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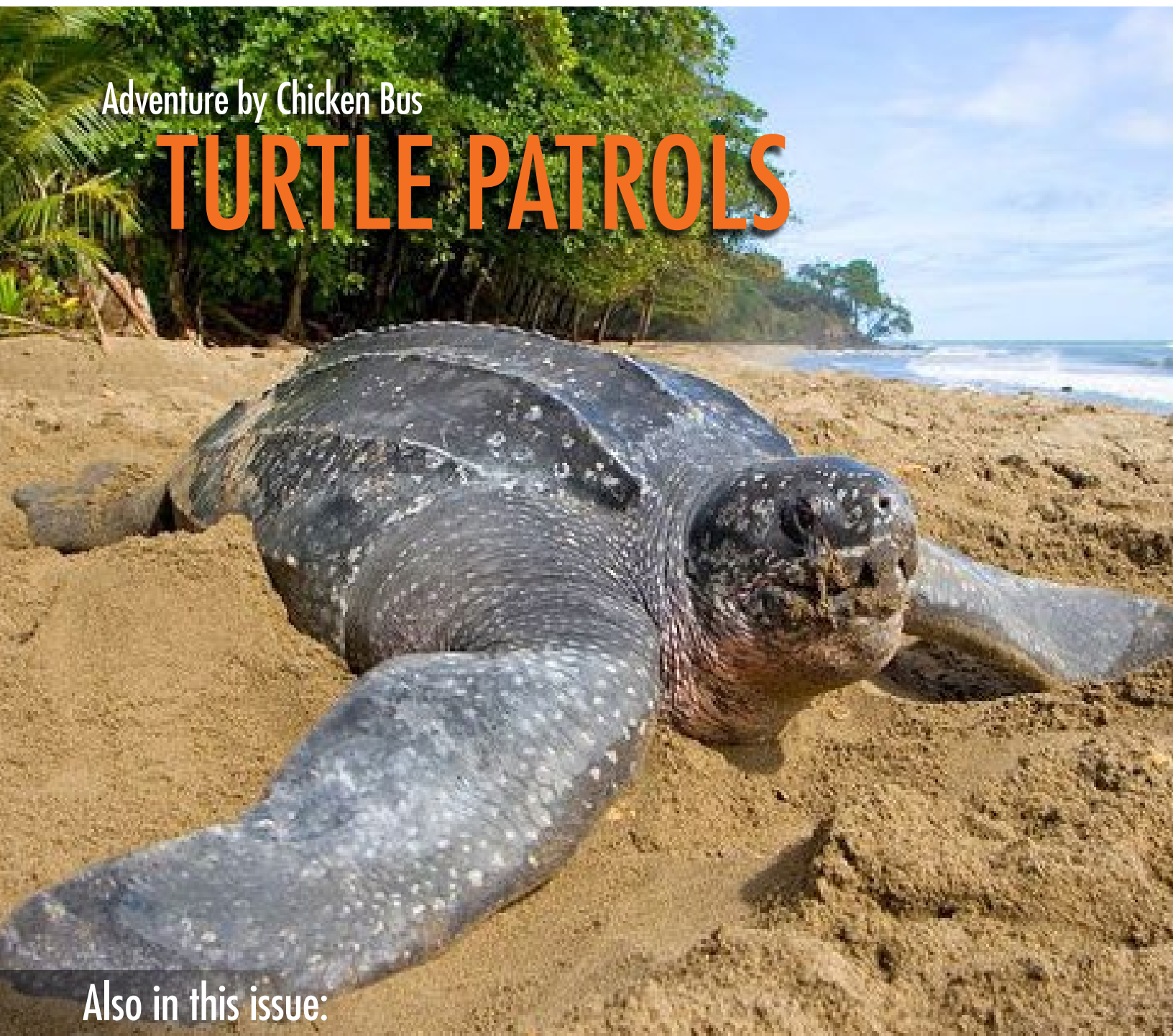
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El Residente

Adventure by Chicken Bus

TURTLE PATROLS



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CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Dear Readers, If you are reading this it means you've successfully followed the COVID safety rules. Congratulations! Everyone on the ARCR and El Residente staff is healthy, and the ARCR office is open (by appointment) with all the usual services available. In the immortal words (sorta) of Sonny and Cher, "I've got you, mask!"

This issue of *El Residente* brings you some information you might have missed elsewhere – be sure to read the *Across the Board* column to learn what crime rates have gone down and which have gone up, along with other important news. On the *From the Embassies* page is information about getting tested for Covid, and if you like nature, *Wild Side* tells about a sea creature most of us never get to see (and maybe don't want to!). There are some decorating tips for better living in *Design Wise*, and if you enjoy fishing but don't know what Costa Rica has to offer besides ocean excursions, read *Adventures in Paradise* (Trout! Who knew?). Or, if you prefer to just go shopping, *Out and About* gives some clues on where to go to get some unique items and bargains, and *Guest Column 2* tells how to get there safely. Also in this issue are the usual informative articles, like *Legal Update*, and *Guest Column 1*, which are worth reading. All-in-all, we've worked hard to give you the best possible issue with something for everyone. Enjoy, and stay safe!



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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

A GOOD SIDE-EFFECT FROM COVID-19?

Crime statistics are always of interest. In late December, Walter Espinoza, General Director of the Costa Rica Judicial Investigation Police (OIJ), reported that there had been an overall 23 percent reduction of in criminal complaints in 2020:

- Crimes against property declined, however, 559 homicides were reported, a small increase compared to the same period in 2019.
- Robberies in 2020 decreased from 18,374 in 2019 to 13,790 (-25%).
- Assaults also dropped in 2020, from 15,909 in 2019 to 9,303 over the past year (-42%).
- Vehicle theft fell from a total 4,537 in 2019 to 2,879 (-36.5%) in 2020. (Motorcycles - 9,661, cars - 6,298, rural vehicles - 2,567, and light-duty trucks - 1,421).
- Thefts also dropped 52% from 2019 with 19,219 complaints, but only 11,240 in 2020. However, bicycle theft became more common (no figures were available).

The biggest negative impact came from an increase in frauds and scams. According to the OIJ they registered a total of 15,227, which broke down as follows:

- Deception - 9,279
- Scams - 4,031
- Computer scams - 777
- Identity theft - 643

These figures include 2,456 credit card scams, and using false identification (posing as someone from a respected company or institution) which went up from 2,280 in 2019 to 3,873 (+41%) in 2020.

DANGEROUS DRINK If you aren't already aware, Costa Rica has experienced multiple deaths of persons drinking an adulterated alcoholic liquor known as Guaro. According to the Health Ministry, the deaths were due to poisoning due to the liquor containing methanol. The liquor is derived from sugar cane and marketed under multiple brand names. There have been nearly 100 suspected cases, resulting in 58 deaths, since October 2020, and authorities have issued an advisory against consuming the following Guaro brands: Guaro Chonete, Guaro Cuerdo, Guaro Sacheto, Guaro Gran

Apache, Aguardiente Estrella Roja, Guaro Montano, Aguardiente Barón Rojo, Aguardiente Timbuka, Aguardiente Molotov, and Guaro Fiesta Blanca.

GOING ELECTRIC A recent article in a US national car magazine discussing the global move to ban the sale of new gasoline or diesel powered vehicles revealed a surprising fact: Costa Rica has vowed to suspend all sales of new vehicles using petroleum as a propulsive method by 2030. What that means is after 2029 the only new vehicles sold in this country would be electric or hydrogen powered.

PACEMAKER WARNING In a January 25, 2021, news release, CNN reported that Apple's Support Page warned pacemaker wearers that they should keep their iPhone at least six inches away from their pacemakers; "...that its smartphones could interfere with implanted medical devices." Want to learn more? Go here: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT211900>.

TAX PROPOSAL An article in a recent issue of Q Costa Rica reports a proposal for taxing expats foreign income in CR! The article says that the change would affect, "...foreigners residing in the country pay passive income, that is, from investments..." The article does not say if income received from US Social Security (not taxed in the USA) or other retirement sources would be considered "investments" and would be exempt or taxed in CR, but given the objective of CR to increase income for the country, it is very possible they would be. Many, many expats living here subsist solely on SS payments. The key to the whole thing, as it affects expats, is the part of the article where it says that money from investments would be taxed, "...at the moment the resources enter the country..." Thus, if someone has a CR bank account, and "investment" money is deposited in it from a foreign source, under this plan it could be taxed.

Stand by for further information about this proposal as it becomes available.

US 2020 STIMULUS PAYMENT If you were one of the people who did not receive the 2020 \$600 COVID stimulus payment because one of the persons on your US tax return has an ITIN (vs. SSN), the IRS has reversed that rule, retroactively. You can now claim that stimulus payment on your 2020 tax return.

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6 ADVENTURE BY CHICKEN BUS

by Janet LoSole

Part 2: Turtle Patrols

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

As part of a hands-on biology lesson for our children, Jocelyn, 8 and Natalie, 5, my husband, Lloyd, and I had arranged to volunteer with an organization called ASTOP (Asociación Salvemos las Tortugas de Parismina) which is engaged in saving endangered sea turtles. We had chosen this group, in part, because their website declared, "Costa Rica... announced a law in 1999 that strictly banned sea turtle poaching and the sale of turtle products. A decade later, thanks to ASTOP, poaching has dropped from 98 percent to 38 percent."

The group is located on Parismina, an island sandwiched between the ocean and the Rio Parismina on the Caribbean side of the country. Traveling there meant

backtracking from Limón to Siquirres and transferring to a bus bound for Caño Blanco. From there a launch would ferry us the short distance to Parismina.

In Siquirres we waited for the bus at a soda while drinking gallons of iced tea to combat the heat. The image of an egg frying on the sidewalk came to mind just as an old man with greasy hair tucked into a faded cap and a stubbly, grizzled beard wheeled past, balancing his grimy Styrofoam cooler on his adult-sized tricycle.

"Huevos de tortuga. Huevoooooooooooooooooos!" he called out.

I jerked my thumb at him. "Lloyd, he's selling turtle eggs!"

Sadly, most of the egg vendors we saw that day were old men and appeared to be poor. Technically illegal,



selling endangered sea turtle eggs – one cog in the wheel of the underground economy – goes to the heart of the problem. How does one deprive people of their right to an income and survival even if it impacts the survival of another species? In Parismina, we hoped to find the answer to that question.

At one o'clock, the crowd surged forward, jostling to board a "chicken bus," a colloquial term used to describe the discarded school buses from North America that are sold to businesses in Latin American countries, where they are repainted in bright colors and religious scenes, outfitted with stereo speakers, and up-cycled with more seats to accommodate man, woman, and child along with their potatoes, avocados, and chickens – or, in this case, a family of Canadian backpackers.

The driver picked his way slowly over hard-packed dirt roads. Pitching and rolling along lonely stretches, I glimpsed sleepy jungle backwaters through thick fronds. After two bone-jarring hours we bumped into Caño Blanco and then boated to Parismina.

There we rented a small, A-frame cabina at the local campground. That night, at dusk, we joined the townsfolk who had gathered at the crossroads of two footpaths that converged at a beer stand-cum-nightclub. While children ran and played in the twilight, adults sipped cold beer while sitting on the branch of a tree. At times some of the crowd moved inside to cut a rug to the lilting sounds of Bob Marley.

I learned that some constituents stayed out all night as part of their volunteer work with ASTOP, who claimed that three species of sea turtle, hawksbill, leatherback, and green, all on the brink of extinction, were coming ashore.

To the north of Parismina lies Tortuguero National Park, which shelters nesting turtles under its National Park protection status. But Parismina falls just outside of the park boundaries and receives only occasional assistance from the Coast Guard in the form of armed patrols. To stem the slaughter of turtles for soup and the pilfering of the eggs of the females that come ashore on the island, ASTOP had formed and struck a committee to oversee volunteer recruitment and the operation of a turtle hatchery. The volunteer committee does most of the work.

Luring foreigners and their cash to the island meant pumping money into the local economy, making it more profitable to keep the turtles alive and returning to the sea than selling the coveted eggs on the black market. Volunteers, like us, registered with the program for a nominal fee which is used to fund the local guides who patrol the beach every night when the turtles emerge from the sea to lay their eggs.

Volunteer patrols commence at 8:00, 10:00, and midnight, and last four hours, watching the chocolate sand beach for six kilometers. Guides patrol because they had grown up in Parismina and witnessed firsthand the drastic drop in the number of turtles that were part of the very fabric of their community.

Lloyd signed up for a patrol to determine if it was an activity the girls could accomplish at such young ages. He arrived back at the cabina and, tapping sand out of his shoe, said, "The girls will be blown away by the whole thing."

I signed up for a patrol the next night and, donning pants and long sleeves to repel mosquitoes, I met up with two guides at the guard shack where I was given a walkie-talkie, two plastic bags, a flashlight, and a pair of latex gloves. We were no more than twenty feet from the guard house when we came across a young turtle digging out a hole to bury her eggs. We approached cautiously from the side, then moved to stand behind her. From just one foot away I observed the entire process from beginning to end, unnoticed by her.

She developed a rhythm to her digging, bending one back flipper under her rear as if making a British



curtsy, then she dug her flipper into the sand, curled it into a spoon, and flicked outward. Her head receded into her shell and her lungs exhaled in a great whoosh, then the opposite flipper repeated the motion. Bend...curtsy...flick...exhale... bend...curtsy...flick...exhale.

When the digging was complete and the laying started, I snapped on the latex gloves, reached into the hole, pulled out the eggs already in the hole, and plunked them into a plastic bag. As I strained the length of my outstretched arm to pull out egg after egg, the turtle unknowingly plopped more right into my hand.

The eggs, shaped like over-sized ping pong balls, felt soft and delicate, almost flimsy. This female managed to lay ninety-eight eggs. Probably less than one percent would make it into adulthood. We retreated quietly, giving her room to bury what she assumed were her eggs, then measured her and checked for tumors. This smallish green turtle measured one meter (39-inches) from stem to stern. We watched her turn 180 degrees and flip clumsily back to the sea. Because her track marks led to the nesting site, we walked a few paces to bury half of her eggs in a more hidden spot. Then we got down on our hands and knees and swiped the sand back and forth with our arms, raking it as best we could to cover our tracks to foil poachers who prowled the beach. We reserved the second half of the eggs to bury in the protected sanctuary of the hatchery, which is surrounded by fencing and watched over by a member in the guard shack.

I returned to the campground, peeled off my clothes, and stuck my sweaty body under the cold spray of the shower. A long-limbed frog, jammed into the corner of the stall, observed me with wide, blinking eyes. Lloyd lifted his head when I crept into the cabina and I flashed a thumbs-up. He smiled and went back to sleep.

A few nights later I asked Jocelyn, "Would you like to go on a patrol with me?"

"Okay."

Lloyd stayed behind to put Natalie to bed. When we returned, Jocelyn kept Lloyd up late, describing how she had seen the turtles laying their eggs and how they bumbled their way back to the sea, tired and breathing heavily. As we had hoped, the stories inspired Natalie to volunteer with Lloyd the next night. When they returned, she proudly reported to me, "I got to put on the glove and take the eggs out."



The next day, as we strolled toward the village center, I told the girls, "You go on ahead. We'll catch up." A moment later, as Lloyd and I rounded the corner of the campground, we saw Jocelyn running back toward us, madly waving her arms. Immediately worried that Natalie had hurt herself, we yelled, "What? What?" and took off at a run. Ahead, on the lawn of the restaurant, Natalie was corralling a tiny baby turtle with her feet to protect it from a dog called Chispa. The baby had hatched, veered off in the wrong direction, and wound up at the edge of town. Natalie was on the verge of tears. "What should I do?"

Lloyd picked up the baby, no bigger than the palm of a child's hand, and gave it to Natalie. She walked down to the beach, set it down on the sand, and watched it flip itself silly in a frantic effort to escape into the sea. Every few seconds he popped his head out of the water to breathe. And then he was gone. She turned and faced us. "There he goes!"

"You got all that, right?" I said to Lloyd.

"Oh yeah," he said, turning off the camera he was carrying.

In a final and defining moment for our family, Jocelyn proudly proclaimed, "We actually saved the endangered sea turtles of Costa Rica."

The experience also provided the answer to the gnawing question of how to justify depriving someone of a source of income to save a species. Parismina had the solution; alter the source of revenue. "Some guides had formerly participated in stealing turtle eggs," a guide explained. "Now they play a part in protecting them."

We later journeyed up the coast to Tortuguero, home of a research station and National Park. At the hotel I overheard Lloyd lecturing the girls. "There was a scientist

named Archie Carr who came to Tortuguero to study the sea turtles. And because of him, the government made it illegal to kill the turtles for meat or steal their eggs. He convinced them to protect the turtles or else they would become extinct. Now the locals make a living by welcoming people like us to learn about them.” He pointed to a picture hanging over the bed depicting villagers holding spears raised above their heads while scads of decimated turtles lay in bloody pools on the beach.

Natalie looked queasy. “They used to kill them like that?”

“Yes,” Lloyd said, “but not anymore. It’s against the law now.”

Early next morning, at the main dock, we hired two brothers, Tomas and Tulio, for a four-hour tour of Tortuguero National Park. At the end of their outstretched arms we spotted lizards, iguanas, frogs, lanky spiders spread-eagled in webs between trees, as well as parrots and butterflies, including the famous blue morpho. Out on the main tributary they pointed out branches swaying in the treetops, indicating the presence of one of the three species of monkey: spider, howler, and white-faced capuchin. Lloyd was in his element, sharing his childhood love – admiring wildlife out of doors – with our girls.

A few days later, we arranged water transport back to Limón, then pressed on south to Puerto Viejo. At a funky hostel there we pitched our little four-man tent right beside the bathrooms. Backpackers from around the world, some displaying their national flag, camped side-by-side, in the true spirit of international relations. Our tent encroached slightly onto the main crab boulevard leading to the beach, (at night their silhouettes against the walls of the tent made them appear enormous).

The beach fronting the hostel was dusted with white sand and shaded by enormous palms. The ocean floor ranged from shallow, velvet soft sand, to crusty reef, to bottomless pools. Lloyd and the girls spent long hours exploring every nook and cranny of the reef and plunging into natural saltwater pools dozens of feet in depth. They cataloged octopus, eels, starfish, and dozens of species of fish. Lloyd urged me to come in. “It’s simply amazing. I saw a lobster yesterday.”

The clear, hot water was a balm to my sore muscles after all the late-night turtle patrols and backpack-lugging. I sat cross-legged at the water’s edge, squinting against the sun’s rays sparkling on the surface, watching Natalie as she pattered around me, and Jocelyn swimming with her dad in one of the deeper pools. As I relaxed on the silky ocean

bottom, bobbing lightly, Natalie asked, “Can we go to the big pool?”

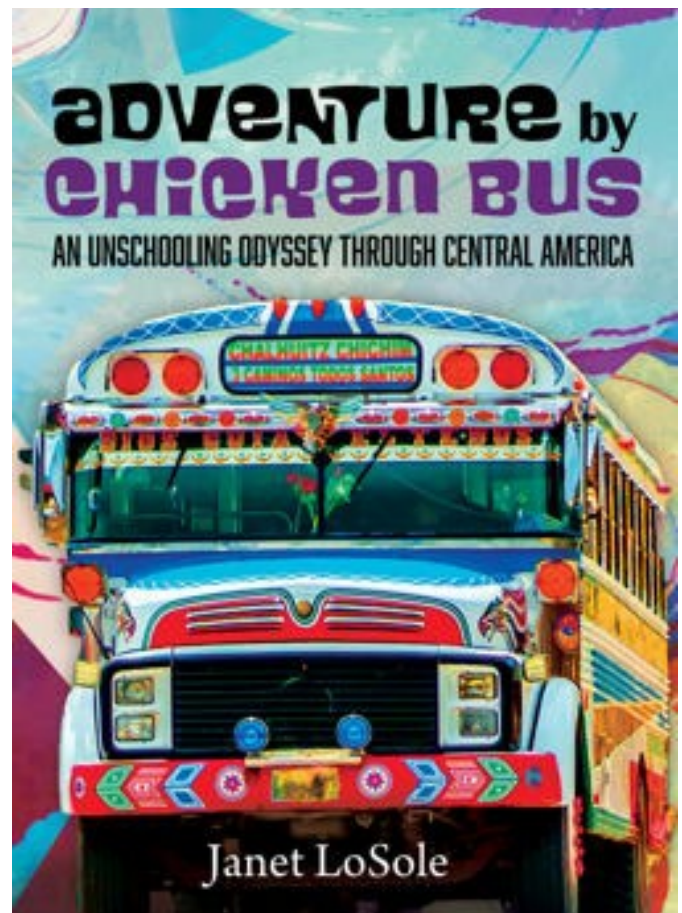
“Where is it?”

“I’ll show you.” She took me by the hand and led me several meters out along the reef until the rocky crust gave way to a vast gulf of beautiful, clear water. We positioned our mouthpieces and goggles and took the plunge. She floated close to the reef and pointed out creatures to me: sea urchins hiding in the crevices, slithering eels, and fish of all shapes and sizes. I lifted my head and glanced over at Lloyd and Jocelyn, about twenty meters away. Lloyd was looking back. We grinned at each other. The hands-on biology lesson for our children had been a total success.

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

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

<https://twitter.com/JanetLoSole>



by Mitzi Stark



Mercaditos – Little Markets

The idea of buying over the internet is not so new, as those of us who remember the JC Penney and Sears Roebuck catalogs can attest. With over 2,000 pages of items, you could call or mail in an order, not just for clothes, hats, and shoes, but also for car tires, kitchen faucets, hardware, carpets, and everything else, all at the same time. (At one time early in the 20th century you could even buy a house from the Sears catalog!) You'd telephone the service center and place your order, put it on your charge account, and have it delivered the next day. The old catalogs were also good for other things; school projects, paper maché work, and even toilet paper.

There are no more catalogs from those giant retailers, and with the pandemic making trips to the malls and shopping centers risky, internet shopping has been a boon for both buyers and sellers. But, as one store-owner

lamented, "We need the walk-in trade, the people who see something in the window or showcase, and buy it." So how do you combine attracting customers with safety measures and help the economy survive? One way is with Mercaditos or Little Markets.

One of those is Mercadito Ruta 111 in Belén. It is a permanent collection of twenty small stores under one roof, right in the heart of downtown (half a block north of the church on the main road, Ruta 111). The building itself is happily decorated with local art, and the wide-open doorways invite you to come in to browse and buy. Many of the products are traditional, such as old style candy, baskets, aprons, wooden bowls and spoons, plants and planters, sauces saucy hot or for normal palettes, and bowls in which to serve them. There are bright-faced rag dolls and trendy beachwear, key chains, soaps and creams made with pure organic ingredients,



herbs and spices, cakes and cookies, plus a restaurant with traditional tamales or rice and beans. All are products of small local companies trying to survive.

I spoke to Alejandra Chaves, the entrepreneur who put it all together as a way to give small local companies, many owned by women, a permanent place to show and sell their work to the public. Chaves was an events organizer for companies

planning fairs and expos when she too became a victim of the economic downturn. As a “Belenita” she knew of small struggling businesses in the area and contacted them. “We opened on November 3, and it’s been busy ever since,” she said. “Candy, baskets, and bags are the most popular items, but everything sells.”

My visit in December yielded a Christmas tree made from bottle brushes and a jar of mango chutney. This little market deserves repeat business, and when I go back for more chutney I always find something new. The store is open Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Check Mercadito Ruta 111 on Facebook. There is a parking lot nearby, but if you go early there is on-street parking available. Belén is a nice, village-size town where one can safely park and walk around.

In December I also found another type of Mercadito that was really a feria, or fair, operating under the new health rules. It was held on the tennis and basketball courts in the park in La Trinidad, a suburb on the west side of Alajuela. With good spacing between booths, plenty of sanitizer on hand (pun intended), 66 small, local businesses had set up shop. The ample space between the booths made it easy to set up displays and to look over sale items, which ranged from jewelry, ice cream, tomato sauce, cookies (in the shape of reindeer), clothes, hats, dog shelters sheltering a variety of stuffed dogs, chocolates in colorful boxes (which make perfect gifts if you don’t eat them all yourself), and one stand that had unforgettable rum punch cakes. They gave out samples and I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to drive home! I don’t think I’d serve that at a party, but they were selling better than the hot cakes at another stand.

It was a windy day and my first purchase was a scrunchy to get my hair out of my face. That was followed by a package of organic spaghetti and sauce, and then some all natural ice cream in a take home carton. Organizer Juan Carlos Jimenez explained that this little market was a way to augment internet sales for small businesses, as many operating out of homes needed more exposure for their products. He said they



had started with a “chat room” that brings them together to share ideas, and this was their first event. “Sales were pretty good!” said Jimenez, and they are now thinking of having a Feria de Verano or Summer Fair.

It’s good to know that there will be fairs, expos, inaugurations, and festivals coming soon, but be prepared to wear a mascarilla, carry your gel, keep your distance, and in some cases, make reservations ahead of time, due to limited capacity.

The ice cream fair is scheduled for March 6, at the convention center on the General Cañas highway between San José and Alajuela; check out Feria de Helado on Google for requirements or cancellations. Also, there’s a cat show scheduled for the San Pedro Mall on May 1, an event that has been postponed twice. I’m not sure if I will go to that – it seems silly to travel so far to look at cats when I have six at home – but it is encouraging to know that there are fairs and events in the future.



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by Linda Loverude

Plastic – The Convenience That Keeps on Giving...



I woke up this morning and had plastic on my mind. We cover our pool every night with a blue plastic tarp to keep fornicating frogs out. Every morning I exercise in the pool, and every day I notice the little blue flecks of plastic floating in the water. When I try to pick them out they crumble into even smaller pieces – microplastic. I recall a fellow writer lamenting that when he sweeps the floor there are always bits of plastic in the debris – he doesn't know where it comes from. The truth of the matter is that we share our entire lives with plastic, and in the last couple of decades we are sharing it even more intimately; the microplastics have broken down to be such tiny particles, though still intact, that they are now found in the bodies of fish, in the rainfall, even in human placenta.

The pandemic has made the situation much worse. Plastic is the main component of face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer bottles, medical garb, test kits, take-out food containers, delivery packaging, etc., etc., etc. According to Dave Ford, from the Ocean Plastics Leadership Network, there are 129 billion face masks being made every month. Reports from small Pacific islands tell the

sad tale of face masks now washing up on their shores, along with all the other plastic debris.

OK, we can acknowledge that plastic is a worldwide disaster of epic proportions, but let's focus this down to a local issue – the common plastic shopping bag. It has changed our civilization for the better, or has it? According to Forbes magazine, we are polluting our planet with 5,000,000,000 (five trillion) plastic shopping bags a year! That breaks down to an astonishing 160,000 bags each second. And, again according to Dave Ford, even though we think we're recycling, in reality only 21 percent of plastic is actually recycled. Those of us that drive past ugly piles of garbage along a road can attest to that.

From an environmental point of view, eliminating plastic shopping bags is a positive step in cleaning up the environment; when those bags go into landfills they take decades to degrade, and during that time they affect birds and other scavengers. Floating in the ocean, the bags resemble jellyfish and are eaten, eventually killing whales, sea turtles, or whatever unfortunate creature has made that feeding mistake.



And it doesn't stop when the groceries get home. Those bags are a handy-dandy way of lining small trash cans or are used in a multitude of other ways – as lunch bags, tote bags, storage bags, etc. Their uses are endless. But, even when the bags are used for secondary purposes, they eventually end up in the garbage and go on to landfills or garbage piles on the street corners, taking 10 to 100 years to break down.

This is the reason for Costa Rica's new law, implemented in 2021, banning single-use plastics; not only the shopping bags, but extending to straws, cutlery, bottles and cups.

Costa Rica is gaining status as a world leader in sound environmental practices. The UN has declared that the country's ban on single use plastics has made it "a country that cares for peoples' health...it is an important step in creating the sustainable balance that Costa Rica strives to achieve."

As a result of the new law, beginning January 1, 2021, all Walmart owned stores in Costa Rica no longer provide plastic shopping bags for their customers; you bring your own bag, carry your purchases out in your hands, or purchase a reusable bag from them.

On the surface, this step for reducing the number of plastic bags seems like a good thing; eliminating them appears like a responsible step to cleaning up our world. Walmart may be the world's largest purveyor of plastic bags, and by no longer providing millions and millions of them to their customers, they have complied with the law, and that is a good thing. (Incidentally, they have reduced a huge overhead expense and increased their profit margin.) But, rather than investing more in the environment and providing biodegradable bags, the company has chosen to transfer the responsibility to their customers.

The discontinuance of providing plastic bags isn't the rosy solution it first appears to be, there is a side effect that gets overlooked; people must now buy other plastic bags or items to replace the shopping bags that they were reusing in their homes. Instead of passing the buck, the retailing giant could have gained status by modeling the use of biodegradable plastic bags to other retailers.

So what can we do to help change this situation? One step is that we can each call on our local Mas x Menos, Pali, and any other Walmart owned stores here in Costa

Rica and ask them to replace their deleted plastic bags with another, environmentally responsible way for their customers to carry their purchases home. (And if we want to take a further step toward improving the environment, pressure them to stop selling products packaged in non-biodegradable plastic.)

The bottom line is – the convenience of plastic bags is here to stay. So, if the need is still there, the plastic must change. Biodegradable plastic bags are one answer; they are readily available in the world market. (There are shopping bags being made out of avocado pits, mushrooms and cows' milk. A company called Earthnest manufactures a wonderful Biobag made of vegetable starch, and costs the same to manufacture, is stronger than a conventional plastic bag, and in normal use it does not disintegrate in rain, sun, or cold, but will biodegrade in three months in a landfill.)

Biodegradable plastics may, or may not, cost more, but switching to them IS a viable option. If the world's largest retail chain would switch to biodegradable bags it would set an example for other retailers AND would be a publicity coup worth much more than the bottom line savings of not buying and supplying the old style bags.

What can you and I do? Most people want to save our environment; they just don't know what they can personally do. One way is to start by informing your neighbors, expats and Costa Ricans alike, about the issue of plastics. The best way to induce change is by advocating for change; it is public opinion that drives institutional behavior. Post signs, pressure TV and radio stations to broadcast public service announcements, write letters, sign petitions, write articles, make phone calls, and picket/boycott to end the use of conventional plastics and move to biodegradables. A change to the infrastructure is necessary, but it takes a comprehensive effort. Fortunately, the Costa Rican government is leading the way, and they will extend the plastics ban to non-recyclable packaging; it's the logical next step.

We must remember, as Annie Leonard said, "There is no such thing as 'away,' when we throw anything away it must go somewhere."



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by Ivo Henfling

How Far is This From Walmart?

A question I often hear from expats is, “How far is this property from Walmart?” This question is frequently misinterpreted by the realtor. It doesn’t necessarily mean that the person is a passionate Walmart fan, but that the store might be a point of reference for them – a familiar place they know from home that they use to judge distances to everything else. Nonetheless, if you are a passionate Walmart fan, please wear a mask while shopping, but don’t worry, you can still wear your pajamas when buying your groceries.

Sometimes, after showing people a property they will say, “Wow, this is far away!”

My response is, “Yes, it’s quite far from Tokyo, Moscow, and even Nairobi. It’s even far from your former home.” But, when looking for a new residence in Costa Rica, you will need to re-think what living in paradise means for you and your family. Is living in a certain community, or the proximity to a store, really so important, or do you envision a totally new lifestyle?

Of course, if it is a prime consideration to live close to a Walmart, one should first look at the locations where there is a Walmart; there are 14 in Costa Rica. Those are the gigantic places where you can shop for everything you need and can find many US products. BUT it is important to remain aware that those huge “super stores” are in locations which may be culturally and socially different from others, with varying temperatures and rainfall, and surrounded by very different social levels of housing. The one in Escazú, which is one of the top areas that expats choose to live, is best known. But, for example, there is also one in San Sebastián, which is a totally different world.

SHOPPING

If food shopping options are a major decision-making factor about where to live, it can be important to know that Walmart also has several different divisions in Costa Rica; the supermarkets Pali, Mas x Menos, and Maxi Pali, are all owned by Walmart. It is crucial to understand, however, that not all cater to expats, and the products on their shelves may lean more toward the needs of the local population. In other words, some stores will have more foreign products

than others, depending on the concentration of the expat population in the area. If you’re into buying the exact same products and brands as you did back home, you might find what you’re looking for in an Automercado; they have 22 locations. You will also find quite a lot of imported products in PriceSmart and Pequeño Mundo.

Wherever you shop, it will quickly become evident that imported products are heavily taxed by the Costa Rican tax authority (Hacienda). Add to that the cost of transport from the factory to Costa Rica. That means you will often have to pay double, or more, for the same product here than you would back home. Therefore, I suggest that you explore; try products made in Costa Rica or in Central America. They might not taste exactly the same, but at least it will be an adventure trying them. And, reading the labels on the products you buy is a great way to practice your Spanish.

SELECTING YOUR NEW HOME – WHAT IS “BEST” FOR ME?

Often, newcomers choose the location of their new home based on suggestions on Facebook. The smart ones, however, do their homework and research all the locations that fit their personal requirements. That could mean a warmer or cooler climate; some love hot evenings, other sleep better when the temps are moderate. And I’m sure everyone has other important amenities in mind besides how close it is to a Walmart store, like the proximity to a good hospital, a bridge club, or a certain church.

The bottom line is that local knowledge is very important when you’re moving to Costa Rica. Save yourself the headache of trying to figure everything out on your own. Use a local real estate agent, one who knows the who-is-who and what-is-what in the area you want to move to.

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

18 ADVENTURES "NEAR" THE HIGH SEAS

by Christine Monteith



Paddling the Rio Coto

During these “dry dock” days, while I recover from a medical issue and all I can do is listen to the distant crash of surf, I’m searching for new avenues to enjoy my favorite of the four elements, water. In my mind, the next best thing to being in it is to float on it.

I have always gravitated to open water. The family story goes that at the age of two, my dad unhooked me from the Jolly Jumper attached to a tree near our cottage, whereupon I marched down the path, out onto the dock, and without hesitation, jumped into the river. My whole body dipped underneath the surface, as the water was about four feet deep, then my head buoyed up and I paddled about contentedly. To this day the sensation of cool liquid sliding over my skin with the subtlety of silk is delicious. The buoyancy, as I dip and dive beneath the surface where I try to

remain weightless and motionless, allows me to hang in space. I’ll probably never travel in outer space and that is the closest experience to zero gravity that ever I’ll have.

I’ve always lived near large bodies of water: Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, Swan River (Perth), Hudson River (Manhattan), Pacific Ocean (Central California) and now the Golfo Dulce. If the nearby body of water was inhospitable for swimming, like the Hudson, I would swim three times a week in an over-chlorinated pool at the local YMCA. Now, it’s a great joy to live near the Golfo Dulce and it is a thrilling experience each time I enter the water. So, during this time I am prohibited from swimming or surfing, I sought a different kind of water related experience.

For an alternative, Ben and I borrowed our friend’s ocean kayak to explore the nearby Rio Coto, a wide,

slow-flowing estuarine river nearby. On the advice of our friend, we chose a day when the high tide peaked at 11:30 a.m. The Rio Coto bridge, our entry point, was midway up the length of the river and the incoming tide would make our paddle upriver easier, and we would return on the out-going flow.

The Rio Coto bridge is relatively new (approximately 10 years) with the roadside signs leading up to it still saying "Rio Coto Ferry." When Ben first came to this area all vehicles that wanted to cross the river had to use a flatbed ferry. Talk to anyone who has been in the area for long, and you'll be regaled with comical and slightly harrowing tales of crossing on the ferry.

We were warned of the sandal-sucking mud flats at the entry point, but we slipped into the water without incident. Gently dipping the tips of our paddles into the silt-laden water, we slid quietly upstream. The river makes wide, lazy bends with sandbars breaching the surface at lower tides. The grassy riverbanks are about two meters high and almost vertical, indicating that there is high water flow during the rainy season. Stretching back from the riverbanks are fields dotted with trees, and in the distance we could get a glimpse of the Talamanca mountain range outlined against a blue sky. The quality of the air is different on the water, and it felt cool and gentle as it brushed against my cheeks. The contemplative silence was only occasionally broken by the low hum of an outboard motor; it was Sunday and a few locals passing by gave us a wave as they puttered upriver in small boats to a favored fishing spot.

As we floated along we watched black-necked stilts with their spindly, long, red legs delicately walk along a sandbar. A variety of egrets: great egret, snowy egret, and grey egret would stand next to the tall riverside grass and usually fly to the farther shore as we approached. There were also northern jacanas, a colorful bird that picks at the mud in search of food. Other interesting inhabitants of the river are crocodiles. We kept a keen eye out for them but saw no signs. We had been



assured that the American crocodile is not aggressive and not likely to jump into a kayak, unless you were carrying a fresh chicken. We left the poultry at home.

It was a pleasant couple of hours on the water. Off-loading and on-loading the kayak from the car roof rack went relatively smoothly. It was a little more work than the ease of sliding the kayak off the dock at the cottage, but well worth the effort.

The outing was a fun change for me as I had not left our neighborhood for over a month; my medical issues

had been compounded by car repair problems since early December, and we had been mostly vehicle-less. Ben had made several trips to the mechanic at the border, either by bus or catching rides with friends, but I had stayed around the property, to the great joy of our two dogs.

Being out was a revelation for me, seeing people out and going about their lives again. Our region is mostly “open for business” with a nascent tourist industry trying to expand past the typical surf tourists. The locals are practicing the health protocols; masking, distancing, and hand-washing. Our Costa Rican friends and neighbors take their civic engagement seriously and participate willingly with those requirements. Now, with our vehicle back and the more restrictive driving prohibitions reduced, it feels liberating to be able to “move about the country.”

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



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TRANSPORTATION

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ALL COSTA RICA

by Allen Dickinson

Tico Time

Being “on time” is a cultural standard for gringos, and it can be a shock to some to discover that the custom isn’t as widely revered here. Sometimes we expats can get upset when a scheduled appointment isn’t met by a Tico counterpart; we’ll even get angry and attribute their lateness to disrespect or laziness. But, over time, we learn – well, most of us learn – it’s not disrespect or sloth, it’s something called “Tico Time,” or “La Hora Tica,” and it is a part of the culture; a part frequently dictated by physical conditions.

When a maid or gardener doesn’t show up at the appointed time it is easy to be critical. What we may forget is that the person might have to make a long trip to get to our location, via one or more buses. Sometimes, Ticos, who need any menial job to support their family, will take a job that requires that they arise and leave before sun-up, traveling one or even two hours, utilizing a series of buses just to reach their place of employment. And we all know that buses in this country don’t adhere to any formal schedules! That means that if the worker has to utilize multiple buses they may end up standing around waiting a good while before the connecting conveyance appears and they can get on with their journey.

Most Ticos accept that – they know not everyone has a car and that getting there is more important than arriving precisely at some arbitrary time. To them it’s “Tico Time,” and that’s OK.

That applies for those who do have a car, as well. We’ve all experienced the traffic here, particularly in and around the population centers. A driver, be it a gringo or Tico, can start out with ample time to (normally) reach their destination on schedule. But on the way they can encounter many different situations that delay their progress: vehicular accidents, road repairs (a construction crew that set up a roadblock that requires a long detour – at 6:00 a.m.), a bus or delivery truck parked, restricting traffic flow while they load or unload, protests and strikes, a large OTR truck with a semi-skilled driver blocking all the lanes while they make multiple attempts to back a huge trailer into

a passageway barely wider than the trailer itself. Or maybe it is simply congestion (a day when it seems like every Tico in the country that owns a car decided, “Today I drive!” Any one of these things can add a lot of time to a simple trip.

I’m sure that when one of those situations happens to YOU and makes you late, it’s easy to forgive yourself and make explanations (not excuses) to whomever you were late to meet or with whom you had an appointment. To expats it’s one of the trials and tribulations we must endure while living in this beautiful country.

With that in mind, maybe, the next time you become irritated because someone is “late,” it would be a good time to remember what that other person may have to go through just to get to where you are.

Oh, don’t get me wrong, not all lateness is because the person had difficulty getting somewhere. There truly is a “Tico Time” mentality, and it’s not exclusive to Costa Rica; it’s embedded in most Latin cultures. The reason for it is simple; in a poor world where everything costs money, time is free and therefore can be squandered without major financial repercussions.

We expats tend to think in terms of “Time is Money” but that isn’t the Latin perspective. As a consequence, the Latin attitude is that being exactly on time isn’t that big a thing; everything will get taken care of – eventually. Thus, mañana doesn’t always mean tomorrow – it means “not today.”

When you think about it, maybe it’s not such a bad way to live. Surely it’s better than the high-pressure lifestyle that is common in more “developed” countries. I know, the “Do it Now!” mentality is hard to discard from our thinking, but it can be done. And isn’t that one reason why most of us came here? To relax, to slow down our pace of living, to have time to stop and smell the roses, to enjoy life? It takes an effort to change – and an understanding of the culture in which we have chosen to live – but with patience, practice, and constant awareness of our deeply ingrained habits, we can do it. Sometimes.

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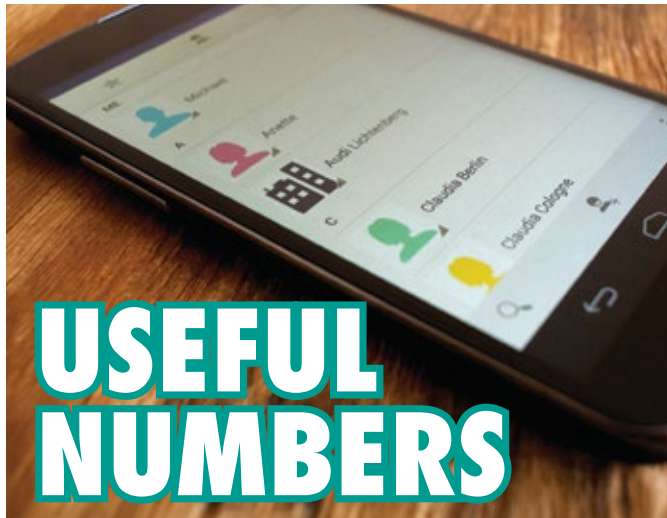
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(Dial zero and ask for the Duty officer)

United Kingdom Embassy

Phone: (506) 2258 2025

Address: Edificio Centro Colón, Paseo Colón, Provincia de San José, San José

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., 12:30 – 4:00 p.m.

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

Email: costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Canadian Embassy

Phone: (506) 2242 4400

Address: Sabana Sur, Edificio Oficentro Ejecutivo, atrás de la Contraloría, San José, 1007, Provincia de San José, San José

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Web site: <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>

Email: sos@international.gc.ca

Emergency phone: +1 613 996 8885 (call collect where available)

French Embassy

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Address: A022, San José, Curridabat

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Email: a.m.bafrcr@gmail.com

Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

Address: Calle 32, San José

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Emergency assistance: (506) 6050 9853

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

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Milliliters × .034 = Fluid Ounces

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Millimeters × .039 = Inches

Meters × 3.28 = Feet

Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet

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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(24) FROM THE EMBASSIES



ASK ACS

Q: I have heard COVID-19 testing is now mandatory for all airline passengers entering the United States, including US citizens. What if I have received a COVID-19 vaccine or have recently recovered from COVID-19, do I still need a test to travel to the United States?

A: Effective January 26, all airline passengers to the United States ages two years and older must provide a negative COVID-19 viral test taken within 72 hours (three calendar days) of flight departure from Costa Rica. Alternatively, travelers to the US may provide documentation from a licensed healthcare provider of having recovered from COVID-19 in the 90 days preceding travel. Passengers who have received a COVID-19 vaccine are still required to take a COVID-19 viral test within 72 hours of flight departure. Check the CDC website for additional information and Frequently Asked Questions.

Q: Where can I obtain a COVID-19 viral test in Costa Rica? How much will it cost and will I have the results in time for my flight?

A: RT-PCR COVID-19 testing is available at medical facilities across Costa Rica. Follow this link for a complete list of locations: <https://www.ict.go.cr/es/documentos-institucionales/material-de-apoyo-coronavirus/pruebas-covid-para-usa/1898-laboratories-authorized-in-costa-rica-for-test-sars-cov-2/file.html>.

Results for COVID-19 tests conducted in San José and the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM) are generally available within 24-48 hours. Tests conducted outside of the GAM, including in remote and coastal locations, may take longer to process. Clínica Bíblica and Laboratorio Echandi now offer COVID-19 antigen tests for travelers. Other private laboratories on the list of government approved labs will soon offer antigen testing as well. Proof of international travel is required. The results of these tests are available within a few hours. Customers must

check with individual labs for testing availability, pricing and length of time for a result. Tests are paid for by the individual requesting the test and results are generally delivered via email. While most testing locations do not require a doctor's referral, many do require an appointment. Most locations accept appointments via telephone. Airlines will review COVID-19 test results for passengers either during the airline security question process or when they speak to an agent at the counter. Passengers attempting to leave Costa Rica without valid proof of negative COVID-19 test results or documentation from a licensed healthcare provider of having recovered from COVID-19 in the 90 days preceding travel will not be allowed to board the plane. Passengers receiving a positive result for COVID-19 will be issued a 10-14 day sanitary quarantine notice which must be completed prior to being allowed to board a flight to the United States.

For additional information on COVID-19, please see the US Embassy San José COVID-19 information page at: <https://cr.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/> You can also email: ACSSanJose@state.gov.



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From the UK Embassy

I think we all remember as children going on holiday with our parents and asking endlessly, “Are we there yet?”

Now, on our journey through the pandemic, we are all asking, “When will things be normal again? Is this the new normal? Are we there yet?” There are some hopeful signs, such as vaccination programmes, but there is still some way to go.

What do we know about vaccination for us Brits living in Costa Rica? The British government has been clear that the UK NHS vaccination programme is directed at UK residents eligible for NHS treatment. We Brits overseas won’t be receiving vaccination direct from the NHS. Costa Ricans and other nationals, lawfully resident in the UK and registered with the NHS will be receiving their vaccinations there.

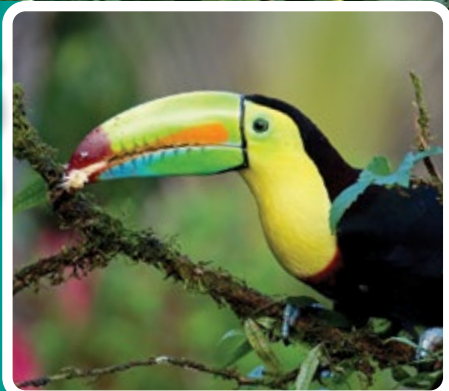
Similarly, British legal residents in Costa Rica should, by the rules of their residency, be registered with the Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social (CCSS) and will be included in the Costa Rican vaccination programme. It will be key to make sure that we are registered with our nearest health clinic/Ebais and that our contact details are up to date. Keep an eye on the Ministry of Health press releases: www.ministeriodesalud.go.cr for updates on when your turn is likely to come.

The Costa Rican government is actively looking at the subject of foreigners who are either still in process with Migration for residency or, indeed, those who have not applied for residency but are still present in the country without immediate plans to leave. There are likely to be arrangements for at least some of the people affected by this and, as soon as these are clear, we will publish them in our Costa Rica Travel Advice at: www.gov.uk.



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:



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by Frank Lockhart

Traveling COVID-Safe

Editor's Note: While Mr. Lockhart is not associated with any recognized health organization, his suggestions in this article make perfect sense.

We're pretty lucky to be living in Costa Rica, for many reasons. One of those is the country's lower COVID infection rate, compared to the USA; at 3.6 percent (total cases/total population), Costa Rica has slightly less than half of the infection rate of the US. However, that should not be cause to lower one's guard, COVID is still here and it is still dangerous.

We all know about the international travel requirements, but when it comes to moving around in Costa Rica, what are some easy, common-sense precautions that you can take to protect yourself and your friends and family?

TRAVELING BY CAR, TAXI, OR RIDE-SHARE?

Using your own car for transportation is obviously the safest mode of transportation (at least in terms of COVID). But for those without cars, the choices are limited. The Ministry of Health has imposed regulations limiting the amount of people on public buses and is requiring taxi drivers to wear masks, etc., but even so, many people have forsaken public transportation.

But what if you need to go somewhere, like food shopping or to the doctor? The answer is to prepare for your transportation before you need it. When it comes to taxis or ride share drivers, finding a trusted person who cleans their vehicle after every passenger, and using only that driver, is an effective way you can reduce your potential exposure to COVID. Here are some steps to consider:

- Start by striking up conversations with local taxi drivers at the taxi stands. Learn what precautions they take regarding COVID.
- Ask your friends if they know of a ride-share driver who takes COVID prevention steps seriously. Get the driver's phone number.
- Although it seems counter-intuitive, take a test drive with whomever you choose, to assess their COVID prevention awareness and practices.
- If you find a driver who cleans his vehicle after every rider, who has hand sanitizer in his car, and who practices good COVID-prevention, form a bond with that person. Tip them well, and tell them you will use only them for your transportation.

If you go shopping or have a doctor's appointment, pay your driver to wait for you. Of course that's extra money,

but these are extraordinary times, and your health is worth more than money.

TOURING COSTA RICA BY BUS OR MINI-VAN

One of the joys of living in Costa Rica is enjoying our beaches, volcanoes, hot springs, National Parks, and diverse vacations spots. You don't want to sit in your house all day every day – you could do that back home. You want to see this great country; but how to do that safely?

The pandemic has forced tour companies to make radical changes or go out of business. Joya Verde Tour Company is one of those companies who have changed their procedures. I spoken with José Antonio Perez, the owner of the company and his first recommendation; travel with a company that displays the Safe Travels® certificate on the outside of their vehicle. That means they have passed the government's Safe Travels course and employ COVID-prevention protocols on all trips.

The Safe Travels program was developed in London, England, by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and has been adopted by over 11 countries, including Costa Rica. In August, 2020, the Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT) adopted the WTTC's protocols and launched the Costa Rica Safe Travels certification program to identify which tour companies were practicing COVID-prevention methods. In order to become certified, a tour company and its drivers must undergo training, demonstrate both an understanding and practice of health protocols, and be subject to surprise inspections by ICT personnel. Once a tour company and its drivers are certified, they are given the Safe Travels emblem to display on the outside of their vehicle. That emblem attests that the driver has undergone training and inspection, that the vehicle is disinfected before every trip, and after every stop along the way (important for tours that take bathroom breaks or stop at sightseeing spots). It further certifies that the vehicle has hand sanitizer, shoe disinfectant, and cleaning supplies on board, along with extra masks.

Typically, Joya Verde used to do week-long tours in a 45-passenger bus. They now concentrate on transporting "social bubbles" in mini-vans on shorter excursions, and have rerouted their tours to only stop at open-air restaurants. And, they no longer go to the famous-but-crowded tourist sites, but instead offer tours to lesser-known, quiet beaches,

smaller towns, and off-the-beaten track coffee plantations. The benefit is that clients travel safely and actually get to see more of the real culture of Costa Rica.

2020 was devastating to tourism and safe travel. 2021 is going to continue to be tough, but safe local travel and tourism is available. Besides selecting a conscientious taxi and/or ride-share driver, patronizing tour companies displaying the Safe Travels seal is recommended. Participants should take an active role in arranging their movements by staying in small groups with just friends and family, selecting tours during the week rather than on weekends, and patronizing only outdoor dining facilities.

An ARCR Board member recently used a Safe Travels provider on a tour with a group of her friends. "It was a wonderful way to get out of the house and see Costa Rica anew. We had a great time. Knowing careful planning and safety protocols were in place allowed us to relax and enjoy ourselves."

For more on the Safe Travels program, contact: SafeTravels@ict.go.cr. For more information on Costa Rica tourism, email: joyaverde.cr@gmail.com

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28 AN ADVENTURE IN PARADISE

by Lee Swidler

Gone Fish'n

When we got to the river, the sun was just cresting over the hills. The stream looked like most other rivers I had thrown a fly in, but there were no trout rising. Here in north-central Costa Rica, where the nighttime temperatures rarely dip below 70 degrees Fahrenheit, it is too hot for trout; but we were after fish with teeth! Machaca, similar to the North American shad, are abundant in these rivers and lagoons and we were about to have a day to remember.

Dave and I had hooked up on Craigslist and he had hired me to show him some tropical fly fishing; he had flown in from Calgary and I picked him up at the airport yesterday. This morning we had a long drive, and headed northwest, we needed to get within striking distance of the river for an early morning float. After we had driven a few hours we bunked down in some nice cabins for the night. I had promised him an adventure, and what better way to begin than waking up in a foreign country, trying to make sense of a suicide shower, and climbing into my old Trooper and hitting the road, all before daylight! He was about to experience a day far removed from anything he could find around home.

Arriving at the river, we were greeted by Efrain, our boatman for the day. He had already loaded the small boat, so with little fanfare, we were off. The plan was to head upriver via motor, then float back down to our entry point. Since we wanted to be on the river all morning, we went upstream for close to half an hour. On the way, we saw great blue herons, egrets, roseate spoonbills, and other birds that I couldn't identify. At this hour of the morning the wildlife were having their breakfast and,



although the sound of our motor and boat did tend to annoy them, they quickly returned to their breakfasts once we passed. Occasionally we saw “rings” on the water surface, an indication of what lay below.

As we cruised up the river, Dave and I rigged up our rods. We were using 5-weight rods; light enough to still have fun with the smaller fish, yet large enough to handle the “big ones.” Catching a fish up to eight kilos on a 5-weight rod may not be the challenge of a lifetime, but it certainly would make the day memorable.

Eventually, Efrain edged the boat to the bank of the river and made a u-turn. Our time was now, and without hesitation we began casting. Efrain kept the boat in the center of the river, when possible, to afford us the luxury of fishing either bank. The jungle river is small by most people’s standards (just 10-15 meters wide), so one consideration was the overhanging tree branches. Fly fishing requires different methods of casting and here we often relied on “roll casts,” a technique that allows the caster to extend the fly line without a traditional back cast, which would undoubtedly end up in a tree. And we certainly did catch our share of trees!

Our fly choices this particular morning were bass “poppers.” These bugs were originally developed for North American bass and are designed to imitate small frogs or other local fauna; they make a “pop” when yanked

off the water, hence their name. The idea was to make noise, then get the lure back in the water in the same vicinity as the first cast for the fish to strike. We were using green-colored poppers and it did not take long for the first machaca to strike.

“Fish on!” was soon a phrase that became overplayed, like a top-ten recording. All morning we could do no wrong; it was non-stop action from boat put-in to take-out. Dave could not believe how active the fish were, and I am sure his first day on Costa Rican waters was one he will long remember.

With a full day of machaca fishing behind us, the following morning we hit the road north again, heading to the lagoons of Caño Negro where the famed huge tarpon hang out. While most experts agree that tarpon return to the sea every year, it has been demonstrated through DNA testing that 15 percent of the tarpon in this area never vacate the fresh water. Instead, they hang out in the San Juan River and its tributaries, the Caño Negro area being one; and they grow large.

We arrived at Caño Negro after lunch and decided to fish “the evening rise,” the time of day when the sun is on its way down and the bugs are on the way up! We hired a local boatman who knew the area well, and we were soon rewarded with scenes we had only dreamed of; there were tarpon everywhere! They were rolling,



jumping, and doing everything but going for our flies. We changed them often and attempted many different techniques, but all to no avail. Still, we left the water smiling. How could we not! Just the sight of these monsters, some easily in the 100-kilo range, was enough of a show to be worth twice the price of admission. And tomorrow was another day!

At 6:00 a.m. the next morning we met up with our boat. That wasn't exactly the crack of dawn, but well within the reaches of what could be considered acceptable for a fisherman. Our first stop was to find coffee, which took us to the Caño Negro Bar, a lakefront establishment which we motored up to in the boat. Although the establishment was not yet open for business, the ladies there were happy to make us a cup of (albeit "instant") coffee. We thanked them and returned to our boat, and there we were, in one of Costa Rica's jewel Biological Refuges, alone on the water having coffee (or reasonable facsimile). The only way the day could get better might be to hear those words, "Fish on!" again.

It did take a little bit of time to find them, but eventually we came upon feeding tarpon. The first one we saw was kind of nibbling on the surface under an overhanging branch. It would not be an easy cast but, after maneuvering the boat into position, Dave laid his streamer just off the fish's nose... and it was quickly attacked. A couple of good yanks set the hook and the fight was on. Tarpon are the kings in the world of fly fishing, and Dave had hooked into a nice 40-kilo example. For this day we were fishing 12-weight rods and this fish put it to the test. After a few aerial leaps it was soon heading upstream and well into the line backing. It took a half hour of fighting, but then Dave had it boatside. He hopped overboard for his Kodak moment before releasing the giant to fight again. Dave 1, fish 0.

It took another hour before a second tarpon was landed, but again, Dave won out. This was starting to look like quite the day, but then for some reason (maybe word got out), the fish stopped biting; it happened almost as quickly as it had begun. By noon we were ready for lunch and once again we exited our boat all smiles.

Costa Rica is blessed with so many fishing opportunities. Most fisher-people think of ocean sport fishing when they think of Costa Rica. It is unfortunate that the inland



fresh waters are not publicized, since the abundance of species and different microclimates around the country make inland fly fishing a gas!

So, of course, what fly fishing trip would be complete without going after the infamous "Tico trout." While there are many stories explaining how trout came to inhabit the waters of the central mountains of Costa Rica, from US military guys from Panama, to American workers on the canal, the very fact that we can find trout here is what completes a Costa Rican fly fishing experience. For those fish, instead of huge 12-weight "clubs," we choose a rod size of 2 or 3. For the uninitiated, that is like switching from a major league baseball bat to a Wiffle ball bat! The smaller size rod is for light action with small fish; a 10-inch trout being on the larger side, although I have certainly been rewarded with larger ones.



Up in the central mountains it gets cold, which is the reason the trout have done so well. Up there, it gets cold enough that some of the lodges provide heaters in the rooms. Our lodge, however, only offered a stack of woolen blankets, but they sufficed for sleeping quite

nicely. In those places you wake up quickly once out of bed! And while the trout are certainly skittish up there, they bite all day so there is no reason to be out of bed at first light. Instead, we headed for the cafeteria for some great locally grown coffee.

After a leisurely breakfast were on the river. Small dry flies were our first offering and we found them to the fish's liking. In fact, we found that as long as we fished stealthily we had good luck whether tossing out little dry flies or sinking nymphs. Our bead-headed nymphs in the deeper pools seemed to produce slightly larger fish, but the dry fly action was so much more fun that we stayed with them. Before long it was lunchtime and we returned to the lodge. After eating we took an afternoon siesta before returning to the stream for more of the same great action.

The next day we returned, and I took Dave back to the airport where he boarded a plane for home. It was a great few days of fishing, and I am sure he returned with enough memories to get him through another Canadian winter.

Lee Swidler offers guided fly fishing adventures. He can be reached at: mrlee@email.com

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by **Rómulo Pacheco**

New Subcategory for Foreign Teleworkers Being Discussed

There is currently in the legislative stream, a proposal for the creation of a “Law to attract workers and remote service providers of an international nature.”

The intent of the Bill is to broadly modify the General Law on Migration and Foreigners to include, within the migratory category of non-residents, the subcategory of “Stay.” This subcategory would not be a Residency or Visa, but would give a limited authorized time for younger nomads remotely employed as a “Worker or Remote Service Provider,” to stay and work at their job in Costa Rica. The purpose is to incentivize the affluence of that category of foreign worker who works for their companies remotely, and can do so from within Costa Rica.

In the Bill a “Remote Service Provider or Worker” is defined as “... a foreign person who provides (paid) services remotely, subordinate or not, using computer, telecommunications, or similar means, for which he or she receives a payment or remuneration from abroad.”

The proposal includes that one of the essential requirements to opt for this immigration status is that the person qualifying for the subcategory would receive a stable monthly salary, fixed income, or an average monthly income, of at least three thousand US dollars (USD \$3,000) from abroad; (If the request is made for a family, four-thousand American dollars [USD \$4,000]). This requirement guarantees that the foreign resident in that subcategory will have their own independent income which will allow them to purchase national goods and services. Additionally, the Bill requires the applicant (and his family) to have international medical insurance to cover any health problems while in Costa Rica.

What benefits does the proposed subcategory provide to teleworkers and service providers?

1. Total exemption from tax on profits (income).
2. Exemption from the payment of all taxes on the importation of equipment, instruments, tools, computers, telecommunications or similar equipment, necessary for them to correctly fulfill the functions of their employment.
3. Provides validity of a foreign driver's license, without the need to apply for a Costa Rican driver's license.

4. Allows the opening of accounts in the Costa Rican banking system.

5. Eliminates the requirement to constantly leave the country to remain legal (90 day Visa renewal).

The time frame for inclusion in this new category would be limited to one year, with the option for an additional one year extension. What is not mentioned in this bill is if persons in this new subcategory will be provided the opportunity to change their status to a Temporary or Permanent residency.

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by Ryan Piercy



Moray Eels

Boasting around 200 of the 800 species of eels globally, it is unsurprising that Costa Rican waters are home to many of the varieties of the moray eel family. The moray is often mistaken for a sea snake when, in fact, it is a fish. Perhaps the confusion is aided by their long serpentine bodies which lack the pectoral and pelvic fins one expects to find on a fish; their dorsal fin extends from just behind the head along the back and joins seamlessly with the caudal and anal fins. And, some varieties sport highly decorative markings, as one often expects from snakes. Most possess large teeth used to tear flesh or grasp slippery prey. A relatively small number of species feed on crustaceans and other hard-shelled animals; they have blunt, molar-like teeth suitable for crushing. The eel's small, circular gills are located on their flanks, well back from the mouth.

Some of the more common moray eels, or morenas, that you may encounter diving here include the Abbotts

moray, Panamic green moray, spotted moray, tiger snake moray, yellow-edged, and zebra morays. The tiger snake and the zebra morays both have appearances that are extremely obvious; one with defined black and white stripes along its length, the other with small black spots interspersed between larger tiger-like spots on its yellowish body.

Like most eels, many morays live in shallow waters, sometimes amongst rocks and reefs or burrowing into the sand, normally emerging at night to feed. They are opportunistic predators that feed on small fish, crustaceans, and octopus, and are often apex predators within their ecosystem because there are few other species that prey on them, excepting humans of course, who trade them for use as food or aquarium fish.

Though morays can occupy both fresh and saltwater, as well as tropical and temperate waters, the majority inhabit warm saltwater regions such as those located



this species around the Isla de Coco where you may also find the finespotted, jewel, starry, and slenderjaw morays. Also found near the Isla is the widemouth moray, a brown eel with white spots. This variety is only known in the Eastern Pacific, from the Galapagos to the Isla de Coco.

For those fortunate enough to dive in the deep, you may notice that morays are constantly opening their mouths. This is not an act of aggression, but merely aids in their breathing process. Morays secrete a protective mucus along their body, which in some species

around Costa Rica. They especially prefer sheltered areas such as those offered by dead patch reefs, coral rubble, and less frequently, live coral reefs.

Many moray species will be between one to five feet in length, though here we should note the giant moray, whose brown and spotted body can reach up to near seven and one-half feet in length. It is possible to encounter

contains a toxin. This allows sand granules to adhere to the sides of their burrows for sand-dwelling morays. Others, such as the spotted moray, can be aggressive towards humans. Thus, unless you are accompanied by a knowledgeable guide, it is always best to keep specimens at a respectful distance and just enjoy observing them as they move and hunt gracefully in their natural environment.

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by Shelagh Duncan

Decorating Tips to Maximize Small-Space Living

Just purchased or moved into a new home? Finding furnishing and decorating a bit challenging because it's a smaller space than you are used to? Remember, bigger is not always better. Lovely as they are, large homes are more expensive to furnish and maintain. Here, in this tropical paradise, where we spend so much of our time outdoors, do we really need all that interior space? Probably not.

Whatever size home you have, you still want to make the most of it. In this article we will be looking at maximizing small-space living. There are decorating challenges of course, but the key is to always make the most appropriate choices for the space you are living in. So, here are a few tips you can try to help your condo, house, or room appear larger and more spacious.

FURNITURE FOR SMALL SPACES

One of the biggest mistakes people make when decorating a small room is to fill it with overstuffed or large-scale

furnishings. Smaller rooms and homes require smaller, or more lightly-scaled, furniture. One large item, a sectional for example, will make the room seem more open than a sofa and two chairs.

Try to avoid pushing all your furniture up against the walls. Leave some "breathing space" behind your sofa; just 6" to 12" will do it. Create groupings, place a couple of chairs at an angle to add interest, and float your sofa in the room if space allows. Small changes can make a big difference.

In any small space it's important to not to feel boxed in, so keep colors light and choose furniture with a low profile and clean lines. Pieces with exposed legs add to the open feel, as do sofas and chairs with low, slim arms. It is harder to get condo-scaled furniture here, so look for multi-use pieces to cut down on the amount of furniture you need: nesting tables, an extendable dining table, sofa sleepers, and even stacking or folding chairs are all very practical.



Shiny, reflective and transparent surfaces will visually expand your space. Accent pieces in acrylic, glass, or shiny metal will appear more weightless and will instantly transform your space.

In open-plan layouts, try to define the space by using lighting, furniture placement, and rugs to establish separate areas for dining, conversation, or other uses. Open shelving will also offer an airy feel and will visually separate areas without boxing them in.

DECORATING FOR OPENNESS

A decorating trick to create the illusion of height and depth is to hang curtains close to the ceiling—or in the case of vaulted ceilings, high above the window frame—never on it. The longest ready-made panels generally available here are 96-inches, but if you can find 108-inch panels, or decide to go with custom made draperies, the additional height will make a big difference. In smaller spaces hang your drapery panels so when they are open they will clear, not cover, the window glass—this will expand what the eye can see and make the room seem more spacious. If you prefer the look of blinds, install them within the window frame instead of on top of the frame. And, choose a color that blends in well with the wall.

Mirrors will reflect light and add interest to your walls—you can even consider adding a mirrored wall. Not that dated 1980's look, but a more modern interpretation, maybe by adding wood. This will add texture and warmth, and will visually open up your space.

To add other visual height, include things like a slim floor vase with tall bamboo or grass and vertical artwork, to encourage the eye upward.

LIGHTING

Great lighting is always important, but it becomes essential when dealing with small spaces. If possible,





allow lots of natural light to enter, and use floor and table lamps to illuminate corners and focal points to keep the eye moving. By adding a distinctive hanging light fixture you will draw the eye up and make the space seem larger.

COLOR & PATTERN IN SMALL SPACES

Decorators know that dark colors will seem to advance toward us, and lighter, cooler colors appear to recede, so opt for light-colored flooring to visually open up the space. An additional hint for a condo or small house is to keep the same flooring throughout. Wall colors should be light too, and use accent colors sparingly in small spaces. Neutral and monochromatic color schemes will work best, and using slightly lighter or darker color values can define spaces and add some subtle interest.

Stripes can work well in small spaces because they can be used to create the illusion of height or length. It's all about fooling the eye. Patterns are always popular to add some interest to a room, but keep to the 2:1 ratio; use two smaller-scaled patterns or textures to one



lesser-used bold pattern, and you will not overpower your room.

If you want to use some dark or strong colors, keep them at or below eye-level. This will help anchor your room, yet still make it feel spacious.

Even if you try to use all the other tips mentioned here, here's a big one: it is important to keep clutter under control; if you don't, your space will always seem smaller than it is. Master the art of "a place for everything"; it will clear your mind as well as your home.

I hope some of these basic rules for small-space design can help you make the most of your home.

Until next time...

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by Tony Johnson

The “Fairy Tale” Marriage That Was Indeed a Fairy Tale

“There were three of us in this marriage...” Diana, Princess of Wales

The recent season of the TV show *The Crown* has resurrected some “Di Mania,” reminding us of the dreams we had about the “fairy tale marriage” between Charles and Diana, and the nightmares about its disastrous ending.

It began with a king’s ransom expenditure (\$135 million in today’s dollars) for a wedding that succeeded in dazzling much of the globe, witnessed by hundreds of millions of dreamers worldwide who were all convinced that the newlyweds would live extraordinary lives and enjoy an even more exceptional – if not absolutely perfect – marriage.

The public gleefully approved of Charles’ choice, as did the palace that had pressured him into selecting Diana: the monarch wanted him to end his playboy years, produce an heir, and have a spouse above reproach who was suitable for becoming queen, thus maintaining the image of a monarchy above everyone else.

So how could their marriage not be ideal? He was a somewhat odd-looking crown prince, redeemed by his glorious uniforms, next in line to become the king. Not a CEO, president, Nobel laureate or rock star. Thousands do that; he was to be that most rare of beings, a “Your Majesty.” And Diana was a woman so gorgeous and sweet, so winsome, that most of the world fell immediately in love with her. That smile. Those bluer than blue eyes. Those hats! Charles marrying her would make our dreams of wedded bliss come true and we commoners would no longer feel foolish for ever believing it was possible.

But it ended in betrayal, recrimination, humiliation, and divorce. And worst of all, the horrifying and totally avoidable death of Diana.

How did it get to that point? The newlyweds had an abundance of everything, always better than the best, yet they couldn’t make their marriage work. Anything their hearts desired could be arranged – except for what many of us commonly have, the people skills required

for a functional union. The roots of their marital failure lay in their childhood injuries and wounded psyches. All magnified by the crushing pressure of media feeding frenzies and microscopic scrutiny.

THE REALITY OF THE CROWN

If you haven’t seen it, *The Crown* is a docudrama, rather than a historically accurate record of the couple’s lives. But it gives us an easily accessible way to further examine the role our personal vulnerabilities play in marriage. The concern here is not the accuracy of the TV characters’ personalities as they are portrayed, but the examples the drama gives for exploring the role sensitivities play in relationships, ours and others. My focus in this is not on the actual royals, but on the vulnerabilities exhibited by the characters in *The Crown*.

THE REALITY OF HUMAN NEEDS

To review, in the last few editions of this column, I have discussed the physical, social, and spiritual needs we all have, with an emphasis on our crucial identity needs. We all need to see ourselves as worthwhile, loveable, competent, intelligent, respectable, ethical, and “OK.” A key point was that when those needs go unmet, when those vulnerabilities are violated by our partner, we feel deeply wounded and can become involved in bitter relationship-destroying conflicts.

To the ordinary observer of the fairy tale wedding and marriage, it may seem improbable that their relationship could suffer common struggles. Since all of their physical and economic needs were more than met, and having guaranteed financial security, we fail to see what could possibly cause any disputes.

That assumption comes from our experience with the most common source of our own marital conflicts – the lack of money. The tensions that arise from our difficulty paying

bills, and so forth, are often converted into ugly marital battles. Feeling ashamed of our financial insecurity, we may shift the blame to each other. “It’s YOUR fault... if only YOU would...” But if money wasn’t the source of discord between Charles and Diana, what was?

Charles, of course, was born to golden carriages overflowing with riches; there were castles, glorious wardrobes, priceless art, hundreds of servants meeting his every need, and Diana now had access to all of that. So what could they possibly fight about? The same sensitivities that the rest of us do, as it turns out.

The Crown, although fictionalized, reveals that behind all the material riches, the human vulnerabilities of the royals, especially Charles and Diana, still existed.

DIANA’S VULNERABILITIES

An excerpt from an early interview gives some insight into the couple’s vulnerabilities:

Interviewer: “And I suppose, in love?”

Diana: “Of course!”

Charles: “Whatever love means.”

Diana’s love was confident and certain. Charles was nowhere near as assured, giving us a hint of what the Palace already knew; Charles loved someone else. Diana was hurt and shocked by her betrothed’s reply, and Charles was made uncomfortable by the painful truth aroused by that question.

Diana’s breathtaking beauty, her innocence, her charm, made her OUR ideal spouse for Charles. But surprisingly, she had numerous reasons to feel inferior; she failed her Ordinary Level Exam twice and left school without a certificate, working as a kindergarten aide. She was called “Lady Diana” because she was the aristocratic daughter of an earl, but she was not of royal blood, whereas Charles was the crown prince, a graduate of Cambridge, and a naval pilot who held numerous titles and had inherited a fortune. He loved the country life: hunting, shooting, horses. She preferred the city: dance, ballet, and charities. She was 19 when they became engaged and he was 32; he was more worldly, experienced, and knowledgeable; she was naive and unworldly. So while Charles joked about “her having me?” it was Diana who actually felt inadequate.

Diana later described the marriage as an “ugly, dark, loveless cave.” So, apart from a short period early in their relationship, it’s unlikely that her Worthwhile

and Lovable needs were met, and she suffered the deep emotional wounds of not being “good enough.” This lack of self confidence was compounded by Charles’ neglect of her and his failure to help her adjust to royal life. She must have felt abandoned, lonely and unworthy of his time and efforts. And his “whatever love means” comment began her humiliation and deepened her insecurity days before the wedding, signaling to the world that while she was completely in love with him, he failed to return such love to her. His inability to be as in love as she was must have undermined any sense of her lovableness, her worth.

Worse still, Charles was lying. He definitely knew what “love means.” His long affair with a married mother of two, at the expense of loving Diana, certainly confirmed Diana’s feelings of being unlovable, inadequate, not worthy of his respect or honesty. He treated her, as she said, like a “smiling doll” whose main value lay in providing him with an above-reproach mother for his heirs. Not in being lovable like Camilla.

As if it couldn’t get worse, Charles saw her as a dysfunctional, troubled person; as if “there’s (nothing) between your ears other than your self-obsession,” making her, in his eyes not OK, but unbalanced, disturbed, screwed up. And her eating disorder and self-harm were more evidence for Charles that there was something seriously wrong with her.

PRINCE CHARLES’ VULNERABILITIES

What vulnerabilities could a crown prince conceivably have? Many, as it turns out. His mother, the queen, was cold, distant, and unaffectionate. He was raised by nannies and had little contact with his mother, while his father was harsh and critical. Charles was sent to boarding schools where he was bullied. All this leaving him insecure and desperate for attention and admiration.

Raised to be a king, he felt entitled to his own set of rules, such as having both a wife and a mistress, just as other Princes of Wales had done. But, since the entire focus of the British monarchy is on survival, he was denied what he needed. He was forbidden to marry Camilla, and he had to keep his affair secret, lest the public realize that the monarchy was not a model to follow – not above reproach as they pretended.

Charles made a huge mistake by marrying a woman that the public truly loved, finding her more Worthy, more Lovable, more Competent in terms of people skills, than he. And then, when his cheating was revealed, Diana



became even more Ethical and Respectable than he, and he was exposed as a fraud and a fool.

Charles, who was hungering for public approval, affection, and admiration, badly lost out to Diana whom the public adored. Compared to the monarchical, cold, distant, Charles, who didn't want to soil himself touching his subjects, Diana was genuinely warm, caring, interested in them, lacking any superiority toward those she met. And the public loved her for it. Leaving Charles wounded and jealous.

Diana at first enhanced Charles' public approval, something he craved. But she quickly outdid him. Rather than being arm candy, Diana became the People's Princess, loved and admired for who she was, not for her rank. Exactly what Charles never achieved. Furthermore, being forced to marry Diana made him cold and cruel toward her.

It was so easy to sympathize with Diana, who seemed so innocent, such a victim of the egotistical Charles, while at the same time it was difficult to pity him for his lifelong lack of love. He felt that, "I spent my whole life unthanked, unappreciated, unloved." Diana's failure to see this further wounded his vulnerabilities.

His pain, however, never justified his cruelty toward his wife, but we can now perhaps better understand how she threatened his vulnerabilities. (And, there is evidence that she rubbed his nose in those weaknesses to

avenge her humiliation by orchestrating press coverage to remind him, yet again, which was more popular with the people. So she wasn't totally innocent in this deteriorating marriage.)

The "Wedding of the Century" had magnificent production values, providing the world with a spectacle of delights to see, hear, and feel. Except for one – truth. The marriage was a lie. Charles did not love Diana, although she was head over heels in love with him.

The Palace and Diana knew this truth before the wedding day but forced Charles to go ahead with the nuptials because it was too late to cancel and inconvenience thousands of aristocrats, celebrities, and commoners planning to attend. He was told to marry out of "duty" and he would eventually love his future wife. But fulfilling that duty resulted in resentment toward Diana, rather than toward the queen, even though it was the Crown who deprived Charles of his autonomy and his freedom to act like a king. It deeply threatened his sense that he indeed had the stuff kings are made of.

Charles and Diana both wanted to be "the one." Neither could. Charles craved being the center of the public's attention, but he lacked charisma; he was boring, uninteresting. All the while, Diana was pure charisma, but she couldn't be the "one woman" in his life because

she lacked the quality he needed – putting HIM at the center of her attention, something that Camilla did well. Not being “the one” must have left them both feeling Unworthy, Unlovable, Incompetent, NOT OK.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE THE REST OF US?

If a crown prince and the “most loved woman in the world” had such deep insecurities, is there any hope for the very insecure rest of us?

Yes!

IF, and that’s a big if, Charles could have completely set aside Camilla and focused exclusively on Diana, she may have been able to give him the love he so needed, and her vindictive competitiveness with him may have never been aroused. IF she could have toned down her affection toward the crowds, giving him more room to shine, he might have been less jealous, feeling less inferior to her, and less cheated out of his due.

In other words, if they were both more sensitive and accommodating of each other’s needs and vulnerabilities, both might have been less angry and more satisfied with

their marriage. And the rest of us would have gotten the proof that we’re not being foolish for believing in “Fairy Tale” marriages. But they weren’t, and it doomed the relationship from the start.

For the rest of us, this example affirms that it doesn’t matter if we are a prince or a pauper; we all come into our relationships with vulnerabilities and needs. As past articles have pointed out, we should try to understand our partner’s weaknesses, and respect them as we want ours to be respected. THAT will give us a better chance of a happy future together.

Tony and Kay Johnson married in 1973 at Kay’s brother’s house. Annie Green Springs wine and cake were served to a small group. Fortunately, the Johnsons never had to deal with the curses of great wealth. johnson.tony4536@gmail.com



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

► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

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

► **Al-Anon**

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

► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

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

► **American Legion Post 12-Golfito**

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

► **American Legion Auxiliary**

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

► **Amigos of Costa Rica**

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

► **Atenas Bridge Club**

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

► **Birding Club Costa Rica**

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

► **Canadian Club**

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

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

► **Central Valley Golf Association**

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

► **Costa Ballena Women's Network**

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

► **Costa Rica Writers Group**

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

► **Democrats Abroad Costa Rica**

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

► **Domestic Animal Welfare Group Costa Ballena**

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

► **First Friday Lunch**

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

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

► Little Theater Group

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

► Marine Corps League

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

► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

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

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

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

► Professional Women's Network

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

► Quepos-Manuel Antonio Writers Group

The QMAWG is a group of aspiring and accomplished

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

► Radio Control Sailing Club

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

► San Vito Bird Club

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

► Wine Club of Costa Rica

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

► Women's Club of Costa Rica

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

► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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

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

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

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

BUSINESS DIRECTORY (45)

Important dates in Costa Rica:

19 March, Friday,
Saint Joseph's Day
(Observance)

2 April, Friday,
Good Friday (National
Holiday)

11 April, Sunday,
Juan Santamaría Day (National
Holiday - an official Day Off
will be observed the following
Monday)

1 May, Saturday,
Labor Day (National Holiday
- an official Day Off will
be observed the following
Monday)

All ARCR Seminars for
Expats have been temporarily
suspended due to COVID -19.
Dates for future Seminars will
be announced at a later time.


Funniest One Liners

Knowledge is knowing a
tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is
not putting it in a fruit salad.

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

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

Change is inevitable, except
from a vending machine.



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