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# El Residente



DESTINOS

## Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí

**Also in this issue:**

Costa Rican Coffee: How Do I Love Thee; Let me Count the Ways

Kayaking the Río San Juan; The Trip of a Lifetime

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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.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

What more can be said about COVID-19 and how it is affecting our daily lives that hasn't been said before? I'm sure that many of us, now confined mostly to our homes, are missing the freedom to travel about our beautiful adopted country like we could before the virus struck. In these times it's natural that our longing for the "good old days" will lead us to reminisce about trips that we have taken in the past. One person who has indulged in reliving his past, Lee Swidler, graces these pages with his recollection of a particularly engaging journey; An Adventure in Paradise begins the four part tale of how he and some friends traveled the length of the Río San Juan in kayaks.

Those who are looking forward to an exploratory jaunt after the crisis has worn itself out will find William Duckwall's Destinos full of information about somewhere to go. The article provides an informative guide for that trip to be taken when the world returns to a semblance of normal.

In the meantime, while travels are confined to local areas, you can read about how some others are dealing with the drastic alterations the disease has imposed on their world, as well as explore some of the effects of how extended, close confinement can impact relationships... and how to deal with them.

In the meantime, inside is information about scams, taxes, and other things we still have to deal with on a daily basis.

No need to wash your hands or put on your mask, just dig in! Oh, and patronize our advertisers when you can – but keep your distance, Amigos!

## CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>Published by:</b>	ARCR Administration
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:service@arcr.cr">service@arcr.cr</a>
<b>Managing Director:</b>	Rómulo Pacheco
<b>Editor-in-Chief:</b>	Allen Dickinson
<b>Associate Editor:</b>	Bob Brashears
<b>Graphic Design:</b>	Eduardo González
<b>Advertising graphics:</b>	Eduardo González
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<b>Main office,</b>	Av 14, Calle 42, San José, Costa Rica
<b>San José:</b>	(506) 2220-0055, (506) 4052-4052
<b>WhatsApp:</b>	8935-2444
<b>Mailing address:</b>	P.O. Box 1191-1007 Centro Colón, San José, Costa Rica
<b>Advertising and</b>	
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Cover Photo: William Duckwall



## ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

**OLD SCAM, REDUX** A new version of an old scam (profiled in the Across the Board column – Old Scam, New Twist – in the January/February 2020 issue, and fully described in an article in the March/April 2019 issue), is still going on here in Costa Rica. The following information was received from a member in May 2020:

*"I recently received two calls from someone who said he was from the Ministry of Hacienda. He gave me his name (Nelson Sanchez) and insisted on speaking English even though I speak Spanish. His English was flawless. He told me that foreigners do not have to pay the 13% IVA and the Ministry has to return the tax money. He was very convincing, even citing a law that says they must return the tax money I have paid. He offered to help me get a refund, but I declined. I later called the Hacienda and they told me they never call or send emails and that there is no "Nelson Sanchez" working for them. I also called my bank to make sure no one tries to get into my account, and they assured me that since I did not give out my account numbers it was safe."*

**SCAMS CONTINUED** This from another member:

*"Just the other day I got an email request, purportedly from Amazon, to update my account profile. About a third of the way through the update it started asking for my credit card number and even the security code on the back. I immediately deleted the email and ran my security software. A check revealed that Amazon never sends an email asking for critical information – they simply would ask you to go onto your account and make changes."*

The bottom line is that, despite COVID-19, the scammers are still working, trying to get your money. If you receive such a call or email from any purported business/agency/etc., hang up or delete the message immediately!

**ANOTHER SCAM ALERT** (The following was copied from a Medicare.gov message and applies only to those US residents who are enrolled in the Medicare system.)

*"Scammers may use the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to steal your identity and commit Medicare fraud. In some cases, they might tell you they'll send a Coronavirus test, masks, or other items in exchange for your Medicare Number or personal information. Don't fall for it; it's a scam!"*

*"It's important to always guard your Medicare Number and check your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) for errors. Only give your Medicare Number to participating Medicare pharmacists, primary and specialty care doctors, or people you trust to work with Medicare on your behalf. Remember, Medicare will never call you to verify your Medicare Number."*

*"Visit: [Medicare.gov/fraud](https://www.medicare.gov/fraud) for more information on protecting yourself from fraud and reporting suspected fraud."*

**NEW HOLIDAY** President Carlos Alvarado recently officiated at a law-signing ceremony making December 1 a new holiday; Army Abolition Day. It celebrates the day in 1948, after the conclusion of the civil war, when the constitution of the Second Republic was approved and the Army was abolished. On that day, then President

José Figueres Ferrer symbolized the act by smashing down part of the wall at the military barracks in San José with a sledge hammer. The new holiday will replace the October 12 Día de las Culturas, or Cultures Day, which celebrated the day when Christopher Columbus arrived in the new world.

**ECONOMIC DEFLATION** The government recently reported that inflation for March-April 2020 was a negative half-percent, making year-to-date figures virtually unchanged at -0.1%. Inflation rates in the 2007-8 period were substantial, over 20% total for the two years. During the 2009-14 period, however, overall inflation declined from that high, and for the years of 2015-19, has stabilized at an average of 1.3% per year. (Credit for the information in the preceding two articles goes to Bob Normand of *Golden Gringo Chronicles*.)

**TRAFFIC CAMS ARE RETURNING** Soon, "jugársela" (beating the system) on the road by such actions as not stopping for a red light, circulating in a restricted area, or use of bus lanes, will bring you a traffic ticket, thanks to a series of traffic cams that will be operational before the end of the year. The equipment will be placed in strategic locations, especially on the roads with high traffic volume and the need for more controls. The program will start with 40 cameras this year and reach 100 within 2021.

The system will process the photos of the offending vehicle's license plate and tickets will be issued in real-time to the vehicle's owner either by email, or by text message to their cell phone. Owners who have not registered their email or phone number with Cosevi will be notified when they pay the vehicle's Marchamo. Fines will range from ₡23,415 for violating the vehicular driving restrictions in San José, to ₡326,701 for passing on curves, street racing, running a red light, driving in exclusive bus lanes and, of course, speeding. Presently there is no indication if points are to be applied. (*This information adapted from an article published in Q-Costa Rica, February 26, 2020.*)

**RAINY SEASON** The rainy season is upon us and it is again time to think about mosquitoes. COVID-19 isn't the only health threat out there; Costa Rica has many mosquito-borne diseases, Zika, Dengue, and others to look out for. Please take a moment and review your property for locations where standing water may accumulate and provide potential mosquito breeding areas. Stay healthy!

**PRICES GOING UP** A June 13 article in the Tico Times noted that the Costa Rica government is applying a 13% Value Added Tax (VAT) to over 100 on-line services, beginning August 1. These services include popular ones such as Amazon, Facebook, Netflix, and Uber. The tax will most likely be passed to the user/subscriber. For the full list of the services to be taxed and to read the article, go to: <https://ticotimes.net/2020/06/13/popular-digital-services-taxed-13-vat-in-costa-rica-as-of-august-1> (NOTE: This tax only applies to purchases of online services made using a credit card issued by a Costa Rican bank – it does NOT apply to online services purchased in Costa Rica using a foreign bank credit card.)

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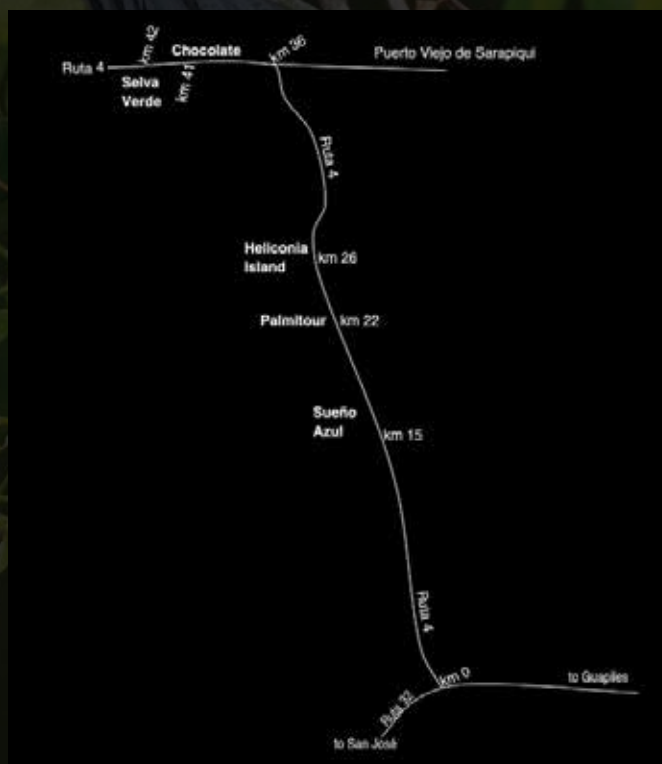
by William Duckwall

## Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí

**I**n my last article, back in March, I wrote about two destinations on Ruta 32: the Quebrada González Station of Braulio Carrillo National Park, and the Rainforest Aerial Tram. Both are just past the Río Sucio Bridge, about an hour's drive from San José, depending on the whims of traffic and Mother Nature. If you drive about ten kilometers past that bridge you'll finally be out of the mountains and at the head of a coastal plain which slopes down gently to the Caribbean over a distance of roughly 50 kilometers.

Ruta 4 comes in on the north side of Ruta 32. At or near this intersection there are several good restaurants and a big service station. If you return to San José via Ruta 32, keep in mind that this service station is the last one you'll see until you exit Parque Braulio Carrillo, after 35 km of steep mountain road.

If you continue on Ruta 32, you will go through Guápiles (my hometown), Guácimo, Siquirres, Limón, and eventually, allowing about three hours for the 165-kilometer drive, Puerto Viejo de Talamanca. Go





much farther, and you'll be in Panama. Indeed, Costa Rica's Caribbean coast is only 193 kilometers (120 miles) long, as the crow flies.

But there are good things closer at hand – turn onto Ruta 4 and head down the hill towards the coastal plain toward the other Puerto Viejo – the one known as Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. We've stayed at two good eco lodges in the vicinity. Also, there is a rustic chocolate tour, one that threatens at the outset to feed you so much chocolate that you'll be refusing more by the end of the day. It is not an empty threat.

## Sueño Azul Resort

(<http://www.Sueñoazulresort.com>)

From the intersection at Ruta 32, follow Ruta 4 about 15 kilometers; this will put you in the neighborhood known as Horquetas. There you should rely on Google maps or Waze for the final few kilometers to the resort. As I write this, Google Maps displays two different pins for Sueño Azul. The property name has several variations on travel websites – Hacienda Sueño Azul, Hotel Sueño Azul, Sueño Azul Resort, etc. Don't be confused; there is only one Sueño Azul. You'll turn left from the highway somewhere in the vicinity of Frogs Heaven (haven't been there, but it has good reviews) and find your way over a couple of rickety bridges, crossing first the Río Puerto Viejo, and finally the smaller Río San Rafael. Shortly after the second bridge, veer to the right into the parking lot of Sueño Azul.

Before you rush off to the bar, have a quick look at the lagoon by the parking area – there is a small caiman that likes to bask on a log near the shore, sometimes with his turtle pal. The lagoon is an important feature of the hotel and many of the rooms have balconies that overlook the lagoon with its avian and reptilian inhabitants.

We happened to stay there by chance the first time. We had tried to book rooms at Selva Verde (detailed below), but had waited too long; they couldn't accommodate a large group on short notice in high season. Our local travel agent recommended Sueño Azul and it proved to be ideal. All the rooms and the dining area are on



ground level – no stairs to negotiate, which was helpful, as some members of our group had mobility issues.

Sueño Azul is a big, sprawling property, 2,500 acres, which reaches back to the northern arm of Parque Braulio Carrillo. The main building (reception, offices, restaurant, and bar) is near Río Puerto Viejo, and there is a pleasant deck just past the swimming pool that overlooks the river where the Río San Rafael joins. From that deck you can nurse a coffee in the morning while watching kingfishers working, and cormorants downriver sunning themselves. Or enjoy a beverage in the afternoon on the terrace by the lodge restaurant and bar while watching egrets return to their nighttime roost by the lagoon. Green ibises sometimes walk across the lawn; they seem like an average sort of bird, long billed, overall dark, nearly black – until they happen to walk into the direct sun, which lights up their iridescent green plumage.

There are 58 rooms, ranging from standard (\$132) to suites (\$209), breakfast included. The price goes up about 25% during high season (mid-December to mid-April) and there is a discount for residents and citizens. On

our most recent visit, our standard room overlooked the lagoon; we had a good view of nesting boat-billed herons (two eggs in the nest), cormorants, dozens of roosting egrets, northern jacanas, green herons, and aningas drying their wings in the sun. The rooms are spread out into several wings, scattered around the lagoon. Should you want to mix business with pleasure, the property includes a large conference center. In addition, there are spa and yoga packages, horseback excursions, and tubing trips down the river. Restaurant El Corral, built in a part of the main building that was once the stable of the hacienda, is very good. We ate all our meals there, never bothering to get in the car and go anywhere else.

In addition to scenic walks around the lodge and lagoon area, there is a rocky dirt/gravel/occasionally-paved road that winds back to a scenic stream cascade. It is about a one-hour walk, or you can arrange to go by horseback. If you hear popping noises, almost like tiny firecrackers, coming from the trees along the road, then take the time to search for the little white-collared manakins that make the noise by clapping their wings in a courtship dance. At the cascade area, which has lots of little potholes and spots to explore, there is a covered area with picnic tables, restrooms, and changing areas. Plus, there is an unadvertised feature; if you go past the building with the restrooms you'll come to a rustic stream-fed forest pool, complete with a water slide.

It's a wonderful place to just relax. If you have any interest in birds, then by all means bring binoculars, scopes, cameras, etc. And be forewarned, even if you think you have no interest in birds, you may just change your mind after a visit.

## ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

### Palmitour

(<https://www.facebook.com/Palmitour/>)

Return to Ruta 4 and turn left, toward Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. About seven kilometers farther there is a little family restaurant on the left, shown on Google maps and Waze as Palmitour. In addition to the usual típico fare, they specialize in dishes made with palmito (heart of palm); their unique lasagna comes to mind. They have an extensive palmito plantation, and can arrange an informative tour. The Horquetas area is the center of palmito cultivation; if you see a pickup truck on the highway with what looks like carefully stacked white firewood, that's fresh palmito.



### Heliconia Island

(<https://www.heliconiaisland.com/botanical-garden.html>)

Traveling another four kilometers north on Ruta 4 brings you to signs for Heliconia Island, which is on the left. It is a botanical garden as well as a bed-and-breakfast with five rooms and a restaurant. We've never stayed there overnight, but we often bring visitors to the garden, which has a stunning collection of heliconias and gingers, all with accompanying wildlife, including lots of birds and butterflies, and the occasional sloth. Cost is \$10 per person for the self-guided tour. You could rush through it in an hour, or spend a more leisurely two or three hours poking into everything. The property is bounded on the far side by Río Puerto Viejo.

Return to Ruta 4, turn left (north) and continue another 10 kilometers. At kilometer 8, you'll be passing the La Selva Biological Station, a favorite spot for researchers studying tropical rain forests.

When you cross the bridge over Río Sarapiquí you will be entering the town of Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. The road will come to a "T" intersection. Turn left to continue





on Ruta 4 (turning right takes you into downtown Puerto Viejo). Follow Ruta 4 another 5 kilometers and on the right side of the road you'll see the next attraction.

## Costa Rica Best Chocolate

(<http://www.costaricabestchocolate.com/en/>)

This is a small, family-run business, with an interesting history (see their website). They offer several tours but we have only taken the two-hour chocolate tour, which covers exactly what the Sibö tour does not. The Sibö tour spends more time on the European history of fine chocolates; this tour focuses on the long history of chocolate in Central America, and the actual processing of cacao into chocolate. The presentation is perhaps less polished than Sibö's, but it is just as entertaining. During the tour you will have seemingly unlimited opportunities to sample chocolate at all stages of processing, sweetened or not, with added spices (all possible combinations of cinnamon, vanilla, cardamom, chilies, cacao nibs...), and ultimately explore your own physiological reaction to way-too-much-chocolate,

perhaps a small step toward achieving the mental state of the Aztec leader Montezuma who reportedly drank 50 cups of a hot chocolate beverage every day.

## Selva Verde Lodge

(<https://www.selvaverde.com>)

From the chocolate tour, travel a little less than one kilometer farther on Ruta 4 and you will find Selva Verde Lodge, with the entrance/reception on the left. This is one of the earliest eco lodges in Costa Rica. It was started by Giovanna Holbrook, who started running eco tours in the 1970s. She returned to this area in 1982 to untangle a tour group SNAFU and found that 600 acres of primary forest was about to be cut down. That was the genesis of Selva Verde and its pristine forest reserve. Rather than recounting the history, it is better to hear the story from her – there is a short YouTube video of Ms. Holbrook, recorded in 2009 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfgO6ZK46RY>.

My wife and I have stayed there several times. When we have house guests, we almost always bring them there for two or three nights. It is always a revelation, an epiphany, for guests who think they have seen Costa Rica, when all they have seen is Guanacaste and San José. Selva Verde is tropical lowland rain forest. This is where the Toucan Rescue Ranch brings its young rescue sloths for release. The long trail through Braulio Carrillo starts above Heredia in Barva, and ends in this area. Anything you read about rain forest ecology written by researchers at the La Selva Biological Station applies here as well.

The lodge's rooms are scattered over a considerable area: near reception, on raised pilings near the Río Sarapiquí, and on the hillside across Ruta 4. Some rooms have fans,





some have air conditioning, and some are self-contained bungalows suitable for a honeymoon. Prices are in the same general range as Sueño Azul, but please see their website for all the options and pricing.

The best part Selva Verde Lodge is their selection of guided walks. We always go on an early morning (6:00 a.m.) bird walk with a guide. The cost is \$27 for adults, and it is a great way to start the day and get an overview of the area. There is also a night walk (\$23) at 7:00 p.m., which starts in the froggy area near the dining hall and ventures across the suspension bridge over Río Sarapiquí to the primary forest on the other side. You're guaranteed to see red-eyed tree frogs. Our party encountered a kinkajou when we crossed the bridge; he was high up on the support cables. (Warning: Don't stand under an agitated Kinkajou!) There's also a general guided walk through the reserve that takes place at the more civilized hours of 9:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m., \$25. You're likely to see poison dart frogs; both the blue-jeans frogs, and the green and black frogs which are common. Iguanas the size of infants roam the grounds and there are troops of howler monkeys you'll see and hear. We once encountered an anteater, which was unusual – our guide said it was a first for him – on the path near the lodge. The walk that I hope to do next is a four-hour walk to a 600-year-old



almendro tree deep in the reserve. Almendros (wild almond) are trees important to green macaws (lapas verdes) both for food and nesting.

The guides at Selva Verde are wonderful! They are knowledgeable, entertaining, and patient. You'll always feel like you're being guided by a friend. The last time we visited was in February – just before the current unpleasantness. One of our guides was Melany Ocón, who you can meet briefly in a virtual tour of Selva Verde: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wnnSHXy8lg>.

She took us to the 400-year-old Sura tree that is shown in the video.

There are other activities off-site which can be arranged through the hotel. In addition to the chocolate tour detailed above, there is horseback riding and zip-lining. On the Río Sarapiquí, you can go white-water rafting or take a boat tour with a wildlife guide. Birding tours can be arranged (birding was the early focus of Giovanna Holbrook's travel business). You can take a cooking class taught by a local Tica, where you can learn how to make empanadas and patacones. You also have the option of visiting a local school with a tour led by a director, teacher, and/or students (part of the modest booking fee goes to the school). And, with two weeks' advance





notice, your group can arrange to participate in a full or half-day community service project. As I look through the options, I realize I have only begun to sample all that Selva Verde has to offer.

### RETURN TO THE CENTRAL VALLEY

The fastest way to get back to the Central Valley is via Rutas 4 and 32. Alternately you could take a scenic drive that will go by the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, a perfect spot for lunch and a walk. Just drive about five kilometers farther on Ruta 4 and then head up the mountain on Ruta 126 for 39 kilometers to reach the waterfall. From there, it is another 34 kilometers to Heredia and the faster-paced life of the Central Valley.

*William is a retired engineer who lives in Guapiles with his wife Janet. He has varied interests – Costa Rican birds and orchids – and writes a little now and then. He can be reached at: [bduckwall@mac.com](mailto:bduckwall@mac.com)*



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## 12 MUSINGS FROM THE GOLDEN GRINGO

by Bob Normand



### Costa Rican Coffee: How Do I Love Thee; Let me Count the Ways

*Editor's Note: This article was previously published in the Golden Gringo Chronicles in March 2020. It is reprinted here with permission.*

If you're as old as me (or, now that I think of it, even considerably younger) you remember the 1960s, 70s and 80s when nutritionists and the medical industry regularly bad-mouthed coffee. How times have changed. Now we find coffee being virtually touted as a health food, or at least containing some ingredients that are aids to good health.

Before anyone starts hurdling epithets at me for praising coffee, let me assure you I know that caffeine-based coffee is not for everyone, particularly those with higher blood pressure or those who may be prone to anxiety and/or insomnia. For most of us though, the caffeine in coffee is a mild and useful stimulant and can

be thought of as the most commonly used psychoactive drug in the world. Coffee also contains a "suite of antioxidants" that can provide various benefits.

In recent, i.e., the last two decades, studies, numerous results indicate that the ingredients in coffee can indeed help certain health problems. Almost five years ago I put together a summary on the evolving understanding of the benefits of coffee. These include a lower chance of contracting Type II diabetes (although I developed it anyway), a lower chance of stroke when used in conjunction with green tea, better long-term memory (I forget what they said about short term memory), a lower incidence of certain types of cancer, and it has





also been linked to lower rates of Parkinson's disease and other forms of dementia..

Unlike wine and other alcoholic beverages, the history of coffee only goes back to the 16th century. It was first reported used as a medicine in the palace of a sheik in Ethiopia. The sheik's medicine man noticed how certain birds, who had been chewing on berries from certain shrubbery, had an unusual vitality about them.

After the medicine man experimented with chewing the berries himself (bitter), then cooking them, then roasting them, he hit upon the brown brew we're so familiar with. When the medicine man fed the concoction with its stimulating aroma to the sick sheik, the leader recovered quickly. It wasn't long before the news of the miracle drug spread quickly, even to Mecca where the medicine man was later made a Muslim Saint.

Kaffa Province in Ethiopia quickly became the world center, the mecca, for coffee. As time went on, these Ethiopian plants were planted in various areas around the world. This



was the origin of *Coffea Arabica* and today is the only type of coffee allowed by law to be grown in Costa Rica.

Much has been written about the good quality of coffee in Costa Rica - just Google Costa Rica coffee and you'll see. Even the commercial brands here are, on average, richer than I had experienced in North America, and in much of Europe for that matter. Some of the premium brands (I favor dark roasts) are truly an adventure in taste.

What I remember most about the brew when growing up in a small New England town, was the old aluminum percolator on top of our stove. Some of these pots were just plain and uncoated, while some others carried a laminated coating of porcelain.

It was always there; in our house the pot stood over the burner of our oil-fired stove in the kitchen when it was cooking, and to the side during the morning hours to keep it warm, always ready for that impulsive family member who wanted a second or third cup. As human creatures universally effected by smells, who can forget the mixture of aromas from freshly perked coffee, bacon frying, and the sweet smell of steaming cinnamon rolls coming out of the oven (thanks mom). I can still see mom doing all that on a Saturday or Sunday morning.

The low tech part of the percolator I was referring to, was that little glass knob at the top that allowed you to



see the water change color from clear to golden brown as it perked. It was one way to know it was ready - the other was your watch. Those simple cooking utensils were in use before electric percolators, and long before the quickie coffee makers of today with their built-in glass carafes.

Later, of course, once coffee was broadly accepted by societies virtually everywhere, the pots got more artistic like the French porcelain coffee server.

So, for someone who has always been a coffee fan, if not bordering on a coffeeholic, I find myself very fortunate to be living in one of the premier coffee producing countries in the world with a tremendous selection of rich coffees to choose from.

*Bob Normand, aka "Golden Gringo" is the author a monthly newsletter called The Golden Gringo Chronicles. He has written extensively about the legends of Costa Rica, including his books, Mariposa, A Love Story of Costa Rica, and Las Esferas, Mystery Spheres of Costa Rica,. Mr. Normand lives in Quepos and can be reached at: <http://www.goldengringo.com>*

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by Katya De Luisa

## Senior Rehabilitation Centers

**A**s we age, staying healthy takes more work than when we were young. It's essential that we eat well, exercise, and keep our brains active. And, all the experts agree that socialization is an essential component of good health. Older adults, however, commonly tend to isolate themselves, particularly if they or a loved one is physically disabled or has cognitive challenges.

For the past few months everyone has been in isolation and many of us have resorted to on-line meetings for our get-togethers. But humans, especially the elderly, have a fundamental need to be in physical contact with others, and that can't be replaced by technology.

In Costa Rica, like many other countries, elder care facilities are in lockdown, prohibiting visitors, even family. This is especially devastating in this country where family contact is an essential and integral part of the culture. (For me, over the past few months, my only physical contact, maintaining the distancing rules, has been grocery shopping. I'm eager to get back to my Tuesday meditation group, my monthly book club, and those dinner parties!)

Many seniors like to attend activity centers which provide care for the elderly of working families and socialization for seniors living alone. Attending those centers has been a lifeline for many elderly persons, helping to alleviate things like depression and anxiety, especially for those with cognitive decline and dementia. Thankfully, Costa Rica is in the process of easing the lockdown and some elder organizations are beginning to reopen their doors, keeping within the strict guidelines and regulations set by the Ministry of Health.

There are several centers offering day care for seniors and activities throughout the country, like Centro Diurno Bella Horizonte, Centro Diurno Arboleda Dorada, and Centro Diurno Santa Rosa. However, none of those specialize in offering a complete range of rehabilitation services, therapists, and medical consultations to their clients and the general senior population. The only one which has a full list of services is La Casa Sol.

Opened in 1996 by Jenny Mora Vargas, a licensed geriatric psychologist, La Casa Sol was located in an old hacienda style house in Santa Ana. That same year Jenny Mora became a founding member of ASCADA, the Costa Rican Alzheimer's Association.

At that time Costa Rican elderly usually lived with their families and there wasn't much information available about the importance of keeping them active, and even less about slowing "senility." After several years of operation in Santa Ana, the business relocated to its present site, a more spacious building in Escazú Centro, where they offer services to locals and foreign residents over 60.

Today La Casa Sol is a one-stop for senior services and they offer private, individual medical consultations with the center's on-site medical staff; Jenny Mora (who is bilingual), Dra. Andrea Quesada, a medical doctor, and Dra. Erica Salazar, a specialist in anti-aging and memory/cognitive enhancement therapies. Available to both attendees at the center and the public are private physical and occupational therapies, as well as social clubs, music, art, dancing, chair yoga, and Pilates exercise programs. There are also educational videos and programs, computer classes, movies, and games. La Casa Sol also conducts a care-giver training course and offers referrals to families for qualified home care-givers.

All activities incorporate therapeutic techniques designed to enhance and maintain a senior's physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Those with mild cognitive decline, memory issues, or dementia are always included in the activities with the other attendees. Some receive individualized physical, occupational, psychological, speech, and cognitive enhancement therapies others get physical, occupational, and mental stimulation therapies. Several of the La Casa Sol employees speak English, and many of the predominately Costa Rican attendees love to practice their English skills with the expats.

Other services at La Casa Sol are family support groups and private consultations to assess physical and mental capabilities. They also provide transportation within the Central Valley and nutritious lunches and snacks.




Like many businesses in Costa Rica, La Casa Sol had suspended operations. They are, however, preparing for reopening soon, in compliance with the new regulations set by the Ministerio de Salud (Health Department). Private medical consultations are available by contacting Jenny Mora at 8330-8851.

To learn more about La Casa Sol, visit their website at: [www.casasolcr.com](http://www.casasolcr.com). You can email them at: [casasolcr@gmail.com](mailto:casasolcr@gmail.com) or call them at (506) 2288-0209, 8330-8851. They are also on Facebook at: [casasolcr](https://www.facebook.com/casasolcr)


Katya De Luisa is an author and freelance writer. She has 20 years of experience working with seniors and is the founder/organizer of The Infinite Mind dementia project here in Costa Rica. [www.theinfinitemind.org](http://www.theinfinitemind.org)





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by Allen Dickinson

## Avocados!

When I was about five years old, I was sitting in my father's lap while he was eating half an avocado with his lunch. Despite his warnings that I "wouldn't like it," I insisted on tasting it. Much to everyone's surprise, I loved it! From that day on I would share an avocado with my father whenever I could get my grubby little hands on one.

Even back then avocados were expensive, so we didn't have them as often as I wanted. About that time it became my wish – my dream – to have my own avocado tree with unlimited fruit so that I could enjoy some whenever I wanted.

I made that wish known, so, when I was about eight, my mother showed me how to grow an avocado plant from a seed (suspend the seed over a glass of water with some toothpicks so that the blunt end of the seed is submerged – and wait.) Eventually the seed will split and a sprout will grow.

For the next fifty years I used that method and was more often successful than not – an avocado plant would rise from the seed. Each time my hopes and dreams would grow with the sprout, but alas, eventually, every one of them died a premature death. The last time I tried, I got one to grow about three-feet tall. Although it was spindly, with only two or three leaves at the very top (the lowest one would soon fall off as a new one grew higher), my hopes rose – maybe this time! When it died, so did my dream of having an avocado tree and I quit trying.

Some years later I moved to Costa Rica. Avocados were cheaper here and I was able to indulge myself and eat them more regularly, but gave no thought to trying to grow my own – that was a childhood dream I had put aside.

Then, one day as I was sitting on my balcony in Santa Ana, I looked down and saw some familiar looking leaves sticking up above the weeds growing in the vacant lot next door. I was suspicious, it looked like all those leaves I had seen falling off my avocado plants over the years, but no, it couldn't be! I asked my wife, "What is that?"

Her answer blew me away; she casually glanced over at the plant and said, "Oh, it's an avocado. I threw a seed out there one day."

OMG! An avocado plant was growing wild next door! No toothpicks, no glasses, no encouraging words, just Mother Nature thumbing her nose at me! Periodically, I would sneak onto the vacant lot and whisper a few kind words to "my" plant. And it was responding! It grew to about four-feet and had begun to bush out when the owner of the lot mowed it down with the rest of the weeds.

It was a disappointment, but not a shock; I had experienced a lifetime of broken-avocado-tree-dreams, and this was just one more.

Time passed and life went on. A few months ago, as I have chronicled here, we moved to a new home. It's an older house and there are mature trees and bushes growing in the yard here. One tree, which is about 30-feet tall, annoyingly drops about 40 or 50 leaves a day onto my patio. They have to be swept up and disposed of; it's my teenage son's job to do that every morning. I have not paid any attention to the tree at all.

Then one day I looked more closely at one of the leaves and it looked familiar. Sometimes dreams come true. I discovered that the annoying, leaf-dropping tree is an avocado tree! And it is loaded with little baby avocados! In fact, it has been dropping little avocados all over the place! I can't pick them up as fast as that damn tree can produce them!

But alas (again) Mother Nature is still messing with me. When the avocados remaining on the tree started to become mature, I began harvesting. But, to my dismay, they are all rotten inside and inedible. So close, but so far. Others have so many avocados they sell the excess at the side of the road, but not me.

Oh well, at least the mangos from the tree across the street, which is dropping fruit faster than the neighbors (from blocks around) and I can keep up, are delicious! I love mangos too.



# (20) OUT AND ABOUT

by Mitzi Stark

## Ferias, Fiestas, y Festivales – Part 5



With the COVID-19 health crisis, the calendar of events has been one big blah for the last two months as events were canceled or postponed. I missed Pet Fest in nearby La Garita, the cat show in Cartago, a book presentation complete with mini-concert and refreshments at the museum in Alajuela, and I could weep over missing the Pizza Fair at the national stadium. Every week I checked the events on Facebook: [siempreeventos.com](https://www.facebook.com/siempreeventos.com) and: [gamcultural.com](https://www.facebook.com/gamcultural.com), the GAM (general area metropolitan) cultural agenda, but there were no offerings.

There were some virtual events; there was a workshop on gin and tonic, one on belly dancing, and another on making beer. But the fun in fair-going is: 1) Getting out of the house, 2) Seeing all the new products, 3) Seeing all the people and, 4) Connecting with others with like interests. “Attending” an event on-line is sort of like looking in the store window and not being able to go in and buy.

The point of this series is to show that Costa Rica offers a whale of opportunities and experiences without having to travel too far, pay too much, or get too tired. Fairs, or ferias, festivals, book presentations, and inaugurations are all open to the public. But, if we have missed a few due to restrictions on driving and congregating, all is not lost, some of the best fairs are still to come.

The Chocolate Fair is a dream come true. Everywhere you look there is a different form of chocolate: bars, bits, dark, light, bitter, fruity, sauces, sundaes, ad







infinitum. It will run Friday to Sunday, September 11 to 13 in the new Convention Center on the General Cañas highway between San José and Alajuela. You might want to go twice. There is a \$2,300 entrance charge but you get that back in all the free samples and discounts on many products.

An added bonus is that the ice cream fair will be held on the same days, at the same place. WOW! You may want to diet a week or two before going because it is impossible to say, "NO!" when you see all the shapes, colors, and flavors offered. So far I have found no information on what they will charge for entry, but hopefully it will be "two for one" with the Chocolate Fair. It may be easier to go by bus as there is a pedestrian crossing over the highway and buses run frequently, whereas by car you have to drive miles just to turn around.

The International Book Fair has been postponed until October 30 and will run until November 8 at the Old Aduana Building, Avenida 1, Calle 23; that's just west of the Atlantic Train Station. It is a whole week for book lovers, and yes, there will be electronic books there too. This fair is not just for the egg-heads and book junkies, there will be music and storytelling and displays of toys and games, old time printing presses, and good discounts on books. While most books will be in Spanish, the big book sellers have sections in English. The historic building itself is worth a visit.

There are always surprises at the Book Fair. One year a Mexican publisher had a book on display with the entire collection of Diego Rivera's paintings. I spent so much time looking at it that the clerks got a little nervous. I might have bought it if it hadn't cost \$200 and weighed twenty pounds. Another time I was undecided about a book by Miguel Salguero, the humorist and journalist, when someone nearby said, "Here comes Miguel." I quickly snatched a book off the shelf, dug out a pen, and had him autograph it right then and there. Then, of course, I had to buy the book. The event is free, but you might want to avoid mid-day crowds on Sunday.

Other events currently listed are a Coffee Gourmet Fair, July 19, also at the Centro de Convenciones, and a Golden Retriever Fair, August 16 at the Centro Comercial Campo Real in San Rafael de Alajuela. Last year 300 dogs came, so this is one for dog lovers. And if you prefer cats, there will be a cat show in the San Pedro Mall on Saturday, August 29.

Costa Rica celebrates Mother's Day on August 15, and there will surely be fairs with offers of gifts made by Tico artisans, such as plants and planters, art, jewelry, organic cosmetics, and soaps.

So, all is not lost, events will be returning for those who like to attend them. You can be sure, where there's a fair, I'll be there!

Be sure to check listings as some events may be cancelled or changed. [www.gamcultural.com](http://www.gamcultural.com), [www.sanjosevolando.com](http://www.sanjosevolando.com), [www.si.cultura.cr](http://www.si.cultura.cr), are good places to look, or Google, events.Costa Rica 2020.

**by Christine Monteith**

## Returning to Surf

The monochromatic sky stretched wide before me, spread with blotches of gray like a watercolor left out in the rain. The sunrise was obscured yet there was light enough to discern the rhythmic rise and fall of the swells. As I slipped into the water of the Golfo Dulce and its warmth enveloped me, I reveled in the taste of salt on my lips and the delicious sensation of floating. Then the familiar klaxon in my head startled me out of my reverie; a moderate-size wave with spewing foam was heading my way. The refrain, “Dive, dive, dive!” reverberated in my consciousness and I plunged under the wave and felt the surge of joy being in the water again.

It had been a long two months. During that time, there were several mornings when our furry, four-legged alarm clock, Soozi, standing by the side of the bed, would wake us, and we could hear the roar of the surf. My husband, Ben, and I would lie in bed and listen to the siren song. Our fear wasn’t of being dashed against the rocks; it was the “multa,” the equivalent of \$245 USD if both of us were caught surfing; that’s practically a whopping \$500. We love

to surf – but not that much! Our enthusiasm was further dampened by reading the news stories of the arrest of Noe Mar McGonagle, the 2015 ISA World Champion and Costa Rican native son (born and raised on our surf break) for defying the quarantine. The article was accompanied by photos of him on the sand, board under his arm, surrounded by a three-man police escort. Mr. McGonagle later posted an apology video encouraging surfers to stay at home.

It was that incident that inspired a group of surfers to organize. The argument, stated by a group called Peaceful Surf Paddle, was that the road is to cyclists as the beach is to surfers. If the Ministerio de Salud was allowing cyclists and runners to practice their sport by using public roads, then why not allow surfers to practice their non-contact sport and cross the beach? We understood that the government wanted to keep the beaches closed to discourage people from gathering, but surfers do not congregate on the beach; the beach is merely a conduit to the water.





An online petition which contained a list of suggested protocols, signed by nearly 1,000 people, was presented to the Ministry in late April. The effort met with success and it was announced in early May that surfers could enter the water at a limited number of beaches (with restrictions) from Monday to Friday, 5 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Hey, we'll take it! Ben and I have always been morning surfers. Now, with the alarm going off at 4:00 a.m., we wake up Sooz! We are in the car at 5:00 a.m., adhering to vehicle restriction rules, though the police presence has practically disappeared here. Even at that early hour, there are quite a few people in the water.

There has been an influx of surfistas from the northern coast where their breaks are located within national parks, which are still closed. Though we locals are a little annoyed that our personal playground is being invaded, we try to be magnanimous. Besides, the out-of-towners are bringing needed dollars to the local economy. And after all, there are enough waves out there for everyone. It's just good to be able to participate in the sport we all love, again.

*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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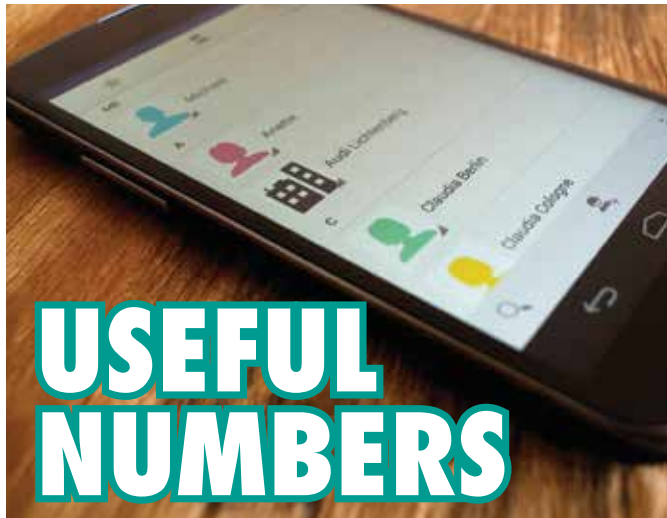
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**Address:** San Pedro, Los Yoses, 50 metros antes de finalizar la avenida 10.

**Email:** [embv.crsjo@mppre.gob.ve](mailto:embv.crsjo@mppre.gob.ve) and [embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com](mailto:embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com)

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**Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares**

**Hectares × 2.47 = Acres**

**Kilometers × .62 = Miles**

**Centigrade × 1.8 + 32 = Fahrenheit**

**Liters × .264 = Gallons**

Want a pocket version of some of the above conversion formulas?

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# 26 FROM THE EMBASSIES



## ASK ACS

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### The rights of absentee voters are protected by law.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) protects the rights of Service members and their eligible family members to vote in federal elections regardless of where they are stationed. It also protects the federal voting rights of U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

### Q: Do all states have the same election rules and deadlines for military and overseas voters?

A: States have different steps regarding how and when voting forms are returned. Head to: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov) to find state-specific guidelines.

### Q: Can I vote in person at a local embassy/consulate or on a military installation?

A: No, embassies and consulates are not polling places, but they can help you fill out forms and send your ballot to your election office.

### Q: When are absentee ballots counted?

A: Absentee ballots submitted in accordance with state laws are counted for every election. In a close election, the media reports that the outcome cannot be announced until after the absentee ballots are counted. However, all ballots are counted in the final totals for every election – and every vote (absentee or in-person) counts the same.

### Q: How are absentee ballots kept confidential?

A: State absentee ballots and the FWAB are designed with a “Secrecy Envelope” allowing for the separation of the voter’s identity from the cast ballot. Local election officials are professionals who go to great lengths in their ballot-handling procedures to ensure your vote, and personal information, are kept private.

### Q: Can I vote absentee if I’m a U.S. citizen but have never resided in the United States?

A: A growing number of states now allow U.S. citizens who were born abroad but never resided in the United States to vote using the address where a parent or other relative is eligible to vote. Visit: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov) to see a current list of states that allow these U.S. citizens to vote.

### Q: Does voting affect the tax status of overseas citizens?

A: Voting for federal office candidates will not affect your federal or state tax liability. Depending on the laws of your state, voting for state or local offices may affect your state income tax liability. If you are concerned about your state tax status, consult legal counsel.

### Q: What is the FPCA?

A: It is a form that tells your election office that you want to vote absentee and need to receive absentee ballots that year. Send in a new FPCA every January, every time you move or at least 90 days before an election.

### Q: How do I get the FPCA and fill it out?

A: Go to: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov) and select your state of voting residence. Use FVAP’s online assistant or fill out the FPCA by hand. Then print, sign and send it to your election office. Hard copies are available at any U.S. embassy, consulate, or military installation.

### Q: How do I send in my FPCA?

A: Mail your FPCA to your election office. Find the address at: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov). If you are mailing through the U.S. Postal Service, APO/FPO or diplomatic pouch, you can download a postage-paid envelope at: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov). Or contact your closest U.S. embassy or consulate to see if you can drop off your FPCA for mailing free of charge. If you are mailing the FPCA using a foreign country’s postal service, place the correct postage and



write "USA" in the address line. You may be able to send in your FPCA by email or fax. Check: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov) to see what your state allows.

### Q: How do I check the status of my ballot request?

A: You can follow up with your election office to make sure your FPCA was received and find out when to expect your ballot. Find contact information at: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov).

### Q: What are the most common mistakes made on the FPCA?

- Illegible handwriting. If you prefer to type, you can fill out the FPCA form using the online assistant and print it out.
- No signature. Don't forget to sign and date your FPCA before mailing to your election office. If you use the online assistant, you still need to print and sign.
- Not meeting state requirements. You must fill out all sections of the FPCA required by your state and send it ahead of the state deadline. Find your state's requirements and deadlines at: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov).

### Q: What if I don't get my ballot in time?

A: You should receive your ballot at least 30 days before the election or with enough time to send it so that it arrives by your state's deadline. If you don't get your ballot in time, you can use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) as a backup. Go to: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov) and select your state of voting residence. Use FVAP's online assistant or fill out the FWAB by hand. Then print, sign and send it to your election office. Find contact information at: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov).

Election Calendar: Find your state's primary election dates on the [FVAP.gov/guide/appendix/state-elections](https://fvap.gov/guide/appendix/state-elections) website. To find your state's election website for specific information on candidates, elections, contact information, and links to your local election offices; visit our contact page.

## COVID-19 ELECTION UPDATE

FVAP is working closely with state election offices, the Military Postal Service Agency, the Department of State and other federal agencies to bring you up-to-date information on state election date changes and mailing delays. The [FVAP.gov/COVID-19](https://fvap.gov/COVID-19) page will provide updates and links to state-specific COVID-19 election impacts.

If you would like more information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program, or need help with the absentee voting process, please go to: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov) or email: [vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov).



## By Boat, By Bus, By Plane

On 11 June, in the space of a few hours, staff of the British Embassy in Costa Rica welcomed, and then bid farewell, to over 170 British and foreign nationals at the Juan Santamaría airport; they were headed to London Heathrow on a UK Government charter flight. The hours flew by in the blink of an eye, but they were the culmination of a massive, weeks-long repatriation effort involving colleagues in London, our embassies in Panama and Guatemala, regional consular teams, and of course, our own staff who cover Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

That flight was one of the last, worldwide, to fulfill Her Majesty's Government's mission of helping British travelers stranded in different parts of the world. Since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, the government has organized roughly 200 charter flights to take more than 37,000 people back home. This last operation, in particular, was complex in that it involved transporting people from far-flung regions of four different countries (think Atitlan Lake in Guatemala, Omotepe Island in Nicaragua, Santa Teresa in Costa Rica, and Panama) and getting them all to San José for the transatlantic flight to London.

For us in Costa Rica, it was an all-hands-on-deck affair that gave a lot of us the chance to engage directly with British nationals here and in Nicaragua. For those of us who went to the airport, it was an opportunity to match names to faces and to speak in-person to some of those we'd been emailing for so long. We felt the collective excitement and, yes, mixed emotions, of the people gearing up for a long flight home.

Of course, not everyone who has the chance to fly back home will take it. For different reasons, people decide to ride out the storm where they are and defer their departure. Our consular team remains committed to supporting those who have stayed behind and can be contacted via our Embassy number at +506-2258-2025.



## 28 AN ADVENTURE IN PARADISE

by Lee Swidler



### Kayaking the Río San Juan; The Trip of a Lifetime Part 1

A trip of a lifetime, planned well in advance, was finally upon us. Cody, my son, and I were packed and ready when Gilbert, our driver, arrived at the house at 8:00 a.m. We were headed to the airport, where we would meet up with my best friend Bob and his son Dave, who were flying in from New Jersey.

After we loaded up the kayaks and gear, we were off. The ride on the old road over the mountains, from Jacó to San José, was surprisingly void of traffic and we made good time, arriving at the airport an hour early, so we headed over to Mall Internacional in Alajuela to wait in the food court.

The four of us were embarking on a great adventure; we would travel the length of the San Juan River, the estuary that divides Costa Rica and Nicaragua, from Lake Nicaragua to the Caribbean Sea, by boat and inflatable kayak, a distance of over 190 km. We had planned this trip for close to a year and hadn't been deterred, even when a month before our departure date Bob was diagnosed

with prostate cancer. An understanding doctor moved his surgery date up to give him a few weeks to recoup.

Bob and Dave arrived on time, and before noon we were headed north to Los Chiles, Costa Rica, our first stop, in Gilbert's taxi. At around 1:00 p.m. we stopped for lunch, but rice and beans were not on the menu for me. Bob knew what I had been dreaming about and produced a bag containing corned beef, rye bread, deli mustard, and pickles he had brought with him from his favorite Jewish deli! So while Cody, Dave, and Gilbert had the local fare, Bob and I broke rye.

We arrived in Los Chiles around 3:30 and checked into Hotel Tulipan, run by a nice guy named Carlos, who spoke perfect English. Before we allowed Gilbert to return to Jacó we needed to sort through all our "stuff" (food stuff Bob had brought) to see if we could lighten the load and send some of it back. We were quite the scene in the hotel courtyard as we spilled out the contents of the bags and made decisions about what we would have to live with for the next five to seven



days. There were boxes of freeze-dried meals, foil-pouched meals of Indian food, bags of rice, beans, cans of tuna, peanut butter, jelly, pistachios, cookies, and lots more. We would not be hungry, but we would not be traveling “light.” With our final decisions made, we wished Gilbert a buen viaje and checked into our rooms. Tomorrow we would go by river taxi down the Río Frio over the border to San Carlos, Nicaragua, where we would board a second river taxi to take us to the historical town of El Castillo. There we planned to inflate our kayaks and go.

Saturday morning arrived at 4 a.m. with the sounds of roosters, followed by howler monkeys at 5:00. By 6:00 the kitchen folk had their music playing and the coffee was on. Unable to sleep any more I got up, dressed, and went across the street to check out the Costa Rica immigration office. At 6:30 there were already two people in line and by the time the four of us met for breakfast at 7:00 there were another 20 people waiting. You can imagine what the line looked like when we finally got our act together! However, with assistance from Carlos, our passports were taken to the front of the line while we waited at the hotel. Carlos returned in about five minutes with stamped passports in hand. It’s nice to have friends in important places.

We then went to the ticket vending lady who signed us up for the second boat of the day, a 10:30 a.m. departure. Our boarding passes were playing cards; I got a jack, Cody got an ace. We had some time before our boat left so I went over to talk with two gringos who were eating their breakfast; there was a bass boat parked out in front of the hotel and they looked like the owners.

Mike and John were good ol’ boys from Louisiana. They had run the Río San Juan a few times so I pumped them for information. We would be paddling through the Río Indio Maiz Biological Reserve, which is a vast uninhabited swath of jungle bisected by the Río San Juan River, and while Mike was telling me what a great adventure was in store for us, John was telling me to watch out for giant crocodiles, overhanging tree limbs, and of course pirates with machetes. I will admit he made me feel a little apprehensive but he wouldn’t dissuade us from this adventure (mainly, because I didn’t tell any of the bad stuff to the other guys!).



The gear was ready and it was heavy; we had almost a dozen bags plus fishing rods and paddles. We found a guy with a pushcart to bring the stuff to the dock, about 200 meters away from the hotel, but downhill. Since the boat departure was still over an hour away, we found some shade to sit and wait. The boat was already at the dock, but no one had boarded. Then, a bus with about 50 people arrived and they all started down to the boat. The push began; we had to get all our gear on the boat as well as find seats.

The boat was laid out so there were seats along both rails and all cargo was put in the center aisle. I imagine the thinking was that in the event of an emergency no one would be running down the aisle; they’d just jump over the side. Everyone with a playing card got a seat and we got under way. About 20 minutes into the ride the captain told everyone to put on their life jackets. This is not what one wants to hear when traveling in crocodile-infested waters (and we saw plenty). Then, when I realized no one was getting real excited and most were smiling, I let out my breath; the reason for the safety exercise was because we were approaching a Nicaraguan check station and needed to follow the rules (at least when the authorities were around). Once the checkpoint was behind us the life jackets came off.

Once we had arrived in San Carlos, Nicaragua, we had to pass through immigration and customs. Since we had the most gear we let everyone pass ahead of us. Here we met Carlo, a four-foot tall Nicaraguan teenager (I’m not sure even if he was into his teens) but the heavy bags didn’t scare him one bit. Carlo escorted us through Nicaraguan

officialdom and got our bags the 500 meters down river to the dock where our next boat, to El Castillo, would depart.

There were three boats to El Castillo that day; one left in 30 minutes, but it would take six hours (the local). The next left at 2:00 p.m. and would take four hours, and the last boat of the day left at 4:30 and would get us into El Castillo at 6:00, the same time as the other two boats! We decided that sitting on the hard wooden seats for the shortest period of time was the goal, so we opted for the 4:30 “express.”

We had about four hours to kill so our stuff was wheeled into the shade of a huge warehouse, close to where our boat would dock, and we passed the time by taking turns going for beer, going to the bathroom, and general wandering. About 3:00 the captain of our boat came over and said we would leave early and we should load our gear. This was a blessing and we hustled over and loaded our many heavy bags onto the rear of the boat. The fact that we are first to board made the loading easy.

We waited for the rest of the passengers to board, then we waited some more. By 4:15 it was obvious we were not leaving early! Cody and Dave decided to run to the bathroom before the passengers began to load, but five minutes after they left, the passengers came in a pack; in no time, the seats were filled and we were ready to go. There was no sign of the boys! We were saving two seats for them but they were nowhere in sight. Just when I began to believe that Cody and Dave would be spending a night in beautiful downtown San Carlos, they ran up and boarded. However, since Bob and I were in the rear, and they couldn't get to us, the captain told everyone to move to the rear (to fill the seats we were saving) so two seats could open up for the boys to sit up front. We left port for El Castillo at 4:33.

It was a fast boat, traveling at maybe 30 mph. The wake was blowing by my shoulder and every time we changed direction I would get soaked. We made just a few stops, some in the middle of what seemed like “nowhere,” but always there would be a family waiting to greet the arriving passenger. This was Semana Santa (Easter week), and many workers were returning home from the city for the holiday. We arrived in El Castillo about 6:30 p.m., dusk.



El Castillo is built along the river. There are no roads or cars, just walkways. The town was a Spanish settlement and its claim to fame is a huge fort built on a hilltop overlooking the river. From there the Spanish were able to keep the British and pirates from attacking Granada and other upriver settlements. The town is situated at the foot of a large rapid called El Diablo and as the invaders' boats slowed to maneuver through them, the big Spanish cannon would take care of business. Today the fort is a national museum.

In El Castillo we again had to move all the gear off the boat and find a muchacho to help us. A two-wheeled cart was located and our gear was loaded and taken to La Victoria, one of the newer hotels. The room was bunkroom style with a private bath and A/C. The main issue was water, of which there was none. The owner told us there was a pump problem and it would be fixed by 6:00 a.m., so no showers.

We walked around town, then back to the hotel for dinner. River shrimp were the specialty and that's what we ordered (except for Cody, who ate the vegetarian plate). River shrimp turned out to be freshwater lobster (actually huge crawfish) with huge tails that were as good, or better, than any lobster I've ever had! We drank the final Victoria and Tona beers (the two major Nicaraguan brands) in the hotel, so the waitress recommended "Premium." Premium was absolutely the worst beer ever bottled! It was so bad that we elders couldn't drink it, but the boys had no problem. After dinner we walked to a fiesta going on in town. Loud music, dancing, and a lot of serious drinking were going on. We saw what the



scene was and retreated to the hotel to smoke cigars on the terrace overlooking the river.

In the morning we were up early, but still no water. The owner kept climbing up to the water tank and then back down and into the hotel, but to no avail. Eventually, about an hour into his troubleshooting, the water pressure came on and we were able to clean up. This helped us get moving; we had things to get done before we could get on the river.

Our first task was to buy some bottled drinking water. In our search we met some local tour guides and a fisherman, Miguel, at Castillo Kayak, who spoke perfect English, told us he guided trips down the river, and gave us a few pointers, specifically advising that there would be four hours of heavy paddling where the river got deep and the current was slow.

We also met Eduin Espinoza from Lake Arenal in Costa Rica. He was in town visiting his brother, a local fishing guide. Eduin is a protégé of Peter Gorinsky, one of the better known fly fisherman in Latin America, and a friend with whom Bob and I had fished about two years ago. In that adventure the three of us had snuck

into Nicaragua illegally (via boat) and camped out on an uninhabited island in the middle of Lake Nicaragua (but that's another story).

Our Kodak moment was with a Nicaraguan soldier from whom we learned we needed a permit to kayak the river. So we sought out one of the local soldiers who not only sold us the permit, but gladly posed for a photo with us all sitting together on his bench, him holding his AK47.

With water purchased, permits obtained, and the hotel bill settled, we began. First up was to move all the gear from the hotel to the riverside. As we inflated the kayaks and loaded, more and more townsfolk gathered to watch. We had four inflatable kayaks; two tandems and two singles. The plan being that the two father/son teams would be in the tandems, and would each pull a single kayak carrying all the gear and food behind them. It was not an early departure, unless you call 11:30 early, and as we shoved off we all waved to the townsfolk, but no one waved back! An omen?

To be continued...

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by **Rómulo Pacheco**

## Your Obligations Regarding the Municipal Property Tax

**A**fter the municipal elections some months ago, and trying to keep up to date with property owners' tax obligations, it is worth remembering that each local government (called a *municipalidad*), in each individual county (canton), has, in order to fund itself, two primary sources of income: 1) From their own taxes for the support of its constituency (aka the municipal patent tax) and, 2) From the tax on real estate.

I am going to focus on the second of these taxes here; mainly on the consequences of not filing the proper declaration of value on time. To fully understand the rationality of the sanctions (fines), it must be noted that the Real Estate Tax is a national tax in favor of municipalities. This means that all the municipal corporations in the country are governed by a single law (N 7509), and a single regulation of that law. (This is different than what happens with the municipal patent tax – laws and regulations particular to each municipality.) Being a national law and applicable to the entire country, the rules for all local municipalities are the same.

This national law contains Article 16 and Article 27, which require that all owners of a duly registered real property must, every five years, present a sworn statement which declares the value of both the land and any construction on it. The statement is required regardless of whether the owner has any tax exemption allowed in the same law.

The law goes on to say that the value of the annual tax to be paid will be calculated, for each year, for a period of five years, at a rate of 0.25%, and that amount will be divided into quarters for four payments.

Now, what happens if the owner of a real property does not file the declaration, or submits it late? The answer is provided by Article 17 of the law which states that the Tax Administration will be empowered to carry out a valuation of the undeclared real estate, and will impose a fine of an amount equal to the difference left unpaid. In simple words, the municipality will calculate the difference between the previous declared

value and the new value proposed in the assessment made by the municipality. That amount will determine the amount of the fine. In the case of non-payment by the property owner, the Tax Administration will not be able to conduct a new valuation until a period of at least three years of non-payment has elapsed.

Being that the fiscal period for this tax is on an annual basis, beginning each year on January 1, and the value to be determined for the entire period is fixed (Article 9 of the law), the fine will be calculated based on the amount unpaid for only the year where the valuation was made. In other words, the municipality is not authorized to charge taxes for previous unpaid years.

It is worth noting that the procedure for determining penalties is governed by the property law, which safeguards due process; that all taxpayers have the right to be notified, both of the assessment applied by the municipality and of all the stages of determining the fine foreseen by law and regulation.

Finally, it is important to remind property owners that it is their duty to declare property values and cooperate with the law in the payment of real estate taxes, which are a fundamental pillar in the support of the municipal treasury. Further, that being up-to-date with the declarations will avoid unnecessary penalties and surcharges, as well as assessments by the municipality, which results in “tedious administrative procedures.”

*Rómulo Pacheco*

*Attorney at Law, Notary Public*

*Pacheco, Marin, and Associates*

*(506) 2220-0055 / (506) 2290-1074*

[romulo@residencycr.com](mailto:romulo@residencycr.com)





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by Ryan Piercy

## Hawks

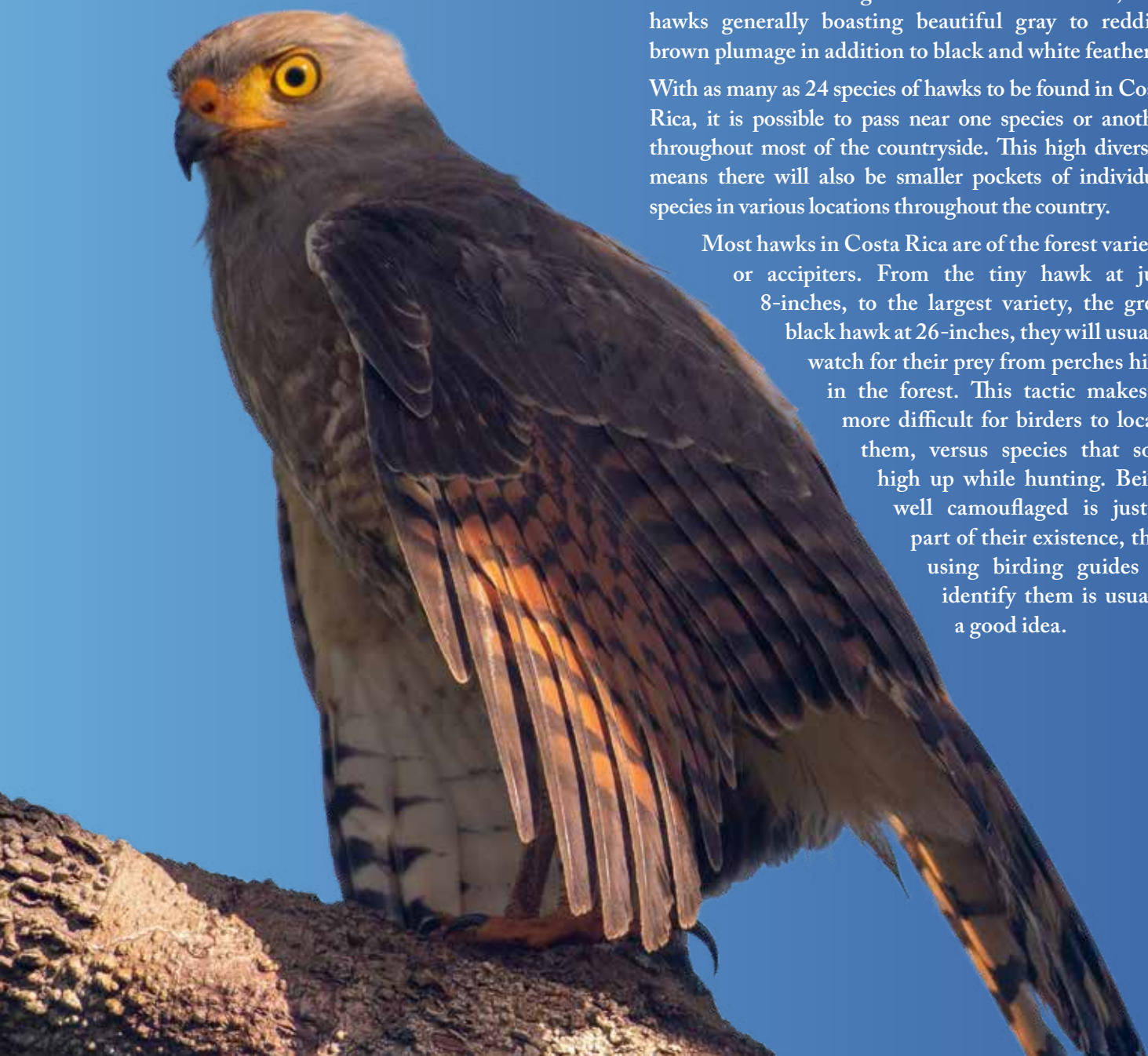
**H**awks are special to many people, and it is no wonder considering that the relation between man and raptor dates back thousands of years. That relationship has been almost symbiotic, with hawks being used as hunters to gather sustenance, and later for sport, all over the globe. The conquistadors noted as early as 1500 that the Aztecs used trained hawks to hunt.

Costa Rica, unsurprisingly, has several species of hawks that one may observe, with luck and a keen eye. Though the hawks here are smaller than their cousins the eagles, they are just as captivating and form the broadest category of raptors.

Apart from their usually smaller size, rarely exceeding eight pounds, they can be differentiated from eagles as having a dark curved beak, as opposed to the lighter hooked beak of the eagle. Their colors also differ, with hawks generally boasting beautiful gray to reddish brown plumage in addition to black and white feathers.

With as many as 24 species of hawks to be found in Costa Rica, it is possible to pass near one species or another throughout most of the countryside. This high diversity means there will also be smaller pockets of individual species in various locations throughout the country.

Most hawks in Costa Rica are of the forest variety, or accipiters. From the tiny hawk at just 8-inches, to the largest variety, the great black hawk at 26-inches, they will usually watch for their prey from perches high in the forest. This tactic makes it more difficult for birders to locate them, versus species that soar high up while hunting. Being well camouflaged is just a part of their existence, thus using birding guides to identify them is usually a good idea.







Some species, such as the roadside hawk and the broad-wing hawk, will be easier to find; they may just be hanging out in a tree as you drive down a country road. Gray hawks are also a common sight as they may occur almost everywhere in the country. Most species can be found inhabiting the various large parks and reserves.

One location which comes highly recommended to those in search of good viewing opportunities is Cinchona-Virgen del Socorro, located in the Central Valley. Just over an hour drive on good roads from San José, it provides a great vantage over the forest, giving a chance to see some species such as the barred hawk, short-tailed hawk, as well as the broad-wing hawk and gray hawk mentioned above. One might even get the opportunity to see the bright and beautiful white hawk. This location is near the Braulio Carrillo Park, which offers the possibility of discovering other rarer species which may come into view. Another good location is near La Paz. Take a few days to stay there to enjoy the waterfall gardens and Poas Volcano, and discover what other varieties of hawks inhabit the area.

Happy hawking!



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by Shelagh Duncan



## Ten Simple Ways to Update Your Home Without Breaking the Bank

**Y**ou might be quite happy with your current interior decor, but like any solid, long-term relationship, it can get a bit stale. With us spending so much more time in our homes these days, why not try a few simple ideas to reinvigorate your space and make it look fresh and new – so you can fall in love with your home all over again!

You don't need to buy a bunch of new stuff to give your home a fresh look. Just take what you've already got and mix it up! That's what interior designers do. First we look through what clients already own, because treasures may be hidden in a cupboard or closet or sitting on a shelf that no one ever notices. Have a look around your home, open the drawers, clear some shelves and countertops and start fresh. Swap out mirrors, table lamps, throw blankets and pillows. Rotate artwork into different positions, rearrange the books and try out new objects on the coffee and dining table. Here are some more ideas to get you going.

### 1. ADD SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO YOUR ENTRYWAY

Change the wall art to a mirror – or vice-versa, change up a lamp or the table. Painting a wall in the entrance will give a completely new first impression of your home. Just making a small change can make a big difference.

### 2. CREATE A NEW CENTERPIECE FOR THE COFFEE OR DINING TABLE

If you've got a few tablecloths sitting in the drawer, get them out and use them. Arrange one like a table runner. Head outside for a large plant leaf or two, add some fruit, candles, or a vase of your favorite tropical blooms, or use three identical vases in a row with one Monstera or Philodendron leaf in each. Remember that a centerpiece needn't be alive. A favorite large





bowl, a sculpture, a piece of driftwood, a runner dotted with seashells or candles, can make a wonderful dining room focal point.

### 3. TREAT YOURSELF TO NEW LIVING ROOM CURTAINS

Set the tone of any room with fresh new curtains. Ready-made panels are very economical, and even on wide windows they can frame the view beautifully. Still on a budget? Then look at switching out a pair from another room. Some of those accessories may work in that room too, so keep an open mind and have fun experimenting.

### 4. TREAT YOURSELF TO A NEW SHOWER CURTAIN

Small room – big change. It's not expensive and one panel of fabric can completely change the look of your bathroom. A large-scale pattern can have a huge design impact, while a white or translucent curtain can make the room seem brighter and more open.



### 5. MOVE SOME FURNITURE AROUND.

Move furniture away from the walls. Change around the seating in the living area and arrange in conversation groups, or switch the dining and living areas for a while. You never know what inspiration you will get from looking at things from a different perspective. Try the bed on a different wall and, if space permits, add a small chair, desk or table to the bedroom. Exchange a night table or two for your living room end tables.



## 6. PAINT SOMETHING A STRIKING OR BOLD COLOR...

... or a pretty pastel, a glossy black, or distressed white – it doesn't matter! It's only paint, after all. Go for it! You can paint one wall, the inside of your wardrobe, a bookshelf, a door, or a piece of furniture. Accent walls give any room a new dimension. Gloss paint will give an even bolder statement, but will accentuate any surface imperfections; a flat or matte paint will be more forgiving on those less-than-perfect walls.

## 7. SWAP A MIRROR OR A LAMP

That large framed mirror over the powder room sink might look fantastic over your dresser or buffet. Would those living room lamps work in the bedroom? Saw a

great floor lamp on sale? Try it at the side of the bed instead of a table lamp – why not?

## 8. CLEAR YOUR KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS

Coffee grinder, espresso maker, kettle, toaster...do all the small appliances really need to be out? Try putting them all away and notice how much cleaner (and bigger) the kitchen looks. Take everything off the countertop, give it a good cleaning, and then reassess.

Perhaps you might create a more organized coffee-and-toaster station for the weekday mornings – or maybe you'll realize you only make coffee at home on the weekends and there's no need to have the gadgets out for the rest of the week. Perhaps you'll find a place near the range to tuck all of your spices.





If you put everything away and take out only what's needed, within a week you'll soon find out what items really should be on the countertop and which can go into the cabinets. (Tip: Try doing this in the bathroom too.)

## 9. CHANGE UP YOUR BEDDING

This might be as easy as flipping over the bed throw so the other side is facing up and adding a couple of color coordinated pillows. What about taking the living room throw pillows and trying them in the bedroom? Need some color – try your beach sarong as a bed runner. Think outside the box and you'll get the look of new bedding without spending a cent.

## 10. DECLUTTER YOUR SPACE

Getting rid of the things you no longer use or need is perhaps the most quoted way to free up space and change the look of any room. If you find it hard to part with some of those treasures from your past, take

photos of them – and then donate or sell them. Your memories are captured for any time you want to revisit them, and you gain the space while someone else gains the benefit of your generosity.

So, treat yourself to a new look and it can feel like a fresh start. Perhaps you will begin to enjoy and appreciate your home even more after trying a few of these simple changes.

Until next time...

*Shelagh Duncan*

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# WHAT CAN ARCR MEMBERSHIP DO FOR YOU?

The Association of Residents of Costa Rica is dedicated to serving expats from all over the world who are interested in this beautiful country. We can answer all your questions about life in this tropical paradise, AND help make YOUR transition of moving here **simpler**, **easier**, and **smoother**. ARCR provides our members:

- Assistance in applying for Costa Rica residency.
- Help with obtaining a Costa Rica drivers license.
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# (40) PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

by Tony Johnson

## We're on the Eve of Destruction

*(Eve of Destruction, Barry McGuire 1965)*

In the midst of a pandemic which requires maximum cooperation to contain, there's protesting, some areas of some cities are burning, and in other places mobs are rioting and looting. As you well know, we humans are quite adept at starting conflicts. It took one month to engulf Europe in WWI and about 4.5 years and 20 million deaths to put an end to "The Great War."

Everyone has been in some sort of conflict. But few have had much training in the nature and psychology of this frequent disturbance of the peace. Fortunately, personal conflicts are easier to resolve than wars. And our chances of effective resolution become better when we are clearer about what's required for a "peace treaty," rather than just a temporary "cease fire."

### BASICS

Clarity is a crucial tool of resolution. So let's be clear about our terms. Here's a brief overview:

#### CONFLICT

A disagreement that involves strong, negative emotions, such as anger, hurt, resentment, and fear.

#### RESOLUTION

An agreement that meets the important needs of BOTH parties. Otherwise, it's an open wound, a trigger for more conflict, waiting to reignite into open hostilities again. Resolution is found in seeking a Win-Win rather than Win-Lose outcome.

#### TRIGGERS OF CONFLICT

Not all disagreements are conflicts. "Vanilla is better than chocolate," does not usually become a conflict unless it becomes PERSONAL. The KEY trigger to all conflicts and effective resolutions is addressing the personal aspects. For example, "Only an idiot would think bland and boring vanilla is superior to rich and delicious chocolate." When the argument moves from issues of fact or opinion

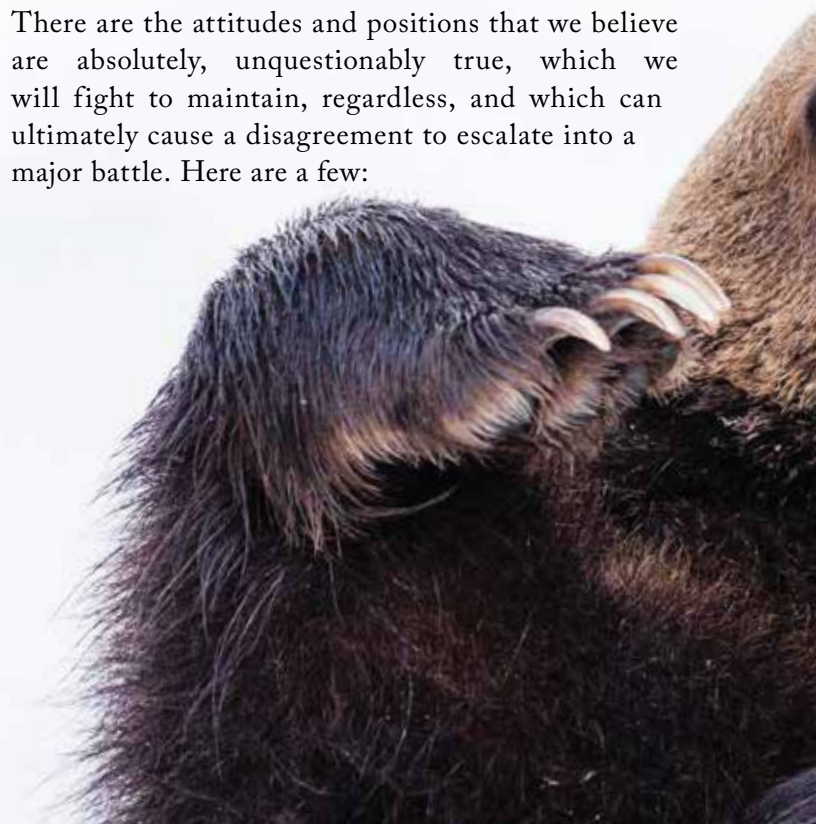
to personality and character, innate defensiveness and negative emotions are aroused and the cycle of conflict begins.

#### CYCLE OF CONFLICT

Whenever we feel personally attacked it's natural for us to defend ourselves. And our defense is usually to go on the attack and a cycle of attack, counter-attack, and counter-counter attack begins. "You think I'm an 'idiot' you MORON?" Now both sides feel attacked and go to war, bringing out the "big guns" of the most hurtful, disrespectful accusations we can hurl at each other. This makes it harder to calm down, to back off; to see the others side and work together toward an effective resolution. In many cases, the actual trigger may have been an accident, solved through a sincere apology. But subsequent negative reactions can make things worse. And our common conflict beliefs about each other only turn up the heat.

#### AGGRAVATING CONVICTIONS

There are the attitudes and positions that we believe are absolutely, unquestionably true, which we will fight to maintain, regardless, and which can ultimately cause a disagreement to escalate into a major battle. Here are a few:





## CONVINCED ABOUT TRUTH

Typically, both sides are convinced that they, and only they, have the total and ONLY truth, while the other side has little or none. This prevents the use of a key resolution tool – listening to learn. Why listen or learn when we already know all there is to know? The difficult reality is that neither side has a full understanding of the matter; both have something to learn.

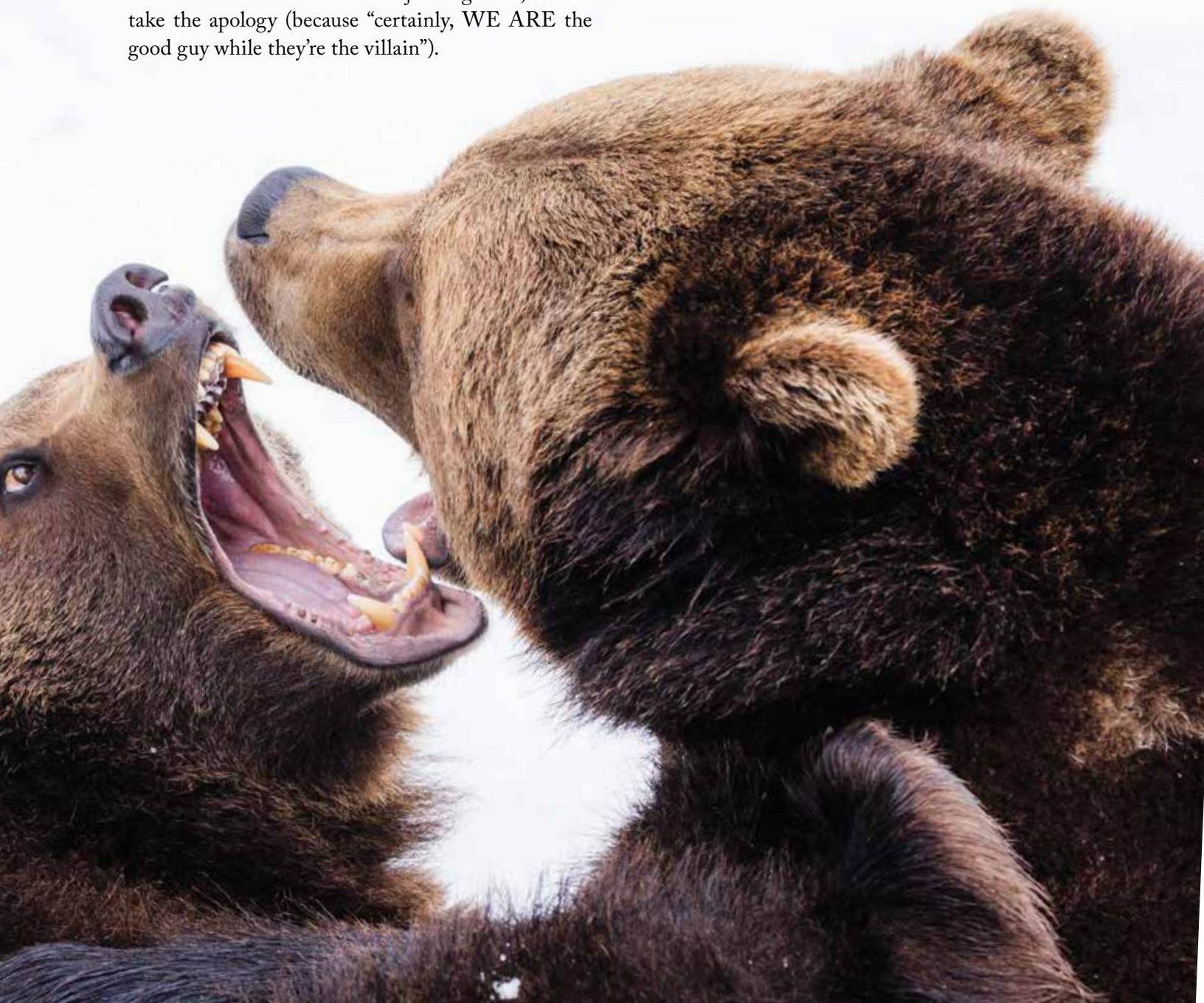
## CONVINCED ABOUT FAULT

Again, both sides are convinced that they are totally innocent and the other side is totally to blame for the problem. This interferes with compromise and cooperation. Why give in when we're innocent? In this attitude it's the other side's job to give in, ours to take the apology (because "certainly, WE ARE the good guy while they're the villain").

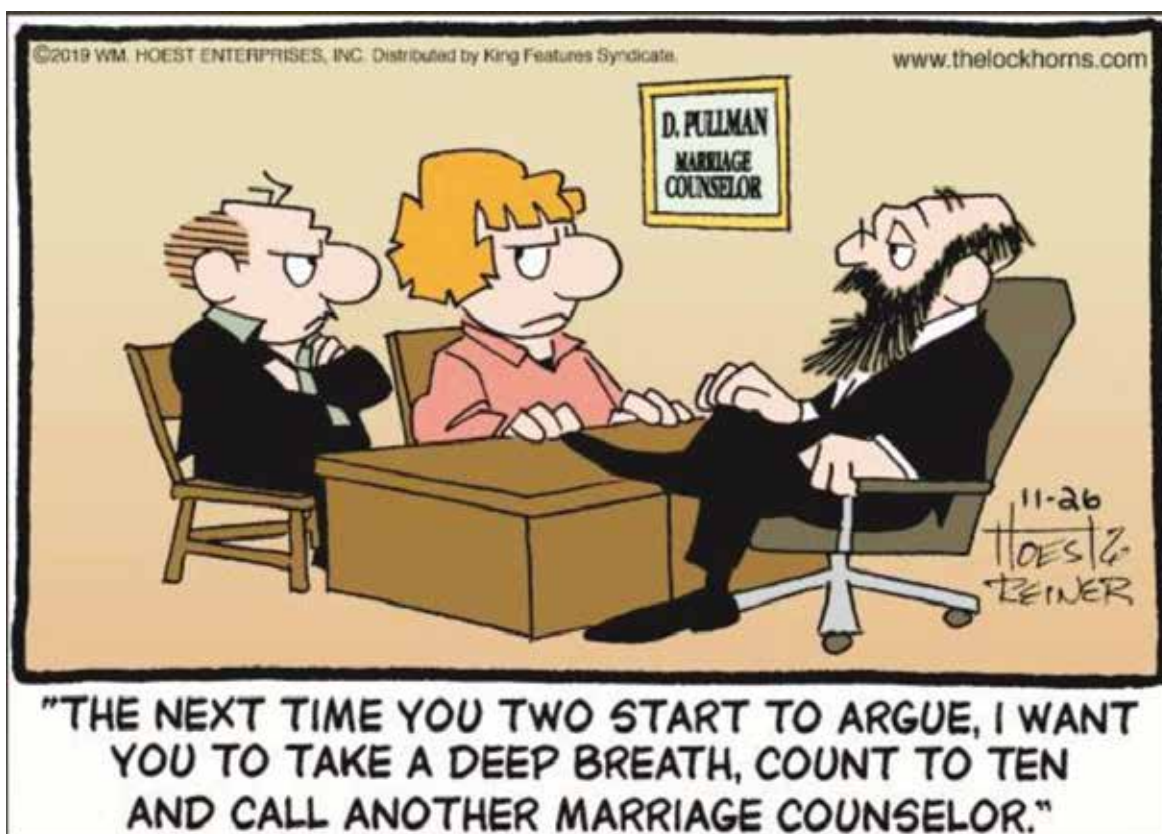
## CONVINCED ABOUT INTENTION

Yet again, both sides are sure that there was no accident, the other side MEANT to harm us. The pain we feel is not inadvertent, but was the result of malicious intent. So, how can we trust what the other side promises or proposes? And why would we want to resolve and relieve their distress? "That dirty dog INTENDED to hurt me so I'm justified to hurt them in return." NOT a good approach for resolution.

In short, while in a conflict we're angry with each other; because we're sure we have the "whole truth" of the situation, the other side is completely to blame and that they deliberately acted to harm us. Thus, we assume the worst about each other and the best about ourselves, so we approach each other with anger and







hostility and righteously attack each other, putting each other on the defensive. This is no position from which to listen and learn and cooperate in finding a solution together – and one side IMPOSING their solution doesn't usually work for long.

What is there to learn? We were there so don't we already know everything there is to know about the blow up? Our ASSUMPTIONS about each other's intentions blind us to the reality that we mostly only know OUR side of the events and issues. We believe that WE have nothing to learn from them; THEY must learn from us. Therefore, we approach each other with arrogance and disdain, arousing more defensiveness in each other. We counterattack to protect ourselves and, by doing so, escalate the conflict to where it gets harder and harder to resolve – because we deserve victory rather than resolution.

### A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

It's cleaning day. Always hectic because my wife and I move furniture to help the two cleaning ladies. And to get a better result for ourselves. So four people are constantly moving around, going in and out the front door.

Amid all the chaos, my wife leaves her boots on the sill of the front entrance. "Goddamn it!" I shout as I trip over her boots while carrying some heavy furniture, and I angrily toss

her boots aside feeling I wasn't given due consideration for my needs for easy passage. She feels angry and hurt because I have just insulted her in front of the cleaners. We don't speak to each other for at least a day.

### ELEMENTS OF THIS CONFLICT

Clearly we have each taken each other's actions and words PERSONALLY. We both feel DELIBERATELY disrespected by the other, and we both become defensive. Not by explaining and justifying our actions or by attacking each other, but by giving each other the silent treatment.

Our mutual silence says, "I don't have to show concern for your feelings, or apologize, because I DID NOTHING WRONG. Everything wrong was done by YOU! And you alone."

And the stonewalling just feels like one more insult by the other, "You're NOT WORTH talking to." Because we don't feel the other is addressing OUR hurt FIRST, the conflict goes on till the next day. The silence is yet another insult, one more brick in the wall between us.

And, yes, we are both convinced that we have the truth about what happened and why, so there's nothing to discuss, nothing to learn. We both feel,



“YOU owe ME an apology / I don’t owe you a thing.”  
And, that unspoken vibe is yet another log on the fire.

## HOW TO REACH RESOLUTION

Resolution always requires honest communication; some effort to heal the hurt felt by both sides. It always needs understanding and mutual concern to restore a good feeling about each other. Easier said than done, given the hostile climate between us.

Gradually, one side grudgingly admits, “This silence is nuts. Do we really want to let this trivial incident take us over the cliff to the destruction of our relationship? If we don’t work this out soon, things will only get worse. One of us has to put the brakes on this craziness.”

Typically, one side makes a RECONCILIATION GESTURE; some action that indicates, “I’d like to solve this and restore good feelings between us.” In other words, one side SOFTENS, shows some friendliness, some consideration, to the other. “Can we talk?” Hopefully, the other side responds with a similar SOFT reaction. “Yeah, let’s do that.” And the discussion begins.

Skipping WAY ahead, for that discussion to work, we must suspend our convictions and open our minds to the possibility (the really good possibility) that the other side has some merit to their position. That takes EMPATHY. “What!? You want me to feel for the \*\*\*\*\* who has hurt and insulted me?”

YES! Empathy enables us to get at the HEART of the issue; that we both feel deliberately wounded by the other. For example:

My wife would like me to admit, “I should have been watching more carefully as I carried in the chair. I over-reacted and embarrassed you. You did NOT INTEND for me to trip on your boots. You were preoccupied with getting the house cleaned. I’m sorry I embarrassed you.”

I’d like my wife to admit: “I should have been more careful and put my boots elsewhere. I would have been upset too, if I tripped over your boots that way. You didn’t mean to embarrass me.”

Good start. But better still, we both DIRECTLY address the personal injury each is feeling because of the other’s actions, even though they were not unintended.





My wife needs to hear me say, "I'm sorry I hurt you. I made you feel put down in such a rude and harsh way, and in front of the ladies. You deserve better than that."

I need to hear her say, "I'm sorry I made you feel like your labor and safety didn't matter; that my convenience with the boots mattered more than your effort. If your boots got in my way, I'd be upset, too."

Now that's a couple of conflict resolving RECONCILIATION OFFERS. But how do we know what to say without a listening-learning? Simple – EMPATHIC conversation!

And how do we have such a healing discussion? (And, of course, it all doesn't work unless both sides are acting in good faith, rather than deceptively using the process to find vulnerabilities to win the next war.) I'll delve deeper into that next time.

Can't wait? Try the book: *Difficult Conversations*, by Patton, et al.

*Tony Johnson taught a semester-long conflict resolution class and was the campus coordinator of the Dispute Resolution Center at a California State University. He still frequently uses the skills he taught. He can be reached at: [johnson.tony4536@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto:commander@alcr10.org) or visit our website at: [www.alcr10.org](http://www.alcr10.org). If you need directions, call Terry Wise at: 8893-4021.

## ► American Legion Post 12-Golfito

Meetings are held at 4 p.m. the first Tuesday every month at Banana Bay Marina. The GOVETS have been helping Southern Costa Rica for over 20 years. Contact Pat O'Connell by email at: [walkergold@yahoo.com](mailto:walkergold@yahoo.com) or call 8919-8947, or Mel Goldberg at 8870-6756.

## ► 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](http://www.amigosofcostarica.org) or email to: [emily@amigosofcostarica.org](mailto: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](http://www.atenasbridgeclub.com) or email to: [atenasbridgeclub@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.birdingclubcr.org) or email to: [info@birdingclubcr.org](mailto:info@birdingclubcr.org).

## ► 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: [www.canadianclubcr.com](http://www.canadianclubcr.com) or email Pat at: [canadianclubcr@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:bbrashears0@gmail.com) or visit our Facebook page, Costa Rica Writers Group.

## ► Democrats Abroad

Meets on the last Saturday of the month at Casa LTG (Little Theater Group). Contact Nelleke Bruyn: 8614-2622, e-mail: [cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com](mailto:cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com). Join Democrats Abroad at: [www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org). Register to vote absentee at: [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://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](http://www.dawgcostarica.org) or email to: [dawgcostarica@gmail.com](mailto: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

The oldest continuously running English-language theater in Central or South America and currently puts on a minimum of four productions a year. The group's monthly social meetings are held in the theater on the first Monday of the month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Membership: Student C2,500, Adult C5,000, Family C8,000. For more information call the LTG Box Office: 8858-1446 or go to: [www.littletheatregroup.org](http://www.littletheatregroup.org).

### ► 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:pzwomansclub@gmail.com) or visit our web site at: [www.pziwc.org](http://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](mailto:pwn.costarica@gmail.com). PWN website is: [www.pwnocr.com](http://www.pwnocr.com).

### ► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information email Walter Bibb at: [wwbsurf40@yahoo.com](mailto:wwbsurf40@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](http://www.sanvitobirdclub.org) or email: [eltangaral@gmail.com](mailto:eltangaral@gmail.com) for more information.

### ► Wine Club of Costa Rica

Meets at 1 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Join us to tantalize your taste buds and expand your education. For more information on upcoming events please contact us at [costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:service@arcr.cr) subject line; Club Corner, and post them on the the ARCR Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/ARCR123](https://www.facebook.com/ARCR123).



# BUSINESS DIRECTORY (47)

## Important dates in Costa Rica:

**July 3rd**

First Friday Lunch,  
CANCELED

**July 4th, (Saturday)** American  
Independence Day

**July 25th, (Saturday)**

Annexation of Guanacaste

**July 30th and 31st**

ARCR Seminar for Expats.  
CANCELED.

**August 2nd (Sunday)**

Virgin of the Angels Day

**August 7th,**

First Friday Lunch, TBA

**August 15th (Sunday)**

Mother's Day

**August 27th and 28th**

ARCR Seminar for Expats.  
TBA

## Funniest One Liners

When a bill collector comes to my door I pretend I have Covid 19 and they run away. When I want to make love to my wife she pretends I have Covid 19 and runs away.

If you don't pay your exorcist you can get repossessed.

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

When chemists die, they barium.



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