of those old, trusted brands are alive and well. Sometimes though, they aren’t the same things I associated with the brands back home. Looking at package data I discovered that some brands are sold by the same companies, and others have origins in China. I don’t know if those brand names have been co-opted by the Chinese, or are being sold with licenses, but they are available. Here are few examples:

BRAND	FORMER PRODUCTS	PRODUCTS NOW
Kodak	Cameras and film products	Batteries, light bulbs, flashlights
Delsey	Various paper products	Toilet paper
Viceroy	Cigarettes	Cigarettes
Black and Decker	Power tools	Small kitchen appliances
Electrolux	Vacuum cleaners	Major home appliances
Rinso	Laundry detergent	Laundry detergent

I have also noticed that some brands found in Central America aren’t always what they seem at a casual glance. Here’s an example.

A few years ago I was on a border run to Panama. The first night, as I was in my hotel room getting ready for bed, I realized I had forgotten my toothpaste. No problem. The next morning I simply headed to the large discount store across the street; I had visited it the day before and had noticed that they had a huge, four-foot tall display of my favorite American brand of toothpaste.

As I walked through the store I also spotted an array of some attractive sunglasses nearby. Walking past the toothpaste display I saw it included a free, top-name toothbrush too. Good deal! Thinking I could always use a new toothbrush, I grabbed a package of the toothpaste with an included toothbrush, and moseyed over to look at the sunglasses.

It was really bright outside and a pair of sunglasses would be a welcome way to cut the glare. The sunglasses were, judging by the price, Chinese copies of an expensive American brand. But, even though I tend to lose sunglasses quickly, the price was too good to pass up. I tried on a couple of pairs, decided on one, and went to the counter with them and the toothpaste, and purchased both.

Feeling really smart I went back to the hotel; it was time to get the taste of a few beers and too many cigarettes from the previous night, out of my mouth.

As I stood at the bathroom sink in my room, brushing away the remnants of the night before, I looked down at the familiar red, white, and blue box the toothpaste had come in and noticed something odd – the brand name, prominently displayed in the familiar colors and logo design, was different – it said, “CRUST.” It was, of course, made in China.

I quickly rinsed out the foam in my mouth – the name was enough to justify that! I mean, who wants to put something with a name like that in their mouth unless it’s part of mom’s deep dish apple pie! Besides, I had read a news story a while back about Chinese-made toothpaste being found with gypsum (the stuff they make the sheets of drywall out of) in it.

The tube of “toothpaste” went in the trash, but I kept the toothbrush (brand name, Oral-D) and the sunglasses (though I soon lost them). Nowadays I’m much more careful about checking labels when I buy something.

Other brands ARE what they seem, true to my memories of the product in the US – but yet, AREN’T.

Tobacco users may notice some differences between the cigarettes they buy here and what is sold in the USA. That’s because the products, although branded the same, are owned, manufactured, and distributed by totally different companies. For instance, the Viceroy cigarette brand, mentioned earlier, is owned and manufactured by the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in the United States, but outside the US the brand is made and distributed by British American Tobacco. The product formulations by the two companies are different, although the packaging remains identical.

The bottom line is that, for those of us living in a foreign market, an additional dose of caution and skepticism needs to be employed when we buy “name brand” products here. Nothing is quite the same anymore!

by **Rómulo Pacheco**

New Requirements for Inactive Corporations

This important change affects all owners of inactive corporations used to hold property, vehicles, and other assets

Owners of inactive corporations will now be required to file an income tax return in 2021. This requirement begins January 1, and the deadline for filing is March 15, 2021. This change appeared among the changes announced in La Gaceta (the official newspaper) regarding obligations for inactive corporations.

Inactive corporations are those that contain only assets, and do not develop profit-generating activities. The change may seem contradictory; the corporation must be registered in the Tax Registry as a payer of income tax, even though the tax return shows zero profits and they do not issue electronic invoices. The law further states that inactive companies have the obligation to file a declaration of their assets, liabilities, and the share of capital which is maintained. The difference is that there will no longer be a separate form for this; the same form D-101, which is established in Article 20 of the Income Tax Law, will also be used for filing a tax return for inactive corporations. Form D-135 will no longer be used for this purpose.

The change establishes that, although a corporation does not have to prepare an additional declaration, they do have to complete the tax return form. This was explained by Raymundo Volio, Director of Tax Authority, "Legal persons may not unregister as income tax payers as long as they exist and maintain their legal validity. In that way, they will maintain their status as taxpayers, whether they carry out profitable activities or not." Thus, all the companies which do not carry out commercial activities, but have been used to host their assets, such as real estate and vehicles, must now disclose those assets and provide justification of the origin of the funds used for the acquisition of those assets.

Some inactive corporations which have been used to shelter properties and/or vehicles for many years in the past may have difficulty verifying the origin of the funds used to purchase the asset. In those cases we must wait for the next directive from the taxation guidelines to be able to comply with the new procedure.

If you consider this new filing requirement is "too much" and would rather dissolve the corporation(s) and put the assets in

your own name, we believe that before you are allowed to do so, it will be necessary to make this first declaration BEFORE proceeding with the corporate dissolution procedure. It is also important to consider that the transfer of assets to your own name may generate Capital Gains taxes, which can be as high as 15 percent of the value of the transferred asset. Each case must be analyzed independently to avoid making mistakes, which can be very expensive.

If these changes to the law affect you, I strongly recommend that you consult an experienced and qualified attorney to advise and assist you,

Rómulo Pacheco

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by Ivo Henfling

Don't Become a Nasty Expat

Didn't we all move to Costa Rica to be happier, and not to become a "Nasty Expat?" We all had our own reasons to move here; some of us wanted to retire, others were looking for a change in their boring life. And most of us just wanted a better lifestyle. I have never met a person who moved to Costa Rica to be miserable, but I've met some who have accomplished it!

When I moved to Costa Rica in 1980 there were no ways to express our experiences, good or bad. Except for the Tico Times, other newspapers in English did not exist. In those days this magazine, El Residente, was only available in print and it was either sent to you by regular mail or you could pick one up at the ARCR offices. The internet still had to be invented; Forums, Facebook, and other social media didn't exist.

Now, the days of printed news are over and the digital era has taken over. The digital era is great for those who have kept up with it. Reading a newspaper and banking are now mostly done online, and social media allows us to share our thoughts and experiences, good and bad, easily. Maybe too easily.

The internet provides an easy platform for people to leisurely, and without much advance thinking, express all their grievances and displeasures, and to blame others for them, without even thinking of their own role in the events. The easy access to sites where people can vent their frustrations has given rise to a new kind of person, the Nasty Expat. Some spend all their time, days and nights, being nasty about everything and with everyone.

So, what happened? How did formerly nice people become Nasty Expats? Is it the fault of the internet? Or could there be other reasons? Here are a few of the causes for people acting objectionably, and often being just downright rude.

THE FAILURE TO DO DUE DILIGENCE

This Nasty Expat is a person who does not go through the due diligence process at all. They don't do any of the necessary homework and just book a flight and move to Costa Rica like it is just a vacation. Pretty soon, they find

out that living here isn't as easy as they imagined. They resent the difficulties, and that is when they get nasty.

BEING A TYPE A PERSONALITY

This is an expat who already knows everything and comes here with the expectation that everything will be done NOW, and done their way. Costa Rica is probably not the right place to move to for persons who are rigidly organized and impatient.

NOT LEARNING THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

For expats over 50 it is difficult to learn a new language, unless they already speak several. But Spanish is the language of this country, and as a foreigner, we are guests in this country. Therefore, everyone who comes here should at least try to learn enough Spanish to be able to speak to the local population. It is a matter of showing respect, and the Ticos will love you for it! Not understanding them makes you an easy candidate for making huge mistakes and becoming a victim. Do not expect them to speak your language, if they do, that's great! But if they don't, it's not their fault you can't communicate with them.

MARRYING A LOCAL

Marrying a local can be an incredible or a horrible experience, just like marrying someone from your home culture. Marrying someone from a different culture requires a lot more work on your part. Lack of communication skills and different values can easily be an excuse for becoming a Nasty Expat. I know! It took me eight years during my first marriage to find out how horrible I could be. Then I learned enough to make it work the second time.

HAVING A CHILD

Having kids is fun, but it comes with a lot of responsibilities. Planning to have a kid with a Tica or Tico? Then you are in for a new experience; their culture, especially with respect to children, can be quite different than other cultures.

Child-support is one of those things that is a must-do after a divorce, and this is probably the champ of reasons to turn a happy expat into a Nasty Expat.

STARTING A BUSINESS

I have always thought that the best way to enjoy Costa Rica and its people is as a retiree; no important worries, just enjoy yourself. But this culture has a lot of different perspectives, to say nothing of laws, about employees, which can cause not only friction, but legal problems. I always try to not generalize, but having a business with Tico employees increases the chance of having an unhappy life in Costa Rica.

REMEMBER, IT WAS YOUR DECISION

Why would you complain about Costa Rica if it was your decision to move here? Did someone put a gun to your head to come here? Life's too short to not enjoy living in this beautiful country.

Being a Nasty Expat is easy; just blame everything and everyone else for your misery. Should you take it out on the shoemaker that sold you the cheap shoes which were

of a bad quality? Should you berate the traffic policeman who writes you a ticket because you drove through a red light or broke another traffic law? And why is it acceptable for people to air all their bad decisions and their displeasures on the internet? (Unfortunately, those people do not ever take responsibility for the actions that led them to become a Nasty Expat.)

Sometimes adjusting to your new home country can be hard work. And maybe, after you've been here a while, you'll discover that you don't want to spend the time and effort. Taking the time to discover that about yourself is the best reason for renting instead of buying; it offers a much easier start in Costa Rica. Allow us to assist you and help you avoid becoming a Nasty Expat. We will hold your hand for a long time, if you want us to.

Ivo Henfling is a Dutch expat who has lived in Costa Rica for forty years. He founded the American-European Real Estate Group, the first functioning MLS with affiliate agents from coast to coast, in 1999. He is the broker/owner of GoDutch Realty and can be reached at (506) 2289-5125 or (506) 8834-4515 or at: ivo@american-european.net

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(32) AN ADVENTURE IN PARADISE

by Lee Swidler

Kayaking the Río San Juan; The Trip of a Lifetime Part 4

The following recounts the author's trip traversing the Río San Juan (which constitutes the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua) with his son and some friends. Part 4 tells about the final day of the trip, their fourth day on the river, and return to Jacó.

Myron, the son of Ariana, the proprietress of the lodge where we'd spent the night, had a small fast boat and we had arranged with him to take us to our final destination, the Rio Colorado Lodge, located at the confluence of the Rio Colorado and the Caribbean.

We awoke at 6:00 a.m., deflated the kayaks, and began packing. We moved all the gear from the cabinas to the dock, then down the steep stairway to Myron's boat. It was a windy, rainy, overcast day, and I could not even imagine what it would have been like if we had to paddle!

We exited Nicaragua by stopping at the final military checkpoint, having our passports stamped, and then crossing to the Costa Rica side to regain entry to Costa Rica. There, we were advised by the officials that we should find an immigration office to have our passports stamped, as this was not an official entry point. We were then waved on with the words "Pura Vida."

An hour later we arrived at a very developed area of high-end fishing lodges along the river. Our lodge was in line with the others and when we pulled in we were greeted by the owner, Dan Wise. He and I had been corresponding, and he had graciously offered us special rates to spend the night (as non-fishing guests) as well as transportation back to San José in one of the vans that he uses to bring clients in.

We had arrived around 10:00 a.m. and Dan told us that lunch was served promptly at noon. Garfield, the "major domo" of the lodge then introduced himself. Garfield was stuck in a time warp, probably the late 70s; his ponytail and gold chains were the giveaway. It would be easy to believe that he was on the lam from something, but down here the



rule of "don't ask, don't tell" prevails. We did get some info from his stories, however, but I am sure there is a lot more we didn't get to hear. What we did learn was that he was a decorated Viet Nam war vet, as well as having graduated the Thunderbird School of Global Management. (He said it is in the top ten in the world for international business management, and then proceeded to name the other nine.) Bob's son Cody and Garfield spent a lot of time talking military speak and sharing war stories; Dave soaked it all in while Bob and I, having heard more than we needed, went off looking for more beer and a bed to rest in.

As promised, the lunch bell rang at noon. Although Dan was a Southern lawyer, it was still a little surprising to sit down to chicken fried steak! The meal was better than just good, with the finishing touch being a piece of chocolate pudding pie.

While the paying guests (fishermen) sat in groups telling tales of fish caught (or almost caught), our big discussion was how we would get our passports stamped. We had reentered

Costa Rica at an unofficial entry area, so we had no stamp showing we were legally in the country. To add to this, Dan told us a horror story of what happened to him years ago (being deported to Panama so he could reenter). Ultimately we made the decision to stop at the airport on our way back to Jacó, hoping that we wouldn't be arrested and deported for illegal entry.

As we sat on the deck talking with the other guests, Dan pointed to the level of the water, which was a good ten feet below the dock, and explained that the river was at a historical low; that the water was usually close to level with the dock. In fact, during heavy rains, he said, it actually covered the dock. We were beginning to understand why we had so much difficulty paddling; the current we had expected did not exist. We wasted the rest of the day smoking cigars and drinking beer, all the while listening to Dan barking orders to the workers in his Southern drawl.

That night dinner was served in a banquet style dining hall, a different location than lunch. It was set up that way so everybody could tell and hear everyone's (tall) fish tales. As the "newbies" on the block, we held center attention, describing our perilous journey down the river.

The usual arrival and departure from the lodge is by a boat. Tomorrow it would take us and some others to an airport at Tortuguero, where we would drop off some who were flying over to San José. (How many airports have you seen where you get there by boat!) The boat would then take the rest of us to Cano Blanco, a small settlement set up as a staging area to transfer tourists from boat to bus (or vice versa).

After dinner, Dan advised us he had a group coming in from San José the following morning, so we needed to be up early; before 5:00 a.m. There would be breakfast waiting and the boat would leave at 5:15. We awoke to heavy rain, stowed our gear on the boat, and by 5:20 we were fed and on the river, headed out.

After leaving some of our "shipmates" off at the airport, we headed downriver to Cano Blanco, where there are some hotels located along the canals of northeastern Costa Rica (there are few roads) to meet the lodge's van. There were also a nice little store, restaurant, and clean bathrooms. We had a four-hour wait for the van, so we got comfy, played some Pinochle, and had lunch.

Eventually the van arrived. We had expected to see a bunch of young guys (from the stories Dan had told) disembark from the van, but the first out was an elderly, white-haired lady with a walker. She was followed by a tall, bearded, also white-haired, guy who looked a lot like Jerry Spence, and then three younger guys. All were from Wyoming. As we

loaded up our gear we noticed a decal on the rear of the van that said, "SIG SAUER, to Hell and Back Reliability." SIG SAUER being a high-end firearm, it was a very interesting decal for a Costa Rica tourist van.

Eduardo, who was our driver, was in a pissy mood, for whatever reason. We tried to make small talk, but to no avail, so we just settled in for the three-plus hour ride to San José.

The first 30 kilometers were over a terrible, potholed dirt road and we moved slowly. About 10 km into the journey we came upon a Channel 6 News car pulled over to the side of the road. The folks from the car motioned for us to stop and explained that about a half kilometer up the road they had been confronted by masked bandits who had thrown a log out into the road to stop them. When the driver threw their car into reverse and sped away, they were fired on! They had called the police, were waiting it out, and advised us to do the same.

As more cars pulled to the side of the road to await the police, some younger guys in a jeep-type vehicle with no top pulled up. When they heard the story they said they were going through. So we all formed a convoy behind them and headed out. Apparently Eduardo had more than just a decal; he pulled out a Sig Sauer 9mm automatic (with a laser sight!), racked a shell into the chamber, and was ready. He was now in a much better mood and more talkative. The road wound through a Del Monte banana plantation, plenty of cover for bad guys, but we saw none. We did eventually see four policemen in riot gear on two motorcycles, responding. The rest of the journey to San José went smoothly.

In San José we met up with our van driver, Gilbert, who had returned to pick us up and take us the remaining distance to Jacó. We moved all our gear (for the last time) into his van and headed west. But, before going to Jacó, we stopped at the airport to try and resolve our passport problem. While Bob was showing his hotel receipt (to prove he actually slept at a hotel in the far northeast where there was no immigration office) I calmly explained our predicament to the lady behind the immigration window. She smiled and told us there would be no problem for the visitors (Cody, Bob, and Dave) as far as leaving the country. I, on the other hand, would have to write a letter explaining where, how, and why I entered Costa Rica, and take the letter (with a copy) to the central office of immigration; as a resident, the powers that be wanted to keep track of where I had been.

Tired but happy that the passport issues had been taken care of, we crawled back into the van and headed for Jacó.

I guess I better start writing the letter for immigration!

(34) SENIOR LIVING IN COSTA RICA

by Katya De Luisa

Dementia in Costa Rica

Many people believe there is a lower incidence of Alzheimer's and dementia in Costa Rica. However, Costa Rica is seeing a rate of increase in the percentage of cases of dementia comparable to more developed countries. According to the Raul Blanco Cervantes Geriatric Hospital, there are presently an estimated 30,000 people in the country living with dementia, and, it is predicted that the number will quadruple by 2050.

The majority of us experience some memory challenges as we age. Some memory loss can be a normal part of aging, or it can be the early signs of a cognitive decline which might be leading to dementia. (In the past dementia was referred to as "senility" but that term is now antiquated.)

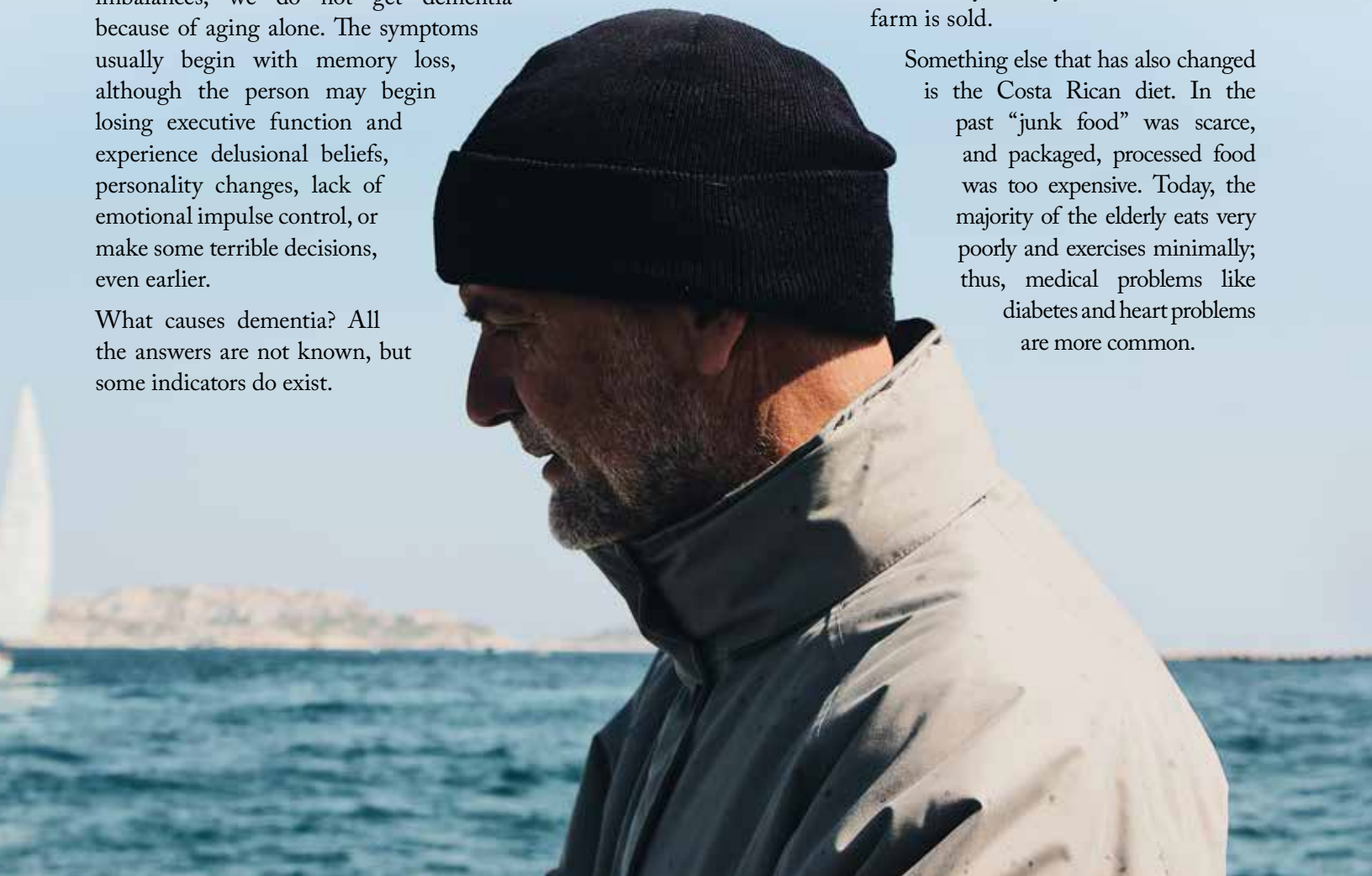
Dementia is a symptom caused by a neurological disease like Alzheimer's, vascular deterioration, or hormonal imbalances; we do not get dementia because of aging alone. The symptoms usually begin with memory loss, although the person may begin losing executive function and experience delusional beliefs, personality changes, lack of emotional impulse control, or make some terrible decisions, even earlier.

What causes dementia? All the answers are not known, but some indicators do exist.

In Costa Rica, we have the legendary "Blue Zones," an area near the Gulf of Nicoya being the primary one, with others throughout the country, where we commonly encounter elderly in their nineties and over. These generations lived very healthy lifestyles, were predominately farmers who ate animals they raised and vegetables they grew. They drank water from the land, had strong ties to their communities, and worked from sunup to sundown in lots of fresh air – the perfect balance for a long, healthy life.

Modern Costa Rica, however, has changed that dynamic. The small farms are disappearing as the young people look to the city for education and jobs. Many elderly couples find much of their family has moved away and, eventually, they can no longer keep up their farms. And, when one spouse dies, the other usually moves in with their family, if they have one, and the farm is sold.

Something else that has also changed is the Costa Rican diet. In the past "junk food" was scarce, and packaged, processed food was too expensive. Today, the majority of the elderly eats very poorly and exercises minimally; thus, medical problems like diabetes and heart problems are more common.



The country has also grown in the number of retired foreign seniors. We now have over 488,935 foreigners with residency, 24,201 of whom are United States citizens and 3,639 from Canada. Many of these persons are retired and over the age of 65; a number of them will eventually develop some cognitive decline.

Dementia commonly begins to appear after age 65, although early onset dementia can begin at 30-50. According to statistics from Michigan University, one in seven seniors over 70 has dementia, and over half of the residents in elder care facilities suffer from the illness.

So, what happens when you or your partner begin showing signs of dementia in a foreign country, far from your family?

The most crucial first step is to get diagnosed. The Raul Blanco Cervantes Geriatric Hospital has a world-class memory clinic that offers all the testing necessary. With Costa Rica residency you must pay for Caja services and are therefore entitled to use the Caja medical system. In most areas there is an Ebais clinic where persons over 60 may go and request a referral to the Blanco Cervantes memory clinic. Those who have private insurance can see a geriatric specialist or neurologist for testing.

Early diagnosis is very important. Many dementia symptoms are treatable and caused by conditions such as a vitamin B12 deficiency, thyroid imbalance, or alcoholism. Other issues, such as Alzheimer's or Lewy Bodies, are incurable, but symptoms often improve with early intervention of diet, exercise, and some medications.

If you have been diagnosed with dementia, do not hide it. Let your family know, and then, together with your partner, inform yourselves, no matter how scary it may seem. Good decisions need to be made early on, and those who wait are headed for heartache.

When the time comes for a care-giver, Costa Rica has many organizations training and certifying professionals. UNED is the online university providing care-giver courses throughout the country, and INA, the national trade school, and other universities like Santa Paula and UCR, also have courses. In addition, there are Facebook care-giver groups, usually in Spanish, but where you can solicit an English-speaking care-person with certification in your area. Odds are you will find several.

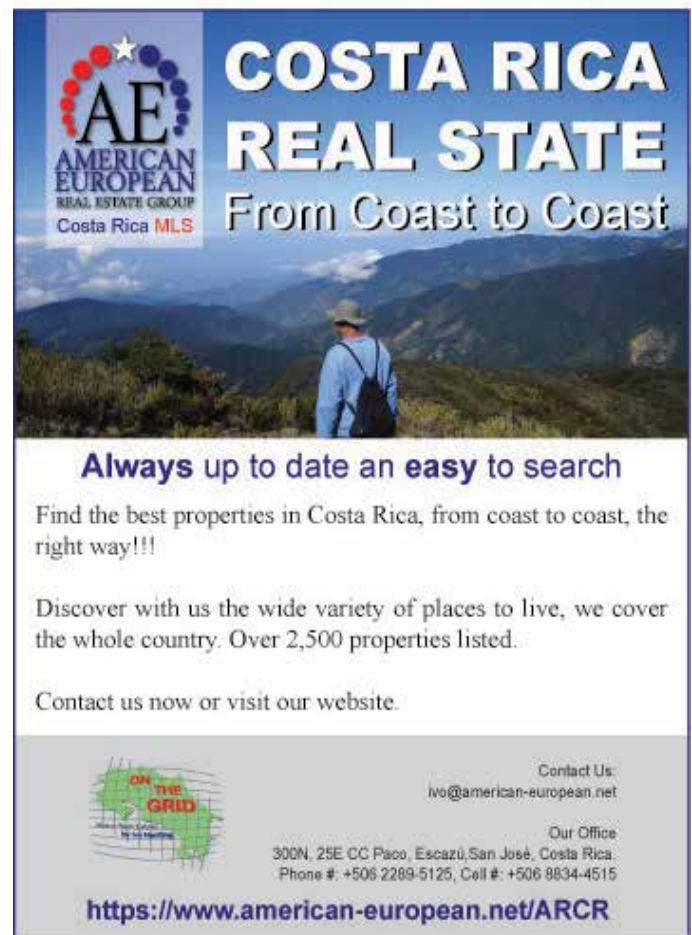
According to the Ministerio de Trabajo, the average pay for a care-giver is about 15,000 colones (\$26 USD more or less) for an eight-hour shift. (Remember, this

person is not a maid; their job is care-giving, although it is not uncommon for them to also do some cooking.)

If a nursing home becomes necessary there are several private facilities from which you can select who accept foreign elderly. Choose wisely, just because a facility is the most expensive does not mean it is the best. Check out cleanliness; if there is a smell, leave. Is it a homey environment, is there a garden? Ask to see the kitchen and menus. Find out what programs there are to keep your loved one occupied, and find out what their staff to resident ratio is. Also, ask if any of the staff speak English. Before making a final decision, visit several times, preferably during mealtimes and activities, and take notice of how the staff treats the residents.

Both the person with dementia and their partner and family must work together proactively to create a quality of life for everyone involved.

Katya De Luisa is the founder/director of the Infinite Mind Dementia Project here in Costa Rica. Contact her at: kdeluisa@yahoo.com with any questions and check out the website: www.theinfinitemind.org



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by Ryan Piercy



Parrotlets

Most everyone is familiar with the beauty of large parrots, especially the great Macaws; however even the smallest of the species displays a beauty as great as their bigger cousins. These are the parrotlets, smallest of the New World species of parrots. They have stocky builds and short tails, but many of the same brilliant colors for which their larger cousins are known.

Parrotlets consist of nineteen types within three genera, but only one of the species is found locally. Specifically endemic to Costa Rica and parts of Panama is the Touit costaricensis, the red-fronted parrotlet. The birds are small, about 15cm tall, usually found in the cooler forests around 500 to 1,000 meters of elevation, during the wet season, and up to 3,000 meters when the climate is dryer. Their typical range is in the Talamanca and the Cordillera Central mountain ranges through Costa Rica and into Panama.



These beautiful animals are a bright green with a red forehead and shoulders, and sometimes also under the eyes. Some will also boast a splash of yellow underneath. Often they are found in small family groups, up to six specimens. It is probable that parrotlets mate during the dry season and will lay but two or three eggs. They appear to eat mainly the small fruits of trees and bushes, usually feeding in pairs or in small groups as they forage in areas of alimentation.



Like so many other parrot species, this small flyer, often weighing no more than 80 grams, is under constant threat of extinction. Fortunately they are protected by law in Costa Rica, but unfortunately, continuing deforestation keeps them at risk.

At times these brilliantly colored little birds can even be seen as far as down on the coast as Limón, so if you are in the area, keep your eyes peeled in case you are fortunate enough to encounter a few.

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A beach scene with a white beach umbrella on a sandy shore. In the foreground, a gold medal is displayed. The medal is circular and features the text "Latin America-Asia Travel Excellence Award" around the top edge and "2010 Winner" in the center. The background shows a blue ocean and a clear sky.

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by Shelagh Duncan



Can Paint Really Make You Happier?

We all know that we are a better person when we're calm and happy. Being happy these days, however, can be a challenge, to say the least.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant emotional and psychological effect on people from all walks of life and in every affected country. The effects on the most exposed groups, like health workers, can even lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as severe anxiety, depression, and other symptoms of distress. Social distancing and isolation have affected us all, and we feel stress and anxiety in one way or another, sometimes making us feel powerless and with things being out-of-control.

Maybe it's time to say "enough" and to try and control our micro-environment – our homes. Our homes should be a refuge, not a jail, so why not turn our homes into feel-good spaces?

We can do wonders with a simple, mood-altering coat of paint. "Color is influential in relation to how a room feels, therefore it can easily affect our mood and behavior," says Dulux color expert Andrea Lucena-Orr. "As soon as you enter a room that's bright or has a certain positive essence, you can't help but feel uplifted and reinvigorated."

Research by The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health in Melbourne scientifically proves that different colors on walls can strongly influence a range of emotions. They can make us feel relaxed and calm, or cheerful and excited, while the wrong color scheme can make us bored, sad, tense, and even irritated.

Color, of course is a fundamental building block of interior design, but beyond imagining how colors will look together and work in your home, it's important to consider how they make you feel.

Color psychology is the theory that colors can affect how you feel, think and act. For example, deep red hues are

associated with passion and energy, whereas cool blue shades are considered calming and serene.

Here are some tips on how to use colors to set the right mood in your home; try painting just one accent wall and you will see a big difference!

ORANGE

Orange is a high-energy color with a sense of fun, although it can be polarizing; people tend to love it or hate it. It's usually a favorite of those who like to be known for their creativity and individuality. "In decorating, coppery oranges – both light and mid-tones – are really coming back into play," says Kate Smith of Sensational Color. "Orange blends really nicely with neutrals, so definitely take a second look at it if you haven't thought about it in a while. There are so many tones you can choose from, from pumpkin orange to terra cotta to peach."

RED

Red can be bold and dramatic or warm and earthy, depending on the tone. Deep crimson hues create passion and drama, while rusty shades can add a cozy ambience. Red is a stimulating color, so is best used in areas where energy should be high, like a family room or entertaining space.

YELLOW

Yellow is a cheerful color. It is usually associated with sunshine, energy, and happiness. It also can spark creativity and encourage communication, which might help if you have teenagers at home! It also has the ability to evoke memory and imagination. Combined with lavender, it's also thought to have healing properties.

GREEN

If you want a sense of calm, look no further than green. The connection with nature means that we associate green with peacefulness and balance, and it also has associations with renewal, good health, and positive growth. The human eye can actually see more variations of green than of any other color because of our evolutionary history; surrounded by green in the natural environment, our ancestors had to be able to distinguish the slightest changes in the landscape to protect themselves from predators. But now that we are no longer expecting anything to jump out of the bushes, green is a wonderful way to bring the peace of nature inside!



BLUE

Blue is everyone's overwhelming favorite, and for a reason; between blue sky and the ocean, it is a constant in our lives. There is also a trust factor associated with blue, that's why many of our authority figures wear blue uniforms and why blue is the most popular color for corporate logos. Blue slows our heartbeat and respiration, giving a calm, sedating effect, making it an excellent choice for bedrooms. If you like the idea of blue but want a sense of profoundness – with a little mystery – go with deep shades like indigo or midnight blue.

PURPLE

This color is associated with spirituality, mystery, royalty, and creativity – and even a little eccentricity. But if you use it in the home, choose a shade that leans clearly toward a blue or a red undertone, such as a grayish-lavender or a red-violet, which tends to make people more comfortable. True purple (often the top choice of preteen girls) can come on too strong.

PINK

Pink can add a touch of feminine flair and it has seen a huge increase in popularity over the past few years, with blush and “millennial pink” shades being in vogue. Muted blush or grayish-pink hues can instantly soften any room, and darker shades of magenta add a punch of drama. Mixed with a bit of brown or gray, it can also be used as a neutral that conveys calm, stillness, and beauty.

BLACK

Just like that favorite little black dress, this color has always been associated with sophistication, elegance, and luxury. It's most often used as an accent in the home, as all-black interiors can become dreary and overwhelming very quickly. Glossy or matte black accessories, furniture, and appliances, are timeless and chic. Used correctly, black can actually expand your space instead of closing it off.

WHITE

White is all about purity, cleanliness, neutrality, and fresh new beginnings. With the popularity of Scandinavian design, more and more designers are leaning towards all-white walls and sparse white furniture. White interiors can feel fresh and modern, but can also feel very cold and sterile, so pay close attention to the undertones.

GRAY

Gray stands for wisdom, intellect and knowledge, and it's a color we instinctively trust. It conveys authority and a firm foundation. Gray is a great neutral that you can use without pushing the boundaries too far, but it's still classic, sleek, and sophisticated. Gray in the home used to be far less fashionable, probably because shades available on the market tended toward an industrial, battleship gray. Now, however, gray is much more versatile, taking on brown or blue undertones to work with almost any color you can dream up.

BROWN

Brown speaks to reliability, stability, and approachability. Brown accents such as wood tones, leather, and natural elements, are a great way to warm up a space and make it feel homier in an instant. Brown shades are truly versatile, and go with any design style and mood.

What is your happy color? If you feel color confident, then spend some time dreaming up a fun design on an accent wall.

At the end of the day, it's important to choose colors in your home that speak to you. Be sure to consider the purpose of



each room and how you want to feel while you're in it. And remember, light changes the way a color looks at different times of the day and under artificial lighting, so consider all these things and get the paint brush out!

If this all seems too much, then leave it to the experts. The designers at Royal Palm's new Design Center in Uvita are ready and able to help you create a full color palette for your home, or just one room.

Until next time

Shelagh Duncan

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PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

41

by Tony Johnson

Changing the Pattern

When they scream, it's no longer about the issue, it's about the relationship" – Therapist Wisdom

It's difficult for us to see ourselves honestly; we defend against any realities that would diminish our standing in our own eyes. It's much easier, however, to see our shortcomings in others, IF we're willing to make the connections. The distance gives us comfort, making it easier to ask, "Am I like that?" The prevalent rudeness and incivility in today's society offer us opportunities to determine if there are patterns similar to those of others in our personal relationships.

Here's an example. Imagine you are in a checkout line, right behind the customer being served. Suddenly, that customer begins shouting at the clerk, their voice getting louder and louder. You're concerned about both parties so you lean close to the customer and softly suggest, "The clerk seems confused. I think things would go better if you were calmer."

Instantly, the full force of the customer's wrath is turned on you. "THAT'S OFFENSIVE! Who are YOU to tell me to calm down," they shriek. You take your own advice and remain calm, fully aware that a shouting match is not worth the turmoil and distress. Luckily, you're called over to a newly opened line. Breathing a sigh of relief as you leave the store you notice this incident has now become a matter for security. You're sure things would have been better if the customer had been calmer, and the clerk less pressured and confused, but regardless you promise yourself that you will never step into something like that again.

Notice anything familiar? A similar pattern in your relationship perhaps? The smallest word begets an extreme reaction? Does your partner ever pop off at you? Do you ever get suddenly upset with them? Do you wonder at how intense things can get over "nothing" sometimes? Let's delve a little further into the example for more understanding.

In today's rude and uncivil society, unforeseen events like described above can and do occur. And, if we try to help, too often we get the irrefutable accusation that we were being "offensive." By today's rules, that means the game's

over; using the word "Offensive" supersedes and shuts down any possible disagreement because any further dissent will be regarded as yet another offense. We cannot possibly deny that the other person DOES feel offended, but we can't reply that, "I didn't INTEND to offend," because, somehow, that will be deemed offensive too. To make matters worse, somehow it has come about that invoking the word "offensive" automatically transfers the responsibility to the other person, and thereby entitles one to act in any way their impulse moves them, regardless of how offensive such a response might be. By modern rules, the first to claim to be offended gets to escape any charge of offense against themselves, and the offender is left with no "way out," except total withdrawal and silence – and possibly being offended themselves.

This column focuses on relationships, not social issues, but briefly exploring this social issue might give us some important insight into relationships.

THE PATTERN

The pattern may SEEM like a simple matter of stimulus-response, but it's more complex than that. It may appear as if the pattern is just "someone says something and that caused another to be offended." It may seem as though the speaker is entirely responsible for the "offense," but are they totally responsible? Not at all.

I need to proceed carefully here because this might offend. Looking more closely, we see that the offended person themselves actually caused their own offense THEY created the last link in their own sense of being insulted. But how could that be?

On the surface, it seems to both the "offendee" and "offender" reacted like flipping a switch; the offender said the words which flipped the offendee's switch; and their quick reaction is that the offender CAUSED THEM to feel offended. And even if the offender were to deny that they INTENDED any offense, they may still feel that we did somehow cause it.



Hold on. They contributed the offensive words to this chain of interactions? Yes, but that's not the final, the direct, cause. Let's examine this incident from both sides.

In the example, the alleged offender is astonished that their soft suggestion of a solution – to be calmer – is seen as an insult. From their perspective, they were just trying to be helpful, intending to communicate, “Do you really want things to get even worse?” But when they are attacked by the offeree for their well meant action, they begin having doubts about the wisdom of their action, and can actually become defensive of it.

The truth is that offeree played a **KEY** role in their own feeling of offense, even though they are usually unaware of doing so. Oh, they do indeed feel insulted during the incident; they are not feigning it, but what has occurred is that they are offended because of how they perceived the word “calmer.” They saw it as a **DELIBERATE** attack on their sense of self; as an **INTENTIONAL** act of demeaning, or degrading some aspect of their identity. Even though the offender had no such intent.

From both person's point of view, the precise meaning of the word “calmer” is ambiguous. It could be meant as a helpful caution by implying no judgment of the person's behavior, **OR** it can be seen as neutral; not taking the side

of the clerk nor the customer, **OR**, as is the case here, it can be perceived as intentionally insulting, implying that the customer was being a jerk.

THE DIRECT CAUSE

Now, the offeree didn't quickly sort through those three possibilities and conclude the use of the word was deliberately disparaging, their reaction happened automatically; the word was instantly filtered through their past experiences, resulting in assumptions about the meaning of how the word was being used. If they had seen the word as positive, an attempt to facilitate resolution, they would probably feel relieved and grateful. If they saw the word as neutral, having no negative intent, they may be puzzled about the offender getting involved.

But that wasn't the offeree's perception; they experienced the word as a deliberate affront, maybe because of some previous experience where someone used the word with the intent to wound. No, they are not “crazy,” although their intense response may seem that way; instead they misinterpreted, misunderstood the **INTENT** of the alleged offender's behavior. In other words, they confused the **IMPACT** of the word with its “**INTENT**” and perceived the word as intentionally harmful.

And, because the offender **PERCEIVED** their intent as helpful, they may also feel insulted by the offende's sense of insult. "You're insulted that I tried to help you? **THAT'S** insulting to me." Offense can go both ways.

Maybe that extreme example might help to illustrate a **PATTERN** of similar, but less intense, reactions in your relationship. A pattern that is almost certainly there from time to time, because everyone is sensitive to something they regard as insulting, and therefore hurtful.

UNMET NEEDS OFTEN LIE BENEATH OUR PAIN

Both parties can perceive certain events in ways that create their own hurt. Chances are, beneath a sudden hurt and angry outburst lies an unmet need. Every human being needs to feel:

- **WORTHWHILE:** As having some value. Not that every aspect of us is valuable, but we want to feel that there is something in us that is of enduring worth. We cannot bear feeling "worthless," we need to feel we're worth being around; that we have qualities others want to be near.
- **LOVABLE:** Being more than just worthwhile to others, being deeply **NEEDED** in someone's life.
- **COMPETENT:** That we have skills valued by others and which are also useful to our own independent self-care.
- **INTELLIGENT:** Able to understand and clearly convey experiences and solve problems.
- **RESPECTABLE:** That we are entitled to courteous, considerate treatment, and that it is disrespectful to be abrupt and rude to us.
- **ETHICAL:** That we are regarded as reliable, trustworthy, dependable; we keep our word.
- **OK:** That we're fundamentally healthy. Not broken or F****d up.

HOW CAN WE USE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

Let's apply the lessons of the example. First, we now know that how we **REACT** to others is according to how we see a situation. And how we **PERCEIVE** that situation depends on the history of our **NEEDS**.

Unmet **NEEDS** often become **VULNERABILITIES** in our interactions with others. When that other is our partner, those issues can become regular arguments because such needs/vulnerabilities underlie those disputes. If one party

has a vulnerability, and their partner is insensitive to that vulnerability, a feeling of insult, offense, or wounding can occur. And conflict follows.

Vulnerabilities can explain why some incidents, which seem to be trivial, produce intense reactions in another person. Even though we do not recognize them or regard them as vulnerabilities, they are no less real and important to the other party involved. And the current event is perceived as a repeat of a past injury that they may have vowed to not ever tolerate again.

Those needs (aka vulnerabilities) provide the **MEANING** of the event and, therefore, the perception of the event explains the reaction and its intensity.

Here's an example of how one of these needs/vulnerabilities can lie under our pattern of arguments over even small things which, nonetheless, result in big fights.

Our partner is upset with us because we have neglected to do the dishes in what they consider a timely manner. It may seem like a simple matter of fairness, of us not doing our share of the chores, so our partner is understandably angry with us. They remind us of the deal, "You count on me to make dinner. Can't I expect you to do the dishes?" And we reply with, "What's the big deal? I'll do them later." See the pattern here; offense and offende?

For hours afterward, we cold shoulder each other. Why? Promises were painfully broken in our partner's past. And more to the heart of their reaction, they saw our response as meaning, "I'm **NOT WORTH** keeping promises to." Hence, the meaning of today's dirty dishes goes back to a history of broken promises that left our partner vulnerable to feeling unworthy.

Another example of the pattern: We want privacy and quiet. Our partner routinely interrupts to make some point. We angrily push back. "**NOT NOW!**" Feeling rebuked and offended, our partner screams "I only wanted a minute!" More stonewalling results.

What's the injury, the meaning of our angrily saying, "**NOT NOW?**" For us, maybe we became the offended because we saw our partner's repeated interruptions as **DISRESPECTFUL** of our needs, reminding us of past painful experiences when we were treated as if we **DIDN'T MATTER**. We perceived that as our partner thinking we were not worth their consideration. So we assert our offense by harshly sending our partner away. And now they're feeling offended and not lovable because we would not make time for them.

As things stand, such incidents rarely get discussed at the level of meaning necessary for resolution. Instead, the partners find ways to set the fights aside by changing the topic. But, as they have before, these arguments will occur again.

In short, repeated conflicts are inadvertently initiated when we trigger each others' vulnerabilities. It's difficult to break such patterns when we don't also address them at the level of meaning, not just the level of actions. While such self-disclosure is difficult with our partner, it effectively resolves conflicts because then we understand their upset and know to avoid it. And an additional payoff is that we feel closer to each other, breaking the pattern.

Until then, we scream at each other when we believe our partner has deliberately and painfully trampled our ego, and we theirs. When we have neglected to remember and respect our partner's ego, our relationship becomes mutually damaging. This pattern changes when we make each other's ego our priority.

As has been my pattern – more next time.

Tony Johnson, is a retired university counselor. He implements these ideas to live harmoniously with his partner in Ojochal. He can be reached at: johnson.tony4536@gmail.com

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Organizations are invited and encouraged to post their group activities, information, meeting schedules, and notices of special events FREE in the ARCR Facebook account. Go to www.facebook.com/ARCR123

► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

Groups meet daily throughout the country; times and places change frequently. Schedules for meetings and their locations can be found at: www.costaricaaaa.com.

► **Al-Anon**

English language meetings open to anyone whose life has been/is affected by someone else's problem with alcohol. Meeting information can be found at: www.costaricaaaa.com. Family Resources.

► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

Meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 12 noon at the Tap House, Escazú Village, Escazú. If you wish to attend please call: 4034-0788, or email: commander@alcr10.org or visit our website at: www.alcr10.org. If you need directions, call Terry Wise at: 8893-4021.

► **American Legion Post 12-Golfito**

Information can be obtained from Pat O'Connell, 8303-0950

► **American Legion Auxiliary**

The Legion Auxiliary meets the second Saturday of each month, at 1p.m. in Moravia. Contact Doris Murillo at: 2240-2947.

► **Amigos of Costa Rica**

A US-based non-profit organization established in 1999. As an advocate for philanthropy in Costa Rica; it contributes to the well-being of Costa Rica by connecting donors resources with vetted non-profit solutions. US Government tax-payers donations are deductible. For more information go to: www.amigosofcostarica.org or email to: emily@amigosofcostarica.org.

► **Atenas Bridge Club**

Informal, friendly duplicate games. Classes at 11 a.m., games at 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays. New members welcome. For more information, visit the website at: www.atenasbridgeclub.com or email to: atenasbridgeclub@gmail.com.

► **Birding Club Costa Rica**

A private group that travels around Costa Rica to observe and identify the 900+ species of birds found here, learn about different parts of the country, and enjoy the company of like-minded and interested people. For more information, visit the website: www.birdingclubcr.org or email to: info@birdingclubcr.org.

► **Canadian Club**

Canadian Club welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons, and at our special annual events. No passport required. There is no fee or dues to pay, just sign up with your email address and we will keep you informed of Canadian events.

For information go to Facebook: Canadian Club of Costa Rica, or email Pat at: canadianclubcr@yahoo.com to sign up.

► **Central Valley Golf Association**

Meets every Tuesday morning between 6-7 a.m. at the Valle Del Sol golf course in Santa Ana. Both individual and two person events with different formats every week. We invite all men and woman with all handicaps to join us and enjoy golf on a picturesque course. No membership required. For more information, contact: Larry Goldman 8933-3333, email to: nylarryg@yahoo.com.

► **Costa Ballena Women's Network**

Begun in Ojochal with a handful of expat ladies, our focus is networking, community, business, and social activities as well as offering an opportunity to meet new people. Monthly lunch meetings held the third Saturday of each month through a variety of social activities h at various restaurants with guest speakers talking on interesting topics. For more information please email: cbwn00@gmail.com.

► **Costa Rica Writers Group**

Published authors and writers; newbies, and wanna-bes make up this group. Dedicated to helping and improving all authors' work with resources for publishing, printing, editing, cover design; every aspect of the writing process. Third Thursday, January through November, Henry's Beach Café, Escazú, 11 a.m. Contact: bbrashears0@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page, Costa Rica Writers Group.

► **Democrats Abroad Costa Rica**

Provides information about voting in the US and voting issues of interest to US citizens living in Costa Rica. For more information or to join, email: democratsabroadcostarica@gmail.com or visit our website at: www.democratsabroad.org/cr
Register to vote absentee at: votefromabroad.org

► **Domestic Animal Welfare Group Costa Ballena**

DAWG is a volunteer run, non-profit organization focused on animal advocacy in the Costa Ballena region of Costa Rica with a goal of eliminating the abuse and abandonment of domestic animals in Costa Ballena. We stress education, spay and neuter. Donations are our lifeline. For information visit the website at: www.dawgcostarica.org or email to: dawgcostarica@gmail.com.

► **First Friday Lunch**

Each month on the first Friday of the month ARCR sponsors a First Friday Lunch at 12 p.m. All are invited to join ARCR officers and others for an informal lunch and BS session. No RSVP or agenda, just good food and meeting new and old friends.

Attendees are responsible for their own food and drink expenses. Meetings are at the Chinese restaurant, Marisqueria Mariscos Vivo, located behind the Mas x Menos grocery store located across from the Nissan Dealer near Parque Sabana. Call ARCR (2220-0055) for directions.

► Little Theater Group

An English Speaking theater group located in Escazu. Website: littletheatregroup.org Email: info@littletheatregroup.org Whatsapp: 8708-2607

► Marine Corps League

Meets the second Saturday of the month at 11 a.m. at the Tap House in City Place Mall in Santa Ana. We are looking for new members. Former Marines and Navy Corpsmen can be regular members. All other service members are welcome to join as associate members. For information call Andy Pucek at: 8721-6636 or email: andy@marinecorpsleaguecr.com.

► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

(For Women) The Club, in existence since 1980, promotes friendship and support among members, mostly expats in Costa Rica, through conducting a variety of social and recreational activities. Meetings are held from September to May, interest groups meet year-round. General Meeting at 10:00 a.m. every first Tuesday of the month. For more information go to our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/newcomers.org/> or email to: newcomersclub.costarica@gmail.com.

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

Formed in November 2009 to promote friendship between English speaking women in Pérez Zeledón and, through friendship, to make positive contributions to our local community. The PZIWC meets for lunch on the second Tuesday of each month, hosts Ramblers Day on the third Tuesday of each month, and has a Games Day on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information, please send an email to: pzwomansclub@gmail.com or visit our web site at: www.pziwc.org.

► Professional Women's Network

PWN provides its members with opportunities to network with other professional women with the goal of aiding personal and professional development of entrepreneurs, students, and professionals. PWN sponsors service and outreach programs to "give back" to the community. Meeting schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Helen at: 2280-4362. Location: Tin Jo Restaurant in San José, Calle 11, Av. 6-8. Or email us at: pwn.costarica@gmail.com. PWN website is: www.pwn-cr.com.

► Quepos-Manuel Antonio Writers Group

The QMAWG is a group of aspiring and accomplished

writers living in the Central and South Pacific Coast area who meet to expand their skills, share resources, and support and socialize with others with an interest in writing. Meetings take place on the second Sunday of each month at 12:00 p.m. at El Avion restaurant in Manuel Antonio, and includes a presentation and Q&A session, followed by a luncheon and social exchange. For more information, email Bob Normand at: bob@bobnormand.com

► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information email Walter Bibb at: wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com.

► San Vito Bird Club

A community based birding/nature group centered in the diverse southern zone of Costa Rica. We also facilitate nature education to local elementary schools through Cornell University's Bird Sleuth program. Twice monthly bird walks through the Wilson Botanical Garden and other sites are open to all; binoculars available as needed. Please visit our website: www.sanvitobirdclub.org or email: eltangaral@gmail.com for more information.

► Wine Club of Costa Rica

Social group. Monthly Meeting, Mainly Escazu Email: costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com

► Women's Club of Costa Rica

The oldest, continuously operating, philanthropic organization for English-speaking women in Costa Rica. The club is focused on serving community needs, particularly on children's needs. Along with its philanthropic fundraising activities, WCCR also hosts regular lunches, teas, and many special interest groups. Guests are welcome. Information and a calendar of events can be found at: www.wccr.org.

► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Open to men too. Meetings in English in Heredia, Spanish in San José, and English/Spanish in San Ramon. We work on peace and human rights issues. Call Mitzi: 2433-7078 or write us at: mitzstar@gmail.com.

Meeting times and dates are subject to change or suspension due to the coronavirus and Health Ministry mandates. Contact the club for further details.

NOTICE: Club officers should review the contact information for their clubs and make sure it is up to date.

Send any changes or corrections to: service@arcr.cr subject line; Club Corner, and post them on the the ARCR Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/ARCR123.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY (47)

Important dates in Costa Rica:

All ARCR Seminars for expats have been temporarily postponed due to Covid -19. Dates for future Seminars will be announced at a later time.

Funniest One Liners

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

I always take life with a grain of salt... plus a slice of lemon... and a shot of tequila.

Evening news is where they begin with "Good evening," and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

Whenever I fill out an application, in the part that says "If an emergency, notify," I put "DOCTOR."

Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.

I want to die peacefully in my sleep, like my grandfather. Not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.

The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on the list.

If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.

Alejandro Piercy
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Available in ARCR's Insurance Office

Phone: 2220-0055 or 4052-4052 / email: insurance@arcr.cr