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ARCR's English Language Magazine

May / June 2019

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

El Residente



FIFTY YEARS AGO IN COSTA RICA

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

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

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EDITOR'S NOTE

HELP! El Residente has lost some of its writers and we need to replace them. If you have ever considered being a contributor, now is your chance. Have you written something about Costa Rica? About your life here? Or do you have something else in mind? Send it in! Don't worry about how professional the writing is; we have an excellent staff that will help you make it just like you want it to be. Do it now! If you put it off...well, you know that story.

In this issue, if you are a member of the Caja, be sure to read about the changes taking place in the Across the Board column. Corporation owners should be sure to review the information on digital signatures in the Legal Update column. Other good reading, which can help you avoid snake bites, can be found in Wild Side. All-in-all, we hope you enjoy this issue.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Published by:	ARCR Administration / www.arcr.net
Email:	info@arcr.net
Managing Director:	Rómulo Pacheco
Editor-in-Chief:	Allen Dickinson
Associate Editor:	Bob Brashears
Graphic Design:	Eduardo González
Advertising graphics:	Rubén Chavarría
Office hours:	Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Main office, San José:	Av 14, Calle 42, San José, Costa Rica (506) 2220-0055, (506) 4052-4052
Mailing address:	P.O. Box 1191-1007 Centro Colón, San José, Costa Rica
Advertising and Publicity:	service@arcr.net
Insurance Office:	insurancearcr@gmail.com
General information:	service@arcr.net
Caja account info:	service@arcr.net
Residency info:	legal@arcr.net
Facebook page:	www.facebook.com/ARCR123
ARCR Forums:	www.forums.arcr.net
ARCR Webpage:	www.arcr.cr

Cover Photo Credit: Golfito circa 1968 by Steve Johnson

ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

CAJA NEWS 1, RATE REDUCTIONS After extensive negotiations with the Caja, it has been determined that some ARCR members (those under 55 years of age) will be receiving a reduction in their monthly Caja contribution. Those over 55 will not. There is no need for you to call the office, those affected will be notified.

CAJA NEWS 2, PRESCRIPTIONS Prescriptions are generally issued for enough medications to last the patient 30 days. Some facilities are now printing prescriptions by computer and the form is taken to the pharmacy and filled. When the patient picks up the packet they may find the pharmacy has included a form for up to 6-months of additional 30-day refills. **DO NOT LOSE THE FORM, AS WITHOUT IT REFILLS ARE NOT AVAILABLE.**

CAJA NEWS 3, ON-LINE APPOINTMENTS Some Ebais, doctors, and other Caja facilities are now scheduling all appointments online. If you encounter difficulty entering your Cédula number into the appointment website, contact ARCR for assistance.

AFTER LIFE SERVICES Some ARCR members are not aware that they can receive a discount on after life services from the Polini Funeral Home chain. Polini has multiple locations around the country, under various business names, so inquire directly with your local funeral home to determine if they are part of the Polini group, and what discounted rates are available.

HEALTH CARE INSURANCE 1 Members who have an international healthcare insurance policy from a U.S. company should be aware that their coverage may be denied if a medical emergency occurs in a country subject to U.S. government sanctions (Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, etc.)

HEALTH CARE INSURANCE 2 INS has announced that those persons who are residents of Costa Rica and have a valid, paid-up healthcare insurance policy through INS, and who experience a medical emergency while visiting their home country, will be covered by their INS policy.

U.S. EMBASSY RESTRICTED ITEMS The U.S. Embassy in San José has changed what items

can be brought into the building. The following information is taken from their website.

Prohibited items:

- Cellular phones
- Bags, luggage, backpacks, purses
- Any type of electronic device (including laptops, cell phones, iPads, iPods, MP3 players, cameras, memory sticks, CDs, smart watches, etc.)
- Weapons of any kind, explosive materials, tools of any size
- Drinks, food
- Strollers

This list is not comprehensive and other items may be prohibited at the discretion of the security staff.

Be advised that the Embassy no longer has a storage facility for any items. Visitors are strongly recommended to make alternate arrangements for storage of any of the above personal effects before arrival. Failure to abide by security requirements can result in significant delays or even a missed appointment. Please ensure you have a hard copy of your appointment confirmation alongside any supporting documentation required for your appointment. Only clients with scheduled appointments will be admitted. U.S. citizens with emergencies are admitted on a case-by-case basis.



ARCR Board of Directors:

From the left, back row, Earl Tomlinson, Allen Dickinson, Bob Brasbears, Terry Renfer, Terry Wise. Front row, Mel Goldberg, Linda Leake, Martha Rollins.

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6 FIFTY YEARS AGO IN COSTA RICA

by Steve Johnson



The woman with the oxcart was Piedades Duarte, head of the community development organization for La Palma-Colorado, standing in front of the Chang Trading Co. in La Cuesta

Settling In

My first order of business as a Peace Corps volunteer was to get to know the community. I had been told not to push things too much and to take my time getting acquainted. My job was supposed to be rural community development and agricultural extension, both things about which I had zero experience; my college degree in international relations was of absolutely no use. Supervision from San José was lax at best, and as was the case with most volunteers, I would have to figure things out for myself.

What might I do? There was a community organization in La Palma and Colorado, two villages deep in the jungles west of La Cuesta, and the president of the organization, doña Piedades Duarte, was a real spark plug. But I had a big problem – transportation. The only way to get there was by horse. Walking, my preferred mode of transportation, was not an option because the terrain was swampy. Then I was swindled by the local horse trader who sold me a pregnant mare, telling me she

was a stallion. Later I discovered he had charged me twice the going rate. To make a long story short, let's just say the mare and I did not get along one bit.

For the last couple of years the people of La Cuesta had been working on raising funds to build a public water system, which was finally completed about four months after I arrived. It had been a major community effort and I realized they wanted to take a rest after that, but they continued to hold fund-raisers, which I helped with.

One of those was on a Christmas Eve, a community dance in La Palma, which was held out in the jungle at a bar called El Guay. The bar's name had been chosen by the owner (the name on the sign was someone called Garcia) who was quite a celebrity in the area because he was the only person who had ever gone to the U.S. The story was that on his way back to Costa Rica he had stopped at a coffee shop in the Miami Airport called "The Wait." He was so impressed with the little

restaurant he decided to name his cantina after it, and in Spanish it came out EL GUAY. Once, on an old map of Costa Rica, I saw the village marked as El Guay. Interesting how towns get their names.

That night I went to El Guay and met the members of the community development organization outside of the bar. About 8:00 p.m., two old guys with guitars showed up and the bar owner lit a Coleman lantern.

I and the community development organization were at first thrilled because we were selling homemade guaro like it was going out of fashion – we were going to make lots of money! But, by midnight the party turned into a brawl and things got out of control; a drunk rode his horse around inside the cantina and shot bullets through the roof; the floor was littered with drunks who had passed out. The horse was careful not to step on them and, fortunately, nobody got hurt.

The members of the community development organization and I barricaded ourselves behind the bar for protection and when the sun came up the next morning there were about 20 drunks strewn across the floor. We cleaned the place up and after the bar owner deducted expenses, like for broken tables and chairs, from our receipts, our net profit came to only four colones (about 75¢ U.S.). We were very tired and very disappointed. It was my first Peace Corps disaster.



The cantina in La Palma called El Guay



The bus that ran between Paso Canoas and la Cuesta





The fork in the road in front of the La Cuesta border patrol station



My mare with her colt

Soon after that I began organizing the school garden during the day and teaching English classes in the evening.

I should have been satisfied with the school garden, English classes, and fund-raising, but fell into the typical Peace Corps volunteer syndrome of thinking I was not doing enough. I was looking for something else to do, so I began working on a project with the local farmers to purchase a tract of land from the United Fruit Company. Almost immediately it went off track and we got into a disagreement, ironically not with United Fruit, but with the local politicians. After a traumatizing experience I washed my hands of the whole thing and decided to plant five acres of corn, the principal crop in La Cuesta.

I was interested in agricultural extension and decided that before I could start I needed to learn the traditional way of growing corn in the tropics. It was a process known as slash and burn, which involved cutting down the jungle and then burning off the debris before planting. The only tools needed were a machete, a match, a simple planting stick, and a hand-operated corn sheller. This kept me busy for months and I learned a lot.

Somehow the word got back to San José that I had become a farmer. It was then that I got my one and only visit from my boss. He had the Costa Rican agricultural extension agent from Golfito in tow and they had a project for me; they wanted me to begin planting experimental plots of corn to see

what combination of fertilizers worked best in the area around La Cuesta. The job was a perfect fit for me as I had just completed my self-taught training course in growing corn and would be doing something that did not require the approval of the local politicians.

The Peace Corps allowed me to extend for a third year so I could finish my corn experiments and send the results to the University of Costa Rica. Twenty years later one of my Costa Rican brothers-in-law, who is an agronomist, told me that he had come across the reports I had sent to the university in the back of a filing cabinet. I hope they were of use to somebody.

Next Part: Falling in Love

Steve Johnson arrived in Costa Rica in 1968. He later met his wife near Golfito, where she was teaching first grade in his village. In 1970 they married and moved to the United States. He never got over his love of Costa Rica and its people, so when he retired in 2009 the couple returned here to pursue their lifelong passion for gardening and birding. Besides writing, he enjoys digging holes, washing dishes, and splitting firewood. You can contact him at: johnsos05@yahoo.com



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Swan Song

The parents in the movie we were watching had done some illegal things (nothing evil, but they were sideways with “the man”). Their kids were unaware of that significant wrinkle; all they knew was that they were tired of moving in the middle of the night to another town where they would again be forced to start over with a new school, new friends, etc.

I recall looking over at my parents at frequent intervals. The story seemed awfully familiar.

During my early childhood, we lived in various rental houses and apartments in and around Denver. When I was four we moved to Boston (our two years there left me with a wicked accent and a scar on the end of my nose from when the neighbor boy threw an impromptu spear at me for swinging with his sister – stop it! I was five and it was an actual swing set).

We returned to Denver and again moved around. Even when we spent a year in the same spot my schooling refused to be stationary, as I was part of the forced school busing program. We had no money so I assumed that my classmates were like me; poor people they wanted to send to a posh school in six-week intervals. It turned out that the busing exercise was based on race, not necessarily affluence, so I got to spend time with equally poor kids at their school.

When I was in the fourth grade we moved to Houston, I guess so I could better understand the concepts of

humidity and what it was like to share a bedroom with a baby (my sister). We left the apartment complex after a year or so and moved to a starter home even farther out in the suburbs. This attempt at a neighborhood had fallen on hard times and the community rec. center behind our back fence had closed, leaving behind a pool full of trash, turtles, and an abnormally high concentration of used needles and condoms.

I did not live in a democratic home (and even if I had, I lacked the votes to carry the day) so my thoughts regarding our constant movement were neither sought out nor heard. The years passed and I came into contact with people who had spent their entire lives in one place in some sort of Leave it to Beaver spin-off. This both annoyed and inspired me and I promised myself that, if I had children, I would make sure their formative years were spent in a single, comfortable place.

With that as a backdrop, we have a bit more than seven weeks left until we say goodbye to our adopted land of Costa Rica and head to Victoria, BC. As I sat down to write this I realized that Thing #1, now 13, has lived in Houston, Brenham, Houston again, and Costa Rica. Soon we’ll all move into a rental house in Canada while we wait to, hopefully, sell our house in Pura Vida. Then we’ll buy the last house that we’ll ever own in the last place that we’ll ever live – Ha!

I have, in short, done exactly the opposite of what I promised to do. In my defense, how things turned out was not by any means my plan. I now recall some of the lofty goals we leveraged as justification for taking our boys from the home and neighborhood they loved in Houston:

- Fluency in Spanish
- Exposure to a different culture
- Healthy lifestyle/rock-hard abs

Had we been wildly successful on these fronts I could, potentially, still claim to have fulfilled my promise to myself. In that version of the narrative, we made those moves because we saw an opportunity to create a better life for our children. Did we?



Well... Things #1 and #2 have their father's gift for language. However, had we stayed a bit longer in Costa Rica and girlfriends had entered the picture, there might have been a bit more incentive (ganas) to care about verb tenses – particularly the conditional. Perhaps it's for the best that we leave now before grandchildren become part of the equation.

Culture-wise I give us a solid B+. Our time in Central America has definitely opened up young minds to a completely different approach. It's also given them the opportunity to view what is happening in the United States (race, politics, wealth distribution) from the outside-in. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it has exposed them to Shakira and a complete understanding of how her hips absolutely do not lie.


On the subject of Health/Rock-Hard abs: The boys are thriving, and growing. Personally, my struggles with a cancerous kidney and a pulmonary embolism have left me a bit puny. I have been deemed "otherwise" healthy, which is akin to saying that the Titanic was "otherwise" seaworthy. I'm not sure we can credit Costa Rica for any of this one way or the other, but if nothing else I have hopefully instilled a desire in the boys to do whatever is

necessary to stay out of the hospital. Rock-hard-ab-wise (my personal goal) it appears that no amount of free time is sufficient for me to regain my teenage form – though had the cancer rampaged undetected I might've at least ended up dropping a few pant sizes. We'll never know. I hope.

So, like the protagonists in that bad movie (and my parents) we'll pack our bags and head to our next home. I will probably get over my failure to live up to my own lofty goals, but regardless, I will definitely stop making ultimatums. Life, I have learned, like any meal in our house that involves soup, is messy.


Things #1 and #2 are excited about the move and have some significant expectations of their new, new country. I hope Canada is prepared to deliver. And I hope the public middle school Thing #2 attends understands that he consider shoes, and underwear, optional. Perhaps they will bus him somewhere special.

Editor's Note. This will be the last Monteverde Moments column. It is with some sadness we bid Marshal Cobb and his family goodbye. We wish them well in their continued adventure. And, of course, our prayers go out for Marshall's good health and the hope that he enjoys a long and fruitful life.



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Encuentranos en
las Paginas Amarillas de Costa Rica

By Allen Dickinson

GPS? I Don't Need No Stinkin' GPS!

I don't have a GPS device – I refuse to have one. Costa Rica is a small country, and what's the joy in exploring if you know where you are going, what path you will use to get there, and when you will arrive? Where's the adventure in that? Sure, I get lost sometimes, but to me that's a benefit, not a disadvantage. Besides, it's such a small county, how lost can one get here?

Costa Rica is beautiful, more so the farther you get from "civilization." And those times I have been lost I've met lots of nice people, and have seen things and places that I'm willing to bet no more than two other gringos (and most Ticos) have seen. And so what if I am lost? I know that before long I'll encounter something that "tells" me where I am and, from there, I can figure out how to get home.

Oh yeah, I have encountered roads that are only passable with a four-wheel drive vehicle, and I have one. But, if the road couldn't be "passed" there wouldn't be a road – or it would be clogged with the dead vehicles of others who, like me, had to give it a try – and failed. And if it gets too scary, there is always reverse gear – I know that sooner or later there will be a place that is wide enough where, with a little skillful maneuvering and a sharp lookout from my wife, I can turn around. (I keep in mind, however, that I once met a person with the same adventurous attitude who tried that with his brand new, British-built, high-dollar, four-wheel drive SUV. Years later it is still at the bottom of the valley – even the insurance company couldn't retrieve it up the 300-foot, nearly vertical mountain slope. And, of course, my spirit of adventure can be modified depending on the season – rainy or dry. (I ain't totally stupid!)

But, I must also make a confession – I may not have WAZE on my cell phone, but my kids do. That phone app can be really handy if you are actually seeking a specific



destination. In this country where there is an unofficial ban on road signs, and asking for directions for some place that is more than two kilometers away from the birth home of the Tico you stopped to ask, well, it's nice to have some chance of ultimately reaching your destination. (I once spent over four hours looking for some place I needed to go. During that time either I or my passenger asked at least 20 people if they knew where it was. And 19 times we got directions – none of which were correct – or even close. The one other time we just got a shrug. If one of us had had WAZE, we'd have gotten there in 20 minutes. That time exploring wasn't fun.)

So, for now at least, I'll forgo GPS and WAZE and go wandering, exploring roads that go somewhere yet to be discovered. Who knows, one day I might stumble across El Dorado, the city of gold. The Spaniards couldn't find it...but they didn't have four-wheel drive.

Little Yellow Tail



Snakes. Not an unusual or uncommon sight, yet a creature feared by so many. Ophidiophobia is the abnormal fear of snakes – but is it really abnormal? Certainly not in the case of the well known pit viper known as the Rabo Amarillo, Terciopelo, or Fer-de-Lance.

By any name, the *Bothrops asper* is a distinctively large and dangerous member of the species, which is found from Mexico to Colombia and Ecuador. This nocturnal viper is common and abundant throughout most of Costa Rica. While the venom of this creature is not the most potent, due to its aggressive nature, large size, long fangs, and venom output, it remains one of the deadliest in all Central America. On average each snake carries around 450mg of venom, though larger vipers can carry up to three times that amount. Their long fangs normally

inject 1–2cc of venom, and large snakes can inject up to 6cc. As many as half of the country's more than 500 annual snake attacks can be attributed to this particular species. (There are about 15 attacks per 100,000 in population, with several resulting in death and dozens of seriously ill, reported each year.)





usually developed the ability to ration their venom and may inject their full amount in a bite.

The Instituto Clodomiro Picado has estimated there may be as many as two deadly snakes per hectare in Costa Rica. Fortunately, that does not mean there are two are found within every hectare, but there is still a strong reason to be cautious whenever you are out traveling around the lowlands or searching to have a closer look at the Terciopelos. Protection from the bite of this pit viper is why most camposinos who work in the fields or remote areas are seen wearing rubber boots.

The Caribbean zone is cited as the most dangerous area, likely due to Terciopelo's love for the small rodents which are abundantly found in agricultural areas such as banana plantations. Their favored habitat is moist, wet forest lowlands and other modified environments where rats are common. They are, however, also present in dry lowlands as well as lower altitudes of rain forest and other damp areas of the country, up to about 2,600m in elevation.

Reaching up to 250cm in length and 6 kilos (females being larger than males) these snakes are normally colored with a gray, brown, or an olive base, have broad flat heads, and robust bodies. Their underside is often a pale yellow and the sides are yellow or cream, with blotches and dark triangles or Xs running down their bodies.

The snake is considered the most prolific of all the snakes in the Americas. An aspect of their abundance is their breeding capacity, with litter sizes up to 40 on the Pacific, and 80 on the Atlantic, sides. Breeding times appear to be closely related to the rainfall seasons, and thus varies on either coast. (The Pacific breeding takes place from September to November, with births occurring April to June.)

The small, young snakes may carry less venom, but that doesn't make them less dangerous, as the adolescents have not



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by Ivo Henfling

How to Avoid Your Retirement in Paradise Becoming Hell

Is Costa Rica your retirement goal? Are you fed up with the cold weather and the rat race, and can't wait to get to warm Costa Rica – that tropical retirement paradise you've been dreaming about for many years?

Or maybe you just moved here and you want to enjoy your new life in the sun?

So, how can you avoid the move from becoming hell for you and your partner? Allow me to give you a few tips.

Tourist Visa

Before you buy a ticket, check to see if you need a tourist visa; U.S. and Canadian citizens don't, but some other nationalities do.

Return Ticket

Costa Rica laws say that visitors must have a paid and reserved way to leave the country before entering, and most airlines won't allow you to board the flight if you don't have a return ticket. You don't want to arrive at the airport, bags packed and in tow, and be refused boarding.

Passport

Make sure your passport is up to date and doesn't expire within six months of your arrival date; holder's of passports that expire within that time frame may be denied entry. Costa Rica Immigration will check your passport's expiration date upon arrival and can refuse to allow you to enter the country. When that happens the only option is to turn around and board the next flight back to your country of origin.

Visa Length

Tourists entering Costa Rica, even those who intend to stay, are given up to a 90 day tourist Visa, sometimes less. Do NOT overstay the amount of time designated in the visa stamp in your passport. If you overstay and leave, they might not let you back in. Wouldn't that turn your retirement paradise into hell?

Money / Credit

Bring enough money to survive for a while. If you bring cash, declare it; up to \$10,000 USD is allowed without question or penalty, but be sure to declare the amount or it can be confiscated.

Travelers' checks are NOT a good idea. Due to fraudulent activities in the past, most businesses will not accept them. And banks may put a weeks-long hold on them before allowing the bearer to receive the cash.

Most major credit cards are widely accepted throughout the country, but make sure your card issuers know in advance that you will be using them in Costa Rica. Nothing can turn paradise into hell faster than having your credit card account frozen because of suspicion of fraud.

Pre-arrange your credit card payments ahead of time. That way you can use your credit (or debit) card for most of your payments.

As a non-resident, you're allowed to have a simplified Costa Rican bank account with a maximum deposit of \$1,000 per month. You can use this account to pay utilities and other local payments.

Before you rent, ask the landlord if you can pay your rent with a U.S. or Canadian check. Foreign checks will take a while, up to several weeks, to clear.

You don't want to get stuck in Costa Rica without having access to money. ATM machines are everywhere, but make sure your bank knows you will be using the card outside your home country. Without a ready method of obtaining cash, your retirement paradise can quickly turn into hell.

Your Container

If you are shipping your household goods here in a container, you don't want that container or its contents to get stuck in Costa Rican customs for possibly

months, do you? Do NOT send your container without a complete and detailed inventory. It happens quite often that the items on the bill of lading don't match the inventory made by the customs officer; a bed, for example, stops being a single article when disassembled by your movers, so list all pieces separately. If you don't they may hold your complete shipment. And list the items with used values. If you don't, you can end up paying extra import duties.

Choose the Right Location

Do your homework on finding the right location BEFORE you purchase a property! Find out if the area you think you like offers the lifestyle that you are looking for. If it is important to have access to healthcare, North American style shopping malls, cultural events, or to be near other expats who speak your language, make sure the area you choose has those features. Rent in a few different places first. That is an important step toward making sure that your retirement paradise doesn't soon become hell.

Purchasing in the "Middle of Nowhere"

It's a lot cheaper to buy a house or property in the middle of nowhere than in a more popular location, but after some time will you like living there? Think about things like the fact that Costa Rica has a long rainy season; will you be happy having to drive miles on a muddy, rutted road to get to and from your home just to get groceries? Do you really want to wake up at dawn every morning to the screeching of monkeys? Consider your resale possibilities when you purchase – you have to find a buyer who likes the area and location as much as you do. It can be very difficult to sell a "unique" or isolated property, and you might want to hang yourself if you find that you hate it there...and then can't sell it. You might even have to walk away from your investment because you can't stand what you thought was going to be a retirement paradise.

Go Native

Oh yes, you can go native. Ticos are lovely people. You don't speak Spanish? Then you better start learning so you can communicate with the local population. For instance: Will you be able to go to the same church? Buy necessary items? Attend the same movies? There's a lot more to the culture than just a casual, occasional

interaction with neighbors about the weather that needs to be taken into consideration: Will you like the same food? Check the local grocery store to see if they have turkeys for Thanksgiving. Do they stock sweet gherkins? How about USDA meats? Do they carry pretzels or certain kinds of cookies, or whatever your favorite food or snack is? Going native might work for you if you're really motivated to be on a low budget, but try it for a couple of months before making a final commitment.

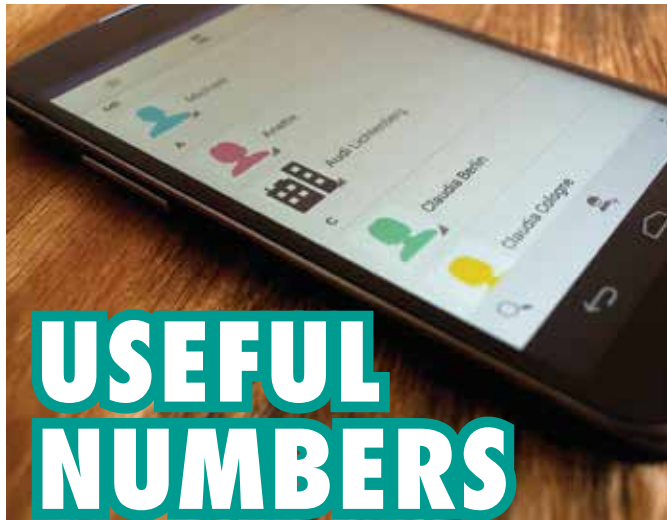
Learn Spanish

Knowing some Spanish will make a huge difference in the quality of your life here. You probably know more Spanish words than you realize, so you already have a head start. But if you want to adapt and have a good relationship with your new country, make the effort to learn at least one new Spanish word a day, you can do that no matter what your age is, and Ticos will love you for it. You don't want to try? Then don't complain when your retirement paradise becomes hell.

Costa Rica is a beautiful and inviting place and has some of the best weather in the world. But don't make the error of thinking of it as a "warmer Cleveland / Vancouver / Norfolk." It is still in many ways a developing nation. If you make that mistake and aren't prepared for the differences and hurdles of living here it can become hell. The country / the people / the culture won't adapt to you, you must adapt to them, so do your homework before you come and paradise will still be paradise after you have been here a while.

Ivo Henfling is a Dutch expat who has lived in Costa Rica since 1980. He founded the American-European Real Estate Group in 1999, which was the first functioning MLS with affiliate agents from coast to coast. He is also the broker/owner of Go Dutch Realty and can be reached at (506) 2289-5125 / 8834-4515 or at: ivo@american-european.net





USEFUL NUMBERS

United States of America Embassy

Phone: (506) 2519 2000

Address: Vía 104, Calle 98, San José

Hours: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

American Citizens Services: (506) 2519-2590

Fraud prevention Department: (506) 2519-2117

Duty Officer (after business hours): (506) 2519-2000
(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 AM – 12:00 PM, 12:30 – 4:00 PM

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 AM – 12:00 PM

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

Phone: (506) 2234 4167

Address: A022, San José, Curridabat

Hours: 7:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Email: ambafrcr@gmail.com

Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

Address: Calle 32, San José

Hours: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Email: emb.sanjose@maec.es

Emergency assistance: (506) 6050 9853

Venezuelan Embassy

Phone: (506) 2220 3704, 2220 3708

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

Email: embv.crsjo@mppre.gob.ve and embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com

Hours: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM, 1:30 – 3:30 PM.

CONFUSED BY THE METRIC SYSTEM?

Need to know how to convert common measurements used in Costa Rica to Customary US Standard measurements? Use the handy conversion chart below!

(These are APPROXIMATE factors, NOT EXACT.)

Milliliters × .034 = Fluid Ounces

Kilograms × 2.205 = Pounds

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?

Ask for one at the ARCR Reception Desk. It's FREE!

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PASSPORT



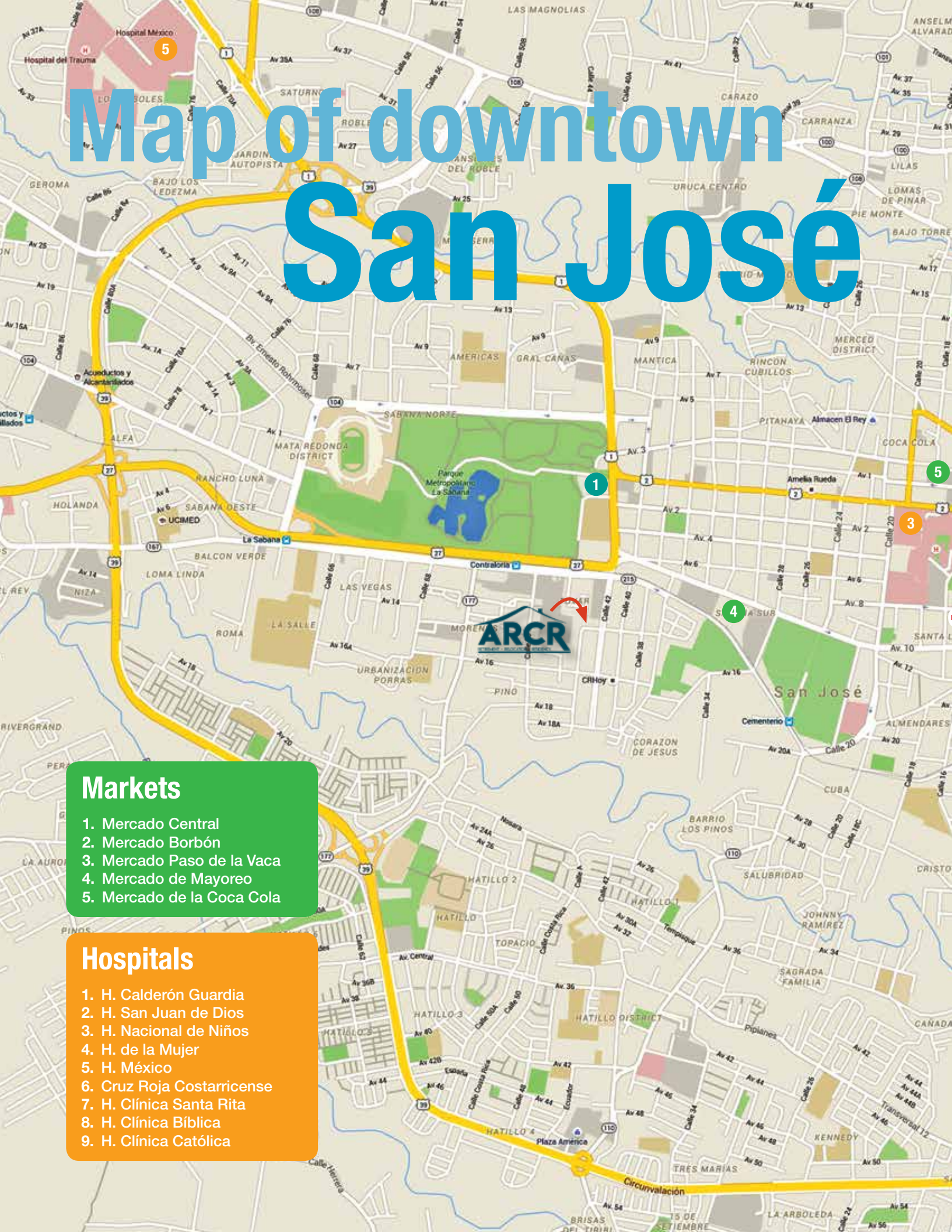
Map of downtown San José

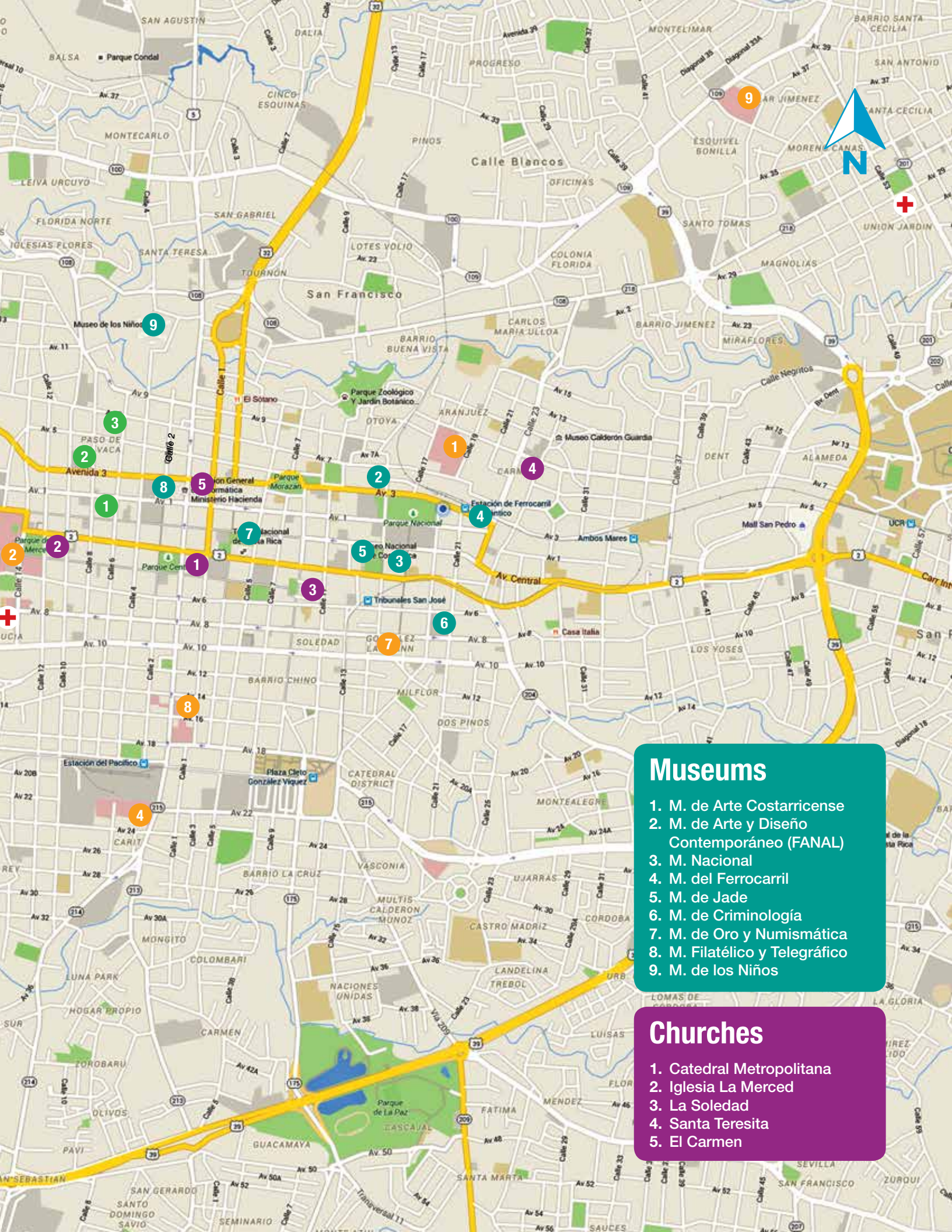
Markets

1. Mercado Central
2. Mercado Borbón
3. Mercado Paso de la Vaca
4. Mercado de Mayoreo
5. Mercado de la Coca Cola

Hospitals

1. H. Calderón Guardia
2. H. San Juan de Dios
3. H. Nacional de Niños
4. H. de la Mujer
5. H. México
6. Cruz Roja Costarricense
7. H. Clínica Santa Rita
8. H. Clínica Bíblica
9. H. Clínica Católica





Museums

1. M. de Arte Costarricense
2. M. de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo (FANAL)
3. M. Nacional
4. M. del Ferrocarril
5. M. de Jade
6. M. de Criminología
7. M. de Oro y Numismática
8. M. Filatélico y Telegráfico
9. M. de los Niños

Churches

1. Catedral Metropolitana
2. Iglesia La Merced
3. La Soledad
4. Santa Teresita
5. El Carmen

(22) FROM THE EMBASSIES



ASK ACS

A friend of mine just told me his brother had passed away here in Costa Rica. He's not sure how to make arrangements. Does he need to travel to Costa Rica? What can you do to help?

One of our most solemn and important responsibilities is in supporting the families and friends of U.S. citizens who pass away here. Please have your friend reach out to us; he likely will not need to travel since we can represent his interests on the ground here in Costa Rica. The degree and nature of the assistance we render depends upon whether the deceased U.S. citizen was accompanied by family, and whether he or she was residing here.

If a family member or legal next of kin is not aware of the death, our first and most important step is to deliver a personal notification. This is typically via phone call; one of our officers calls not just to express condolences on behalf of the U.S. Government, but also to provide information on the circumstances of their loved one's passing. We then explain the Embassy's role in this process so the legal next of kin can make arrangements. This includes working with local funeral homes to prepare remains for return to the United States, issuance of documentation for probate and other legal purposes in the United States, and gathering any local reports and paperwork to assist with executing the late citizen's last wishes.

In the case where an unaccompanied U.S. citizen dies in Costa Rica, one of our officers may serve as a provisional conservator of the deceased's personal estate. In simpler terms, that means we can take temporary custody of personal effects for safekeeping until we can make arrangements to return the items to the next of kin. We try to hold items as long as possible to allow families and next of kin to make decisions or resolve disputes, however, we do not have permanent storage facilities and will eventually have to dispose of items in accordance with local and U.S. law.

He said his brother has a life insurance policy and a number of other accounts to settle. What kind of paperwork does the Embassy provide to assist?

Alongside helping with arrangements, our staff coordinates the issuance of a number of documents. We will issue mortuary certificates to enable a deceased citizen to clear Costa Rica and U.S. customs. We also try to obtain a locally-issued Spanish language death certificate and generate a Consular Report of Death Abroad (CRODA), which is issued on the authority of the U.S. government and confirms the passing of a U.S. citizen abroad. The CRODA can be used in the place of an English-language death certificate and should be accepted by insurance companies and other U.S. authorities for the purposes of final arrangements. As Costa Rican authorities sometimes need more time to issue final reports, we will stay in touch with your friend and try to forward these documents when available.

What kind of costs should my friend expect to incur to have his brother returned to the United States?

It is important to note that the U.S. Government does not have funds to pay for funeral or burial expenses of U.S. citizens who die abroad. Once we know the wishes of the family, we reach out to local funeral homes to get quotations. Though we cannot recommend one provider over another, we take the feedback of every family seriously to ensure a funeral home treats each case with the utmost sensitivity and care. Cremation costs can vary – including preparation, temporary storage, and shipment – running anywhere from a few hundred up to \$1,000. Should the next-of-kin prefer to have his or her loved one returned to the United States for burial, costs can be substantially greater due to additional airfreight and embalming costs. The costs associated with local arrangements tend to be much lower.

How can my friend reach you?

Please have him contact us at +506 2519 2590, Monday through Thursday, from 8:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

For after-hours emergencies, he can also ask for our duty officer via calling +506 2519 2000. If he prefers to email us, he can address any written inquiries to: acssanjose@state.gov



Sharing Lessons Learned in Infrastructure

A British delegation from the infrastructure sector visited Central America from February 25 to March 1, 2019, in what was the largest British trade mission to visit the region in recent years.

The delegates from the United Kingdom showed off the British experience in sustainable infrastructure, urban planning, railways, and smart cities to government authorities throughout the region. The initiative was a collaboration between the Department of International Trade and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in an effort to raise awareness among British companies about

infrastructure opportunities in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama.

The mission also sought to exchange best practices in the region's construction and infrastructure sectors. In Costa Rica, the delegation had the opportunity to learn about the country's infrastructure project pipeline from the Minister of Public Works and about the planned interurban electric train from the First Lady of the Republic.

British companies also shared their experience in various areas such as master planning, alternative energy, mobility and other fields during the conference "Costa Rica and the Future of its Cities: Sustainability and Construction" held on 27 February. More than 215 people including government officials, private sector experts, and students attended the conference. The mission was developed in the context of Costa Rica's recently announced Decarbonization Strategy, which aims to see the country achieve zero emissions by 2050.

For more information on the work of the Department of International Trade in Costa Rica, please contact:

Ms. Luisa Pastor

Director for International Trade

British Embassy San José

Email: Luisa.Pastor@fco.gov.uk



A speaker from the UK addresses the audience at the conference "Costa Rica and the Future of its Cities"



The DIT-organised event attracted over 200 participants

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by **Rómulo Pacheco**

Digital Signatures

Law #9416, the Law to Improve the Fight Against Tax Fraud (Ley Para Mejorar La Lucha Contra El Fraude Fiscal) has been promulgated; I discussed this in the last issue. A recap is that the law requires all corporations to submit information about their stockholders to the National Registry of Corporate Shareholders (Registro De Transparencia Y Beneficiarios Finales), and includes the requirement that the person authorized by the corporation to make the submission have a Digital Signature (Firma Digital). This requirement has caused some confusion among our members, so the following will explain what a Digital Signature is, how to use it, and where to obtain one.

What Is A Digital Signature?

A Digital Signature is a mathematical scheme for verifying the authenticity of digital messages or documents. This information is generated from a Digital Signature system installed on a computer.

What Comprises A Digital Signature System?

The complete Digital Signature system, as used in this application, consists of three parts: A card (similar to a credit card), a card reader, and a program which is installed on the computer.

How Does This Digital Signature System Work?

The card is inserted into the reader which communicates with the computer via a secure USB connection. The computer then sends a signal to the recipient, which they verify as a valid Digital Signature. This gives a recipient reason to believe that the message was created by a known sender, that the sender cannot deny having sent the message, and that the message was not altered in transit. Digital Signatures have many uses, including allowing access to various accounts, such as bank accounts, online.

What Does This Mean To Me?

Digital Signature systems are available to Costa Rican citizens and all types of legal residents of the country. Those persons not residents (for instance those here on tourist visas) are not eligible to obtain a Digital Signature system.

I Am A Resident, Where Can I Get A Digital Signature System?

Digital Signature systems are available at most banks.

Who Must Comply With This New Law?

ALL corporations, through their signing authority, must submit a Declaración De Participantes Y Beneficiarios Finales (a declaration) about their corporation(s) to the Registro De Transparencia Y Beneficiarios Finales (the registry).

How Do I Comply With The Law And Submit My Corporation's Data?

The corporation's signing authority must go online to the website of the Central Bank, www.centraldirecto.fi.cr (the website is in Spanish) and input the required information into the appropriate data base. Accessing the data base can ONLY be done with a Digital Signature card.

Additional General Information:

Non-Resident corporation owners must hold a special meeting of the Board of Directors and prepare a Special Power of Attorney to authorize either a citizen of Costa Rica or a legal resident of Costa Rica, to be the corporation's signing authority.

All shareholders who hold fifteen percent or more of the stock in a corporation are required to be registered as a benefit recipient of each registered corporation, active or inactive.

If you are not a resident or citizen, the card or certificate issued to the corporate representative must be issued by SINPE (most banks are authorized to issue this document).

This is an annual obligation and must be completed every year, and also within fifteen days of each time there is a change in the stock composition. This year, 2019, because it's the first time for all corporations, the registration must be submitted in accordance with the last digit of the Corporation Identification Number (Cédula Jurídica De La Compañía) in compliance with the following schedule:

Last Digit Of Corporate ID / Month To Present The Declaration

0 and 1	September
2 and 3	October
4 and 5	November
6 and 7	December
8 and 9	January

The objective of the law is to identify the totality of stock participation and all individuals in those corporations, as well as the final beneficiaries, to improve the fight against tax fraud.

If you have any questions, ARCR is ready to help! Simply call the office at 2220-0055 and ask.

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THE SEMINARS

Costa Rican Laws and Regulations - Health System in Costa Rica - Buying, Selling or Renting Real Estate - Title Guarantee
Costa Rican Culture - Technology, Communications and the Internet in Costa Rica - Banking in Costa Rica - Moving and Customs - Insurance in Costa Rica - Living in Costa Rica

For more information on seminar dates and to reserve your seat, visit the ARCR web site at www.arcr.cr, or send an email to service@arcr.net, or contact the office by telephone at **2220-0055** or **4052-4052**.

by Gretchen Treuting

Making Art in Costa Rica

Before my first visit to Costa Rica, nearly ten years ago, I realized that just about everyone I knew or worked with had already been there – and they had the pictures to prove it. Costa Rica was apparently not just an adventure getaway for gringos, but was the ultimate photo opportunity.

I noticed that everyone's photos were pretty much all the same; the overly-photographed, but deservedly so, environs of Costa Rica with their stunning vistas and wildlife.

My initial trip with my husband was for fact-finding, so instead of the beaches and rain forests, we invested our time in exploring the area where we would most likely live; the Central Valley. And it was there I unexpectedly found a tremendous amounts of inspiration; lots of lesser-documented visual splendors to chronicle using photography and design.

In the United States I worked as a graphic designer and my hobby was creating “artist books,” which are works of art that use or relate to the structural and conceptual properties of books themselves. So, when we finally moved here, at the end of 2013, I began taking photos and making artist books.

Some people are put off by the ubiquitous razor wire Costa Ricans use to protect their property, but I saw

the beauty of the vibrant painted gates in front of their homes, both humble dwellings and fancy houses. The result was my three-dimensional book entitled *Color According to Costa Rica*. The organized-by-color gates

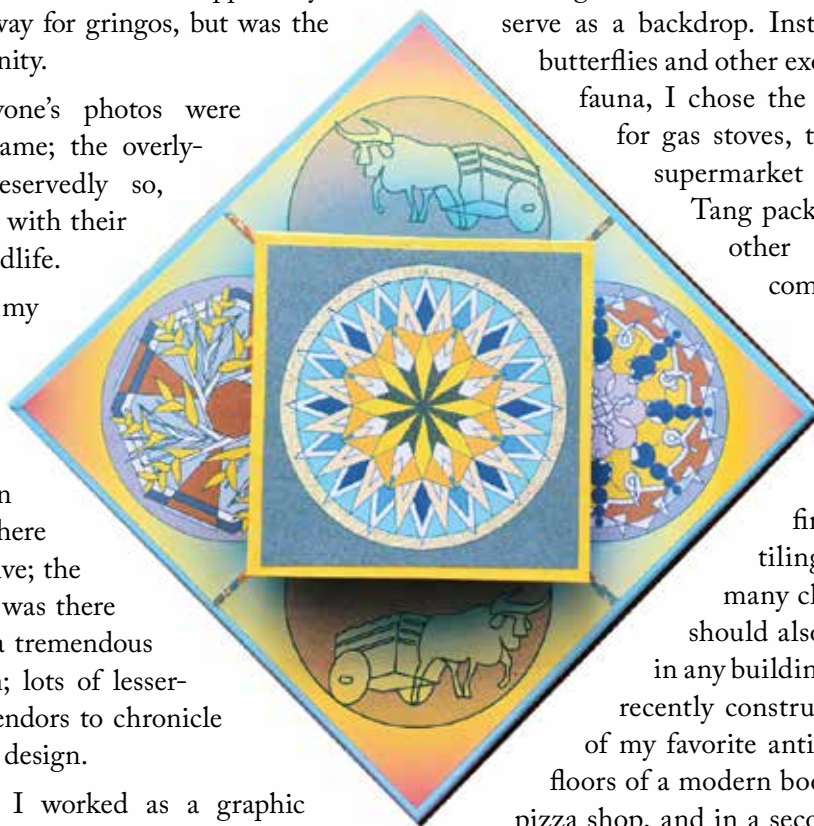
serve as a backdrop. Instead of the famous blue butterflies and other exotic Costa Rica flora and fauna, I chose the deep blue butane tanks for gas stoves, the bright red taxis, the supermarket shelves of color-coded Tang packages, paint buckets, and other “mundane” objects to complete the color wheel.

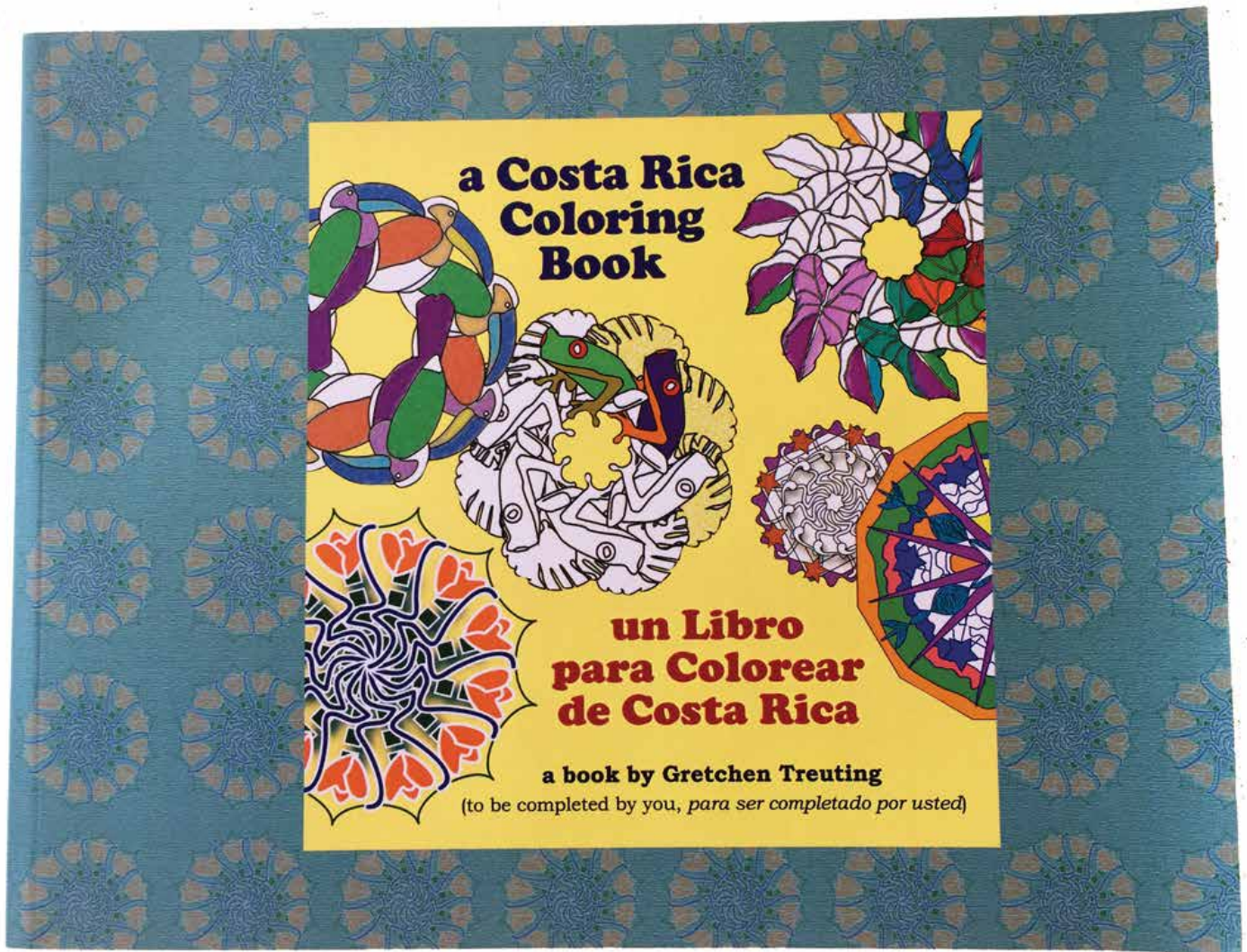
Later, more inspiration came from the floors of the buildings.

A visitor to Costa Rica would expect to find beautiful ceramic tiling on the floors of the many churches here, but people should also look down to the floor in any building, even if it appears to be recently constructed. I discovered some of my favorite antique tile patterns on the floors of a modern bookstore, a bathroom in a pizza shop, and in a second-hand clothing store.

That led to wall pieces to display some of the more unique and enchanting designs we walk on every day. To make my “Costa Rica Tiles” wall pieces, I blended photographs of the tiles I collected.

Two years ago, toward the end of the “adult coloring book” craze, I was influenced by the iconic oxcart

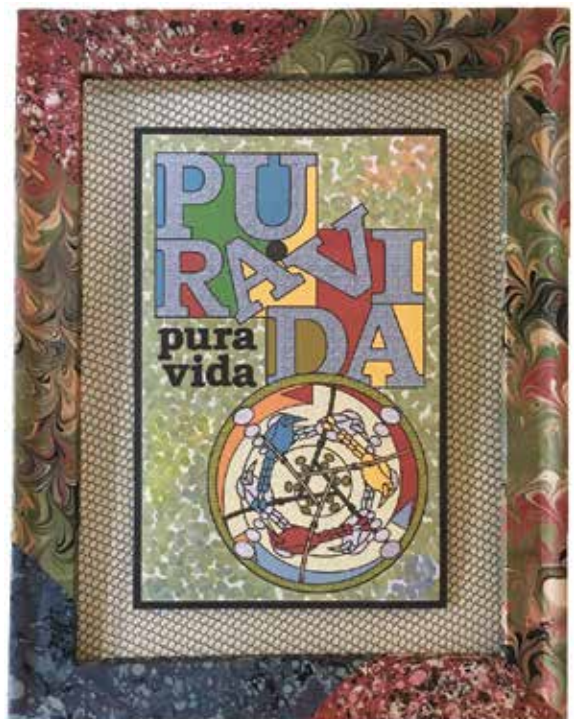




wheels of Costa Rica to create a coloring book of my own. I constructed mandalas using a mot-mot bird, tree roots, the tuba section of the San José Municipal Band, as well as classic images like the toucan and Kolbi frog. I had 100 books printed and was happily surprised by how quickly they sold.

Everything I encounter is fair game for artistic representation, from the “lace” made by insects devouring the leaves of the plants surrounding our house, to a spider’s hidden web being exposed by rain. I am now making other wall pieces and posters with Costa Rica imagery that suggest a sense of pattern; the complex array of branches or leaves, the classic male peacock tail, or the serendipitous combination of fish in a koi pond.

There have been two art exhibits in Costa Rica that have shaped my work. From the Pop Art show in Escazú I reconfigured Robert Indiana’s iconic “LOVE” image as the Costa Rican motto of “Pura Vida.” I was also





moved to pay homage to the Costa Rican artist Herberth Bolaños, whose exhibit at the Jade Museum was, in fact, homage to the quipu, a non-phonetic medium used by some pre-Columbian societies. The quipu was a system of ropes and knots used by indigenous peoples to tell stories and make numerical calculations.

In creating my books and other art pieces I have been using hand-marbled paper produced by my sister; using her colorfully patterned papers for book covers and frames has been a joy.

You can see some pieces of my art hanging in the offices of ARCR. They are for sale.

Gretchen lived in the San Francisco Bay Area where she attended the Pacific Center for Book Arts and studied under many well-known artists. In addition to exhibiting at many San Francisco "book art" shows, she has had her work shown in New York and Minneapolis. She now resides with her husband in Alajuela. If you would like more information about venues where she will be showing and selling her work, or her workshops on book art, please contact her at: BooksAsArt.CR@gmail.com.

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for our members who must file Costa Rica Corporate Taxes

ARCR offers an important service for our members! For one small, annual administration fee, we will review corporate documents, respond to requests for documents, and prepare any required forms, to assure timely compliance with all legal requirements for the corporation by the taxing authorities.

This inexpensive service is designed to assist corporations to meet all legal requirements and to assure stockholders that their corporation will comply with all Costa Rican corporation laws and tax requirements.

For more information and to begin the process, please contact the ARCR office at 2220-0055, or email to: service@arcr.net

(This service does not include payment of any pending amounts for taxes, penalties, or government fees.)

by Shelagh Duncan



Furnishing Your Vacation Rental Property

There are vacation rental properties and there are GREAT vacation rental properties. Make yours stand out from the competition to ensure that your property is rented as often as you'd like it to be. It will also assure that you not only get top dollar, but good reviews and repeat customers.

There are two types of rental properties – those that are used by the owners, and those that are not. Often those used by the owners are favored as they tend to be kept cleaner, better equipped, and more up-to-date. Regardless of whether you choose to use your rental or not, here is how to create a great rental property.

Furniture

Choosing your furniture carefully will give you better returns on your investment in the long run. Do your homework and set a realistic budget! The rule of thumb

when buying furniture is to buy the best quality you can afford, even for a rental property. If you use a local company to supply a “package” of furniture for your rental and you chose one within your budget, you will benefit from their expertise in coordinating all the pieces. And, they usually will deliver and set it up for you. It may not be as personalized as selecting each piece yourself, but you can save yourself a lot of stress, time, and probably money in the end.

If you like decorating and prefer to do it yourself, then the most important items to concentrate on are the sofas and mattresses. If your renters are not comfortable sitting or sleeping, they will not be happy – and unhappy renters give bad reviews! I have had many conversations with renters who have had bad experiences; there was nowhere for them to relax in comfort – and they are on vacation! Cheap sofas can become uncomfortable and quickly start to look shabby. Better quality sofas will

have superior construction and use durable fabrics that are easy to clean. Remember that you do not need to over-furnish.

Make a list of the essentials and as long as your renters have the basics and some decent storage, you will be okay. Give them somewhere to put away their luggage, their clothes, and their other personal stuff as a minimum. If you have a wall-mounted TV, add a table below it to hold remotes and other accessories, and provide a place near the entry where keys, change, and other bits and pieces can be placed and easily located when needed.

Pool and Patio Living

Back home we may be used to having indoor dining, but remember that here in Costa Rica we live outdoors. Get an outdoor dining set that will accommodate at least as many people as you can sleep in your rental. Consider selecting multi-purpose furniture when possible. Comfortable outdoor dining chairs are useful for providing some casual outdoor seating when needed. And don't forget the pool loungers; people need somewhere to sit when they come from the pool, so encourage them away from the upholstered pieces and give them some comfortable seating where they can dry off without ruining a chair or sofa.



Window Covering

Living here full time we may not worry so much about privacy at the windows, unless there is another house close by – but you know that the vacationers will. They are used to pulling blinds or curtains at home, so reduce their possible stress and help them feel comfortable by adding ready-made panels or custom shades to, at least, the bedroom windows.

Window coverings can add some color and texture to a room and should coordinate with the bedding. Renters are on vacation and may want to sleep in, so black-out shades in the bedrooms are a great idea.

Also, if you have the sun beating into your house and heating it up or damaging your furniture, then consider adding window coverings to those windows too, and use panels with sun-out fabric.

Bed and Bath Linens

This is not an area where you should cheap-out. You should try to provide, at the minimum, hotel-quality pillows, sheets, and towels for renters. If yours is a luxury rental then go for the luxury linens. It all comes back to the experience you are offering renters – and that's what they will remember. Use mattress and pillow protectors and make sure these are always clean and fresh. Put out extra pillows and towels, and if you have A/C, a blanket for each bed. Towels should be plump and thirsty, and keep linens all white to make it easier for doing laundry. If you have different size beds here is a tip; use a sharpie to denote the sheet size, F, Q or K on the bottom right corner of each sheet, and then fold them with their pillow cases so this mark is visible. Twin sheets make-up into a smaller package, so they are always easier to find.

The Fun Stuff: Art, Mirrors, and Accessories

Be sure to allocate some funds in your budget to decorate the walls, especially if you decide to supply just the basics in furniture. If you add something dramatic it will make your rental property stand out from the rest.

Rule #1: Select art you love. Buy a few pieces to start and try them in different rooms and areas. Once you know where they will work best you can add more as necessary. If your furniture is more neutral-toned, you

can go to town on colorful art and accessories to bring the space alive. Choose large art pieces for the living area and master bedroom, as they will add an element of prestige to your promotional photos. Some people love to decorate with monkey, parrot, or beach art to echo the area, others may prefer a modern, eclectic, or primitive look. Whatever direction you take, you can use art to be your inspiration for color throughout the house.



Rule #2: Less is more. A few carefully placed and well chosen items can bring a room together beautifully. There is no need to have lots of home accessories everywhere. Make it look finished, but not cluttered. Select accessories that are sturdier than glass or ceramic, and not as easily broken. Ideally they will not be too expensive or difficult to replace. Inexpensive throw pillows are handy for a touch of color here and there, and you always have the option of adding a new pillow cover later if you need to hide a stain or damage.

Try to place a mirror somewhere in the living area, and if possible a full-length dressing mirror in each bedroom. Renters will appreciate this often overlooked detail. Check the lighting levels too, some people may want to read in the evenings, so have bedside lamps on both sides of the bed, and a couple of table and floor lamps in the living area.

Convenience

Equip the kitchen with renters in mind. They are likely going to eat out much of the time, but they will also want to be able to prepare meals in the house, especially if they have children. Provide all the basic equipment:

food prep and cooking utensils, cutlery, dishes and pans, as well as beverage glasses. Supplying sets of unbreakable pool and patio plates and glasses is highly recommended too.

Have some puzzles, books, board games, movies, and copies of local magazines available. Another idea to add to your renters' positive experience would be to compile a binder containing brochures on local attractions, tours, and restaurants – with your recommendations on where to find the best pizza or Chinese food! Tell them about the community markets and where and when they operate, where the banks, pharmacies, supermarkets, and libraries are located, as well as your favorite beaches and waterfalls. Advise them about the national holidays, days when the banks will be closed, and which are recycling and garbage pick-up days.

Providing a “how to” instruction list, or book about the house with your property

manager's information, will help them settle in quickly and add to their overall enjoyment. Especially if you have Spanish instructions on the microwave! Tell them about any quirks and special features or “personality” your house may have!

Give them the security and internet codes and let them know where you keep the remotes and DVDs or CDs, and how to operate the equipment. Tell them that you provide some basic cleaning supplies in the laundry room, as well as cloths, (so they are not tempted to use your face cloths and towels for cleaning off their sandals!) and they can hopefully deal with accidents as they happen, not wait for the cleaners to come.

There are many other considerations to deal with when renting your house, but furnishing and setting it up is step one.

Until next time...

Shelagh Duncan has been working in the interior design field for over 30 years and can be found at ROYAL PALM INTERIORS in Uvita. She can be reached at 506-2743-8323, or email her at: royalpalminteriors@gmail.com, or follow her on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/RoyalPalmInteriors>

(32) SENIOR LIVING IN COSTA RICA

by Katya DeLuisa

Part 2: Staying Healthy in the Tropics

The senior population in Costa Rica is increasing and many of the newer expats are of the baby boomer generation. This age group has witnessed the rise in health needs of their aging parents, and by age sixty most are beginning to experience our own health issues, which commonly leads us to focus more on staying healthy.

Wisdom should come with age, but that isn't always true; too often we seniors fall into repetitive routines. We consistently drive the same routes and shop at the same stores. Our habits direct our lives and our daily routines, and from breakfast to bedtime those routines seldom vary. Generally we have come to depend too heavily on the medical system and medications instead of prevention. To change those old habits takes effort, willingness, and patience; healthy living is not a quick fix like popping a pill, it's a lifestyle change.

So the big question is, how can you change that old, unhealthy lifestyle? Here are some tips.

Eat Right

The first step is to develop healthy eating habits. Changing years of the practice of using processed food and eating quick microwave meals can be difficult. Luckily for us, in Costa Rica there is an abundance of weekly farmers' markets; even the smallest towns have them. Start by eating organic when you can, and if you don't like to cook, make larger meals at one time, then freeze or store the extra so that on other days preparing a healthy meal is quick and easy.

Try to include more alkaline foods, like fruits and vegetables in your diet, which can relieve inflammation and ease arthritis pain. Regular juicing can eliminate constipation and other intestinal complaints. And try freezing fruit for smoothies. The larger supermarkets have a wide variety of healthy foods, and Bioland is the most prominent distributor, so look for them.

Take a Nap

The "siesta" (mid-day nap) serves two purposes; lunch should be your most substantial meal so taking it easy afterwards allows time for good digestion, and it is a

time for a rest during the hottest time of the day. In fact, most of the country shuts down for an hour or two. Even schools have extended lunch periods compared to the American average of 20 minutes. By eating their largest meals midday, Costa Ricans are less likely to fill up at dinner, and you shouldn't either. Adopt the mantra, "eat light at night."

Get Out

Costa Rica has many "Pocket Communities" and it's common that people slip into the habit of having a small circle of friends, limited to a small area. To change that, join an outside group that brings you together regularly. And at the market make it a point to speak to those you see infrequently. Make new friends and expand your interests.

Check Facebook to see if there is a local page for your area, there are some in English for specific regions like Puriscal, Atenas, and Dominical, and there are several other local expat groups. There are also Yahoo groups and blogs where you can post questions and get information.

And don't limit your socialization to only foreigners or English speakers. Find out what's going on in your community. Interacting socially with locals helps familiarize you with the culture and prevents feelings of isolation. I recently joined a small artisan group here in Ciudad Colón to get to acquainted with my town's Costa Rican artists.

Get Physical

Exercise is as important as diet and developing a routine is best. Walking can keep joints lubricated, lower blood pressure, and help organs function better. If you aren't far from town, leave the car at home and walk. Taking regular strolls in your neighborhood gets you acquainted with your neighbors. And in mountain areas, that up and down trek improves cardio health, strengthens muscles, improves brain function, and produces feel-good endorphins. Swim or take up yoga or Tai Chi, or join a local gym or exercise group. If you are into sports and have a soccer field nearby, get a ball and start kicking it around. In no time you will have people joining you, and usually a casual game will result.

Good Health is Holistic

Well being isn't limited to diet and exercise, it's also emotional and mental. It's imperative for brain health that we try new things. Take a class, go to a concert, or take a trip to a part of the country you haven't visited. Go to your town's cultural events, even if you attended them last year. Make an effort to get to theaters or symphonies, and attend some art openings at museums and galleries. The Ministerio de Cultura has a listing of events on their website.

There are often volunteer opportunities where you can make a difference, even if you don't speak the language. Mingling with the locals, who are consistently willing to help you learn, will provide mental stimulation through Spanish language immersion.

And when you are out in public, always give a friendly smile to anyone who makes eye contact; it makes them and you feel good. Plus, you can never say please or thank you too often for bringing out that Tico friendliness.

Read some online newspapers, like the Tico Times, and if you have some Spanish ability, read local print newspapers to increase your language skills while getting informed.

Push Yourself

During my recuperation from a hip fracture, I spent every day in my garden sitting on a chair bent over digging in the dirt, while barefoot. There is a therapy called "Grounding" where it is beneficial to get your feet in touch with the earth. It was not only good exercise, but it also kept my spirits up.

We can change our lifestyle, but if we don't change our outlook on life we may not get the results for which we are searching. If you had a therapist much of your life, get one here. Many Costa Rican professionals speak English.

The steps to staying healthy in our later years are basically the same everywhere and can be easily incorporated into your life as a senior in Costa Rica. If you make the effort, you will receive the rewards.

Next issue: Part III: Medical Care

Katya De Luisa is an author, free-lance writer, artist and Senior Living Coach specializing in dementia. She has resided in Costa Rica since 1980. Contact: kdeluisa@yahoo.com


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(34) PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

by Tony Johnson

Wisdom Gained in a Slow Taxi



"The human condition: lost in thought" – Eckhart Tolle

It took ages for me to really understand Tolle's summary of human experience. But a recent cab ride showed me it's deeper meaning. Yes, a cab ride from SJO to my home in Ojochal was an enlightening experience!

There are at least a couple ways of looking at Tolle's slogan; as PSYCHOLOGY and as SPIRITUALITY. The familiar, and valid, psychological view is that we see many degrees of danger in our world. And since our mind is our problem solver, it becomes lost in thinking about how to identify, assess, and solve those dangers.

The psychological level of Tolle's aphorism is that we're usually so wrapped up in our worries, problems, and plans that we're largely oblivious to the world around and within us. We're so concerned about avoiding danger that, as in a speeding cab, we rarely notice the scenery racing by. When we're so immersed in avoiding a collision, we miss the actual experience of the present moment; we

are literally "elsewhere" in our minds while we miss, for example, the beauty of the Jacó panorama.

In daily life we're trying to keep up with our ever-growing, never-shrinking "must do" lists. They become the central, maybe the only focus of our lives. And, as a result, we are excluding much of our other experiences.

All those ideas, concerns, and perceived dangers aren't just calmly and serenely pondered; we're both obsessed with our ideas and physically "revved up" by them. We're on edge, tense, fearing we'll somehow fail to "keep up" and drop some of the balls we're trying to juggle; which then leads us to devote even more emotional and mental energy to them. Around and around we go.

So being lost in thought has negative mental and emotional consequences. The easy understanding of Tolle's adage is that such absorption obscures the possibility of other ways of living, other ways of experiencing life. Ways of being calmer. But many of us are "racing" through life – like a speeding cab – in a desperate effort to solve our problems. The result is that

in doing so we're not relieved, but consumed and unhappy. Then we typically try harder to keep up, not realizing that being lost in thought doesn't prevent unhappiness, but actually guarantees it.

What Other Way of Living?

A recent cab ride gave me the EXPERIENCE of one different way. And it taught me a lot about myself and reality. No there wasn't a fatal accident, nor some impassible mudslide, or an hours-long traffic jam. Nor did the driver know some secret, amazingly fast way home. No, just the opposite, it was actually the slowest cab ride home I'd ever taken!

In my typical past transfers, the drivers sped, pedal to the metal all the way. They never allowed anyone to get in their way, passing at every chance, often squeezing into any opening available to avoid a head-on disaster. Roaring down the road when any straightaway presented itself, and screeching on the brakes when another driver tried to jump in front of us. The motivating "danger" for them was spending too much time on my transportation, giving them less time for another fare. And trying to avoid that danger put us both in the constant real danger of an accident. My fastest time for that trip from SJO to "Ojo" was around three hours!

Isness or Busyness?

The day of this especially slow ride I was very tired and wanted to get home as quickly as possible, but this driver, Jorge, stuck strictly to the speed limit the whole way. So when it was obvious that he wouldn't go faster, I had to a decision to make:

- a) I could explain and ask him nicely to speed up, "I'm exhausted and want nothing more than to get to bed ASAP!"
- b) I could "pull rank" and demand that since he was working for me, he must speed up or,
- c) I could accept this reality of "creeping" along, rarely passing, even when some driver was slower than us.

I chose C, and on this trip the driver got me home in about four hours and fifteen minutes.

How could acceptance help with my exhaustion problem? You've probably heard that "grasping causes suffering." I think there's a clearer, cleaner, more modern way to express this idea. First "SUFFERING" does not just mean physical and emotional agony, as in passing through final stage cancer (although it would include that). It's more like

common unhappiness or discontent. Normally much less severe than the agony of dying, it can ruin life nonetheless. And "GRASPING" does NOT simply mean wanting more and more (although it could mean that too). It's clearer if we understand it as "resistance," as fighting what is; feeling that we "must have" something better, something more. Like a faster ride. Resenting the reality of going slow.

So suffering and grasping really mean unhappiness caused by our resistance to the present reality; disappointed with what is, wanting something different than what we are experiencing. If suffering results from refusing to accept our present reality and demanding it be different than it currently is, then acceptance must be the solution.

Avoid suffering by accepting what is? How un-North American, no?

But it works! I accepted Jorge's slow pace and didn't fume with resentment. I didn't complain and be a jerk (yes, I have that tendency). I just settled into the steady hum of the tires and engine. No radio, no phone calls, no attempts at conversation, just a kind of serene silence as I relaxed and settled back, feeling calm and deeply at ease. That enabled me to experience myself and the world differently; to find psychological calm and spiritual inner peace. And experience what I'd otherwise miss!

Yes, the "fast life" can be exciting – as well as stressful. Having so much to attend to can be overwhelming, exhausting... and considered a sign of our importance.

Some may not want this calmer way of being, while others may be tired of the rat-race and wish they could calm down and find peace and happiness. Others may want to go even deeper; to reach their true nature. To move beyond the psychological view of "lost in thought."

Spiritually, when we're "lost in thought" we are not only psychologically stressed and out of touch with the world, we're also out of touch with our most basic nature, consciousness. We are out of touch with what we really are at the most basic level. And with the peace that comes with accepting, rather than fighting, reality.

Many tend to think "we ARE our thoughts," that our unique mental life makes us separate and distinct from others. But thoughts, sensations, perceptions, feelings, come and go, thus they are not our permanent essence.

So what is permanent? That's a question many cannot answer. Why not? Because they're so "lost in thought," in their feelings, sensations, and perceptions, that they're often unaware of the awareness that makes all those experiences possible. Unaware of the limitless consciousness behind

everything of which we are cognizant. We tend to see the “clouds” of mental life as primary and hardly notice the “sky” in which they appear. Consciousness is the fundamental ground of all experience. Without consciousness, there would be absolutely no experience.

What does my slow cab ride have to do with all this?

In accepting the reality of the slow ride, instead of fighting it, I became psychologically calmer. Finding my way out of my typical swirl of thought I became acutely aware of – being aware – of being conscious.

Behind our typical rush of thoughts is a world and experience that we often ignore (the Jacó panorama, for example). More profoundly, behind those thoughts, is consciousness. The thoughts are so prominent that we are unaware of being aware of who we are at our basic level.

What Good is Any of This?

Plenty. If you know how to live it. Once we realize that we are not our thoughts, that they merely pass through our consciousness like clouds, we see we have a choice; to remain lost in our mental whirlwind or settle into the peace of our

fundamental being. We no longer have to identify with the thoughts, but rather detach from them and observe them from a “distance.” And by being an “observer” those mental/emotional activities lose their power over us.

Asking ourselves, for instance, Is it really that bad to do the speed limit? is a psychological way of calming ourselves. Accepting reality, rather than angrily resenting it, is yet another way to detach from the mental and emotional cyclone of our typical inner lives – and access peace.

Accepting reality has definite PSYCHOLOGICAL and health benefits. Instead of feeling a stressful restlessness, we can become calm, at ease. Even better, some would say, ACCEPTING WHAT IS enables enlightened SPIRITUALITY.

Thank you, Jorge! Stick with that enlightened speed limit, buddy!

Tony Johnson is a retired university mental health psychologist. He happily lives far from SJO and is slowly learning to be even more present in Ojochal and in awareness. He can be reached at: johnson.tony4536@gmail.com

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► Alcoholics Anonymous

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

► Al-Anon Meetings

English language Al-Anon meetings are open to anyone whose life has been/is affected by someone else's problem with alcohol. Al-anon meeting information can be found at: <http://www.costaricaaa.com/category/al-anon/>.

► American Legion Post 10-Escazú

Meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 11 AM at the Casa de España in Sabana Norte. Casa de España has an elevator so the building is handicap accessible. 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.

(NOTE: change of day.)

► American Legion Post 12-Golfito

Meetings are held 4 p.m. 1st Tuesday every month at Banana Bay Marina. The Golfito GOVETS have been helping Southern Costa Rica for over 20 years. Contact Pat O'Connell at: walkergold@yahoo.com or 8919-8947, or Mel Goldberg at 8870-6756.

► American Legion Auxiliary

The Legion Auxiliary meets the second Saturday of each month, at 1300 hours in Moravia. Contact Doris Murillo 2240-2947.

► Bird Watching Club

The Birding Club of Costa Rica sponsors monthly trips to observe local and migrant birds in various areas of the country. For more information, please visit our website: www.birdingclubcr.org

► Canadian Club

The Canadian Club welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons, and at our special annual events, like our Canada Day Celebration, 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 visit our website: www.canadianclubcr.com or email Pat at: canadianclubcr@yahoo.com to sign up.

► Costa Ballena Women's Network

Costa Ballena Women's Network (CBWN) started in Ojochal with a handful of expat ladies almost 10 years ago. Our focus is networking, community, business, and social activities as well as offering an opportunity to meet new people. Monthly lunch meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of each month at various restaurants with guest speakers talking on interesting topics. For more information please contact: cbwn00@gmail.com and see our FB page - www.facebook.com/CostaBallenaWomensNetwork

► 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, 11:00 AM. Contact: bbrashears0@gmail.com, 8684-2526. Facebook page: Costa Rica Writers Group

► Democrats Abroad

Democrats Abroad meets on the last Saturday of every month at Casa LTG (Little Theatre Group). Contact Nelleke Bruyn, 8614-2622, e-mail: cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com. Join Democrats Abroad at: www.democratsabroad.org. Register to vote absentee at: VoteFromAbroad.org

► First Friday Lunch

Each month ARCR sponsors a "First Friday Lunch." All are invited to join ARCR Officers and others for an informal lunch and BS session. There is no RSVP or agenda, just food and meeting new and old friends. Attendees are responsible for their own food and drink expenses. The FFL takes place at 12:00 PM on the first Friday of the month. Gatherings are at the Chinese restaurant, Mariscos Vivo, located behind the Mas x Menos grocery store (located across from the Nissan Dealer) and not far from Hotel Autentico (the former Hotel Torremolinos, where the ARCR Seminars are held).

► Little Theatre Group

LTG is the oldest continuously running English-language theatre in Central or South America and currently puts on a minimum of four productions a year. The group's monthly social meetings are held in the theatre on the first Monday of the month from 7 p.m. to

9 p.m. and everyone is welcome. Membership: Student C2,500, Adult C5,000, Family C8,000. For more information Call the LTG Box Office 8858-1446 or www.littletheatregrup.org

► Marine Corps League

Meets the 2nd Saturday of the month at 11 a.m. at the Tap House at City Place 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

Newcomers Club of Costa Rica (for women) meets the first Tuesday of every month, September through May. Contact: 2588-0937, email us at: costaricapor@yaho.com or visit our website at: www.newcomersclubofcostarica.com

► PC Club of Costa Rica

The PC Club meets the third Saturday of each month; social, coffee, doughnuts at 8:30 a.m. The meeting starts at 9 and ends at 11 a.m. Guests are allowed one free month before joining. Meetings are held at the Pan American school in Belén. For information call Dick Sandlin at 2416-8493, email him at d_sandlin@email.com or visit our website at: www.pcclub.net

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club (PZIWC) was 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 luncheons on the second Tuesday of each month, hosts Ramblers Day on the third Tuesday of each month, and has a Games Day (board and/or card games) on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information, please send an email to pzwomansclub@gmail.com or visit our website at <https://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. The meeting charge is 4,000 colones for visitors, members 3,000. Membership fee is 12,000 colones and includes listing in the business directory, if desired. Meetings 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

► Radio Control Sailing Club

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

► Wine Club of Costa Rica

The wine club usually meets at 1 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Join us to tantalize your taste buds and expand your education. For more information on upcoming events please contact us at costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com

► Women's Club of Costa Rica

The Women's Club of Costa Rica is the oldest, continuously operating, philanthropic organization for English-speaking women in Costa Rica. The Club is focused on serving community needs in Costa Rica, 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 and further information and a calendar of planned 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 Jose, and English/Spanish in San Ramon. We work on peace and human rights issues. Call Mitzi, 2433-7078 or write us at: peacewomen@gmail.com

"Club members should review the contact information for their clubs and make sure it is up to date. Send any changes or corrections to: service@arcr.net, Subject line; El Residente."

BUSINESS DIRECTORY (39)

Important dates in Costa Rica:

May 1:
Labor Day
(Office closed)

May 30 - 31:
ARCR Seminar for expats.
Location: Hotel Casino
Palma Real

June 16:
Father's Day

June 27 - 28:
ARCR Seminar for Expats.
Location: Hotel Casino
Palma Real

Funniest One Liners

The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue.

The question isn't at what age I want to retire, it's at what income?

I grew a beard thinking it would say "Distinguished Gentleman." Instead, turns out it says, "Senior Discount, Please!"

I was worried that my mechanic might try to rip me off. I was relieved when he told me all I needed was turn-signal fluid.

My email password has been hacked. That's the third time I've had to rename the cat.

Photons have mass? I didn't even know they were Catholic.



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